

Year 7 HT2 Knowledge Organiser

Boy in the Striped Pyjamas by John Boyne



Bruno
naïve, innocent, friendly
An innocent 9 year-old boy growing up in Berlin. He loves adventures, which leads him to discover the horrors of Out-With.

Gretel
'Hopeless Case'

Bruno's 12 year-old sister. She is obsessed with dolls and patronising towards Bruno. She thinks she knows everything, but is just as naïve as Bruno.



Shmuel
small, malnourished
A 9 year-old Auschwitz prisoner. He knows a lot about the realities of war and contrasts Bruno's naivety.

Lieutenant Kotler
handsome, mean

A young, well-dressed soldier who works for Bruno's father. He is cruel and violent towards the camp prisoners, and calls Bruno 'Little man'.



Father
proud, devoted
Bruno and Gretel's father is a high-ranking member of Hitler's regime. He is Commandant of Out-With and tries to protect his family from what happens there.

The Fury
powerful, authoritative

The Fury is the Chancellor of Germany and Father's boss. He is a strict leader and firmly in control wherever he goes. He is married to Eva.



KEY CONTEXT

Boyne was born in Ireland and studied English Literature and Creative Writing at university. He published *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* in 2006.

Adolf Hitler was the leader of Nazi Germany between 1934-1945. He was a dictator and known in Germany as 'Der Fuhrer'. His aggressive actions towards Jews and *Untermenschen* (undesirables) led to the deaths of millions of people across Europe.

The Holocaust is the genocide committed in World War 2. Approximately 6 million Jews were systematically murdered in Extermination Camps, such as Auschwitz in Poland. These camps were designed for the mass-murder of Jews during Hitler's 'Final Solution'.

LITERARY DEVICES

Simile: *It was as if he was the conductor of a barbershop quartet* (chapter 5)

Imagery: *colourful shop fronts; leeks and vegetables spilling out of the stalls* (chapter 2)

Varied adjectives: *Herr Liszt made a hissing sound ... he said in a sinister voice* (chapter 9)

Limited third person narration: the style of narration is third person, from Bruno's perspective. This reflects the innocence of Bruno's mind when compared to the sheer horror of the Holocaust.

SYMBOLS

Innocence and Ignorance: the story is told from the viewpoint of Bruno, who is young and naïve. As a result, he is unaware of the true extent of the events taking place around him. He is oblivious to a number of important factors in the war, for example 'The Fury' (his mispronunciation of Fuhrer) and 'Out-With' (Auschwitz). The reader is forced to infer a number of the more horrific images from the story.

Complicity: although a few of the characters are explicitly mentioned as supporters of the Nazi party, most of them end up complying with the regimes, goals and ideals – primarily through a sense of duty, fear or apathy. Through these characters, Boyne demonstrates how ordinary, otherwise kind, people became compliant with the horrors of the Holocaust.

	PLOT SUMMARY	KEY QUOTATIONS
1-4	Bruno comes home one day to be told by his mother that they are moving house. He is extremely disgruntled by this, but she explains that it is a necessity to move far away due to his Father's job in the army. Bruno hates the new house, which has none of the features of the old house, which he loves. Bruno and Gretel learn that the new place is called 'Out-With.' From a window, they can see all of the people in the camp wearing striped pyjamas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "“We don't have the luxury of thinking,' said Mother. '...Some people make all the decisions for us.”" - "“That's the name of the house,' said Gretel. 'Out-With.”"
5-8	Bruno decides to speak to his father about his displeasure. He recalls how The Fury once came to dinner. He also remembers seeing a train crammed with people heading to Out-With. After a few weeks at Out-With, Bruno decides to construct a swing. He asks Kotler for help – Kotler barks at an old man who now waits on the family (Pavel) to get him a tyre. Bruno soon falls off and scrapes his knee. Pavel helps him, and reveals that he was a doctor before he came to Out-With. Bruno's mother returns, and looks uncomfortable. She says to Pavel that she will claim to have bandaged Bruno up.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "“Ah, those people ... well, they're not people at all”" - "“Heil Hitler”" - "“There was an atmosphere around him [Kotler] that made Bruno feel very cold and want to put a jumper on”" - "“He doesn't understand you. He's only nine”" - "“[Kotler] was just plain nasty”"
9-11	Father decides that Bruno and Gretel should resume their studies, and calls on a man named Harr Liszt to act as their private tutor. One day, Bruno goes out exploring beyond the garden. He meets Shmuel sitting at the other side of the fence. The boy is wearing the striped pyjamas. The two begin to talk more about each other's' lives, and strike up a friendship. The Fury comes over for dinner and is very rude and forceful around the family.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "“Bruno was sure that he had never seen a skinnier or sadder boy in his life”" - "“Poland ... That's not as good as Germany, is it?”" - "“We're superior”" - "“What a horrible man” said Bruno of the Fury"
12-15	Shmuel tells Bruno more about how he came to live in the camp. At dinner that evening, Father realises that Kotler's father deserted Germany at the start of the war. Kotler beats Pavel after he spills wine. Bruno is shocked to find Shmuel in the house cleaning glasses one day. He gives Shmuel food, but Kotler catches him eating it. Bruno then lies by stating that he did not give Shmuel the food.	- "“What happened then was ... unexpected and extremely unpleasant. Lieutenant Kotler grew very angry with Pavel and no one ... stepped in to stop him doing what he did, even though none of them could watch. Even though it made Bruno cry and Gretel grow pale”"
16-17	Bruno's grandmother dies. Kotler is relocated. Bruno and Shmuel meet again and Bruno apologises. Bruno contracts lice and has to have his head shaven. Bruno's father and mother argue more, until it is agreed that the family (except Father) should be moved back home.	- "“When I think about it, perhaps she is right. Perhaps this is not a place for children.”"
18-20	Shmuel reveals that he has lost his father. Bruno dresses in striped pyjamas and goes under the fence to help. They are marched into a room and everything goes black.	- "“Of course all this happened a long time ago and nothing like that could ever happen again. Not in this day and age.”"