

TEACHING GUIDE

ESO

*'A small wonder of a book' GUARDIAN*

# The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas

JOHN BOYNE

THE 10TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION



Aula



# The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas

## JOHN BOYNE

### TEACHER'S INTRODUCTION TO THE RESOURCE

Described by *The Guardian* as 'a small wonder of a book', *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* is certainly not small in scope or subject matter. Study of the book will need careful preparation and planning if it is to be successful. Part of the book's strength lies in the mystery that surrounds it – it states on the back cover that 'we think it is important you start to read this book without knowing what it is about.' Even the cover gives little away. It is important to maintain this mystery with students, as this will enable them to identify with Bruno's voice and be led, like Bruno, to a deeper knowledge of this significant historical event.

*The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* is a cautionary tale about two boys, one the son of a commandant in Hitler's army and the other a Jew, who come face to face at a barbed wire fence which separates, and eventually intertwines, their lives.

These resources are pitched at year 8 as they transfer into year 9 and should help teachers plan for effective transition. It may be that *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* could be introduced to year 8 during the summer term, so that they have time to read the novel during the summer and then can revisit it at the beginning of year 9. Revisiting sections already read means that the engagement is often at a deeper level and this is where students will gain most from this unusual novel.

It is not a long novel and some students will want to read on; the key is not to let them reveal the ending before others have finished reading.

### TRACKING KS3 ASSESSMENT FOCI THROUGH TO TEACHING OBJECTIVES

Making the link between assessment foci (KS3) and teaching objectives for years 8 and 9 will support smooth transition from one year to another. The grids below provide a more encompassing vision of what progress should look like across these two years.

Reading	
KS3 AF	Teaching objectives
AF2 Understanding, describing, selecting or retrieving information, events or ideas from texts and using quotation and reference to text	8R2 Independent research 8Wr17 Integrate evidence 9R1 Information retrieval 9Wr17 Cite textual evidence
AF3 Deducing, inferring or interpreting information, events or ideas from texts	8R5 Trace developments 9R18 Prose text
AF4 Identifying and commenting on the structure and organisation of texts, including grammatical and literary features at text level	8R10 Development of key ideas 8R13 Interpret a text 8R14 Literary conventions
AF5 Explaining and commenting on writers' uses of language, including grammatical and literary features at word and sentence level	9R12 Rhetorical devices 9Wd7 Layers of meaning
AF6 Identifying and commenting on writers' purposes and viewpoints and the overall effect of the text on the reader	8R16 Cultural context 9R6 Authorial perspective

**Progression in developing responses to *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* may look like this . . .**  
**Students:**

Level 5	Level 6	Level 7
<p>Select essential points, using inference and deduction where appropriate</p> <p>Identify key features, themes and characters in their responses and some of the main ways in which these are developed</p> <p>Interpret what they have read rather than merely describe</p> <p>Select sentences, phrases and relevant information to support ideas</p> <p>Explain, using appropriate language, the impact of word choices, sentence structure and style on the reader, including the impact of rhetorical devices</p> <p>Make relevant reference to quotations</p> <p>Produce an argued response which shows a personal viewpoint</p> <p>Relate structure to genre, purpose and audience</p>	<p>Identify different layers of meaning and <b>comment</b> on their significance and effect in a range of texts</p> <p>Explain a writer's viewpoint</p> <p>Give personal responses to the text referring to language, structure and themes</p> <p>Understand and appreciate the effects of language, using appropriate terminology</p> <p>Understand how the structure of a text can affect the reader</p> <p>Comment on what they have read rather than merely describe and paraphrase e.g. interpret the effects of characters actions rather than describe what they do</p> <p>Explain how ideas, values and emotions are expressed through character, description, themes, vocabulary choice and sentence structures</p> <p>Explain how structure and cohesion supports the presentation of ideas, values and emotions in a text</p> <p>Integrate <b>well-chosen</b> (as opposed to relevant) references to support ideas</p>	<p>Acknowledge and explore complexity of meaning, supported by precise references</p> <p>Give personal and critical responses to texts referring to language, structure and themes</p> <p>Evaluate language, style and effects used and how they relate to the development of the text, using appropriate terminology</p> <p>Identify and analyse how the structure of a text can affect the reader</p> <p>Explain how attitudes and points of view are conveyed by a range of stylistic techniques and comment on their effectiveness</p>

**WAYS INTO *THE BOY IN THE STRIPED PYJAMAS* . . .**

These are just some ideas to get discussion started and focused on the novel. The student resources invite more detailed, closer study.

**Context (AF2, AF3, AF6)**

The best place to start is to activate the students' prior knowledge about **World War 2**. Unless students fully appreciate the horrors which are caused by persecution they will never reach a full understanding of the novel, nor will they be able to relate it to contemporary contexts or begin to see or feel what literature is. Relate this to other literature and encourage students to share novels, poetry and non fiction works which they have already read. A class reading list could be developed to encourage other independent reading around this subject.

