

# [The idea of traversing boundaries and borders in ancient literature](https://assignbuster.com/the-idea-of-traversing-boundaries-and-borders-in-ancient-literature/)

[](https://assignbuster.com/)[Literature](https://assignbuster.com/essay-subjects/literature/), [Poem](https://assignbuster.com/essay-subjects/literature/poem/)

Despite the idea that literary works stem across a multiplicity of genres and were composed in different time periods, they always seem to have one underlying core: a similar thematic idea or overarching moral of the story. One theme that seems to be the underlying common denominator throughout the assigned texts has been crossing literal and figurative borders and boundaries. In various ancient texts, authors have craftly incorporated the idea of characters traversing boundaries, be it either prominent physical, geographic boundaries or subtleemotional and social boundaries. When such individuals – deemed “ border crossers” or “ dwellers” – enter into a foreign or unchartered territory, it not only provides insight into thereactions and expectations of the two groups of individuals, it also provides a clear insight intothe relationship between distinct groups of people.

When discussing the topic of crossing borders, it is important to identify the specific wayin which authors depict the idea of crossing borders in written literature in addition to thepositive and negative implications of doing so and the possible dangers involved. The implications of border crossing can also teach individuals about the interactions and relationships between distinct cultures and unique groups of people. The idea of crossing borders does notonly stop at transcribed pieces of literature however. In fact, many examples of crossing bordersthat are demonstrated in ancient texts can also be applied to more contemporary circumstances.

One common way that authors depict their characters crossing borders is by traversing physical geographic borders. In Homer’s The Odyssey the central character Odysseus is on anongoing journey in which he encounters multiple groups of people living on different islands and The Odyssey thus has distinct experiences with each of them. The experiences and actions of Odysseus oneach of these journeys goes beyond the superficial meaning of the text and communicates thepossible experiences that any individual can encounter when traveling to different regions.

Odysseus’ stop-over in the land of the lotus eaters conveys that one of the dangers of bordercrossing stems from one’s high expectations of other societies. The inhospitable and inhumaneintentions of the lotus eaters represent a society in which is unwelcoming of strangers. Dissimilarly, Odysseus’ travels to the cave of Eileithyia demonstrates a new understanding ofwhat results from geographical border crossing. As Eileithyia is the goddess of childbirth, Homeris implying that the the action of border crossing is a means of “ childbirth”. In this context, theaction of crossing physical borders leads to the birth of new tolerances and new acceptions ofdifferent groups of people.

Additionally, the crossing of social borders and boundaries is representative of the moralsand ethics of a given society at a point in history. In the tale of 1001 Arabian Nights, Sinbad theSailor converses with Sinbad the Merchant about his fortunes and wealth that he hasaccumulated over his years of sailing. Though it may not be explicit, Sinbad the Sailor iscrossing social boundaries in two ways in this scenario. Sinbad is crossing one social border ashe is a lower class merchant by birth who is accumulating immense wealth as a result ofinternationally trading with other countries, which can technically allow him to situate himselfinto an upper class status. Furthermore, Sinbad crosses another social boundary by communicating with someone that is representative of a lower class than he is: Sinbad the Merchant. In crossing social boundaries in these two forms, Sinbad the Sailor provides thereaders with insight into two Arabian values. Sinbad is communicating the importance of trade in Arabian society as it not only acts as a means of cultural diffusion, but also as a means ofattaining social mobility. Sinbad also relays the insignificance of a social hierarchy since anyone, in spite of their social status, is able to attain wealth and fortune so long as they are determined todo so.

With regards to a more contemporary idea of crossing social and emotional borders, there have been instances in ancient literature in which females defied social norms and began toexpress their emotions and thoughts in the form of poetry. In 12th and 13th century Occitania, female poets known as Trobairitz began to compose poems, accompanied by compositions ofmusic. Prior to the Trobairitz, the main creators of poems and music were the Troubadours. Onefamous Trobairitz, known for her Contessa de Dia, was the Countess of Dia, who lived in the12th century. In the Contessa de Dia, the Trobairitz exposes all of her true emotions without anysuperficial coverings. By encompassing all of her emotions into this one poem, the countesscrossed the boundary of silence to having a voice and being heard. By crossing social boundariesand expropriating the role of the the Troubadours, the Trobairitz’ are allowing readers to crossinto the psyche of a woman’s mind. The crossing of this social boundary is one of the manymajor achievements in which women have been able to accomplish over the course of many centuries as it has allowed them to voice their opinions and beliefs, having been given the samerespect as a man would. This idea can also be seen in today’s modern society as women arebeginning to step out of their shells and step into less conventional societal positions in whichwere only assumed by men at one point in time.

All in all, the idea of crossing borders and boundaries has proved to be crucial when thinking about the the possibilities of cultural diffusion, societal integration, and equal societalopportunities. The crossing of a boundary, be it physical or mental, has proved to be essential insome circumstances for the growth and evolution of a region as a whole and in othercircumstances for the maturation and development of individuals.