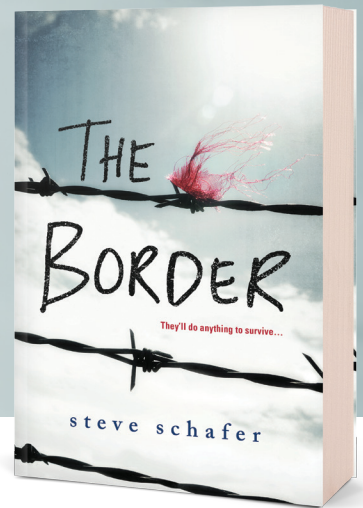


THE BORDER

Discussion Guide

steve schaffer



ONE MOMENT CHANGED THEIR LIVES FOREVER.

A band plays, glasses clink, and four teens sneak into the Mexican desert, the hum of celebration receding behind them.

Crack. Crack. Crack.

Not fireworks—gunshots. The music stops. And Pato, Arbo, Marcos, and Gladys are powerless as the lives they once knew are taken from them.

Then they are seen by the gunmen. They run. Except they have nowhere to go. The narcos responsible for their families' murders have put out a reward for the teens' capture. Staying in Mexico is certain death, but attempting to cross the border through an unforgiving desert may be as deadly as the secrets they are trying to escape...



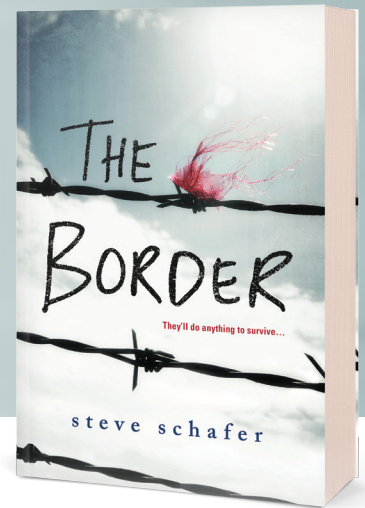
About the Author

Steve Schafer has spent years working, volunteering, and traveling across Latin America. He now works as a marketing consultant to Fortune 500 companies. He lives in Blue Bell, Pennsylvania. This is his first novel.

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1. Had you been in these teens' position, what would you have done? Would you have come to the U.S.? In the same way? What might you have done differently?
2. Would you have been able to survive this journey? What about you would most allow you to persevere?
3. If you were to make this journey, which of the characters would you most want to have with you? Which would you least want?
4. Marcos is a character who both attracts and repels. What seems most honorable about him? What complicates our ability to see him in a strictly positive light? To what degree are you able to sympathize with him, and what about him undermines your sympathy?
5. Pato and Gladys bond quickly in difficult circumstances. What roles do they fill for each other? What does each have to offer the other? Had they been brought together by a different, less dire situation, would they have still found the same connection with each other?
6. Imagine you were driving through the Sonoran desert and found the teens. What would you do?
7. How does the ending of this story differ from your expectations?
8. Not all of the characters arrive at their final destination. How do you feel about the decisions they make once they do? How does their journey impact each of their decisions? What does this say about their growth?
9. Were you able to feel hope for the characters at the end of this story? In five years, what do you imagine each of their lives to be like?
10. There is currently significant debate in the U.S. about immigration. Did this story challenge the way you think about immigrants (Latino or other) you see in your everyday life? In what way? Looking at current policies, what do you agree with, and what should be done differently?
11. Are Pato, Arbo, Gladys, and Marcos immigrants or refugees? What is the difference? What impact, if any, does this distinction have on the conversation related to their journey?