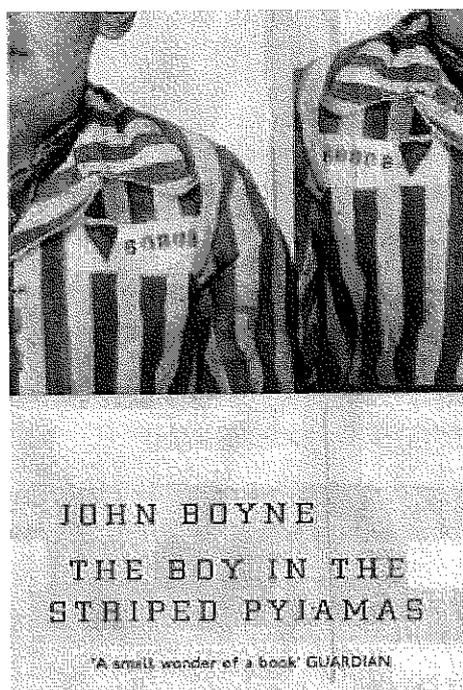
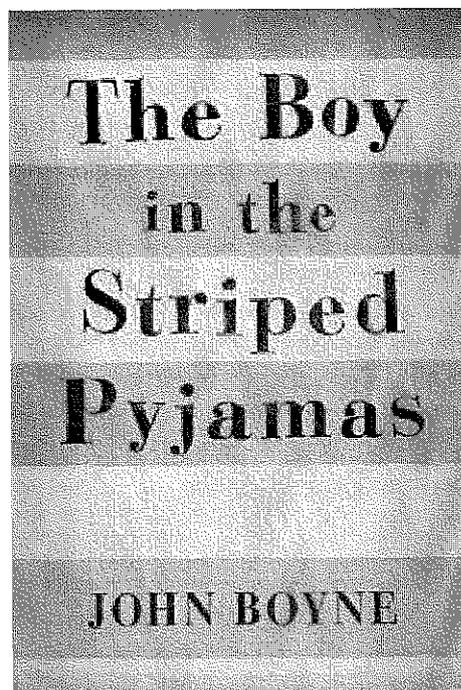
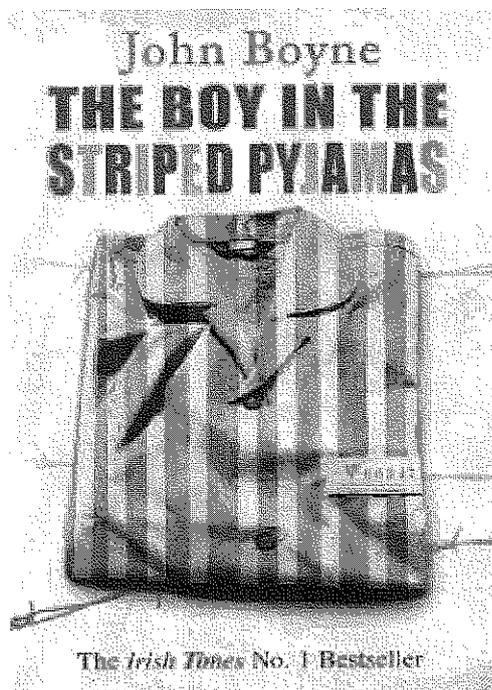


Covers for *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*



Blurbs for *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*

John Boyne says:

A book's blurb is very important to a reader. When he or she takes it down from the shelf in the bookshop it's what makes them decide to buy the book or not. When the novel was being prepared for publication I wrote the following blurb and sent it to my publisher:

When Bruno returns home from school one day, he is upset to discover that all his belongings are being packed in crates. His father has received a promotion at work and the family has to move from their luxurious home to a new city, where there is no one to play with and nothing to do. Worse still, the new house has a tall fence running alongside it that stretches as far as the eye can see and cuts him off from the children he can see in the distance on the other side.

