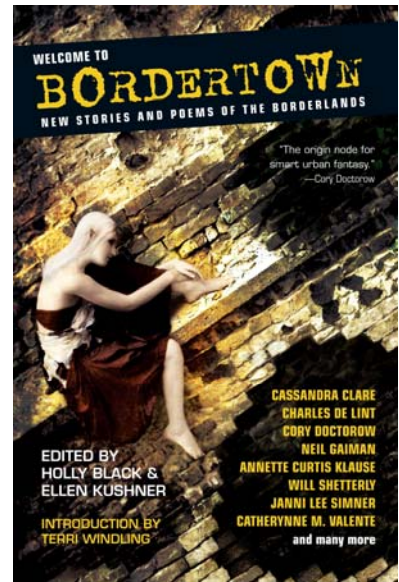


# ***Welcome to Bordertown*** Study Guide

## **How to use this guide:**

Set in a gritty, diverse city that straddles the divide between the human world and the magical realm, *Welcome to Bordertown* provides an ideal backdrop for exploring **the issues and ideas most vital to young adults** in a classroom or extracurricular setting. Through more than twenty interconnected songs, poems, and stories, educators can use *Welcome to Bordertown* to generate discussions and activities around a number of topics, including **race, disability, technology, immigration, sexuality, and gender**.

This guide provides a range of discussion questions that can be modified for use with a wide variety of groups, including **reading clubs, middle and high school classes, Gay-Straight Alliances**, and other **diversity and discussion-focused groups**. Divided into **General Discussion Questions, Story-Specific Discussion Questions, and Post-Reading Activities**, this guide works best when paired with the Bordertown series website, which provides **supplementary material** for many of the discussion questions and activities.



## **Use this guide to:**

- **Introduce** complex topics for debate and discussion;
- **Encourage** analysis of different writing styles and techniques;
- **Deepen** students' understanding of the ways fantasy can be used to explore real-world issues;
- **Spur** discussion of students' personal connections to the pieces;
- **Provide** students with prompts, tips, and inspiration for their own creative endeavors.

## **About *Welcome to Bordertown*:**

**Bordertown:** a city on the border between our human world and the elfin realm. Runaway teens come from both sides of the Border to find adventure, to find themselves. Elves play in rock bands and race down the street on spell-powered motorbikes. Human kids recreate themselves in the squats and clubs and artists' studios of Soho.

Terri Windling's [original Bordertown series](#) was the forerunner of today's urban fantasy, introducing authors that included Charles de Lint, Will Shetterly, Emma Bull, and Ellen Kushner. In *Welcome to Bordertown*, the original writers are joined by the generation that grew up dreaming of Bordertown, including acclaimed authors Holly Black, Cassandra Clare, Cory Doctorow, Neil Gaiman, Catherynne M. Valente, and many more. They all meet here on the streets of Bordertown in more than twenty new stories, songs, and poems, including a 15-page graphic story.

## General Discussion Questions:

- If you knew you could get there, would you run away to Bordertown? Why or why not? (**Bonus:** For more information about the journey, check out [How to Get to Bordertown](#) from *The Tough Guide to Bordertown*).
- Many of the characters in *Welcome to Bordertown* are leaving things behind in order to start over in Bordertown. Have you ever felt like there was a time when you were leaving something behind and starting over as well? How was your journey like and unlike the journey of the characters in the book?
- From music to drawing to computer engineering, different [characters](#) bring different strengths to Bordertown. What strengths do you think you would bring with you to Bordertown? How would you use them there?
- There's tension in Bordertown between those who've lived there for a while and the newcomers, or noobs, who've arrived more recently. How does this echo current discussions about newcomers to the United States?
- If you were to run away to Bordertown, what three things would you take with you? (**Bonus:** Remember, where you stay might influence what you take, so make sure to research the [available accommodations](#).)
- The characters in *Welcome to Bordertown* arrive there in many different ways. Why do you think this is true? How would you get to Bordertown? (**Bonus:** For ideas, see the entries for *Welcome to Bordertown* author Christopher Barzak's contest [How Would You Get to Bordertown?](#))
- Pick a main character from a story. What would you have done differently if you were that character?
- As romantic as it sounds, running away is usually not a good thing to do. There are many dangers on the streets for kids alone, and most kids never find their own Bordertown. What could you do to help someone who might run away?
- Can you draw a map of Bordertown based on clues in the stories? Is it easy? Is it hard? Why might that be? (**Bonus:** Check out [Places & Neighborhoods](#) for help in drawing your Bordertown map).