**Structure (AF4, AF6)**

The novel follows the standard format of division into chapters; each one is fairly short, which will help with pace. The additional information given is that each chapter is fore-grounded with a title. This means that each chapter can be used twice by the students:

1. As an orientation activity – what will this chapter be about?
2. As a critical rereading activity – how well does this build the story and characters in the novel?

**Voice (AF2, AF3, AF5)**

Read the first page of chapter 1 with the students. Ask them to point to the place where they first hear a voice. Discuss the following:

What do we learn about the voice?

What in particular about the language tells us that this is a child's voice?

How might this affect the way we read the novel e.g. perspective?

Is Bruno's voice different from the author's voice?

**Style (AF2, AF5, AF6)**

Having established that the story is told through Bruno's perspective, discuss how this might impact on the narrative style. As progress is made through the book, the use of Bruno's innocent 'puns' could be pointed out. How do these words (Out-With, the Fury) further communicate the horror of the situation?

**Themes (AF2, AF3, AF6)**

Now that context, voice and style have been explored and from their understanding of *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* so far, ask students to decide which themes will be key players in the book. They should provide reasoning behind their thinking. Compile a class list, which can be revisited during and at the end of reading the novel to see whether their predictions were right.

## 6. 'Nothing in the world would have persuaded him to let it go.'

What began as a cheerful story in chapter 1 becomes much darker as Bruno is educated about what happens beyond the fence. Look back at your storyboards/notes and reflect on how much Bruno has learnt. Is there any evidence in chapter 19 that suggests his education is complete? What stops him accepting the full horror? At what point do you come to full understanding of what is happening?

There is a sense of urgency in chapter 19. How does the author build up the pace towards the climactic end? To help you, think about how this might be filmed.

## Post reading . . .

### 8. *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*: a fable by John Boyne

In the pre-reading stage, you found out about the literary conventions of fables e.g. one dimensional characters, morality. Revisit your list and explore with your partner whether *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* is indeed a fable.

### 9. 'Not in this day and age.'

During your pre-reading discussion, you explored whether Bruno's voice is different to the author's voice. Reread chapter 20 – The Last Chapter. What do you think the author is trying to say to the reader? Is there a moral or message? What new insights have you gained from reading this story?

### 10. And finally . . .

Is this a children's story? Hot seat the 'author' to find out.

Hot seating – placing one person in role under scrutiny by instructing the rest of the group to ask questions. The hot seated person should reply 'in role' – answering the questions as they think the person they are being would answer.

So in this instance, one student plays the role of the author, and the group asks this student questions, who responds as if they are the author.

[www.randomhousechildrens.co.uk](http://www.randomhousechildrens.co.uk)



Copyright © Helen Bulbeck, Secondary English Consultant 2007.

Quotations copyright © John Boyne, 2006. Reprinted with permission of Random House Children's Books, a division of The Random House Group Ltd.



*'A small wonder of a book' GUARDIAN*

# The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas

JOHN BOYNE



# Pupil's Notes

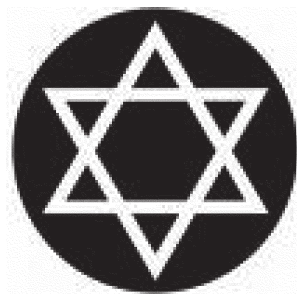
## Pre-reading activities . . .

### 1. 'Every time we left the house, she told us we had to wear one of these armbands.'

To be able to understand fully – and therefore really enjoy – a novel, you need to know about its context. *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* is set during the Second World War.

Work in groups. Spend a few minutes in your group discussing what you already know about the Second World War. Divide up the following terms and symbols. Explain the meaning of your term to the rest of your group (you may need to research first).

*Führer, Auschwitz, Hitler Youth, anti-Semitism, the Exodus, Nuremberg Laws, swastika, Gestapo, death trains, death camps, Warsaw Ghetto, genocide, and resistance.*



The following website may be useful:

<http://www.ushmm.org/outreach/fsol.htm>

What picture do you have of the Second World War now? How do you think this might relate to *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*?

### 2. *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*: a fable by John Boyne

Find out what the differences are between a fable, an allegory and a proverb.

Find an example of a fable and read it. What are the literary elements of a fable? As you read the novel, make a note of how these elements work in *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*.

## During reading . . .

### Read chapters 1 and 2

### 3. 'In an empty desolate place.'

Chapter 1 describes Bruno's house in Berlin. Highlight some of the key words and phrases that create the image of his home. How does Bruno feel about his Berlin home? Now do the same for chapter 2. How does Bruno feel about his 'new home'? What devices does the author use to create the contrast for the reader?

4. 'Bruno could see right across Berlin if he stood up on his tiptoes and held onto the frame tightly.'

It isn't just the physical descriptions of the two homes that create contrast. The way characters behave and react to events also adds atmosphere. In his Berlin house, Bruno can see far and wide and likes what he sees. How does he react when he looks out of the window in his new house? We aren't told what it is he sees. What do you think it might be?

How do the other characters react to the move? What tells us this?

Make a list of the key characters and add the relevant information, supported with evidence from the text e.g.:

Character	Reaction	Evidence
Bruno's mother	She is resentful about having to move	'We don't have the luxury of thinking ... some people make all the decisions for us.'