But Bruno longs to be a great explorer like his heroes Amerigo Vespucci and Christopher Columbus and decides that there must be more to this desolate new place and sets off one day to see how far the fence runs. And it is while exploring that he meets another little boy whose life and circumstances are very different to his own.

This was a simple, to-the-point explanation of the story. At the same time, however, the book's publisher David Fickling wrote the following:

The story in this book is very difficult to describe. Usually we give some clues about the book on the jacket, but in this case we think that would spoil the reading of the book. We think it is important that you start to read without knowing what it is about.

If you do start to read this book, you will go on a journey with a nine-year-old boy called Bruno. (Though this isn't a book for nine-year-olds.) And sooner or later you will arrive with Bruno at a fence.

Fences like this exist all over the world. We hope you never have to encounter such a fence.

There was no question in my mind which was the stronger piece of writing. David's blurb was so in keeping with the story, with the mystery and horror at the centre of it, that it gave me a chill as I read it. Ultimately, although it was a bold and unusual piece of publishing, it was David's blurb which ended up on the book and which brought it so much attention.

Worksheet 1a

Opening and Predictions: Building a Case

We are going to focus on John Boyne's use of intrigue and mystery in his first two chapters. You will have noticed that he often only hints at certain details about Bruno's changing situation, without saying outright what is happening.

Working with a partner, try to answer these three crucial questions:

- 1 Why have Bruno's family suddenly moved house?
- 2 Who are the Fury and the beautiful blonde woman?
- 3 What does Father's new job appear to be?

You'll have to be a real reading detective, and focus on gathering hints and clues. Fill in your evidence, clues and conclusions below.

1 Why have Bruno's family suddenly moved house?

Evidence and clues:

Page number:

Our conclusion:

.....

2 Who are the Fury and the beautiful blonde woman?

Evidence and clues:

Page number:

Our conclusion:

.....

3 What does Father's new job appear to be?

Evidence and clues:

Page number:

Our conclusion:

.....

More Hints and Clues

What is the writer trying to achieve?

Look at the following **hints** and **clues**. Think about why John Boyne uses these particular words and phrases to describe people and places.

A hint from the writer...

Gretel has a few titles, such as 'The Hopeless Case' and 'Trouble From Day One' (page 21).

Why do you think John Boyne has Bruno call her this?

Another little clue...

Gretel calls their new home 'Out-With' (page 24).

Why do you think John Boyne chooses to have Gretel call the place this?
What does the name suggest to you?

Hinting through description...

The writer describes the house as 'hollow' and says 'it might collapse around their ears' on page 26.

What impression does this give of 'Out-With', and why do you think John Boyne uses this particular description?

Extract from Chapter 4

Everywhere they looked they could see people, tall, short, old, young, all moving around. Some stood perfectly still in groups, their hands by their sides, trying to keep their heads up, as a soldier marched in front of them, his mouth opening and closing quickly as if he were shouting something at them. Some were formed into a sort of chain gang and pushing wheelbarrows from one side of the camp to the other, appearing from a place out of sight and taking their wheelbarrows further along behind a hut, where they disappeared again. A few stood near the huts in quiet groups, staring at the ground as if it was the sort of game where they didn't want to be spotted. Others were on crutches and many had bandages around their heads. Some carried spades and were being led by groups of soldiers to a place where they could no longer be seen.

(page 36)

OHT 2c

Annotated Extract from Chapter 4

Emphasizes the number of prisoners ← *Everywhere they looked they could see people, tall, short, old, young, all moving around. Some stood perfectly still in groups, their hands by their sides,*
List includes all kinds of people

Weakness? ← *trying to keep their heads up, as a soldier marched in front of them, his mouth opening and closing quickly as if he were shouting something at them.*
Suggests distress or trauma

Like prisoners ← *Some were formed into a sort of chain gang and pushing wheelbarrows from one side of the camp to the other, appearing from a place out of sight and taking their wheelbarrows further along behind a hut, where they disappeared again. A few stood near the huts in quiet groups, staring at the ground as if it was*
Reader and Bruno wonder why

Irony – reader knows this is no game ← *the sort of game where they didn't want to be spotted. Others were on crutches and many had bandages around their heads. Some carried spades and were being led by groups of soldiers to a*
Mystery

Another mysterious disappearance ← *place where they could no longer be seen.*
Boredom? Fear? Hopelessness?

