

The Boy in the Striped Pajamas

Introduction

Perhaps the most important theme of the novel is that secrecy leads to ignorance, and ignorance is dangerous. Ignorance of what? Of other people's humanity and feelings and of the world (naivety). Ignorance of other people's feelings leads to cruelty, while naivety leads to dangerous behaviors. Bruno is kept ignorant by his parents and even by the servants he lives with, and this ignorance is not cute or endearing innocence; in fact, it results in his destruction.

Why is secrecy so important in his family? Think about the father's job and his role as an employee of Hitler and an employer of poor and fearful servants – servants who seem to have more humanity than he does. Discuss.

How is the lesson of *The Boy in Striped Pajamas* relevant to our own time? Do you understand the world you are living in? Do you know what's happening behind all the fences, walls, and words of your world? What is happening in our factories, military bases, financial headquarters, political backrooms, foreign mines, native people's reservations, and so on?

In many ways, our children and students are being kept ignorant about the real world and being similarly lead to their destruction – not in a concentration camp but in a world on the brink of climate catastrophe, nuclear war, economic disaster, and multiple disease pandemics.

First Writing Task

Explore the ideas expressed in the Introduction.

Practice for Chapters One to Five

1. Why is Maria packing Bruno's things? (page 3)
2. Why must Bruno's father move away to do his job? (page 4)
3. What matters most to Bruno in Berlin? (page 9)
4. What did Bruno hope to see outside his bedroom window? (page 20)
5. Why do you think Bruno always tries to be honest with himself? (page 21)
6. Who first called the new home 'Out-With' and why did they do that? (page 24)
7. How could the house serve as a symbol for Bruno's family? Why is it important to not pass judgments based on appearances?(page 26)
8. Why is there no greenery in the distance after the fence? How could this be symbolic? (page 32)
9. In chapter four, Bruno states his age. How else do you know Bruno is young?

10. What is the tone of chapter four? What occurs in the chapter to set the tone? (page 38)
11. Why does Mother feel they should never have let the Fury come to dinner? (page 40)
12. Why was Mother so startled by Maria's sudden appearance? (page 40)
13. While Bruno is at the train station, he notices two trains separated by a platform. What is the author's purpose for including this description? How does Bruno feel about the trains? (page 41)
14. How does Father's office compare with the rest of the house? (page 45)
15. What is Bruno's relationship like with his Father? (page 46)
16. According to Bruno's reasoning, why was his father assigned to work at Out-With? (page 50)
17. How does Father explain the people in the huts in the distance to Bruno? (page 53)

Chapters Six to Ten

1. How does Maria respond to Bruno's question about living at the new house? (page 58)
2. Why does Maria defend Father? (page 60)
3. Why was Bruno proud of his Father after hearing Maria's story? (page 62)
4. After talking to Maria, how has Bruno's opinion of her changed? (page 63)
5. What is Maria's advice to Bruno after their talk? (page 64)
6. How does Mother prove she is a decent person? (page 68)
7. What does Bruno decide to do for fun? (page 70)
8. What does Lieutenant Kotler do to make Gretel and Bruno uncomfortable? (page 75-76)
9. What happened to Bruno on the tire swing? Who rescues him? (page 78-79)
10. Before he became the family's waiter, what did Pavel do for a living? (page 82)
11. Why does Mother say she'll take credit for mending injury? (page 85)
12. What was the best part about acting with Grandmother? (page 88)
13. What happened after the last play's performance? (page 89)
14. How are appearances important? (page 91)
15. Why is it important to speak your mind? (page 91)
16. How is Bruno's costume similar to Father's uniform? What could this symbolize? (page 92)
17. What does Bruno want to do when he is older? How is this occupation meaningful to the story? (page 102)
18. According to Bruno, what are two categories of discovery? (page 105)
19. Why does Shmuel wish he had a name all his own? Why is this important? (page 109)
20. What do Bruno and Shmuel have in common? (page 109)
21. How does this novel support a theme of discovery?

