



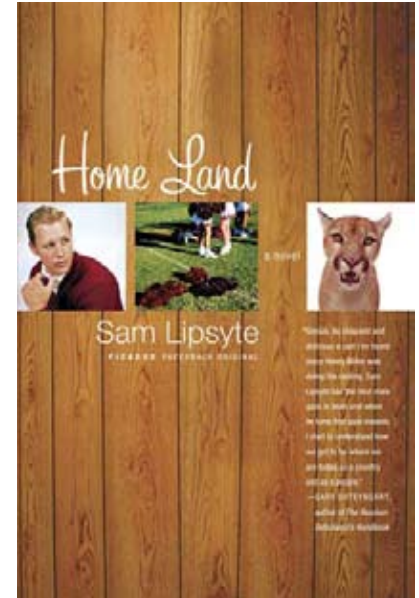
Reading Group Gold

Home Land

by Sam Lipsyte

“Writing this deep is rare enough—writing this deep and this hysterical pretty much didn’t exist until Lipsyte began pouring it onto the page.”

—Jerry Stahl, author of *I, Fatty*



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Reader’s Guide Synopsis

What if somebody finally wrote to his high school alumni bulletin and told...the truth! Here is an update from hell, and the most brilliant work to date, by the novelist whom Jeffrey Eugenides calls “original, devious, and very funny” and of whose first novel Chuck Palahniuk wrote, “I laughed out loud—and I never laugh out loud.”

The Eastern Valley High School Alumni newsletter, Catamount Notes, is bursting with tales of success: former students include a bankable politician and a famous baseball star, not to mention a major-label recording artist. Then there is the appalling, yet utterly lovable, Lewis Miner, class of ‘89—a.k.a Teabag—who did not pan out. This is his confession in all its bitter, lovelorn glory.

About The Author

Sam Lipsyte was born in 1968. He is the author of the story collection *Venus Drive* (named one of the top twenty-five books of its year by the *Voice Literary Supplement*) and the novel *The Subject Steve*. He lives in Astoria, Queens.

Discussion Questions

By Sam Lipsyte

1. Despite glowing reviews for his previous books, Sam Lipsyte found it enormously difficult to find a publisher for *Home Land* in America. The book, in fact, appeared in England a year ago. Is it possible that the novel’s themes of confusion and loss frightened publishers in an age that hungers for moral certainty? Or is it just that anxiety, spiritual fatigue and chronic failure don’t sell like they used to?



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2. One literary journal refused to publish a portion of this novel because the editors deemed it too dirty. They published a different section, but that's not the point. The point is did you find any part of this novel too dirty? Would you admit it if you had?
3. Samuel Richardson popularized the epistolary novel with *Pamela* and *Clarissa* in the 1740s. There were many famous examples of the form to follow, though I can't really think of them right now. I feel tired, shitty. Why is Lipsyte trying to revive a form better suited to illicit passions and court intrigues than to the pathetic yearnings of a man known as Teabag? What kind of an epistolary novel is it if nobody ever writes back?
4. "How did you get to be such a whackjob, Lewis?", Daddy Miner asks his son. Discuss the dynamic between fathers and sons in this novel. Does the dynamic change? Does the dynamic ever change?
5. Early in the novel, Lewis describes the birth of his mother's feminist consciousness. How would you characterize Lewis's feelings about the women in his life, especially Gwendolyn? Are you sure?
6. The author of *Home Land* undertook thirty years of research for this novel, though he didn't know that this was what he was doing at the time. Can you think of a good discussion question that might pertain to this fact?
7. Do you think it is possible that *Home Land* might be an allegory of some kind? Discuss.
8. Was that a satisfying discussion?
9. The unreliable narrator is an enduring device in literature. Why do you think Lipsyte failed to employ it? Or did he?
10. Do you live in New Jersey? Do you think the New Jersey depicted in this book has anything to do with the real, actual New Jersey, as it is depicted on popular television shows?
11. Could *Home Land*, in fact, be some sort of parable? Or maybe a fable?
12. The character The Kid, Teabag's imaginary friend, is based on an actual figure who roamed the American South and Midwest sometime after the Civil War. His real name was Polton Yendis and very little is known about him except that some historians credit him with coining the term "Mansauce." Do you masturbate?

Praise for *Home Land*

"Genius. As eloquent and delirious a rant I've heard since Henry Miller was doing the ranting. Sam Lipsyte has the best male gaze in town and when he turns that gaze inwards I start to understand how we got to be where we are today, as a country and as a people." —Gary Shteyngart, author of *The Russian Debutante's Handbook*



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“Lipsyte’s vision of our collective existence is so accurately skewed, there is no escaping the delirious— and beautifully disturbing—shock of recognition.” —Jerry Stahl, author of *I, Fatty*

“Lipsyte is playful and lewd, bleak and farcical, walking a fine line between near-glib humour and a genuine existential fear one could even call Beckettian....Sam Lipsyte can really write.” —Aida Edamariam, *The Guardian*

“Sam Lipsyte has got balls the size of watermelons. He’s ripped the piss out of his Yank countrymen so much that he gets published here in the UK first. He’s one wicked sod. You’ll love it.” —*Lads*