

Form III Book Report

By Mark Russell

I read 'The Boy In the Striped Pyjamas' by John Boyne. This book is about an eight year-old German boy, during World War Two, named Bruno. His Father is a high ranking SS officer and, after a visit from Adolf Hitler, his family must move to live beside Auschwitz concentration camp. 'The Boy In the Striped Pyjamas' is the main book that I am going to write about. I also read 'The Wave' by Todd Strasser under the pen name Morton Rhue. This book is about a High School teacher in America who decides to conduct an experiment to show his students what it would have been like to live in Nazi Germany. In this book report I am going to compare 'The Wave' to 'The Boy In the Striped Pyjamas'. Both books deal with fascist regimes, but in different ways. In 'The Boy In the Striped Pyjamas', aspects of the Nazi regime in Germany are shown through the eyes of a child; in 'The Wave' there is a re-creation of what life under the Nazis might have been like.

The main character in 'The Boy In the Striped Pyjamas' is Bruno. Bruno is an eight year-old German boy who, at the start of the book, is living in a comfortable townhouse in Berlin. Bruno lives in Berlin with his mother, father and sister Gretel. Bruno's father is a high-ranking officer in the SS and one day he receives a visit from Adolf Hitler- the Führer, whom Bruno calls the Fury because he can't pronounce Führer properly. As a result of this visit from Adolf Hitler, Bruno and his family must move house from the city that he has always known to a house in the middle of the countryside. This seems to Bruno to be a huge change in his life. What Bruno does not realise in his childhood innocence, however, is that he is now living beside the infamous Auschwitz Concentration Camp. Bruno eventually makes friends with a Jewish boy whom he meets, despite constantly being separated from each other by an enormous fence. Bruno can't understand why the other people all live on one side of the fence and why they all are wearing the same striped pyjamas. Bruno is completely unaware of the hatred of the Jewish race by many of the German people, and of the atrocities committed by the Nazis, including his own father, against the Jews.

One of the main characters in 'The Wave' is Ben Ross. Ben Ross is a history teacher in an American High School called Gordon High. One day Ben shows his class a short film about Nazi Germany in one of their classes. The film explains about the horrors of the holocaust and how so many people in Germany just followed orders blindly. The students cannot believe that people would follow orders in that way and they say that nothing like that could ever possibly happen again. Ben then decides to conduct an experiment to simulate what it might have been like for the Germans. This includes salutes, mottos and symbols. He calls the movement "The Wave". However, very soon Ben realises that "The Wave" s

starting to get out of control.

Bruno, the main character in 'The Boy In the Striped Pyjamas', is a very innocent young boy. He lives right beside a concentration camp that his father, an SS officer, runs. Despite living beside a large group of segregated people who are thought of as a lesser race by his family and country, all Bruno sees is a bunch of people all wearing pyjamas. He also seems to be quite an adventurous boy and he says that he wants to be an explorer when he grows up. When he arrives at his new home, Bruno starts exploring every corner of the house in search of something to do or something interesting. As well as that, after he has finished exploring all of the house, Bruno starts with the grounds outside. It is after following the large fence separating Bruno from the Jews that he discovers his new Jewish friend, Shmuel. It also shows how friendly Bruno is that he is able to make friends with Shmuel so quickly after meeting him.

In 'The Wave', the character Ben Ross is actually based on an American history teacher named Ron Jones. 'The Wave' is based on events that happened in Cubberley High School in California. Ben appears to get carried away with things very easily. We are told this very directly when Ben's wife starts to remind him about how his projects can very often take over his life. Also Ben can be quite a stubborn character because he continues on with the experiment despite being told by several people that he should stop. I think that Ben Ross is a believable character. Quite early on we are told a lot about him and his attitude towards teaching. I also think that Ben Ross is the only character in 'The Wave' who is written about in enough depth. The other characters seem to me to be very superficial in comparison.

'The Boy In the Striped Pyjamas' is mainly set in the house beside Auschwitz Concentration Camp. I find this different to many other books as I have never read a book set in such a specific real place. I think that the setting is portrayed in a very unusual way; everything is depicted in a way that a child might look at things. Some minor things such as a small window that Bruno focuses all his attention on or a collection of dolls that he is suspicious of are set out in more detail than would be expected. They are the things that might be more important or interesting to a young child. The broader picture throughout the book is also very good. The author makes it easy to imagine the scenes and become engaged in the book.