Chapters Eleven to Fifteen

1. According to Bruno, why was the Fury rude? (page 122)
2. Why did Bruno's parents argue after their dinner guests left? (page 124)
3. How does Bruno's arrival at Out-With differ from Shmuel's arrival? (page 130)
4. Why does Bruno decide not to share the news about his new friend with his family? (page 133)
5. What is Maria's religion? How do you know? (page 137)

6. Describe Bruno's personality? How does he change from the beginning of the story to this point?
7. What does Shmuel want to do when he grows up? (page 139)
8. Bruno claims his father is one of the good soldiers. Why is his statement ironic? (page 140)
9. How does Shmuel know Lieutenant Kotler? (page 141)
10. How does Bruno prove he is naïve about Out-With? (page 141)
11. Why does Mother ask Bruno to not use the word 'hate'? (page 143)
12. Why did Lieutenant Kotler's father leave Germany? Why is this news shocking to Father? (page 145)
13. What did Lieutenant Kotler do to Pavel? Why didn't anyone help Pavel?
14. Why does Bruno want Shmuel to crawl under the fence? (page 150)
15. Why does Bruno try to conceal mentioning Shmuel to his sister? (page 154)
16. How did Bruno deceive his sister about Shmuel? (page 156)
17. How does talking about Shmuel affect Bruno? (page 158)
18. Why does Gretel make fun of Bruno? How is her jest ironic? (page 159)
19. What were some of Bruno's reasons for not liking Lieutenant Kotler? (page 162-163)
20. Why is Shmuel in the kitchen? How did he get there? (page 166)
21. How are Bruno's hands and Shmuel's hands different? Why is this significant? (page 167)
22. Why is Shmuel afraid to eat the food Bruno has offered? (page 170)
23. Why didn't Bruno speak up to defend Shmuel? (page 171)
24. What does Bruno say that finally wins Shmuel's acceptance? How does Shmuel show he forgives his friend? (page 175)

Chapters Sixteen to Twenty

1. Why does Bruno return to Berlin? (page 176)
2. Why was Father sad? (page 177)
3. Why would Grandmother be upset about the wreath from the Fury? (page 177)
4. For Bruno, what is the best thing about life at Out-With? (page 178)
5. How did Gretel's room change? (page 180)
6. What was wrong with Gretel and Bruno's hair? (page 184)
7. Why are Mother and Father shouting again? (page 187)
8. What does Gretel miss about life in Berlin? (page 189)
9. Why are Father and Gretel silent after Bruno's remark about the children behind the fence? (page 191)
10. What news does Bruno have for Shmuel? (page 194)
11. Why did Shmuel stay away for so many days? (page 194)
12. How do Bruno and Shmuel plan to play together? (page 199)
13. How does the uniform Shmuel provides remind Bruno of his Grandmother? (page 205)
14. What did Bruno expect to find behind the fence? What did Bruno discover instead? (page 207)
15. What kept Bruno from going straight home? (page 208)

16. What does Bruno do and say to comfort Shmuel? (page 212)
17. Why did Mother stay at Out-With longer than expected? (page 214)
18. What clues were discovered after Bruno's disappearance? (page 215)
19. What realization did Father piece together at the fence? (page 215)
20. Why does the author state at the end of the story "Of course all of this happened a long time ago and nothing like that could ever happen again. Not in this day and age"? (page 216)

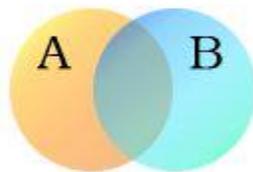
Connecting Themes in John Boyne's *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas*

When you consider the [themes](#) or life lessons about a story, you look at the story holistically and not in separate parts. Test your knowledge of the entire novel by thinking of ways to relate the following themes to events, characters, and conflicts.

Make a web diagram for each theme. **Make sure to include information from the three categories of sources in the novel: the events, characters, and conflicts.** As you recall information for each theme, organize your information. You'll be surprised by the many connections you'll create through these themes and the entire novel.

- Appearances
- Choices
- Friendship
- Loyalty
- Duality
- Discovery

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things are different and how they are the same) to compare and contrast the following characters and settings.

- Bruno and Gretel
- Bruno and Shmuel
- Pavel and Lieutenant Kotler
- Berlin and Out-With
- Mother and Father