

TERRITORY

by Lawrence Levine

Teacher Material

1. About the play.....	2
2. About the author	2
3. Characters.....	2
4. Territory – a social construct.....	4
5. Possible assignments	5
6. Movement on stage and actions to claim territory.....	7
7. Vocabulary	9

1. About the play

Territory is a three-character play set in a New York loft apartment. Maya and her partner Ben have just returned from a party when their old friend James, Ben's former flat mate, turns up and intends to spend the rest of the night with them. At first their reunion seems to be a nice get-together of old friends eager to exchange memories. Gradually, however, the awkward relationship between the three is revealed and more and more details of their past and present are disclosed that shock and irritate both Maya and Ben. Maya and Ben may be living together, but there also seems to be mutual sexual attraction between Maya and James, and a close bond if not dependency between Ben and James, whose love for his former flat mate is unrequited. Ultimately, they all return to their lonely lives where they can more easily keep up their fake harmony.

2. About the author

Lawrence Levine was born in New Jersey in 1976. He lives and works as a playwright, director, and filmmaker in New York City, where his well-received one-act plays *Monkey Love* and *Fear and Friday Night* were produced by Paradise Theatre Company. His first full-length play, *Territory*, about a tortured love triangle, was produced Off-Broadway by the Bottle Factory Theatre Company. *Territory's* run was repeatedly extended after the production received rave reviews from *The New York Times*, *The New Yorker*, *Backstage*, *The New York Post* and several other publications. Levine is currently in the final stages of shooting a feature film version of *Territory* that will be completed in late March.

3. Characters

BEN

Ben works as landlord for his father's business, but his true compassion lies in arts, intellectual movies and books on philosophy. He seems to have said goodbye to his excessive life as a student a long time ago and feels threatened by James's sudden appearance. In an attempt to rescue his fairly conventional life and relationship, he tries to deny that a past with James and another girl and their threesome ever existed. Ultimately, he is even willing to give up Maya, as he is too tired, weak and

uninterested in fighting for a relationship that seems to bore him as much as his entire life.

MAYA

Maya has been together with Ben for a long time. They have never married as Maya claims that there is no point in doing so. She seems to bear her role as the caring female calmly, with only occasional outbreaks of discontent when she either wants to mark her territory in the loft or win the odd argument over minor issues. Later in the play, however, the audience will discover how dissatisfied Maya has been all along. At one stage, she cannot hide her true emotions any more. When her constant urge to keep up a certain level of harmony suddenly vanishes, we no longer see her only as a tired and discontent human being, but also as a sensual and jealous albeit utterly neglected woman.

JAMES

James, a bachelor and unemployed musician who seems to be unable to have a relationship that lasts longer than two months, is Ben's former flat-mate. In an attempt to escape his lonely life and find comfort in his old friend and love Ben, he shows up at Maya and Ben's apartment at night and tries to re-enter his old friend's life. While stating that part of the furniture of their former accommodation belonged to him, he is forced to find out that the only territory, the only thing that is truly his, is a past which his unrequited love Ben is trying to deny and forget. By leaving the apartment, in the end James returns to his solitary life.

4. Territory – a social construct

When you think of our world in connection with the notion of territory, nation states would immediately cross your mind. It is important to note, however, that the borders and boundaries that usually define territory do not exist as absolutes. Of course you can put up signposts, walls and fences but these might not mean much to some human beings, might not exist in everyone's reality.

Yet, we find it so important to define certain spaces as ours, within the world, within Europe, within Austria (the boundaries of countries are essentially an extension of one's personal space), within Vienna, within our flats, within a room that we share with someone else. And similar to animals, we tend to mark these areas that we have elected as ours so that nobody ventures to intrude, or if somebody dares to do so, that he/she at least knows that a boundary has been crossed, that a rule has been broken.

Of course, our means of marking territory differ from the ones animals would use, but the ultimate objective is the same: we want to secure our personal space.

In order to protect this personal space we constantly exhibit territorial behavior:

- choosing the size of the territory
- marking a boundary area
- displaying markings (e.g. name plate on the door)
 - o decorating our space (e.g. furniture)
 - o arranging personal belongings (e.g. personal letters, photographs)
- entering and moving in space (e.g. self-assured vs. shy depending on whether a space is one's own or somebody else's territory)
- displaying certain reactions when strangers enter our space
- telling people about our personal space
- etc.