- Are the stories in *Welcome to Bordertown* in chronological order? If not, can you sort them that way?
- People in Bordertown often walk through the stories of others. Can you pick out some characters who show up in more than one story? Who shows up in the most stories?
- Although all the stories in *Welcome to Bordertown* are set in the same place, each is written by a different author. How are the different writers' stories alike? How are they different? Do you think the Bordertown stories ultimately have more similarities or differences?
- Occupy Wall Street is a leaderless resistance movement with people of many colors, genders and political persuasions. Their slogan "We are the 99%" addresses their feeling that there is a 1% that controls a large and unfair percentage of wealth in the United States. If the Occupy movement made its way to Bordertown, what do you think its goals there would be? What would happen in an Occupy Bordertown protest?
- *Welcome to Bordertown* consists of both [short stories and poems](#). Do you see any patterns to the placement of the two? Do any of the poems seem to comment on the short stories, or the short stories on the poems?
- Are there any short stories in *Welcome to Bordertown* that you think would have been better as poems? Any poems that you think would have been better as short stories? Why do you think some authors chose to write one, and some the other?
- Which of your favorite songs would be played in a Bordertown bar? Why? (**Bonus:** See some of the musicians and bands who might headline a Bordertown show [here](#).)

## Story-Specific Discussion Questions:

- In "Elf Blood" by Annette Curtis Klause, the story centers on Lizzie, but there are hints about Moss and who he is. What do you think is Moss's story? Who is he, and where is he from? Why do his parents have such high hopes for him, and why doesn't he like that? What is he up to? How could Lizzie help him?
- Did you ever feel very alone like Lizzie in "Elf Blood?" Perhaps you didn't let someone turn you into a vampire, but have you ever almost done something stupid because of that feeling?
- In "Crossings" by Janni Lee Simner, Miranda says, "**But while the Worldside elves and halfies still had the amnesty the U.S. gave them when the Way back to their Border disappeared, there was no amnesty for me...**" Why might elves be allowed to remain in the United States while Analise is not? Have there been any times in our history when some groups have been allowed to immigrate while others haven't? How would you decide who is allowed to stay in the United States?
- In "Crossings," the "werewolf" Miranda and Analise meet is mostly harmless, while the "vampire" is more dangerous--and throughout the book, some elves are helpful while others cause harm. In other books, elves, werewolves, and vampires have played a wide range of other roles. Why do different authors portray the same supernatural creatures in such different ways? In what other ways have you seen fantasy stories take the same tropes or themes and vary them in some way? (**Bonus:** If you were writing a fantasy story, what sort of role might you have elves, werewolves, vampires, and other supernatural creatures play?)
- In "[Shannon's Law](#)" by Cory Doctorow, information on Bordertown's Internet is transmitted from place to place by pigeons, mirrors, even art and poetry. If you were designing your own magical version of the Internet, what other means would you use to transmit its information?
- Most of the stories in *Welcome to Bordertown* are told from human points of views; however, "Incunabulum" by Emma Bull is told from an elven point of view. Why do you think the author made this decision? How does having a non-human point of view change the story? In what ways does it not change it?
- In "We Do Not Come in Peace" by Christopher Barzak, Marius says: "**I don't make the rules Mouse. I just live here.**" Mouse replies: "**But you're wrong. You *do* make the rules here. *Because* you live here.**" Do you agree or disagree with each of their

statements, and why? Mouse ultimately helps to burn down Oberon House in protest of Bordertown's injustices. How do you feel about this approach? How might you respond to Bordertown's injustices if you lived there?

- "Fair Trade" by Sara Ryan and Dylan Meconis is the only story in *Welcome to Bordertown* told in graphic novel form. Why do you think the author and illustrator made that decision? How does telling the story in this format make it different from—and the same as—the other stories? Are there any other stories in *Welcome to Bordertown* that you think would be better told as graphic stories? (**Bonus:** Illustrate a few panels from a scene in one of the other stories. For tips, see Dylan Meconis's [Drawing Your Way into Bordertown](#).)

### Post-Reading Activities

- Pick one of the discussion questions and instead of considering the answer, think of it as a jumping off point for a story of your own. You can write the story or just write what the story would be.
- Write your own poem about what it might be like beyond the border in The Realm.
- Draw a Bordertown street scene—include your favorite characters and place.
- Do you like music? Write the lyrics of a song that might be sung in a Bordertown club. Music, too, if you can. (**Bonus:** Where would your song be performed? Choose a venue by looking at the Bordertown [nightlife](#)).