

***The Boy in the Striped Pajamas*—Review/Study Questions**

Chapters 1-2

1. Why doesn't Bruno understand the nature of his father's job?
2. How does Bruno's mother feel about leaving the house in Berlin?
3. How does Bruno feel about his sister?
4. Why is Bruno reluctant to leave Berlin?
5. How does Bruno react to his new house?
6. How do Bruno and Maria react to the young soldier in the hall?
7. Why do you think Bruno's mother fails to tell her son the exact nature of his father's job?
8. Why do you think that looking out the window makes Bruno feel "very cold and unsafe"?
9. In literature the point of view refers to the person telling the story. It can be narrated by a character in the book or by the author. Sometimes even though the book is narrated by the author, it focuses on the thoughts and feelings of only one character. From this point of view, we observe the actions through the eyes of only one of the characters in the story. Who is telling the story? On whose thoughts and feelings does the narration focus? Why do you think the author chose this point of view?
10. In literature, the setting is the time and place in which a story occurs. Setting is especially important in a historical novel such as this one. What is the setting of this novel?
11. What details about the setting help make the characters' times and lifestyles seem real?

Chapters 3-5

1. How does Gretel feel about the new house?
2. Why does Gretel hesitate before looking out of Bruno's window?
3. Why is Gretel surprised when she looks out the window?
4. How are the children on the other side of the fence treated by the soldiers?
5. How does Gretel react to the children on the other side of the fence?
6. How were the two trains headed eastward from the station in Berlin different?
7. How does Bruno's father react to his son's desire to go home?
8. Why is it so difficult for Bruno and Gretel to understand the true nature of Auschwitz?.
9. How would you describe Bruno's relationship with his father? Do you think the Commandant is a good father?
10. What does Bruno's father mean when he says that the people on the other side of the fence are not people at all?

11. A simile is a figure of speech in which two unlike objects are compared using the words “like” or “as.” For example: “As they [the Nazi soldiers] left they stood in a row like toy soldiers.” What is being compared? What does the comparison suggest about Nazi soldiers?

12. A flashback is a scene or series of scenes showing events that happened at an earlier time. Indicate where the flashback begins and ends in Chapter 5. What purpose does this flashback serve?

Chapters 6-7

1. How does Maria react when Bruno calls his father stupid?

2. Why is Maria grateful to the Commandant?

3. What causes both Bruno and Gretel to feel uncomfortable with Lieutenant Kotler?

4. How does Pavel help Bruno after his accident?

5. Why is Bruno surprised to discover that Pavel is a doctor?

6. Maria says, “He has a lot kindness in his soul, truly he does, which makes me wonder...” If she were to finish the sentence, what might she say?

7. Do you think that Bruno’s father could be as kind a man as Maria describes and still be a Nazi officer?

8. Why is Maria so upset when Bruno keeps complaining that his father made a terrible mistake in coming to OutWith?

9. Do you agree with Maria that Bruno should keep his criticism to himself? Why or why not?

10. To what is Maria referring when she says that it is not up to her and Bruno to change things? Why do Bruno and Maria both feel like crying after she makes this statement?

11. What does Pavel mean when he tells Bruno that he thinks he has always been at Out-With?

12. Why does Bruno’s mother take credit for cleaning Bruno up after his fall? What does this suggest about her?

13. A metaphor is a figure of speech in which a comparison between two unlike objects is suggested or implied. For example: “If you ask me [Bruno], we’re all in the same boat. And it’s leaking.” What two things are being compared? What does Bruno mean when he makes this comparison?

Chapters 8-10

1. Why did the last play Bruno and Gretel performed with Grandmother end in disaster?

2. Why was Grandmother unimpressed with her son’s new uniform?

3. Why does Herr Liszt dislike storybooks?

4. Why does Bruno decide to explore to find out more about the people in the striped pajamas?

5. Why does Bruno think that Shmuel’s face is strange?

6. When Bruno states that he and Shmuel are like twins, why does Shmuel reply, "A little bit"?
7. What was the most likely cause of the argument between Bruno's father and Grandmother?
8. How do you think Bruno's father would define the word patriot? How might Grandmother's definition of the word be different?
9. Is Shmuel as naïve as Bruno? Explain by citing evidence.
10. What is the purpose of the flashback in Chapter 8?
11. What is being compared in the following metaphor? "I [Grandmother] was merely the blank wall to whom you [Grandfather] addressed your words? What does this reveal about the relationship between Bruno's grandparents?
12. Bruno thinks it is unfair that Shmuel has many friends while he has none. What does this observation reflect about Bruno? How is this statement in conflict with the actual situation that Shmuel is in?

