

Borders: border and blackfoot culture essay

[Sociology](#), [Identity](#)



Having a strong connection with your culture is extremely important. Culture is like a home. It is somewhere you can be comfortable and express yourself.

Like the majority of us, our families influence our decisions and opinions. In Thomas Kings short story, “ Borders”, the protagonist is always searching for his cultural identity. His views and opinions on his culture are greatly influenced by his mothers Blackfoot pride and her connection with her culture. She influences the protagonist throughout the story in different settings, such as at the border and in Salt Lake City with Laetitia. The author uses the border setting as a representation of the protagonist as well. Like a border sitting between two countries, the protagonist lies between two cultures; his Blackfoot culture and the American culture. His mother’s actions at the border and the reaction from the public influenced the protagonist’s opinion of his Blackfoot heritage. As they pull up to the border station, a guard asks the protagonist’s mother for her citizenship, she responds “ Blackfoot”.

To this, the guard insists “ you have to be American or Canadian” (King 505). She had the decision to give up on her beliefs and say she was Canadian or stick with her opinion and insist that she was a Blackfoot. The protagonist states that “ it would have been easier if my mother had just said “ Canadian” and been done with it” (503). Even though he does not yet have a very strong relationship with his culture, the actions of his mother made him begin to look differently at being a Blackfoot. She never denied her heritage. Her courage and determination left a monumental impact on her son and changed how he viewed this side of his culture.

The huge reaction from the media and the public also influenced the protagonist's opinion on his Blackfoot culture. "The television vans began to arrive, and guys in suits and women in dresses came trotting over to us" (507). The attention from the media made the protagonist start to think that maybe being Blackfoot was not such a bad thing after all, maybe it could be something he is proud of.

The protagonist's mother tries to encourage her son to embrace his Blackfoot culture. He is mesmerized by American culture and for most of the story, that is his only interest. When he first visits Salt Lake City, he is very excited, however he realizes that not even the American attractions can compare with the ones he has at home. "Laetitia took us everywhere. We went to a fancy ski resort. We went to the temple. We got to go shopping in a couple of large malls, but they weren't as large as the one in Edmonton, and Mom said so." (508).

The protagonist begins to feel like the American experience for which he was searching really isn't as impressive as he thought. The author conveys this clearly in his writing. The protagonist stops explaining his American experiences with grander and begins to simply state facts.

An example of this is when Laetitia takes the family out to a restaurant, he says "I had cherry. Mom had chocolate" (508). This shows his evident lack of interest in the American culture that he once was infatuated with. With her comments, the mother tries to show the protagonist that just because it is American, does not mean that it is unique and special. The protagonist

begins to realize this and says that “ I wasn’t at all sad when my mother said we should be heading back home” (508). The author uses the border not only as a setting but also as a representation of the protagonist.

Like a border sitting between two countries, the protagonist is between two cultures; his Blackfoot culture and the American culture. The protagonist is American and Canadian Blackfoot. However with his sister moving to Salt Lake City, he feels confused about his cultural identity. The actions of his mother and her determination to stick up for and protect her Blackfoot culture helped him pick which side of the “ cultural border” he was on.

Our families will always have great influence over our decisions and how we see the world and ourselves. This is evident in Thomas Kings short story “ Borders”. The protagonist sees his mother never gave up her Blackfoot pride in two different situations; at the border and in America. His mother withstands the temptations of American life as well as the pressures at the border. This greatly influences the protagonist’s views and opinions on his Blackfoot culture.