Krzysztof Rybak, "Entry on: Boy in the Striped Pyjamas by John Boyne", peer-reviewed by Elżbieta Olechowska and Susan Deacy. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2018). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/205. Entry version as of October 30, 2026.

John Boyne

Boy in the Striped Pyjamas

United Kingdom (2006)

TAGS: Erinyes Furies





We are still trying to obtain permission for posting the original cover.

General information	
Title of the work	Boy in the Striped Pyjamas
Country of the First Edition	United Kingdom
Country/countries of popularity	United Kingdom
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2006
First Edition Details	John Boyne, *Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*. Oxford: David Fickling Books, 2006, 215 pp.
ISBN	038560940X
Genre	Historical fiction, Novels, War fiction
Author of the Entry	Krzysztof Rybak, University of Warsaw, rybak.km@gmail.com
Peer-reviewer of the Entry	Elżbieta Olechowska, University of Warsaw, elzbieta.olechowska-@gmail.com Susan Deacy, University of Roehampton, S.Deacy@roehampton.ac.uk

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

Creators



John Boyne , b. 1971
(Author)

John Boyne was born in Dublin, Ireland. He studied English Literature at Trinity College in Dublin and Creative Writing at the University of East Anglia in Norwich. He has won awards for literature for children and young adults as well as for adults. He has written 15 novels, among which the most notable for children and young adults is *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* (the novel won many prizes, including Irish Book Award Children's Book of the Year, Irish Book Award People's Choice Book of the Year, Bisto Book of the Year, Que Leer Award Best International Novel of the Year [Spain], Orange Prize Readers Group Book of the Year).

Bio prepared by Krzysztof Rybak, University of Warsaw, rybak.km@gmail.com

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

Additional information

Adaptations	In 2008 the book was adapted into a film directed by Mark Herman and produced by BBC Films and Heyday Films. The film, starring such actors as Asa Butterfield (Bruno), Jack Scanion (Shmuel) and David Thewlis (Bruno's father), is a more or less precise adaptation of the novel, although the character of Fury is absent, so the viewer is not exposed to the use of classical tradition present in the novel.
Translation	Multiple translations
Summary	This story is about a German nine-year-old boy named Bruno, who lives with his mother, father and older sister in Berlin. One day, the father's boss, named "the Fury" orders them to move to the countryside. Bruno is not fully aware of his father's job, but he is obviously sad to leave his friends in Berlin and spend the near future outside the city. There, he sees people in a fenced area through a window–he asks his mother who they are, and his mother tells him that these people are simple farmers. But one day, Bruno goes for a walk near the fence of the "farm." On the other side, he meets Shmuel, a boy in striped pyjamas, with whom he begins to talk about many things; they even play chess and ball through the fence. At one of their next meetings, Bruno decides to cross over to Shmuel's side of the fence, change into striped pyjamas and help him find his lost father. The events that follow this constitute the novel's climax. A mindful reader can spot the Holocaust story hidden behind Bruno's naïve perception from the first pages. Bruno's father is a Nazi soldier, and his boss, "the Fury" (a children's misheard version of the word "Führer," Adolf Hitler's title), sent him to work in Out-With (Bruno's interpretation of "Auschwitz," a place where the biggest Nazi concentration/death camp was located).
Analysis	The novel presents a popular device of connecting Adolf Hitler's title "Führer" with Fury, one of the Furies, the Latin version of the ancient Greek chthonic deities of vengeance, the Erinyes (Ἐρῑνύες). The Latin common use of the word "furia" means "rage, fury, frenzy." This

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

	wordplay is also used in some translations, i.e. Dutch ('Führer'/'de Furie'), French ("Führer"/ "le Fourreur," similar to the French "fureur" – fury), German ("Führer"/"der Furor"), Polish ("Führer"/"Furia"), Russian ("фюрер" ["Führer"]/ "Фюрор", similar to the Russian "фурор" – fury).
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Erinyes Furies
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Authority Child, children Child's view Judaism Parents (and children) Violence
Further Reading	Boyne, John, Transcript of Talk Given at Dublin City Libraries as part of the series 'In Other Words… Irish Literature in Translation in Your Library', 10 November 2010, available at www.dublincity.ie/story/john-boyne-transcript (accessed January 3, 2017). Gilbert, Ruth, "Grasping the Unimaginable: Recent Holocaust Novels for Children by Morris Gleitzman and John Boyne", *Children's Literature in Education* 41 (2010): 355–366. Gray, Michael, "*The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*: A Blessing or Curse for Holocaust Education?", *Holocaust Studies* 20 (2014): 109–136. Macguire, Nora, "»What Bruno Knew«: Childhood Innocence and Models of Morality in John Boyne's *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas* (2006)," in Ciara Ní Bhroin and Patricia Kennon, eds., *What Do We Tell the Children? Critical Essays on Children's Literature*, Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012, 56–73.

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.