

1. Cantú’s writing has been described as “prose that is at times vividly poetic and at others brutally barebones.” How would you describe his unique writing style? How did that affect your reading of the book? Did the division of the book into sections enhance the readability?
2. With all the media influences that surround us daily, do you look for books about current issues that will deliver a different perspective to you? Did this book do that? What new insights did you gain from reading this book?
3. Cantú says “my aim is to describe the Border Patrol from within, not justify it somehow.” He says he joined the Border Patrol at age 23 and “expected to do the job for a few years to gain on-the-ground experiences.” How would you describe the effects that it had on him after 4 years?
4. Cantú’s mother is a recurrent figure in the book. What role does she play in the narrative? How does her own life experience shape her perspective?
5. In acknowledging criticism on his book, Cantú says “During my years as a BP agent, I was complicit in the perpetuation of institutional violence and flawed, deadly policy. My book is about acknowledging that, it’s about thinking through the ways we normalize violence and dehumanize migrants as individuals.” What do you think about this perspective?
6. Near the end of the book, José tells Cantú that he will keep trying. “His reasoning is not a matter of law, or even justice. It is about something far bigger. I don’t want to cause harm. But I have to break the law, Jose explains. It is a situation of emotion, of love.” It is also why other migrants will keep coming, Cantú seems to suggest, whatever the obstacles placed in their way. What do you think about this?
7. “The only way to fathom the troubled US-Mexico border...is to set aside the numbers, the statistics, the half a trillion dollars of bilateral trade, and most of all, the furor about a “wall” ... and go to the border, look at the faces of its people and hear their stories.” (New York Times Book Review) How well did Cantú describe his experiences and the “faces and stories of its people, including the Border Patrol?
8. People migrate to new countries for economic, social, political or environmental reasons. Why did your family migrate to the United States? If they came before 1917 (when a literacy test was required for those over 16), would they have been able to pass a literacy test ? Would they be able to become US citizens today?

Sources: <https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/555764/the-line-becomes-a-river-by-francisco-Cantú/9780735217737/readers-guide/>,
<https://fortbend-tx.aauw.net/files/2018/08/Discussion-Questions-for-The-Line-Becomes-a-River.pdf>