Any threat to our personal space would surely result in an action of self-defense, which, of course, can take different shapes: fighting, looking for a compromise, resigning, ... Whenever personal space is invaded, conflicts may emerge. No matter how aware we are of the fact that the concept of territory does not exist in everybody's reality, its sociological and psychological dimensions must not be underestimated.

5. Possible assignments

Extract 1 (p 37)

JAMES pulls another record from the crate.

JAMES Oh my God. Celebrity Murders! Jesus Christ. I totally forgot about this band. We have to put this on.

JAMES hustles over to the stereo.

BEN It's late. The neighbors—

JAMES Come on. It'll be just like old times.

BEN "Just Like Old Times." You sound like a commercial.

JAMES At least, I don't look like I'm in a commercial.

BEN That's funny.

JAMES It's funny because it's true. Come on, let's listen to some fucking hardcore Ben. It'll be good for your moribund spirit. Come on.

BEN No. James really –

MAYA God, let him put it on already.

JAMES goes to the record player and puts the record on. The sound of loud dissonant guitars, clanging drums, and garbled indecipherable vocals fills the room. JAMES grabs his mask and puts it on. He starts dancing wildly around the room. He goes over to BEN and tries to get BEN to dance with him. JAMES fails to do so, then goes to the kitchen and dances with MAYA. Eventually, James dances his way back to BEN.

JAMES Come on, man.

JAMES grabs BEN's arms and tries to pull him into the center of the room. BEN resists, finally breaking away. He goes over to the record player and turns it off.

BEN Okay. That's enough.

Questions:

What is the relationship between James and Ben like at this moment? Which clues are there in the text that tell us so?

Do we know whose side Maya is on? How can we tell? Or why can we not tell?

Why might James be so eager to put on the record?

Why does Ben ridicule James's comment of the "old times"?

What does James's comment "It's funny because it's true" tell us about his attitude towards life?

Have you ever been in a situation where you were at home and somebody else wanted to do something you didn't approve of? How did you react? What did you do?

Extract 2 (p 45)

- MAYA (*to James*) You want some salad?
- JAMES I don't want any salad. I've lost my appetite. I want my mask.
(*pause*)
He stole something from me and I want it back.
- MAYA Fine. Okay. Look, if I give you the mask back, do you promise not to put it on the table?
- BEN *You* don't have the mask.
- MAYA Ben –
- JAMES (*to Maya*) Well, I guess that depends.
- MAYA Depends? On what?
- JAMES On whose table it is and if we can find a suitable place to put it.
- MAYA What difference does it make whose table it is?
- JAMES All the difference. It makes all the difference.

Questions:

What do James's behavior and Maya's reaction remind you of?

If James doesn't really mean only his mask when he says that Ben stole something from him, what else could he mean?

What does Ben actually tell Maya when he says that she does not have the mask?

What might Maya have wanted to say to Ben when she gets interrupted by James?

Why does James interrupt Maya?

Does James really want the situation with the mask to be resolved, yes or no? How can you tell?

General assignments (after reading the play/seeing the performance):

-) On the next day Maya writes a letter to a friend, telling her about the previous night and speculating about Ben's past. She might also tell her friend of her true feelings and her relationship with Ben.
-) A couple of weeks later James and Ben meet in a café to talk things over again. How will they part? Write down their dialogue.
-) How could the play go on? Write down a scene that could take place after Levine's play ends. Act out the scene in class.

6. Movement on stage and actions to claim territory

A play with the title *Territory*, in which the characters try to claim and share certain areas (the past, the partner, the memories, the furniture, ...) can certainly also be analyzed in terms of the actual geographic territory on stage. Thus, movement and how the characters/actors try to mark their territory become significant and can be the object of careful observation.

How do the characters mark and claim their territory?

How do their approaches differ?

The following points may help you to analyze the movement on stage more thoroughly, which might ultimately result in a better understanding of the content of the play and the characters as such.

Marking the territory by

moving on stage:

Why does a particular character stand in a certain place and for how long?

Why do other characters remain quietly where they are?

