

The boy in striped pyjamas essay

[Literature](#), [Novel](#)



The boy in the striped pyjamas, written by John Boyne, has a compelling plot that brings to the foreground, in your face, through the innocent eyes of a nine year old boy, the compelling and horrors of war. This book has been written in third person limited and the narrator tells the story through the eyes of an obnoxious German boy, Bruno, who really does not understand what is going on. An odd friendship is formed between the son of a Nazi death camp commandant, and Shmuel, a young Jewish prisoner who lives in a concentration camp, close by to where Bruno lives. The Boy in the striped pyjamas is a story about a boy's friendship between Bruno and Shmuel that tells the world of the horrors of the Holocaust, 1939, through the eyes of two nine year old boys. Bruno is the main character who is used by the author to portray to the reader the compelling horrors of war through the novel, The Boy in the striped pyjamas. We begin to learn much about Bruno's character through the interaction between his Father, Mother, Sister, (Gretel) and his newly found friend, Shmuel. It would be difficult to comprehend and know the character of Bruno without the interactions of other characters within the novel, through the descriptive and figurative language used, and through the dialogue Bruno has with other characters in the novel. You learn through the boy's conversation for example that on one side of the fence there are barracks and huts, and low square buildings, hunger, and smoke stacks. On the other is a home and garden. They build a friendship through remark and conversation, and although each of their situations is very different, it is through their conversations about their environments, that you learn more about each character. Throughout this novel, different relationships are formed with Bruno and you begin to learn more of Bruno through his

conversations with them. One of the most important things with character relationships within a story is how differently characters are around other characters. In the relationship between Bruno and his sister and in particular, Shmuel, you begin to learn more about Bruno. In Bruno's relationship with Shmuel, it shows a side to Bruno that you would have not seen in his interaction with his family. For example; you further learn through dialogue between Bruno and Shmuel, that Bruno is friendly, non judgemental and wanting to talk to anyone that will talk to him, he almost seems lonely and 'desperate to not offend Shmuel', which is evident in Bruno's private thoughts written by the author. He has easily accepted his new found friend. As a reader it's heartbreaking to realise that maybe Bruno is the only one that does not know where he is and what is going on and it is this that you feel sorry for Bruno. Through the boys' friendship you learn more about the main character and you become aware, from both their viewpoints that this relationship should not really be happening and although Bruno seems quite insightful he still does not know what is going on. You get this idea from a particular conversation between Bruno and Shmuel, when Shmuel says to Bruno, " We're not supposed to be friends, you and me. We're meant to be enemies. Did you know that? " Shmuel knew exactly what was going on. It is the conversations of comparisons of their own lives, by the boys, that you begin to see the ugly truth of the war and your ideas of Bruno's character begin to change as a reader. Importantly is the relationship that Bruno builds with the character Shmuel. The author has cleverly made their dates of birth on the same day. This immediately forms a strong basis for an instant friendship as they already have found something in common, despite all the

differences between them (p. 109). You learn a lot about each character through their differences and similarities and through the eyes of innocent children and you gain an understanding of the Holocaust. The relationship with Bruno and his sister, Gretel, is normal like any other brother sister relationship, they do not get along. Somehow we can all relate to this. In the beginning of the novel, when Gretel is first introduced (p. 21), she is portrayed as a mean person who loves to torment her brother, Bruno. Throughout the novel Bruno refers to his sister as “ a hopeless case” and caused nothing but trouble for him. Although Bruno and his sister don’t get along, you get a sense that they did get on, on occasion. This is written by John Boyne who describes Bruno’s thoughts; “ But still, there are moments when a brother and sister can lay down their instruments of torture for a moment and speak as civilized human beings and Bruno decided to make this one of those moments” (p. 153). This dialogue between Bruno and his sister sum up what their relationship was like. You learn a lot about where the family, and Bruno and Gretel have moved to because through conversation (pp. 32-38) they describe what they can see ‘ barbed wire fences and people in pyjamas’. Bruno and Gretel in their relationship question what each other believes and how each are feeling. The interaction between these two characters has developed Bruno’s character through the development of the setting and of his relationships with his family. This novel, *The Boy in the striped pyjamas*, is packed with descriptive language. Descriptive language is used to create an image in the readers mind. The language that is used creates imagery for the reader, making the story believable and interesting. Particularly in chapter four, descriptive language