Now describe what it is about the house at Out-With that makes Bruno feel ‘cold and unsafe.’ How do the other characters add to his anxiety? You could continue with this grid as you read.

**As you continue to read . . .**

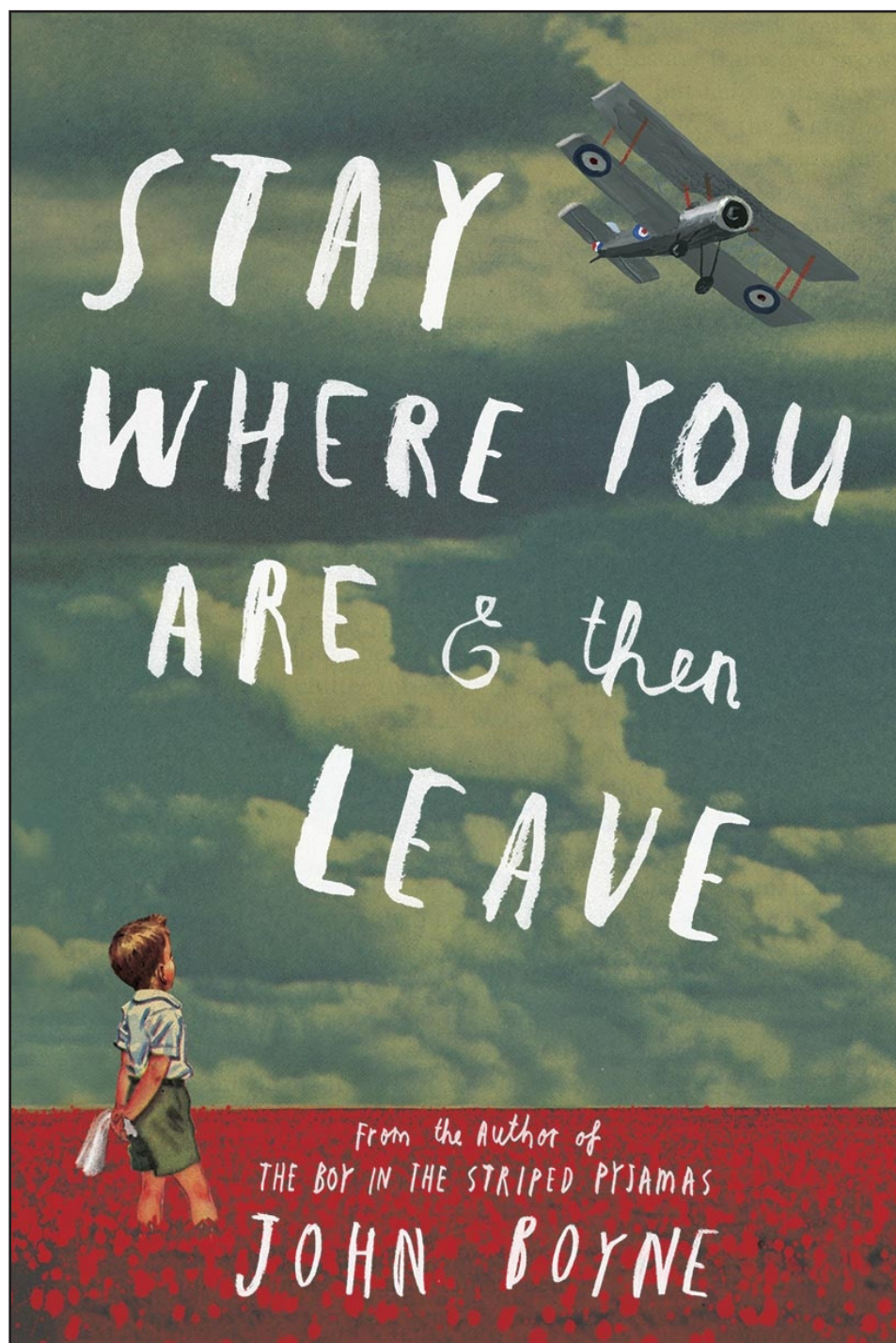
5. 'There was a huge wire fence that ran along the top, extending further along in every direction.'

Bruno's life is full of barriers.

What are these barriers? Make a list. How many of these are physical? How many are created by the people around him? How do these barriers affect his understanding of his situation, and the situation of those around him?

Who unlocks these barriers for him and helps to educate him as to what is really going on?

There are key points in the novel when Bruno gains a deeper understanding about Out-With, his father's role, the Fury and Shmuel. As you continue to read, create a storyboard (or write brief notes) of these moments. Some of these moments may seem insignificant but are crucial to Bruno's education.



## Stay Where You Are and Then Leave

By John Boyne

A moving and uplifting story of an ordinary boy's search for his missing father during the First World War

Published 26th September 2013

[www.johnboyne.com](http://www.johnboyne.com)

@John\_Boyne #SWYA

[www.randomhousechildrens.co.uk](http://www.randomhousechildrens.co.uk)