

Discussion Questions for *Border Songs* by Jim Lynch

(Some questions taken from <http://www.randomhouse.com>)

1. Did you like the book? Why or why not?
2. Did you find the characters believable? Which of the characters did you like the most? Which did you dislike?
3. Did you find the dialog in the story realistic?
4. What did you think of the plot line development? How credible did the author make the plot? Did the plot take turns you did not expect, or did you find it predictable?
5. Why does Wayne Rousseau try to replicate already-existing inventions? What is the significance of his choices – the light bulb, *The Great Gatsby*?
6. Why are Wayne and Norm so antagonistic toward each other?
7. At several points in the novel, characters describe Brandon as seeing things differently, or seeing things that others don't see. Why do you think that is? How does it help him and hurt him?
8. Why does Madeline fall in with Toby? Why does she do what he asks? Why does she suddenly decide to stop?
9. On page 79, Lynch writes, "Now [Norm] felt as if he'd sent his son to the front lines of a war he hadn't realized was going on in his own neighborhood." How does Norm deal with this guilt? How does the notion of a war affect the way the novel's characters behave?
10. How does Brandon's relationship with the natural world (birds, cows, foliage, and so) on affect his abilities as a Border Patrol officer?
11. Several Canadian characters compare the United States' policy on marijuana to Prohibition. Are they right? How does this relate to the vast number of previously law-abiding Americans who are willing to work with smugglers?
12. Why is Norm building a boat, of all things?
13. What does Pearl's death signify? Is it a turning point for Norm?
14. "Astronauts' footprints stay on the moon forever," Brandon whispers to Madeline on page 250, "because there's no wind to blow them away." What is he trying to say? How do you imagine Madeline reacts?
15. What purpose does the character of Sophie serve in the novel? What did you think she was up to?
16. On page 290, the art expert says of Brandon's work, "His focus appears to be the instant before collapse – or surrender." What does this mean, in terms of Brandon's art and his life?
17. Has anyone had any experiences that relate to places or experiences in the book?
18. Any comments about the way the book ended?
19. Are there questions you would like to ask?