

The boy in the striped pyjamas' and 'the book thief' essay sample

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



In novels, the author creates a focus on a relationship - between enemies or friends, a parent and child, or husband and wife. In the two texts, *The Book Thief*, and *The Boy in the Stripped Pyjamas* this is a aspect that is featured in both, the relationship between children. *The Book Thief* focuses on the relationship between Liesel and Rudy, two of the characters. In *The Boy in the Stripped Pyjamas* the relationship that is focused on is between Bruno and Shmuel. The following paragraphs discuss the similar situations, and themes that connect the two relationships together.

The Book Thief was written by Australia writer Markus Zusak in 2005. The novel focuses on Liesel, a 12 year old girl and her family who are living in Germany during and post World War Two. When her family takes in a Max, a Jewish man that is hiding from the Nazi Soldiers, Liesel's life is turned upside as she struggles to keep her family's secret and to find a place in her new world. *The Boy in the Stripped Pyjamas* is also set during World War Two. It follows the story of Bruno, a young boy whose father is a Commander General of a Nazi Concentration Camp. With nothing to do, he explores and finds Shmuel, a Jewish boy that is being held in the camp. They become good friends but their friendship leads Bruno to a mistaken death.

The authors of these two texts use similar themes to convey a story of relationships within the books. The relationships within these two stories both bare witness to death. In *The Book Thief*, Liesel and Rudy both face death; Liesel more so than Rudy as she has to deal with the loss of not only her entire family but also the loss of her best friend. In *The Boy in the Stripped Pyjamas* the relationship between Bruno and Shmuel encounters

death in a horrifying way as they both are killed, Shmuel on purpose and Bruno by accident. The theme of friendship within these texts is one of the most important. The friendship of Liesel and Rudy in *The Book Thief* is presented in a more simple way compared to the friendship that was formed between Bruno and Shmuel.

The friendship between Shmuel and Bruno in *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* is one that allows the audience to question whether or not there were situations like theirs during World War Two. The loss of innocence that these children encountered was due to the situation they were in during the war. In *The Book Thief* the innocence of Liesel and Rudy was lost because of the events in the book that they lived through. Both of their fathers' were sent away to work for the Nazi Party, and especially Liesel as her life is thrown into uncertainty because she is forced to keep a secret from her best friend Rudy. The innocence of Bruno is questioned more than that of Shmuel because it seems that until he meets Shmuel he is naive in thinking that everything around him is perfect and that nothing evil is happening just outside the confines of his own home.

War is a common feature in both of these texts. In these two novels war is in a way a backdrop to the storyline that has been created by the two authors. In *The Book Thief* it is clear, that the war was indeed a backdrop because if the situation of war had not surfaced Liesel and the other characters in this novel would not have existed. Liesel is thrown into her new life because of war and the situation that her family is put under is all because of the war. If war was not presented in the sense of backdrop the author of this story

would not have been able to use his choice of narrator hence the book not having its individuality compared to other books that focus on war and the complications that surface because of it. The relationships that are created between Liesel and the other characters in *The Book Thief* are all affected by war especially the relationship between Liesel and Rudy. In the beginning of this novel the context of war is something does not actually come to the front, however as they grow older during the length of the novel they begin to form opinions about the war and what is happening in their own town.

Their opinions are brought forward whilst there is a march in their hometown and the two characters feed the marchers. Whilst this is only a small action, they managed to change the course of the storyline and the consequences of their actions really did bring the context of war upfront and it allowed the reader to understand what happened to some of the German people that tried to help the Jews and the others that were tortured along with them. The most serious effect that the war had on the characters of *The Book Thief*, Liesel especially, was at the end of the novel was when a bomb was dropped on her home town. As a result of this everyone that was special to Liesel was killed, including Rudy.

Children in war are not aware of what is happening around them, especially in Bruno's case, he only knows what he has seen. For example when Shmuel tells him that there are a lot of children on his side of the fence he thinks that it will be like in Berlin where children are happy and playful and have liberty, but when Bruno crosses the fence and experiences what Shmuel does every day he is very surprised and in a way disappointed to see that

the children here and all lethargic and gloomy, this may affect a child very harshly in the long run seeing such a place on the inside, such as Auschwitz. In the story we see that Bruno can not comprehend what is happening when he and Shmuel are taken into the gas chamber and they think that it is a building to keep them dry and warm.

The relationship between parents is something that these two texts have in common, especially between Liesel and her father, and Bruno and his father. The relationship between Liesel and her father, is a special one. They have both bonded over their views on what is happening in society. As a reader, you begin to see their relationship really come to life when her father, Hans realises that Liesel does not know how to read. He tries his best to teach her and by helping her read and write he himself also learns. This simple act of teaching someone how to read really transformed their relationship and made it a memorable thing in the book.

The relationship between Bruno and his father is very different from the relationship between Liesel and Hans. Bruno and his father rarely talk, and it is clear the Bruno's father is the more dominant character, whereas in *The Book Thief*, the relationship between Liesel and Hans was level footed. As a reader you never actually see the relationship between Bruno and his father change and what goes on between them is in a way a mystery as you never really hear anything about it. Bruno respects his father and looks up to him and all he wants is his attention and love, and it seems that his father does not really want anything to do with Bruno.

In conclusion, the relationships that are presented in the two texts are similar in some ways and very diverse in others. The main difference that is noticeable between the two relationships is that Liesel and Rudy seem more mature than Bruno and Shmuel, but this is expected as there is an age difference between the two relationships. The themes that are presented in these texts are the things that really connect these two texts, and also having the war as a backdrop also connected the two texts. Even though the situation of war in the two texts are vastly different one is more focused on what happened in the towns, and one is situated in Auschwitz, it really is something that makes the reader of the two novels think about the situations that were present during World War Two. Whilst these two texts are very different the way they are presented make both reads worthwhile and allow the readers to think about the experiences that the relationships face.