

The boy in the striped pyjamas summary per chapter

Chapter 1

When nine-year-old Bruno comes home from school one day, he is surprised to find the maid, Maria, packing up all his belongings. He tries to remember if he has done anything "particularly naughty" in the past few days that would warrant him being sent away as a punishment. He asks his mother, "a tall woman with long red hair that she bundle[s] into a sort of net behind her head," what is going on. He is somewhat relieved to notice that her things are being packed, too, by Lars the Butler.

Chapter 2

To Bruno's extreme disappointment, everything about the family's new residence is the exact opposite of the beloved home in Berlin. The new house is the only building standing in "an empty, desolate place," and it is small, having only three stories instead of five. All of the bedrooms are crammed together on the top floor, the servants sleep in the basement, and the ground floor contains a kitchen, a dining room, and an office for Father, which Bruno assumes is governed by the same stern restrictions as the office back in Berlin.

Chapter 3

Bruno's sister, Gretel, at age twelve, is three years older than him. He is "a little scared of her"; from as far back as he can remember, she has made it clear that she is in charge. Gretel has always been a challenge to her other family members-Bruno thinks of her as The Hopeless Case, and he has heard his parents refer to her as "Trouble From Day One."

Chapter 4

Directly below Bruno's window is a small, well-tended garden with pavement surrounding it and a wooden bench highlighted by a plaque. Further out, however, the scenery changes drastically, and it is this sight that so astonishes Gretel when she looks out of the window.

About twenty feet past the garden and the bench is a huge fence topped with bales of barbed wire extending as far as the eye can see. The ground beyond the fence is barren, and there are dozens of low huts and large, square buildings with smoke stacks.

Chapter 5

Bruno reflects upon his final morning in Berlin. The house had looked empty, "not like their real home at all." Father had already left the city a few days earlier, and Bruno remembers that his mother had been very nervous. With tears in her eyes, she had said abstractedly: "We should never have let the Fury come to dinner...some people and their determination to get ahead!"

Chapter 6

Out of boredom a few days later, Bruno is lying on his bed staring at the ceiling when he notices the paint above his head is cracked and peeling. This observation only adds to his unhappiness with his new home. He decides petulantly that he "hate[s] it all...absolutely everything." At this point, Maria the maid walks in carrying a stack of laundered clothes. Bruno attempts to strike up a conversation with her, asking her if she is as dissatisfied with their new living arrangements as he is.

Chapter 7

After several weeks at Out-With, Bruno concludes that he had better find a way to keep himself occupied or else he will surely lose his mind. One Saturday, when neither Mother nor Father is at home, he decides to make a swing in a large oak tree a good distance from the house. For this project, Bruno will need a rope and a tyre. He finds some rope in the basement of the house, but to secure a tyre he will have to ask Lieutenant Kotler.

Chapter 8

Bruno misses his paternal grandparents terribly. Grandfather, who is retired from his job running a restaurant, is seventy-three years old and, in Bruno's estimation, is "just about the oldest man in the world." Grandmother, in contrast, is sixty-two; to Bruno, she "never seem[s] old." Grandmother has long, red hair and green eyes because of Irish blood somewhere in her family. She loves to have parties and is an accomplished singer; one of her favorite pieces to perform is *La Vie en Rose*.

Chapter 9

As time passes, Bruno's memories of home start to fade and he begins to adjust to his life at Out-With. Things remain pretty much the same: Gretel is "less than friendly" to him as usual and the soldiers go into and out of Father's office for meetings every day. The servants continue with their jobs, and Lieutenant Kotler still acts as if he owns the place; when Father is not there, he spends his time flirting with Gretel or "whispering alone in rooms with Mother."

Chapter 10

Bruno walks along the fence for the better part of an hour. He does not see anyone or any opening that will allow him to cross over to the other side. Just when he is about to turn back, he spies a boy sitting in the dirt on the other side of the fence, "minding his own business, waiting to be discovered." Cautiously, Bruno approaches him and says hello.

The boy is smaller than Bruno and wears the same striped pajamas as all the other people who live beyond the fence. When he hears Bruno's voice, he looks up.

Chapter 11

This chapter goes back to describe an evening in Berlin several months earlier, when the Fury comes to Bruno's house and everything changes. Father returns home one day in "a

state of great excitement" and announces that the Fury has invited himself to dinner on Thursday, two days from now, because he has something of great importance to discuss with Father. Bruno asks, "Who's the Fury?" Father responds by telling him he is pronouncing the name wrong and proceeds to pronounce it correctly for him.

