

The Boy in the Striped Pajamas

~ A Movie Study ~



**By
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Auschwitz: Killing Grounds

Auschwitz concentration camp was a network of concentration and extermination camps built and operated by Nazi Germany in occupied Poland during World War II. It was the largest of the German concentration camps, consisting of three main camps and 45 satellite camps.



Auschwitz was designated by Heinrich Himmler, Germany's Minister of the Interior, as the place of the "final solution of the Jewish question in Europe". From early 1942 until late 1944, transport trains delivered Jews and other "undesirables" to the camp's gas chambers from all over Nazi-occupied Europe. The camp's first commandant, **Rudolf Höss**, testified at his trial after the war that more than three million people were murdered there (2.5 million gassed, and 500,000 from disease and starvation). Since then this figure has been revised to 1.3 million, around 90 percent of them Jews. Others deported to Auschwitz included 150,000 Poles, 23,000 Roma and Sinti, 15,000 Soviet prisoners of war, some 400 Jehovah's Witnesses and tens of thousands of people of diverse nationalities.

On January 27, 1945, Auschwitz was liberated by Soviet troops. This day is commemorated around the world as International Holocaust Remembrance Day. A museum was founded on this site in 1947, which sees 1,300,000 visitors pass through the gates each year.

Check out: *Holocaust Websites* - <http://www.wcupa.edu/academics/holocaust/hweb.htm>

The Real Commandant: Rudolf Höss

Rudolf Franz Ferdinand Höss was born 25 November 1900, the eldest of three children. He fought bravely in the German army in World War I and was wounded three times. On 17 August 1929, he married Hedwig Hensel (3 March 1908–1989). They had five children together, two sons and three daughters. He joined the Nazi Party in 1922 and the SS in 1934. Höss murdered a French schoolteacher who had killed a German terrorist and served five years in prison. Later, he helped beat a suspected Communist to death. He was an SS-Lieutenant Colonel from 4 May 1940 to November 1943 and was appointed first commandant of Auschwitz concentration camp in 1940. After visiting Treblinka extermination camp to study its methods of human extermination, Höss, began perfecting the techniques of mass killing that made Auschwitz the most efficiently murderous instrument of the Final Solution. Höss was hanged in 1947 following his trial in Warsaw.



Anne Frank: An Auschwitz casualty
Check out: Anne Frank - <http://www.annefrank.org/>



THE CAST

Directed by Mark Herman

Writing Credits – John Boyne (novel)

- Mark Herman (screenplay)



Asa Butterfield	... Bruno
Zac Mattoon O'Brien	... Leon
Domonkos Németh	... Martin
Henry Kingsmill	... Karl
Vera Farmiga	... Mother
Cara Horgan	... Maria
Zsuzsa Holl	... Berlin Cook
Amber Beattie	... Gretel
László Áron	... Lars
David Thewlis	... Father
Richard Johnson	... Grandpa
Sheila Hancock	... Grandma
Charlie Baker	... Palm Court Singer
Iván Verebély	... Meinberg
Béla Fesztbaum	... Schultz
Attila Egyed	... Heinz
Rupert Friend	... Lieutenant Kotler
David Hayman	... Pavel
Jim Norton	... Herr Liszt
Jack Scanlon	... Shmuel
László Nádasi	... Isaak
László Quitt	... Kapo 1
Mihály Szabados	... Kapo 2
Zsolt Sáfár Kovács	... Kapo 3 Sonderkommando

The Stars

Asa Butterfield – was born 1 April 1997 in London, England. Other than his starring role in *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* (2008), he played Norman in the 2010 film *Nanny McPhee and the Big Bang*, and had the title role in the Oscar-winning 2011 fantasy *Hugo*. He will also be portraying Ender Wiggin in the upcoming film adaptation of the science fiction novel *Ender's Game*. He has an older brother, Morgan, who is a drummer for the English band "Oats," and a younger sister, Loxie. Asa enjoys school, friends, piano, squash, and his cats. He enjoys reading and playing computer games in his spare time.



Jack Scanlon – was born 6 August 1998 in Canterbury, England and presently lives in Deal, Kent with his parents and younger brother. He is a cub scout and a fan of Aldershot Town FC. Jack auditioned for *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas* through his drama club and was cast as Shmuel after director Mark Herman narrowed his choice down to three possible candidates and paired each with Asa Butterfield for a final audition together. Although *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas* is Scanlon's feature film debut, he appeared in a 10-minute short film title *The Eye of the Butterfly* and also played the younger brother of main character Sean (William Miller) in the 2009 British children's miniseries *Runaway*.



Amber Beattie was born on 22 July 1993 in London, England. She is the middle child with an older sister and younger brother. Amber is an English actress and singer, who is known for her role as Lulu Baker in *Jinx*. She attends Stoke Newington Arts and Media College where she is on the school council and is very athletic; she swims with a local club, and is a member of her school cross-country running team. She also loves riding her pony. Drama and English are Beattie's favorite subjects and she has won school awards for imaginative writing. She plays the flute in the school orchestra and sings in the choir.



