

Book Review: The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas

Author: John Boyne

The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas by John Boyne is truly an amazing yet daunting novel that I will never forget. I first read this book about 5 years ago in preparation for teaching year 6 and I certainly have no regrets. The author John Boyne did a masterful job of depicting the setting in such vivid detail and exposing the events in a manner that I felt a constant emotional pull as the story unfolded and impending doom lingered on the horizon. I feel the author did a grand job of juxtaposing two resounding themes in such a flawless manner; one being of the evil that was the Holocaust; against the second theme that of the innocence of a child.

I thought it was brilliant of Boyne to tell the story from the perspective of a nine-year-old German boy as you experience the events of this abominable and unthinkable time in history as a mere complicit bystander, which ultimately leaves you with a sense of hopelessness.

The story unfolds the day Bruno arrives home to discover his family is moving from Berlin to Auschwitz where his father will serve as a Commandant for the concentration camp. Bruno is forced to leave his three best friends for life and discovers that life in Auschwitz is lonely and desolate. All that changes the day he meets a boy his exact age and they begin to forge a friendship over the course of year. However, as much as he finds he and Schmel have in common, living on opposite sides of the fence proves to have a devastating consequence to their friendship.

Hats off to John Boyne for tackling a story through a unique perspective and presenting a poignant story that, as a reader, I willingly suspended my reality and experienced the events in a way that exposed my emotions and feelings to such a raw level.

Reviewed by: Mr. Newell