

# STUDY GUIDE



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## THE TERRITORIES (LOS TERRITORIOS)

a Film by IVÁN GRANOVSKY  
ARGENTINA, BRAZIL / 2017 / 93 MIN  
In Spanish, English, Arabic, and Basque with English subtitles

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## BEFORE WATCHING THE FILM:

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

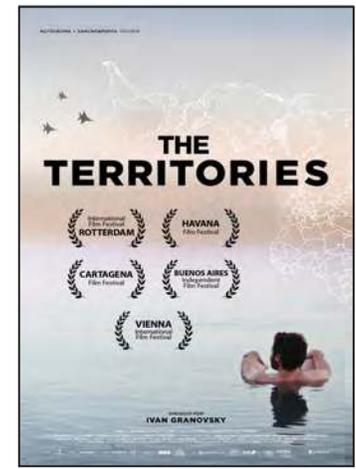
Before watching a foreign film, it is important to know the current events and history of the country where that film comes from. Research the history of journalism and censorship and think about the profound impact journalism has in democracy.

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### INTRODUCING THE FILM

A **film synopsis** is a piece of text designed to summarize the film's narrative, genre, style, and key participants in a way that appeals to a wide audience. The synopsis is part of the film marketing process and tends to follow a traditional format. Read this official synopsis for *The Territories*:

The three previous times that director and protagonist Iván Granovsky attempted to make a film, he relates with a sense of self-mockery, turned into fiascos. So he decided to follow in the footsteps of his father, a famous journalist with a love of geopolitical relations. However, making a documentary about the scenes of world conflict is no easy task, it turns out. From Greece to Brazil, from the Basque Country to Jerusalem, Granovsky is always too late, too early or in the wrong place. He asks clumsy questions, gets vague answers, and in the meantime receives e-mails from his mother telling him to repay his credit card debts to her. *The Territories* is a film you can read like a newspaper, according to Granovsky. It is also a portrait of a thirty-something trying to find his way in a world full of opportunities, but with no idea of where to start.



- ❑ From the film synopsis, can you imagine the genre and tone of the film? From this same text, try to identify the main elements from the documentary
- ❑ How do the trailer, poster, and still images encourage you to watch the film?
- ❑ Can you make any assumptions regarding what the film is about just from the marketing materials (i.e. trailer, poster, and still images)? Who do you think is the film's main character and where does he seem to be? Can you relate this information from the film synopsis?



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## AFTER WATCHING THE FILM:

### CINEMATIC ART/TECHNIQUES

- ❑ Why do you think Ivan, the protagonist and filmmaker, decided to open with shots of different flags? What purpose do the different flags have and how do they set up the film? What does the opening shot tell us about the relationship between Ivan and his father?
- ❑ What effect does the voice-over narration have on the viewer? Does it complement the images of different flags? How is it used to illustrate the film's interest in geopolitics?
- ❑ Think about the shots of news cameras and journalists -- what is their significance?
- ❑ What purpose does music have in the film? In what shots do you hear different kinds of music?
- ❑ How does the film walk a fine line between documentary and narrative film, that is, reality and fiction? Why do you think Iván does this? Do you think Ivan breaks the Fourth Wall, or is he merely blurring the line between reality and fiction?
- ❑ What function does text have in the film? Analyze the moments where we see text on screen and analyze the purpose. Does it add to the film's genre?
- ❑ What does Ivan's treatment of his translators, collaborators, and interviewees tell us about the film's plot and his character? What cinematic techniques does he use to achieve this purpose?

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### NARRATIVE

- ❑ Analyze the elements of **meta-narrative**<sup>1</sup> within the film.
- ❑ Why do you think Iván never finished his other films? What does that say about this project being the only one that Iván has finished? What does this say about his creative process? Consider how he uses self-deprecating humor to advance the film's plot.
- ❑ What connections can you draw between the different news stories and geopolitical conflicts Iván travels to? Pick any two (the Gaza strip, Israeli occupation of Palestine, political history of Argentina, the Basque Country) and analyze what they have in common as well as how Iván deals with them in his own manner.
- ❑ How is the film itself a reflection on filmmaking and the creative process in general?
- ❑ What does Ivan's creative process tell us about his character and background? In what ways is he privileged? What limitations does he face as a journalist?
- ❑ How would you characterize Iván's relationship to his father? Does Iván idolize his father, or is he a shadow of the great journalist his father once was?
- ❑ How would you characterize Ivan's relationship with his mother? Why do you think she's absent and what does that absence symbolize?

*(continued on next page)*



<sup>1</sup> Meta -narrative is a narrative account that experiments with or explores the idea of storytelling, often by drawing attention to its own artificiality.”

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## NARRATIVE *(continued)*

- Why do you think Iván chases war and the topic of battle so persistently? Do you think he aims for self-actualization? What is his drive to keep pushing?
- Why does Iván include outtakes and deleted scenes of journalistic accounts? How does the film analyze and break down what's "in between the lines"? Do you think these outtakes have journalistic value?
- Why do you think Iván includes the (often embarrassing) emails from his mother and father? What does it tell us about Iván's character and the way in which he travels from one place to another, without much thought for the actual geopolitical conflicts he's trying to report on?



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## THEMES

- How are the themes of war, political turmoil, and geopolitical crisis parallel with Iván's own sense of loss and longing? Analyze why the filmmaker might have chosen to include details about his personal life. Did you find this style informative or do you think it interrupts the pace of the movie?
- Do you think that this film itself is a piece of journalism? Or is it a meditation on the process of journalism? Explain your answer.
- What is the purpose of journalism in democratic societies? Compare the 'old school' journalism to the digital one. Think how there has been a shift and how this affects readers in their perception of reality.
- Research the recent history of "fake news." Read *The Washington Post's* guide to manipulated video. How has digital journalism enabled "fake news" to be published and proliferate?
- What is the role of nationality in the film? What is the role of language in the film? In what ways does it reflect the geopolitical conflicts Iván is trying to address?