'The Wave' is set in an American high school in 1969. The description in 'The Wave' seems to be quite the opposite of 'The Boy In the Striped Pyjamas'. I don't think that the setting is described very well. There is nothing unique about the school and it is easy to imagine any generic American High School. The author may have written the book that way on purpose however. It is easy to think that the school is like any other normal school, and that the events of the book could have taken place in any school. In general, I think that I would have preferred if there had been more detailed descriptions in the book. I also think that in that aspect I prefer 'The Boy In the Striped Pyjamas' to 'The Wave'.

'The Boy In the Striped Pyjamas' is written in the third person. Even though it is written in the third person, we only see things from Bruno's point of view. We do not see anything in the book that he does not. We get a different view on the concentration camps. This is a topic often written about, but this is the only book that I have come across that tells us about it through the eyes of a child. I find it very interesting to read a book from the point of view of a child trying to understand concentration camps and the German people's attitude towards the Jews. I think that 'The Boy In the Striped Pyjamas' is a very well written book. The plot is not very complicated but I wanted to keep reading mostly just because I enjoyed reading the book. The book did not really make me wonder what was going to come next.

I think that the main idea and plot in 'The Wave' are very clever. I find the whole idea of how Ben Ross is able to get his students to act as they do very interesting. In comparison to 'The Boy In the Striped Pyjamas', I do not think the description in the book is very good. Many of the characters are not developed very well. We do not know a huge amount about them and what their personalities are like. They are described quite superficially. The plot seems to be thought out very well. It made me want to keep reading the book because I wanted to find out what happened in the end. I did not enjoy reading 'The Wave' that much because, in contrast to 'The Boy In the Striped Pyjamas', I did not think that the book was very easy to read. It felt like a chore to read through it.

I think that one of the most important moments in 'The Boy In the Striped Pyjamas' is when Bruno looks out the window and sees the concentration camp for the first time. Bruno immediately knows that there is something terrible about the place but he does not understand it. It is also the first time that we know that the house is beside a concentration camp. It is not plainly stated but, from the description of the desperate looking people wearing striped "pyjamas", the high barbed wire covered fences, low buildings and the soldiers ordering people about, the reader quickly realises what Bruno is looking at.

I think that one of the most important moments in 'The Wave' is the morning after Ben starts his experiment. Usually, the majority of his class would have straggled into class late. That morning, however, when Ben enters the classroom it is different. All of his students are sitting calmly and straight-backed, just the way he showed them the previous day, in rows of desks. This is important because this is the moment when Ben decides to take the experiment further. It shows him that "The Wave" can do something to the children and that it will be possible to continue with the experiment.

In one way, these two moments are similar in that they are both moments of realization. The difference between them is that in 'The Boy In the Striped Pyjamas' the realization is mostly the reader's while in 'The Wave', it is a major realization for Ben.

The ending to 'The Boy In the Striped Pyjamas', I thought, was very abrupt. I expected the story to continue on a little longer than it did. The story

seems to be cut short. It ends quite suddenly when Bruno's life, too, is cut short. It is really sad that the young boy is in the middle of having the adventure that he always wanted when, tragically, he is killed, along with hundreds of Jews, on the orders of his own father. There is not really anything left to wonder about after the book as we are told the repercussions of Bruno's disappearance and what his parents did after he didn't return home. I thought it was interesting to note that the last chapter in the book is the only chapter where we are told something other than what Bruno knows, for obvious reasons. I usually prefer in books when everything is not wrapped up neatly because it gives me something to wonder about. I didn't mind it in though in 'The Boy In the Striped Pyjamas'. I still thought that it ended well. Even though there was nothing to imagine might happen, I was left with a lot of thoughts mainly about the concentration camps but also the terrible things that mankind can do in general.

'The Wave' ends with the Gordon High students realizing the change they have undergone during the experiment. Ben organises an assembly and he tells the students that he is going to show them a picture of their leader. He then projects, onto the wall, a giant picture of Adolf Hitler. The students then suddenly know what "The Wave" has become. It is a fascist movement that has spread through the school. Ben has shown them what they have become and what they were headed for. Like in 'The Boy In the Striped Pyjamas', most things are neatly tied up in the end, with the exception of one boy who we are told seems lost with no idea what to do. I preferred the ending of 'The Boy In the Striped Pyjamas' to 'The Wave'. After I read 'The Wave' I stopped thinking about the book quite quickly, whereas thoughts from 'The Boy In the Striped Pyjamas' kept going through my head. 'The Boy In the Striped Pyjamas' kept me thinking.

I would recommend these books to anybody, but I would also say that it is important to know a bit about the Nazis and fascism before reading them. Overall I think that 'The Boy In the Striped Pyjamas' is a better book than 'The Wave'. I enjoyed the story more and I think it flows a lot better.