

PRE-READING QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

1. Preview the book by reading the title and the author's name and by looking at the illustration on the cover. What do you think this book is about? Will it be serious or humorous? When and where do you think it takes place?
2. **Cooperative Learning Activity:** Read the Background Information on page two of this study guide and do some additional research to find out more about the Holocaust. Then brainstorm with a small group of classmates to fill in the first two columns of a K-W-L chart, such as the one below. When you finish the book, return to the chart and complete the third column.

The Holocaust		
What I Know -K-	What I Want to Learn -W-	What I Learned -L-

3. **Social Studies Connection:** On a map of Europe and a globe, locate Germany and the city of Berlin, Poland and the city of Krakow, Denmark, and Switzerland, all places that are referred to in the book.
4. *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas* relates to the Nazis treatment of the Jews during the Holocaust. Make a list of books and movies that portray this tragic time in history. What purpose do these books and movies serve? Do you think it is important to continue to remember the Holocaust?
5. Have you read any other books about the Holocaust set in Europe during World War II? If so, when and where did these stories take place? What did you learn about life at the time?
6. How would you characterize the Nazis who carried out the persecution and murder of the Jews? Can you imagine that these same people might have been loving and kind to their families and friends? How might this make their crimes seem even more horrible?
7. **Cooperative Learning Activity:** Work with a small cooperative learning group to discuss the meaning of the word *prejudice*. What does the word mean to you? What causes it? How can it be prevented or overcome?

Pre-Reading Questions and Activities (cont.)

8. Although the story is fiction, it is based on historical facts. The characters in such a work of historical fiction may be fictional or historical or both. Discuss with your classmates other works of historical fiction they have read or seen in films and what periods of history they covered. What do you enjoy about this type of book? What challenges do you think an author faces when writing a work of historical fiction?
9. **Social Studies Connection:** As you read, create a time line from the year of Bruno's birth, 1934, through the end of the novel, 1945. Fill in important historical events relating to Hitler's Germany. Use events mentioned in the novel as well as significant events you find in an encyclopedia or history book.
10. Look at the title page at the beginning of the book and you will notice that the author calls this book a fable. A fable is one of the oldest literary forms. It is usually a short tale that teaches a moral, or lesson. The main characters, sometimes animals, are characterized quickly with a few broad strokes. One character usually displays a flaw that leads to a downfall. The conclusion leads directly to the moral. A fable is universal, cross-cultural, and ultimately, highlights what makes us human. As you read the novel, use this chart to provide examples of how it fits this genre.

Characteristics of a Fable	Examples from <i>The Boy in the Striped Pajamas</i>
Teaches a moral	
Main characters are broadly drawn	
One character displays a flaw that leads to a downfall	
Highlights what makes us human	

Pre-Reading Questions and Activities (cont.)

11. In the Anticipation Guide that follows, write *T* in the “Before Reading” column if the statement is true in your opinion. Write *F* if you feel the statement is false. After completing the book, mark your answers again in the “After Reading” column to see if your opinion has changed.

Statements	Before Reading	After Reading
1. It is difficult to adjust to living in a new place.		
2. When you see someone being mistreated, you should always try to help.		
3. Sometimes it is better not to know if something horrible is going on around you.		
4. It is difficult for children to see the faults of their parents.		
5. A person can be kind to some people and cruel to others.		
6. Betrayal of a friend is unforgivable.		
7. People are more alike than they are different.		
8. It is possible to judge someone even before you get to know that person as an individual.		

POST-READING QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

1. Return to the K-W-L chart that you began in the Pre-Reading Questions and Activities on page three of this study guide. Based on the knowledge you have gained, correct any errors and add new information to column three. Then compare your responses with those of your classmates.
2. Return to the Anticipation Guide in the Pre-Reading Questions and Activities on page five of this study guide. Fill in the “After Reading” column. Have any of your opinions changed?
3. Return to the character chart that you began on page fourteen of this study guide. Complete the chart and compare your responses with some of your classmates. Select one of Bruno’s characteristics and describe how he exhibited this trait throughout the novel.
4. Return to the conflict chart on page seventeen of this study guide. Are there any additional conflicts to add? Have all conflicts been resolved? If not, how do you think they will be resolved?
5. Do you agree with John Boyne’s decision to present the horrible events of the Holocaust through the eyes of a naive child? How does this decision affect the story?
6. Anti-Semitism and other forms of prejudice are constant issues. Discuss current news items describing incidents of prejudice. With your classmates, discuss ways these prejudices might be overcome.
7. There is a movie version of *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas*. Suppose that it is coming soon to a theater near you. Study the movie advertisements in your local newspaper and design an ad for the movie. In your ad, you might feature the part or parts of the story that you find most interesting or effective. Remember that the purpose of the ad is to make people want to see the film.
8. Although Shmuel is a fictional character, many children suffered in concentration camps during World War II. Some of the children’s poems and drawings appear in the book *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*. Locate this book in your library. Read the poems and look at the drawings. What were the children feeling? What did they hope for? In what ways were their feelings and hopes like yours? In what ways were they different?
9. In your library locate books about the period and places mentioned in *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas*. In these books find photos that might represent various characters and scenes in the novel. Make copies of these photos. Then write captions identifying the characters and scenes shown in the photos.

Post-Reading Questions and Activities (cont.)

10. **Literature Circle:** Have a literature circle discussion in which you tell your personal reactions to *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas*. Here are some questions and sentence starters to help your literature circle begin a discussion.
- Which character is most like you? How?
 - How realistic are the characters? Do any remind you of people you know?
 - Which character did you like the most? The least?
 - Who else would you like to have read this book? Why?
 - What questions would you like to ask the author about this novel?
 - It was not fair when . . .
 - I would have liked to see . . .
 - I didn't understand . . .
 - I wonder . . .
 - I thought Bruno was being foolish when . . .
 - I thought Bruno showed wisdom when . . .
 - Bruno learned that . . .

The Boy in the Striped Pajamas

by *John Boyne*

Available on [Amazon](#)