Scene Synopsis

1. OPENING CREDITS

QUOTE: *Childhood is measured out by sounds and smells and sights, before the dark hour of reason grows.* (John Betjeman)



- Carefree boys running in the street
- Large mansion / expensive-looking car
- The dated dress informs audience that it takes place in the past
- Contrast: Appearance of uniformed German soldiers with dogs
- People being herded in back of trucks roughly by soldiers

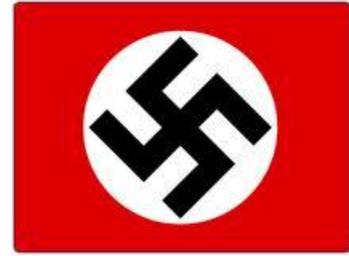
2. A NEW BEGINNING

- **BEGINS WHEN BOY ENTERS HOUSE AND SPEAKS WITH MOTHER**
- Crisis: the family is moving from the city (Berlin)
- *If your country needs you to go somewhere you go* (Dad)
- Big party – conversation with grandparents – “Heil Hitler!”
- Martial tune is played when Bruno’s dad comes down the stairs
- Grandpa is proud of his son (Bruno’s dad)
- The grandmother has reservations about her son’s role, the uniform etc.
- Song – “you’ve got to smile when you say goodbye...” - while the boys are pretending to shoot guns

3. MOVING DAY

- **BEGINS WITH A TRAIN IN THE DISTANCE BELCHING SMOKE**
- Train trip – coal-powered locomotive
- Children saying their prayers
- Car with Nazi flags on front takes them to their new home
- Home is an austere grey mansion
- Introduces **Maria** – the maid – “it’s not for me to say” = favorite saying
- Meets **Lieutenant Kotler**
- Bruno is bored – he looks out the window and sees buildings in distance
- he thinks it is a farm with children and wants to play with them
- the children look a bit strange
- Tired-looking man comes into the house with a tray of vegetables (**Pavel**)

CHECKING FOR DETAIL



SCENE 1

QUOTE: *Childhood is measured out by sounds and smells and sights, before the dark hour of reason grows.* (John Betjeman)

- Discuss quote. How else can time be measured out?
- What is "the dark hour of reason"? What is another way of describing adulthood?
- If children could sit down with a group of world leaders, what advice might they offer these adults?
- Why do many adults regard their childhood as the best time of their lives?
- Investigate: Who was John Betjeman? Write a brief synopsis of his life.

Setting of the Scene

1. What is significant about the building shown in the opening camera shot? What does this tell you about the setting of this movie in terms of the time and place?
2. The movie is set in the early 1940's. Since then the style of clothing has changed quite a bit. Examine the clothing worn by Bruno and his two friends and describe any changes you notice.
3. Investigate: Automobiles of the 1940s. Bruno's family are quite wealthy. We get a taste of this in the opening scenes by being introduced to Bruno's home and the car his mother is being driven in (by a chauffeur). This car appears to be a Mercedes-Benz 260 D. Using resources in your school library or on the Internet, research this automobile manufacturer and relate three interesting facts you uncovered.
4. As Bruno rushes home he passes a number of people being hustled into an army truck by some soldiers. With a small group discuss who these unfortunate people might be and where the German soldiers might be taking them. What does the presence of a couple of mean German Shepherds also reveal about this scene?

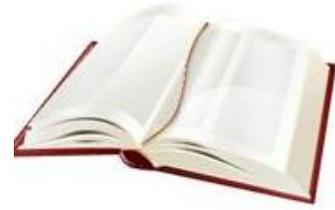
Comparing the Movie and the Book



Both the novel and movie version of *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas* were huge hits with readers and movie-goers. Despite the remarkable job done by the producers of the movie version, it is still impossible to include all of the events described in John Boyne’s novel. The rendition of any novel to a movie format is also open to the interpretations of the producers of the movie. Your task is to choose three scenes from either the novel or movie. Then compare the similarities and differences of these three scenes between the novel and the movie. Finally indicate which version you preferred – and why.

Event	Similarities	Differences	Your Preference/Why

Answers – Checking For Detail



Scene 1

Answers will vary.

Sir John Betjeman

Was an English poet (1906-1984). A student of C.S. Lewis at Oxford University. He served as an intelligence officer in Ireland during World War II. He wrote more than a dozen books including several books of poems. Many of his poems were humorous. He was also a founder of the Victorian Society.

1. It was flying three Nazi flags indicating the film was shot during the time the Nazis ruled Germany (1933-1945).
2. *Answers will vary.*
3. *Answers will vary.*
4. *Answers will vary* (i.e. these are probably Jews or some other group of people considered “undesirable” by the Nazis).
5. *Answers will vary* (i.e. leaving family and friends; moving to an unfamiliar new place).

Scene 2: A New Beginning

1. His father has received a promotion.
2. *Answers will vary.*
3. They seem to have a loving, respectful relationship at this point in the story. They do seem to have their children’s interests in mind.
4. Jazz.
5. Disapproval of the Nazis and Bruno’s father’s role.
6. Her disagreement of the Nazis and their policies.
7. He is proud of his son’s accomplishments and has no apparent qualms regarding the Nazis.
8. The lyrics urge the people to “Smile as you say goodbye”, contrasting the sombre mood of those in the scene. The children don’t realize at this point that they will never see their grandmother again.

Scene 3: Moving Day

1. The distance is about 550 km (342 miles). About 8.5 hours.
2. *Answers will vary.* It seems bleaker and more austere.
3. She probably doesn’t want to say something that will get her in to trouble with Bruno’s parents or the Nazi authorities.
4. *Answers will vary* (i.e. very austere and rude; high opinion of himself; a bully).
5. Loneliness.