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Literature Teaching Unit

Chapter-by-Chapter Study Guide



The Boy in the Striped Pajamas

by John Boyne

- Learning objectives
- Study Guide with short-answer questions
- Background information
- Vocabulary in context
- Multiple-choice test
- Essay questions
- Literary terms



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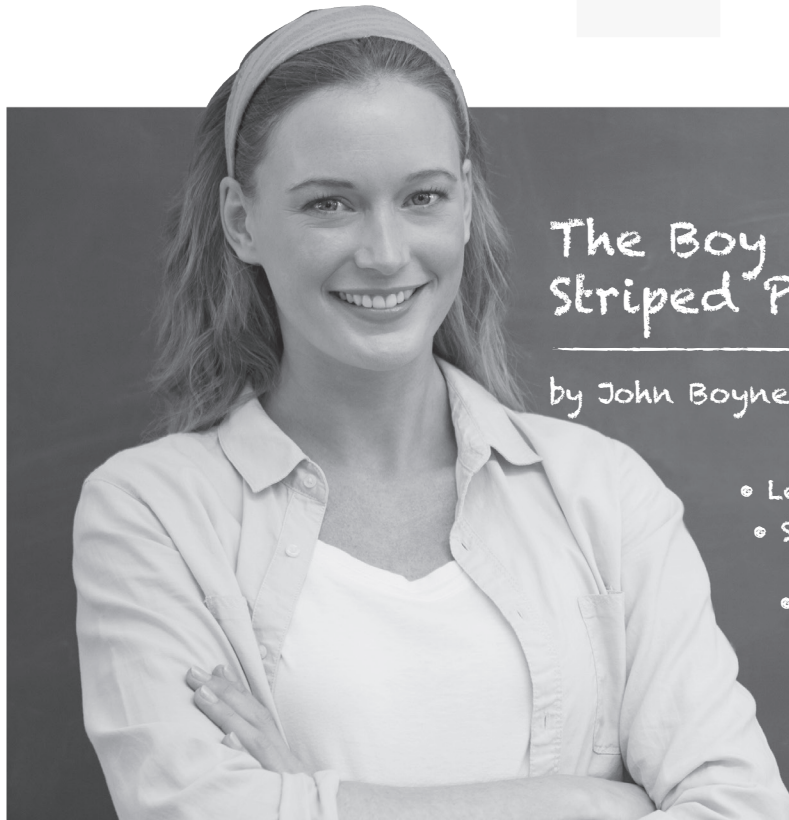
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Objectives

By the end of this Unit, the student will be able to

1. examine the significance of both the title of the novel and the individual chapters.
2. identify the form of narration used in the novel and analyze why Boyne might have chosen this particular type of narration to tell his story.
3. analyze the pros and cons of the chosen point of view and contemplate other options the author might have used and the effects those choices would have had on the novel as a whole.
4. discuss the function of the setting in the novel.
5. examine the impact of the social and political issues present in the novel on plot, character, and theme.
6. define the aspects of a fable and assess the novel as a fable.
7. trace the character development of the novel's protagonist, Bruno.
8. identify and describe the following characters and explain their function in the plot, taking into account the ways in which they support some of the novel's major concepts and/or themes:
 - Shmuel
 - Father
 - Mother
 - Gretel
 - Maria
 - Lieutenant Kotler
 - Pavel
9. define dramatic irony and explain how Boyne uses it to develop plot, character, and theme.
10. discuss the author's use of puns and wordplay and their effect on the novel.
11. cite examples of foreshadowing and their importance to the novel.
12. point out instances of flashback in the text and their importance to the scenes in which they occur.
13. identify the story's climax.

Questions for Essay and Discussion

1. How does Bruno's innocent, naïve point of view affect the novel's overall perspective?
2. Identify at least five examples of situations in which Bruno does not understand the implications but the reader and other characters do. What are the effects of these scenes on the reader's attitude toward Bruno?
3. What are the pros and cons of Boyne's choice of narrative perspective, and how might the novel have been different had the author chosen a different method to tell Bruno's story?
4. Boyne has carefully chosen the chapter titles for his novel. Identify at least three chapter titles and their significance to both the chapter's content and to the novel as a whole in terms of theme, character, and plot.
5. How important is it that the reader be acquainted with the setting to fully understand the novel? In what ways, if any, does the story stand on its own, regardless of the historical facts of wartime Germany? Conversely, how does historical knowledge of the Holocaust enhance the reader's understanding of the novel?
6. Identify the novel's exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution. What is the climax of the novel? Use facts from the book to support your opinion.
7. Explore the difference in meaning of prejudice versus discrimination in the sense that one refers to someone's attitude and the other to action. Is one worse than the other is, and if so, why?
8. Give at least two examples of characters who are transformed by the power given to them, and discuss the effects on each character's attitude and behavior.
9. Bruno has several flashbacks to earlier parts of his life in the novel. Identify at least two flashbacks, and explain their importance to the scene, chapter, and novel as a whole.
10. Assess the following characters to determine if they are round or flat, static or dynamic: Bruno, Shmuel, Father, Mother, Gretel, Lieutenant Kotler, Maria, Pavel.
11. Gretel embraces the attitudes of Lieutenant Kotler, Herr Liszt, and Father about the Jews, yet Bruno, who is much younger, questions them. Why?
12. Note several examples of characters who deny the brutality of what is going on around them by being "guilty observers." How do they rationalize their behavior and attitudes?

The Boy in the Striped Pajamas

Chapter One

Bruno Makes a Discovery

VOCABULARY

- chaos** – a state of complete disorder and confusion
- dismissively** – indicating rejection or lack of interest
- hesitating** – being reluctant to do or say something
- imitate** – to adopt someone else’s behavior, voice, or manner; to mimic
- muster** – to summon up strength or courage that will help in doing something
- spluttering** – saying something that is not understandable; making a spitting or choking sound
- wardrobe** – a large closet or freestanding cabinet for clothes
- whooshing** – the sound made by rushing air or water

1. What discovery does Bruno make when he comes home from school? What is his initial reaction to this discovery?

2. Describe what you know about Maria’s personality by noting the author’s use of physical details on the first page.

3. How old do you think Bruno is? What details in the chapter lead you to this conclusion?

9. Discuss the author’s depiction of Father in previous chapters as compared with this chapter.

10. There is a dramatic shift in the power between Gretel and Bruno in this chapter. What happens, and what is the result of this shift?

11. Why is Gretel nervous at the end of the chapter?

12. How is the last paragraph of Chapter Three an example of foreshadowing?

Chapter Seven

How Mother Took Credit for Something That She Hadn't Done

VOCABULARY

appallingly – dreadfully
astonished – astounded; shocked
decidedly – unquestionably
diversion – a distraction
domestic – native; local
escapade – an adventure
hefty – heavy; substantial
insolently – rudely; disrespectfully
ringlets – curls or spirals
ruffling – rumpling; messing up
striding – walking
succession – sequence
utterly – completely
woozy – dizzy

1. Who is Herr Roller, and what brings him to Bruno's mind in this chapter?

2. Describe Lieutenant Kotler's physical appearance, actions, and dialogue. What small details prevent Kotler from being a one-dimensional caricature?

10. What new information does Bruno learn from Shmuel about where Out-With is?

11. Compare what each boy says about their previous homes.

12. What questions does Bruno ask Shmuel at the end of the chapter? Why might the author not have included Shmuel's responses?
