

The Boy In The Striped Pajamas



By

John Boyne

A Novel Study
By Nat Reed

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About the author: Nat Reed was a member of the teaching profession for more than 35 years. He was a full-time instructor at Trent University in the Teacher Education Program for nine years. For more information on his work and literature, visit novelstudies.org.

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Suggestions and Expectations

This 79 page curriculum unit can be used in a variety of ways. Each chapter of the novel study focuses on one or two chapters of *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas* and is comprised of four different activities:

- a) Before You Read
- b) Vocabulary Building
- c) Comprehension Questions
- d) Language and Extension Activities

A principal expectation of the unit is that students will develop their skills in reading, writing, listening and oral communication, as well as in reasoning and critical thinking.

Links with the Common Core Standards (U.S.)

Many of the activities included in this curriculum unit are supported by the Common Core Standards. For instance the *Reading Standards for Literature, Grade 5*, makes reference to

- a) determining the meaning of words and phrases. . . including figurative language;
- b) explaining how a series of chapters fits together to provide the overall structure;
- c) compare and contrast two characters;
- d) determine how characters ... respond to challenges;
- e) drawing inferences from the text;
- f) determining a theme of a story . . . **and many others.**

Students can work on the activities at their own pace. Every activity need not be completed by all students. A **portfolio cover** is included as well as a **Student Checklist**.

Themes which may be taught in conjunction with the novel include bigotry and persecution, Nazism and Adolf Hitler, the importance of family and friends, loyalty in personal relationships, character growth, developing perseverance in the face of adversity.

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List of Skills

Vocabulary Development

1. Locating descriptive words / phrases
2. Listing synonyms & antonyms
3. Identifying / creating *onomatopoeia*
4. Use of capitals and punctuation
5. Identifying syllables
6. Listing compound words
7. Use of singular / plural nouns
8. Using content clues: analogies
9. Identifying parts of speech
10. Determining alphabetical order
11. Identification of root words
12. Identifying / creating *alliteration*

Setting Activities

1. Summarize the details of a setting

Plot Activities

1. Complete a *time line* of events
2. Identify conflict in the story
3. Identify *cliffhangers*.
4. Identify the climax of the novel.

Character Activities

1. Determine character traits
2. Compare two characters
3. Understanding different concepts
4. Relating personal experiences

Creative and Critical Thinking

1. Research
2. Write an editorial on an issue
3. Write a letter to a friend
4. Conduct an interview
5. Write a description of personal feelings
6. Write a journal entry.

Art Activities

1. Design a cover for the novel

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Synopsis

The Boy in the Striped Pajamas is the unforgettable story of two boys: Bruno, the son of the Commandant of the infamous World War Two concentration camp, Auschwitz, and Shmuel, an inmate of the camp.

Nine-year-old Bruno's world is turned upside down when his family is uprooted and moved to far off *Out-With*, where he has no friends and must endure the insufferable Lieutenant Kotler. From his bedroom window, Bruno sees a fence near their house, and behind it are many people – all wearing striped pajamas. Bruno manages to become friends with a boy his own age, Shmuel, who lives on the other side of the fence, and wears peculiar striped pajamas all the time. Although their only contact is talking through the fence in a secluded area, the two boys soon become fast friends.

Along the way Bruno meets an assortment of fascinating characters including Herr Liszt, his boring tutor, Pavel, the waiter who is also a medical doctor, and The Fury (Adolf Hitler) who eventually comes to dinner.

Author Biography

John Boyne

John Boyne was born on April 30, 1971 in Dublin, Ireland. He was educated at Trinity College, Dublin, and studied Creative Writing at the University of East Anglia, where he was awarded the Curtis Brown prize. It was during this time that John's writings first began to see publication.

John has written seven novels to date, as well as a number of short stories which have been published in various anthologies and broadcast on radio and television. *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas*, which to date has sold more than 5 million copies worldwide, is a Number One New York Times Bestseller. This wonderful novel was also released as a movie in September 2008. His books have been published in 41 different languages. Boyne continues to live in Dublin.



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Student Checklist

Student Name _____

Assignment	Grade / Level	Comments

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Name: _____

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Chapter 1



Before you read the chapter:

Moving to another town or city, or even to another home, can be a most difficult experience. Describe from your own experience, or from your imagination, how it would feel to move to a strange new place – as Bruno must do in this novel. What might an advantage to moving to a new location?



Vocabulary:

Choose a word from the list to complete each sentence.

decent	dismissively	tartan	presume	chaos
frustration	hesitate	protested	banister	muster

1. Bert didn't think he could _____ the strength to finish the race.
2. My aunt showed her _____ by stamping her foot angrily.
3. The situation was reduced to _____ when the emperor entered the ballroom.
4. "It is so hard for the average person to earn a _____ salary," the reporter said.
5. She didn't even _____ before answering the judge's question.
6. For her birthday she received a _____ skirt from her cousin, Sara.
7. My mother ordered the maid to go out into the foyer and polish the _____.
8. "Oh go peddle your papers," she said _____.
9. There must have been more than a hundred people who _____ the new law.
10. "Don't just _____ that the president is always right," the commentator suggested.

Questions



1. Bruno was told by his mother to treat the family's maid, Maria, respectfully, and "not just imitate the way Father spoke to her." How must Bruno's father have usually spoken to Maria? What do you think this tells us about his father's personality?

2. The **setting** of a story includes not only where but when the story takes place. What is the setting of Chapter One?

3. In the first few chapters Bruno mentions a mysterious character called *the Fury*. In Chapter One, what had the Fury done the week before?

b. It turns out that Bruno actually has misheard his parents when speaking of *The Fury*. What his parents are saying is *The Führer*. Investigate who this character was and relate at least two interesting facts about him.

1.	
2.	

4. Who was Gretel, and why do you think Bruno referred to her as a *Hopeless Case*?

5. Why did the family have to move?

6. What (or who) was Bruno going to miss the most when he moved away?

7. In their home, what was “Out Of Bounds At All Times And No Exceptions?”

Language Activity



A. The author, John Boyle, enjoys using a variety of literary devices in this novel. One such device is **onomatopoeia**. An example is “making whooshing sounds as he went.” Define **onomatopoeia**, and use your imagination to think of another example of this device.

B. Many English words can have more than one meaning. This is especially true of words that can be used as both a noun and a verb. For the following create sentences to illustrate the meaning of each word from Chapter One as a noun and as a verb.

Word: pack

Noun	
Verb	

Word: face

Noun	
Verb	

C. Moving ~ A Quatrain Poem.

The **quatrain** is a popular form of rhymed verse, four lines in length. Such poems are often light and humorous. Here is a more serious one by the famous poet, Atrocious Halitosis. It is called, **Moving Away**. (Bruno could probably identify with this one.)

*No one likes to move away,
It makes one's heart to weep.
I'd like to stay where I was raised,
And all my friends to keep.*



Various rhyming schemes make up a quatrain poem. As you can see, the above four lines have a rhyming scheme of **A - B - C - B**. Other rhyming schemes include: AABB, AAAA, AABA, ABBA, ABBB, and AAAB.

Your task is to write your own quatrain poem. You may choose a rhyming scheme that fits with your own personal creation. The theme should have something to do with the themes established in the Prologue and first two chapters of our novel.

The Quatrain Poem

Now create your own Quatrain Poem. Your poem must follow the format of a quatrain poem described above (and must rhyme).

Title: _____

D. A Solution to a Problem

Choose one major event from the past chapter which presents a problem for one of the characters, then complete the following chart using information from the novel.

Characters:
Setting:
Problem:
Solution: