

**Title**

"To Live in the Borderlands"

**Genre (short fiction, poetry, drama, or novel)**

Poetry

**Author**

Gloria Anzaldúa

**Link(s) to work**

<https://www.best-poems.net/gloria-e-anzald-a/to-live-in-the-borderlands.html>

**Author Bio**

Gloria Anzaldúa (September 26, 1942 – May 15, 2004) is a Chicana Feminist scholar born in Texas near the border between the U.S. and Mexico. Her experiences living along the South Texas border informed her scholarship and much of her writing. She graduated from the University of Texas system for both her BA and MA degrees. Her poems, essays and scholarship explore culture as perceived from and within the borderlands in society and the borderlands inherent in Chicana identity. Among her early publications was *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings By Radical Women of Color* co-edited with Cherriè Moraga. Anzaldúa died in 2004, but her legacy lives on in critical feminist scholarship, critical race theory and Chicana/Chicana Feminist studies.

**Work Overview**

"To Live in the Borderlands" exemplifies Anzaldúa's critical stance as a poet, scholar, activist, and feminist. This poem excerpted from the larger *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. In *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* she utilizes both English and Spanish, verbally illustrating life in the between for those of Mexican descent.

**Publication Information**

Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands: The New Mestiza = La Frontera*. San Francisco: Spinsters/Aunt Lute, 1987. Print.

**Contextual Information**

Of significant contextual importance to this poem and Anzaldúa's work, is the concept she coined called *mestizaje*. In the poem, she says, "eres mestiza" or "you are mestiza." To be on the borderlands means you are mixed race and live beyond the binaries associated with race, culture, borders and language. The borderland serves as both a physical border between the

US and Mexico, but also represents the borderlands of the self. In her work, Anzaldua encourages people to think beyond the binaries and to acknowledge the intersecting, and at times, conflicted identities we carry.

### 5-10 Question Reading Comprehension Quiz

1. What, according to this poem, does it mean to live in the Borderlands?
2. In the poem, there are several lines that indicate a life on the Borderland. Name one. Ex. "You are at home, a stranger"
3. Describe what type of poem this is. (Is it a sonnet, free verse, limerick, etc.)
4. What poetic devices does Anzaldua use in the poem? What is the tone?
5. How might mixing Spanish and English in this poem support the overall goals and themes of the poem?

### Sample assignment(s)/activities

"To Live in the Borderlands" is a poem about identity and the ways our identities are complex and, at times, conflicting. Begin this assignment with a free writing exercise answering the following:

- Who am I? Consider both your personal and family history. Along with your language, cultural background, and affinity groups you belong to.
- How do those "who am I" things intersect in your life to construct the person that you are and want to be?

After free writing. Consider what we've learned about the poetic elements of poetry. How can you construct the self in poetic form? Consider how Anzaldua blended English and Spanish to support her poem's themes. Additionally, look closely at her use of poetic devices like metaphor and personification.

### Connection to (new) course objectives

Course Objectives	
1	Examine short stories that are diverse in terms of subgenre, culture, time period, place and conditions of publication, and/or authorship
2	Practice close reading in order to formulate interpretations that are grounded in evidence from primary texts
3	Apply terminology and practices associated with literary analysis
4	Interpret short fiction in relation to social, cultural, and historical contexts
5	Communicate how the material conditions of publication, reception, and dissemination affect short fiction

6	Examine how short fiction reflects and challenges the literary conventions within which they are produced
7	Analyze short fiction for its artistic complexity, unique formal elements, depth, and nuance

**Suggested tags (e.g. Short fiction, gothic, early American)**

- Poetry
- Latinx/Hispanic/Chicana poetry
- Feminist poetry

**Applicable literary terms and definitions**

- Personification
- Metaphor
- Free verse poetry

**Additional links/resources**

Gloria Anzaldua-Wikipedia-[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gloria\\_E.\\_Anzald%C3%BAa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gloria_E._Anzald%C3%BAa)

Gloria Anzaldua-Poetry Foundation-<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/gloria-e-anzaldua>