

The boy in the striped pyjamas review

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Mark Hermans film exploring war, race and friendship grips you from the start as a child's eye of the Holocaust. Bruno (Asa Butterfield) moves away when his father is promoted from a job in Berlin to running a death camp in the middle of the countryside. Here he meets a strange little boy behind a big electric fence. Bruno sees war as an adventure and thinks the concentration camp is a 'farm' and the Jewish prisoners are 'farmers'. As we see his friendship with Shmuel grows, his sister changes and his mother breaks down.

After Shmuel can't find his father, both Bruno and his fate is decided with tragic, moving consequences. With his big blue eyes and big open heart, Bruno is an innocent little boy trapped between the imaginary world of his own, and the harsh truth going on just a mile away. He realises there is something wrong when he is forbidden to go to the 'farm', so he goes alone. Vera Farminga plays Bruno's mother. In contrast to Bruno she knows what is going on, but only to an extent.

At the beginning of the film she is proud of her husband and is happy to have the Jews in concentration camps but when she comes face to face with what she believes she doesn't quite know what to do. She wants to protect Bruno from the truth and when she realises the Jews are being murdered, you see her breakdown. She finally realises the full truth of what she has been supporting. This perfectly balanced film between light hearted friendship and the seriousness of the Holocaust is deeply moving and heartbreaking.