Summer Holiday Reading 2021

The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas

For our reading classes together over the summer holidays, we will be exploring each book in three lessons, with the first offering a general overview, the second delving into the stylistic and narrative elements of the writing and the final lesson offering a closer, more thorough examination of the text itself through the use of close textual analysis and with particular attention paid to literary techniques and structural devices. These lessons are designed to help the students develop new frameworks through which to read and understand literature, equipping them with the vocabulary with which to discuss themes, genre and morals.

*Lesson 1:* **Introduction to *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas***

In lesson 1 we will focus on discussing the context and history behind the book, thinking about why the Holocaust is important to learn about. They will be able to evaluate their own feelings and opinions on the novel through this lens, thinking about why this is a book that is taught in schools all over the world. We will consider the testimony of Holocaust survivors, thinking about the central relationship between Bruno and Shmuel and why it would have been forbidden. We will consider the key themes and ideas explored in the novel and think about the moral of the story and what it meant to be Jewish in Hitler’s Germany/ occupied Poland. We will look at the historical atrocities associated with concentration camps, and learn about the institution Bruno’s dad is a part of, the SS. We will think about the genre of historical fiction and whether this book faithfully fulfils that genre, thinking about the background of the author and why he might have chosen to write a book such as this one. This lesson is designed to keep the students a firm grasp of the important history behind the story and consider why stories of the oppressed are such an important literary genre.

*Lesson 2:* **Exploring Style and Narrative**

In lesson 2 we will dive further into the novel, thinking about the genre, characterisation and structure of the plot. We will consider the question of how the book fits in with the ancient genre of tragedy and study the shocking plot twist at the end of the book. The students will be asked to think about the characters and the relationship between them, questioning how Bruno looks at his father- particularly in light of the ending- and writing a speech addressed to him, persuading him to reconsider his actions. We will also look at the acts of small rebellion (i.e., the maid, Mother), and link these up to their historical counterparts, trying to address the notion of how one can rebel in a totalitarian state. Finally, we will track the following motifs throughout the book: the guilty observer, exploration, and power/control. This lesson aims to give the students a solid grounding in the thematic and narrative landscape of the novel, considering how the story weaves in and out of historical fiction, and looking at the way in which the author structures the plot to keep the reader guessing, building suspense right up until the shocking, and harrowing ending.

*Lesson 3:* **Close Textual Analysis**

In lesson 3 we will be focusing on developing the students’ analytical skills, looking at closely analysing the text of the novel. The class will be asked to analyse and evaluate how the narrative perspective of the novel blinkers the reader, looking at Bruno’s misunderstandings- i.e., ‘Out-With’- and how they obscure the terrible truth. We will work on picking apart the key literary elements in the novel, considering parallelism, word-play, irony and symbolism, and thinking about their effect on the way the story unfolds. The class will also have a chance to collaborate as a group in this lesson in creatively re-imagining parts of the novel, thinking about how to mirror Boynes’ style whilst also putting their own innovative twist on his writing and ideas. This lesson will teach the class to read literature as both the audience and writer, analysing and explicating in equal measure, in order to develop their relationship with reading and understanding the deeper meaning beneath the novel’ssurface.