Does every character have the same right to linger in certain spots or explore certain areas?

Why does one character walk around and another one sits?

displaying certain actions:

Why does James put his mask onto the table again and again and when?

Why is Ben so much bothered by that?

claiming certain rights and ownerships:

Why is Maya angry when Ben wants to go to the bathroom?

Why is it such a big deal to have a drag from your partner's cigarette?

Who has bought the table and who owns it now?

Who is the true owner of Ben's business? And is it a coincidence that Ben, as a landlord, happens to evict people from time to time?

displaying certain

body language

facial expressions

gestures

creating and maintaining personal space:

Does each character have a personal space and how is it defined?

How does each character react when his/her personal space is invaded?

using props:

How are objects (props) used to define territory? (think of the mask, the table, the lamp, the food Maya prepares, ...)

uttering whose territory it is:

(p. 44)

James: ...There you go again. Calling things yours that aren't.

leaving things behind:

Does James leave anything behind?

Have Maya and Ben left anything behind in their relationship?

Finally, think about yourself: Do you have a personal space, a personal territory at home? Do you mark it and why and how? What about the other members of your family?

7. Vocabulary

loft	Dachbodenwohnung
stove	Ofen
silverware	Besteck, Tafelsilber
crate	Kiste
to curse	fluchen
to giggle	kichern
prompt	unverzüglich, prompt
high-heeled shoes	Stöckelschuhe
closet	Kasten
to rummage around	durchstöbern
to peek	spähen
to resume	fortsetzen
to grab	schnappen, ergreifen
to get one's panties in a bunch	ugs. sich aufregen
to quit	aufgeben, beenden
dumb-ass	Blödmann
drag	Zug (Zigarette)
to snatch away	entreißen, wegschnappen
to mock	trotzen, lächerlich machen
grumpy	mürrisch
to take a leak	urinieren, austreten
to sense	erspüren
to flop	plumpsen
impressive	beeindruckend
insufferable	unerträglich
wrapped-up	eingewickelt
Foucault, Jean Bernard Léon	Französischer Physiker (1819-86)
grim-reaper	Sensenmann
to resist	widerstehen
poop	hier: ugs. kleines Scheisserchen
resistant	widerstehend, beständig
to slump	fallen, plumpsen
gentle	sanft

to ease up	nachlassen
to moan	stöhnen
pleasure	Genuss, Wohlgefallen
to straddle	spreizen, überspannen
to spring sth. on sb.	jmdn. etw. aufdrängen, jmdn. mit etw. überraschen
hot toddies	heißes Wintergetränk, ähnlich Glühwein oder Punsch
peephole	Türspion, Guckloch
to struggle	ringen
tattered	zerlumpt
to scare	erschrecken
random	wahllos, willkürlich
to embrace	umarmen
to edge	sich durchdrängen, sich hinschieben
soaking wet	pitschnass
to pummel	schlagen
left-overs	Essensreste
carbohydrates	Kohlenhydrate
considerate	aufmerksam
to get hitched	ugs. heiraten
to hit the wall	am Ende sein/ankommen
domesticity	Häuslichkeit
to pop one out	ugs. ein Kind zur Welt bringen
Lake George	Erholungsgebiet in Colorado (auch in anderen Staaten)
nippy	beißend
barely	kaum
yard sale	Garagenverkauf
alpaca	Alpaka (südamerikanische Kamelart)
suede boots	Wildlederstiefel
frill	Rüsche
humidifier	Luftbefeuchter
to straighten up	in Ordnung bringen
to sneak up	heranschleichen
to scurry	huschen, trippeln
homey	gemütlich, heimelig

to alter	ändern, anders werden
gradual	allmählich
obvious	offensichtlich
perceptive	scharfsinnig
sharp as a tack	hier: scharfsinnig wie ein Adler
ferocious	grausam, wild
possessiveness	Besitzgier
tedium	Eintönigkeit
pod	Schale, Hülse
to lumber	tapsen
threshold	Türschwelle
love birds	Turteltauben
frank	aufrichtig
Cut it out!	Hör auf!
executive	Führungskraft
cardboard box	Pappkarton
armoire	Kleiderschrank
juices	hier: Körperflüssigkeiten
crazed	verrückt
rickety	klapprig, wackelig
hypodermic needle	Injektionsnadel
cutting board	Schneidbrett
to chop	zerhacken
Aspen	nobler Urlaubsort in Colorado
to exaggerate	übertreiben
mug	Häferl
nutmeg	Muskat
modest	bescheiden
real estate	Grundbesitz, Immobilien
racket	Geschäft, Deal
to evict	hinauswerfen, ausweisen
tenant	Mieter, Pächter
eventual	letztendlich
to take sb. to court	jmdn. verklagen