Chapters 11-13

1. Why did Bruno think the Fury was the rudest guest he had ever witnessed?
2. How did the blonde woman show consideration for the children?
3. Reread pages 119-120. What extra ground rules does Bruno's father establish before the Fury's visit? Why do you think Bruno's father established extra ground rules for the children before the Fury's visit?
4. What do the fragments of conversation between Bruno's parents the night of the Fury's visit reveal about the move to Out-With?
5. How does Bruno reveal that he has no understanding of Shmuel's situation?
6. Why doesn't Bruno tell his parents about Shmuel?
7. How do Bruno and Shmuel disagree about soldiers?
8. Why is it impossible for Bruno to understand what is going on around him, even when Shmuel tries to explain it to him? Do you think this is believable?
9. On page 137, Bruno and Maria talk about Pavel. Maria tells him some information that she has heard from Pavel about his life. Based on the text, what do you think that Maria told Bruno about Pavel?
10. Why does Bruno foresee that catastrophe is going to strike on the night Lieutenant Kotler comes to dinner?
11. Why is Lieutenant Kotler reluctant to talk about his father? How does this arouse the Commandant's suspicions?
12. Why do you think that Bruno's father is concerned about Lieutenant Kotler's family history?
13. The author leaves Pavel's punishment up to the reader's imagination rather than describing in detail what Lieutenant Kotler does to him. What is the effect of this?

14. How does Bruno come out with the realization that he had better not disagree with anyone about anything at Out-With?

15. Why does the author use flashback in Chapter 11 to show what occurred when the Fury came to dinner? How would the effect have been different if this incident came at the very beginning of the book?

16. Although Bruno feels that Shmuel is like his twin, the boys are different in many ways. Use a Venn diagram to compare and contrast the two characters.

Chapters 14-15

1. Why does Bruno pretend that he has an imaginary friend?

2. How does talking about Shmuel to Gretel help Bruno understand his friend?

3. What signs reveal that Lieutenant Kotler is getting very close to Bruno's mother?

4. Why is Shmuel at Bruno's house?

5. How does Bruno inadvertently get Shmuel into trouble?

6. Why does Bruno fail to tell Lieutenant Kotler that he gave Shmuel the chicken?

7. Bruno says many things that demonstrate he does not understand at all how bad the conditions are at the concentration camp. Why do you think that Shmuel does not try harder to correct Bruno?

8. Is there any justification in Bruno denying his friendship with Shmuel?

9. Why does Shmuel forgive Bruno so easily for betraying him? What does this suggest about Shmuel?

Chapters 16-18

1. Why is Bruno happier about his life at Out-With?

2. Why does Bruno have a hard time understanding Gretel's explanation for the fence?

3. How does Bruno come to look more like Shmuel?

4. How does the Commandant become convinced that his wife should take the children back to Berlin?

5. Why is Shmuel particularly unhappy when he shows up at the fence after being absent for two days?

6. How does Bruno plan to get into the camp unnoticed?

7. Why does Bruno's plan to visit the camp seem "very sensible" to the two boys?

8. Why does Gretel give up her dolls and replace them with maps?

9. Why is Gretel unable to answer some of Bruno's questions? Do you think that Bruno's parents should give their children more information about Out-With?

10. An author's purpose may be to inform, entertain, or persuade the reader, or to express an idea. Sometimes the author has more than one purpose for writing a piece. What do you think is that author's main purpose in writing *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas*?

Chapters 19-20

1. How does the weather threaten Bruno's plans?
2. Why do the boys want to embrace when Bruno first appears on Shmuel's side of the fence?
3. How does the reality of the camp differ from the way Bruno imagined it?
4. Why doesn't Bruno leave when he sees what the camp is really like?
5. How is Bruno prevented from going home?
6. How does Bruno come to hold Shmuel's hand in the airtight room?
7. How do the members of Bruno's family react to his disappearance?
8. How does the Commandant come to the horrible realization of what happened to his son?
9. What has most likely happened to Shmuel's father? Why is the boy slow to realize this?
10. Why would nothing in the world have persuaded Bruno to let go of Shmuel's hand at the end of Chapter 19?
11. Who do you think is most responsible for Bruno's death?
12. Foreshadowing refers to clues that the author gives to suggest events that will occur later in the book. What events in the novel foreshadow Bruno's fate?