is used to paint a picture to the reader of the setting. Knowing the setting within a narrative, informs the reader more about where the character and you learn more about the character. The narrator describes Bruno's character throughout the book and on one occasion, the writer says that Bruno is always honest in his answers, that he is inquisitiveness and Bruno is ' brave' (p. 46). Being told that Bruno was ' brave' stuck in my head throughout the story and affected how I felt about Bruno in that it was through his brave character that the storyline could develop. From the narrator you get an idea that Bruno's father is quite authoritative and that Bruno is scared of him. Although Bruno in one of his brave moments continues to question why they should stay in Berlin, the narrator highlights Bruno's characters ' the fear Bruno has for his father by writing that Bruno once knowing when to stop speaking swallowed nervously after challenging his father'. The author further writes that Bruno does not look at his dad as Bruno knew it would be a bad idea to hold a stare with his father (p. 51). From this, you get a sense from the author that Bruno is a sensitive well adjusted young boy, who fears his father, and appears not to be egocentric as the conversations he has with others may lead you to believe. Another example of descriptive language to bring forward Bruno's character was used by the narrator through Lieutenant Kotler. He shouted at one of Bruno's house servants, Pavel, in front of Bruno, and adds a word to the end of the sentence " Come over here you __. " (p. 75). Descriptive language used described Bruno's innermost thoughts of feeling ashamed that the Lieutenant would use the tone with someone Bruno knew. I think it was important to show this side to Bruno as it further confirmed his non

egotistical side, but a gentle side to him too. As a result, as the reader, you began to take the side of Bruno and began to see him as the nicest character in the novel. Throughout the novel dialogue is used to create setting, events, conflict and sadly the resolution to create each character, in particular Bruno. The dialogue between the different characters not only develops Bruno's character but importantly it shows many different sides to Bruno and as a reader you get to know him more intimately, and at points, that you can relate to him. Relating to a character helped me with the storyline, as I could certainly relate to some of the dialogues Bruno had with his sister Gretel and in particular his mother. Through Bruno's conversations with his mother, Bruno clearly doesn't like the new place they are living at. This is evident in the conversation where Bruno is insistent to his mother that they should move back home. "... We should probably get up early in the morning if we're to make it back to Berlin by tea-time tomorrow". (p. 14) Bruno was persistent with his mother as this dialogue made you believe that Bruno would usually get his own way. His mother dismissing Bruno made it feel that no matter how much Bruno would insist with her, the situation in which they were living was not going to change. We as children also insist with our parents as we know that we may get our way if we are insistent. But you get a sense of the mother's final decision when she insists he go upstairs and unpack, and to stop talking to her about leaving. He goes upstairs to unpack. Upstairs Bruno's conversation with the maid, Maria, further gives you the idea that Bruno is not used to not having his own way. In this particular conversation Bruno says to Maria " I'm tired of hearing about Father's job, that is, all we ever hear about". Bruno further adds that " Father should think

twice about his job don't you? " (p. 17.) Introducing Maria as a character has opened to the reader that Bruno has someone he can confide in apart from his sister Gretel and that this quietly spoken character can make Bruno feel comfortable enough to bring out, and even question, his private thoughts. Knowing how Bruno is thinking and feeling builds his character further as these private conversations, which I am sure Bruno could have with no other character in the novel, shows us how Bruno is really feeling, for example, about his dad and where the family have come to live. My thoughts learnt of Bruno in his interactions with his family changes when Bruno meets Shmuel. When Bruno first meets Shmuel, (chapter ten), they ask each other a few questions, not realizing just how similar they both are. The questions and dialogue that these two boys have bring sadness and reality to the reader. There is no idea by Bruno where he is, the ideas of war and that Shmuel is in a prison camp. This is all identified through their conversations on either side of the fence. When Bruno brings up the topic of friends to Shmuel you get to feel as a reader how lonely Bruno is feeling. Bruno states, ' It's so unfair,' said Bruno ' I don't see why I have to be stuck on this side of the fence where there's no one to talk to and no one to play with and you get to have dozens of friends and are probably playing for hours every day. I'll have to speak to father about it'. (pp. 110-111) This dialogue shows just how unaware Bruno is, two children, so similar, their lives so different. Bruno's character cannot understand the setting in which Shmuel finds himself, and I guess as a reader it is hard to picture that there could be such horror. Yet, through the boys innocent conversations you continue to see and truly believe the horror of the Holocaust. The introducing of Shmuel, and the

conversations that these boys have, both on each side of the fence, and on the same side of the fence when Bruno enters the camp, not only develops Bruno character but affects the reader somewhat. The story that these boys revealed through the technique of dialogue, is a story that I will never forget. You could sketch a picture with their detail. The use of relationships with other characters, the descriptive language and the dialogue between characters has been used to create the characterisation of Bruno in so many different ways. We have learnt so much about the Holocaust through Bruno's eyes and through the clever interaction, dialogue and descriptive language of the author. It did reveal to the reader the true atrocities of war through the true eyes of a nine year old child. As a reader, I have grown aware of the horrors that war can bring. The Holocaust through the techniques which John Boyne used throughout the novel had an impact not only on the characters within the novel, but these were felt by the reader. Bruno was cleverly placed in this novel to present to the reader the real, sad, unbiased story of the Holocaust. Bruno's naivety and recall of what he truly saw and believed through the interaction with others, made this story feel real and believable. This novel, through the innocent eyes of a nine year old, describes to us just how horrific the Holocaust was and how many people suffered at the hands of the Germans. I believe it sends a clear message to every one of the effect of hatred and war.