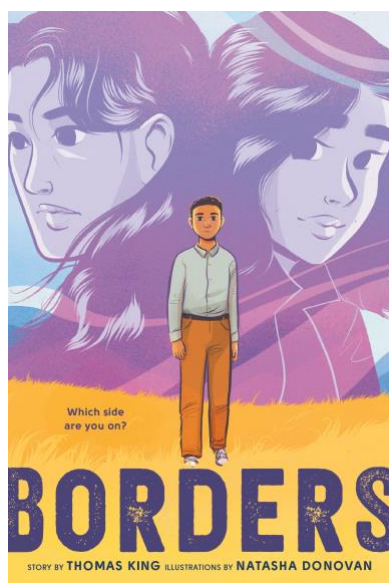


Review: Borders

by Thomas King and Natasha Donovan. Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, January 2021.
192 p. ill. ISBN 9780316593052 (pbk), \$12.99.

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Borders is an adaptation of a short story of the same title published in 1993 by the renowned indigenous scholar and writer Thomas King, and illustrated by Natasha Donovan, best known for the *Surviving the City* series. The narrative follows a boy and his mother as they attempt to drive from their home on the Blackfoot Confederacy to Salt Lake City to visit the boy's sister. Blackfoot homelands span parts of southern Alberta and Saskatchewan, as well as northern Montana.

This seemingly simple journey quickly becomes complicated when they are stopped at the border crossing. They identify as Blackfoot, not Canadian or American, but this places them in a Kafkaesque interstice which neither allows them entry to the United States, nor the ability to return to their home beyond the Canadian border. This restriction is confusing and historically arbitrary, and mirrors another border: the physical and emotional separation between the boy's sister and their mother, which unfolds as the tale of justice, heritage, conflict and reconciliation progresses.

The rich, accessible storytelling often relies on visual content to convey nuance and complexity. The text is somewhat spare throughout, with key phrases delivering amplified impact as parallel threads converge with economy and grace. Donovan excels at conveying the contemplative tone through atmospheric illustrations while her expert layout design urges the reader ever forward. Despite addressing sophisticated subject matter, this engaging book is suitable for older children and adults. It would fit nicely in public and academic libraries with graphic novel collections, and will especially appeal to those with an indigenous studies focus.