Emphasizes people's weak and sick condition

Again we wonder why

Strong sense of foreboding

Worksheet 2d**Hints of Danger**

In a pair, make notes on the following extract, showing which words and phrases hint at danger and how they achieve this.

‘Look over there,’ said Bruno, and Gretel followed the direction of the finger he was pointing and saw, emerging from a hut in the distance, a group of children huddled together and being shouted at by a group of soldiers. The more they were shouted at, the closer they huddled together, but then one of the soldiers lunged towards them and they separated and seemed to do what he wanted them to do all along, which was to stand in a single line. When they did, the soldiers all started to laugh and applaud them.

(page 37)

Your notes:

Readers' View

'I think that Bruno's innocence is the most effective part of the story. It's most powerful when you know he's misunderstood something (like the Nazi salute) and you yourself know what it really means. To me, that's very clever of John Boyne.'

Nadia, 14, Stafford

'I think that some of the conversations which Gretel and Bruno have at the beginning are a bit unbelievable. After all, Gretel is supposed to be one of the brightest pupils in her class and she thinks at the beginning that Out-With is their holiday home!'

Jack, 12, Glasgow

Worksheet 5a

Sentence Cards



In the distance he could see the gate **that led** to the road **that led** to the train station **that led** home, but the idea of going there, the idea of running away and being left on his own without anyone at all, was even more unpleasant to him than the idea of staying.

(Page 66)



...even the things he'd hidden at the back that belonged to him and were nobody else's business.

(Pages 1, 10, 39 and others)



Down from the top floor to the next one, where Mother and Father's room was, and the large bathroom, and where he wasn't supposed to be in any case.

Down to the next floor, where his own room was, and Gretel's room too, and the smaller bathroom which he was supposed to use more often than he really did.

Down to the ground floor, where you fell off the end of the banister and had to land flat on your two feet or it was five points against you and you had to start all over again.

(Page 9)



... they took one last look around the empty hallway where they had spent so many happy times, **the place where** the Christmas tree stood in December, **the place where** the wet umbrellas were left in a stand during the winter months, **the place where** Bruno was supposed to leave his muddy shoes when he came in but never did.

(Page 40)



Bruno's eyes opened wide and his mouth made the shape of an O. He felt his arms stretching out at his sides like they did whenever something surprised him.

(Pages 6-7)

Bruno's eyes opened wide, his mouth made the shape of an O and his arms stretched out at his sides once again.

(Page 11)

Bruno... assumed his customary pose of wide-open eyes, mouth in the shape of an O and arms stretched out by his sides.

(Page 45)

Worksheet 5b

Drama Cards



'... the same way that Father had taught Bruno to salute...'
Page 43

'Out Of Bounds At All Times And No Exceptions.' Page 44

'... for Father was not usually the type of man to give anyone a hug.' Page 45

'Bruno, sometimes there are things we need to do in life that we don't have a choice in... This is my work, important work. Important to our country. Important to the Fury. You'll understand that some day.' Page 48

'Do you think that I would have made such a success of my life if I hadn't learned when to argue and when to keep my mouth shut and follow orders? Well, Bruno? Do you?' Page 49

'Did you do something bad in work? I know that everyone says you're an important man and that the Fury has big things in mind for you, but he'd hardly send you to a place like this if you hadn't done something that he wanted to punish you for.' Page 50

'Who are all those people outside?' ... 'Ah, those people,' said Father, nodding his head and smiling slightly. 'Those people... well, they're not people at all, Bruno.' Pages 52–53

'*Heil Hitler*,' he said, which, he presumed, was another way of saying, 'Well, goodbye for now, have a pleasant afternoon.'
Page 54