Vogue	Modemagazin, Frauenmagazin
freelance	freiberuflich
liberating	befreiend
hip	angesagt, modern
sedentary	sesshaft, passiv
to smirk	grinsen, süffisant lächeln
to be flustered	nervös sein
chatchka	jidd. Schnickschnack
eye-patch	Augenklappe
crooked	gekrümmt
charm	Charme, Liebreiz
to liven sth. up	etw. beleben
smooth	fein, mild
to flip through	durchgehen, durchstöbern
barrel of monkeys/laughs	jede Menge Spaß
to be a riot	ein Riesenspaß sein
obscure	dunkel, düster
prick	Depp
snobby	versnobt
buck	ugs. Dollar
to bang	dröhnen
demented	verrückt
to rant	toben, wild daherreden
gig	Gig, Auftritt
tits	ugs. die Brüste
bestiality	Rohheit
barrage	Bombardement
brawl	Rauferei, Schlägerei
to disguise	sich verkleiden
big-shot	großes/hohes Tier
commercial	Werbespot
moribund	sterbend, totgeweiht
garbled	entstellt
indecipherable	nicht entzifferbar

to stomp	stampfen
to confide in sb.	sich jmdn. anvertrauen
to disclose	mitteilen, offenlegen
callous	gefühllos
vague	unklar, undeutlich
famished	ausgehungert
filthy	dreckig, schmutzig
corny	schmalzig, kitschig
to pour	eingießen
to calm down	sich beruhigen
to be on edge	genervt sein
flea market	Flohmarkt
to jar sb.'s memory	jmdm. das Gedächtnis auffrischen
blur	Unschärfe, Unklarheit
to shoot drugs	einspritzen
to pop out	ugs. auftauchen
void	Leere
to simmer down	sich beruhigen
gutter	Gosse
to squat	hier: Häuser besetzen
to hustle	sich prostituieren
stain	Fleck
lapel	Jackenaufschlag
fly	Hosenschlitz
pellucid	durchsichtig
recollection	Erinnerung
to rave	schwärmen
pale	blass
faded	verblasst
salvation army	Heilsarmee
cuff	Ärmelaufschlag
frayed	ausgefranst
to bait	ködern, locken
to be wound up	verbissen sein

voracious	gierig
to be devoted to sb.	jmdn. hingebungsvoll lieben
thyme	Thymian
to pout	schmollen
coy	schamhaft, schüchtern
fold	Falte
subtle	fein, zart, subtil
brooding	brütend, grüblerisch
to settle down	niederlassen, sesshaft werden
to rank	einen Rang einnehmen
to cheat on sb.	jmdn. betrügen
to betray	betrügen
strumpet	Dirne, Hure
to harp on	auf etw. herumreiten
dick	ugs. Penis, Schwanz
to hover	schweben
to lurk	lauern
Marx, Karl	Deutscher Politiker und Denker (1818-83), schrieb <i>Das kommunistische Manifest</i> und legte so die Basis für Sozialismus und Kommunismus.
Genet, Jean	Französischer Roman- und Theaterautor (1910-86), Vertreter des absurden Theaters
Derrida, Jacques	Französischer Philosoph und Sprachwissenschaftler (1930-), Vertreter des Dekonstruktivismus
to mooch	schnorren
Truffaut, Francois	Französischer Regisseur und Filmkritiker (1932-84)
Renoir, Jean	Französischer Filmemacher (1894-1979)
Ozu, Yasujiro	Japanischer Regisseur und Filmemacher (1903-63)
infinite	unbegrenzt
to seduce	verführen
roll	Düse
to occur	auftreten
to reassure	beschwichtigen
to suck	ugs. schlecht sein, einen Haken haben
awkward	unbehaglich, komisch