Chapter 12

Bruno has asked Shmuel why there are so many people on his side of the fence and what they are doing there; Shmuel reflects upon his past in searching for an answer. He recalls that before he came there, he had lived with his parents and brother in a small flat in Cracow. Shmuel's father had been a watchmaker and had given him a beautiful watch that was taken away by the soldiers.

Shmuel's idyllic life began to unravel when his mother made an armband with a star on it for each member of the family, and they had to wear it whenever they left the house.

Chapter 13

Every afternoon, after his lessons are finished, Bruno takes the long walk along the fence and spends time talking to his new friend, Shmuel. One day as he is filling his pockets with food from the kitchen for his daily excursion, he notices the piles of vegetables waiting for Pavel to peel and is reminded of a question that has been bothering him. In confidence, Bruno asks Maria why Pavel told him he was a doctor on the day he fell from the swing. Maria is startled and at first lies, but she is clearly troubled.

Chapter 14

Bruno continues to meet Shmuel by the fence in the afternoons. He asks every day if he can come over to Shmuel's side so they can play together, but Shmuel says:

I don't know why you're so anxious to come across here.... It's not very nice.

Bruno complains the difficulties of his own living conditions and even expresses envy over the advantages he thinks Shmuel has over him, which shows that he has absolutely no understanding of what life is like on the other side of the fence.

Chapter 15

Father's birthday is coming up, and Mother is planning a party for him with Lieutenant Kotler's help. Repulsed by the soldier's presence, Bruno decides to make a list of all the reasons why he hates him. The lieutenant never smiles, and Gretel flirts with him shamelessly. Also, when Father is away, the young soldier is always around the house with Mother, acting "as if he [is] in charge." Sometimes he is there when Bruno goes to bed and is back before he gets up again in the morning. One time Bruno saw Lieutenant Kotler shoot a dog that was barking outside.

Chapter 16

Almost a year has passed since Bruno and his family moved to Out-With. Grandmother dies, and the family must return to Berlin for her funeral. Bruno had missed his home acutely when they first had to relocate, but in the intervening time his memories of life in Berlin have slowly faded, and the two days they spend back home are very sad. Father is particularly remorseful because he and Grandmother had fought before she died and never made it up.

Chapter 17

In the weeks after the discovery of lice in the children's hair, Mother's unhappiness with life at Out-With becomes increasingly noticeable. Bruno understands her situation perfectly because he remembers how lonely he had been before he had found Shmuel to talk to. Mother has no one, especially now that Lieutenant Kotler has been transferred away. One afternoon, Bruno overhears an especially vehement "conversation" between his mother and father. Mother declares that she "can't stand it anymore," and although Father argues that they "don't have any choice" because of the gossip that will spread.

Chapter 18

Shmuel does not show up at their usual meeting place for a few days, and Bruno is worried that he will have to leave Out-With without saying good-bye. Finally, on the third day, Shmuel is there again at the fence, but he looks "even more unhappy than usual." He tells Bruno that something bad has happened and his father is missing. According to Shmuel, his father had gone Monday on "work duty with some other men"; inexplicably, none of them have returned.

Chapter 19

On the day of Bruno and Shmuel's scheduled "great adventure," it rains heavily in the morning, and Bruno worries that he will not be able to see his friend before leaving for Berlin. Fortunately, the weather improves in the afternoon, and Bruno is able to make his way down the fence to their regular meeting place. When he arrives, Bruno finds Shmuel waiting for him with an extra pair of striped pajamas "exactly like the one he [is] wearing." Bruno tells Shmuel to turn his back then he Bruno strips off his own clothes and dons the striped pajamas.

Chapter 20

After the incident on the other side of the fence, Bruno is never seen or heard from again. His parents are frantic when he does not return home that day, and soldiers are sent out immediately to search "every part of the house and...all the local towns and villages." Mother, who had been so happy about returning to Berlin, ends up staying at Out-With for several more months, hoping for news of her son. Eventually, she decides that he must have made his way back home to Berlin by himself, and she goes to wait for him there.

ACTIVITIES

1. Look for information about the author John Boyne.
2. Who's hidden under the name of "The Fury"? Justify your answer
3. What place is "Out-With" in the real world?
4. Read chapter twelve (complete) and explain the difference between Bruno and Sh'muel
5. Read chapter nineteen and twenty (complete) and explain why Bruno's family couldn't find him.
6. What have you learnt from this story?

The Boy in the Striped Pajamas

by [John Boyne](#)

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