

**TED ANKARA COLLEGE FOUNDATION PRIVATE HIGH SCHOOL**

**ENGLISH B EXTENDED ESSAY**

**“THE LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS”**

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**Abstract:**

Holocaust is a major event that strike world's history. It has been the content of literature and many authors have taken us back to the horrors of holocaust, to terrifying labor camps. In my essay, I wanted to examine the different techniques that the authors used and their effects on the conveyance of the horrors of the holocaust to their respective audiences. I started with choosing two novels that have taken holocaust from two different points. I examined "how effective are "Schindler's List" and "The Boy in the Stripped Pyjamas" in conveying the horrors of the holocaust to their respective audiences? Compare the techniques used by the authors to achieve their aims."

"Schindler's List", considers the suffer that the Jews had to endure, signifies the importance of real life heroes by giving the message; "you can always find a light in the darkness." Opposed to that, I chose a children's novel in order to make a comparison about the language and the metaphors used. "Boy in the Stripped Pyjamas" shows how ignorant people can be to the world around them, or maybe they just choose to close their eyes; except the children. The novel shows how for children, nationality and sex does not matter, what matter is the common interests that they share. In both books I examined the themes and the symbols that are used in order to touch the inner conscience of the readers. Despite the different natures of the books, both of them set up an ironic scene by creating a German savior for the Jews. Even though the techniques they use are different, both of the books give the message that holocaust has destroyed many lives and no matter what the age is a hero can rise.

**Wordcount:** 292

### The Light in the Darkness

Certain events mark a turning point in history. The holocaust is one of those events that changed many peoples' life and destroyed many. Holocaust means "(from the Greek) : *hólos*, "whole" and *kaustós*, "burnt." (1) The Nazis made a holocaust real, they wanted to create a "Judenfrei" race. Events that affect history also affect literature and cinema. Many novels are written about holocaust, one of the most effective novel is "Schindler's List". Since it is a non-fiction novel and based on true facts; I think it's the most realistic novel that explains the sufferings of Jews. "The Boy in the Stripped Pyjamas", opposite to Schindler's List, is for young audience and fiction but also based on true events. The novel narrates holocaust through the eyes an ignorant child. The two books have similarities in context, but differences in the use of symbols, themes, characters and the sophistication of content. So my research question is, "how effective are "Schindler's List" and "The Boy in the Stripped Pyjamas" in conveying the horrors of the holocaust to their respective audiences? Compare the techniques used by the authors to achieve their aims."

To start with "Schindler's List". The books original title is 'Schindler's Ark', which is a simile for Noah's Ark. "Noah's Ark was built by Noah at God's command to save himself, his family, and the world's animals from a worldwide deluge" (2). Schindler's List is the story of 1,200 Jews saved by Oskar Schindler - the protagonist of the book. Schindler is like Noah and saves the lives of Jews by creating them his own labor camp- a haven.

Schindler, isn't a perfect man; he has some bad features that are not exemplary. He drinks, gambles, cheats his wife. He is a man who bribes everyone to get what he wants. All he wants is to get the best out of a bad situation at the first place. However, at the end of the book he finds himself working hard for others. He became a hero from being an ordinary man. However, at the end he is the savior of many Jews. The book is his metamorphosis from being selfish into a hero.

Even though he didn't want to save many peoples' lives at the first place; his emotions didn't allow him to let many people die. No matter how ignorant of the truth a person can be; in times of tragedy you can't only think of yourself. "Race, blood and soil meant little to the adolescent Oskar. "(pg: 34, Keneally) Oskar was not a man with strong belief to nationality. In fact he wasn't interested about the wars' bad effects on millions of Jews. This is also seen when he offers Stern a job; "I have told you, sir, that I am a Jew."(pg: 44, Keneally) says Stern and Oskar says; "I'm a German. So there we are!" (pg: 44, Keneally).

This shows how uninterested he is about the war and the races' of people. The tragedy in the world around him doesn't matter to him. Schindler wanted an "Emanuel Fabrik". The reason why he wanted a factory was to gain power in the society. At first his intention was not saving people, but making money in these hard times. However, throughout the novel, we can see Oskars' development in caring about the world around him. After facing with the reality of war he has a turning point in his life and starts to save people. He unintentionally gives them hope; his factory gained "a minor reputation as haven" (pg: 93, Keneally).

Reputation meant a lot to selfish Oskar. After realizing that his Jewish manager was helping the Jews, at first he reacts to it; then he becomes a part of this saving plan. "You'll be safe working here. If you work here, then you'll live through the war." (pg: 91, Keneally). As it is seen from the quote; Oskar started to have an interest in saving Jews' lives. He creates his own labor camp; "Schindlerjuden" (Schindlers' Jews). "What I ought to do, said Oskar, is keep the people on the premises. Make my own camp." (pg: 72, Keneally) It is ironic that Oskar creates a camp, not to kill people, but to save them. This shows his distinction from the other Germans. He creates to save, not to destroy. His ego helped him to carry on rebelling against his country.

"The promise has dazed them all. It was a godlike promise. How could a mere man make a promise like that?" (pg: 193, Keneally). What Schindler has done is a godlike gesture. He is like God to all the Jews that needed to be saved; he is hope he is the light that the Jews needed. He is a real life hero.

Another important character is Amon Goeth. He represents the cruelty and madness of the Nazi Party members. He is unlike Schindler, a sadistic man who kills people for no reason. "He shot the woman from the steps because she meant nothing to him, she was one of the series, she neither offended nor pleased him." (pg: 28, Keneally) As it is seen from the quote, Amon is numb for emotions. However, the only person he cared about was his maid Helen Hirsch. Despite his hatred for Jews, he falls in love with his Jewish maid. Amon conflicts with himself.

Even though Schindler and Amon can symbolize the "good vs. evil" in the book, they have some common characteristics. They are self-centered, confident and God-like. Schindler uses his God-like power to save people. However, Amon uses his power to kill people brutally without any reason. He is the head of the camp, he has the right to do

everything, he is power. He treats the Jews as they are nothing, to satisfy his ego- to feel the power he has- he murders people.

### **Themes:**

First theme that the book informs us about is the society's attitude towards the Jews. "The Jews are going, the Jews are going. Goodbye, Jews. " (pg: 91, Keneally) The Germans felt a mass national hatred towards Jews. They want them out of Germany which is also the cause of holocaust. No German is allowed to feel pity for them or question. All they are assigned to do is to hate them all.

" They thought of him as a good enough fellow who'd been stricken with a form of Jew-love as with a virus.(...) Schindler was to be pitied as much as was a prince turned into a frog. But he would pay for the disease." (pg: 89, Keneally) Oskar was considered as he was sick with the Jew virus. A normal person isn't expected to help the Jews. Jews are not even seen as humans. Oskar is pitied by his friends as it is seen from the example above. He is considered to be infected by the "magical affects" (pg: 191, Keneally) that the Jews created. Keneally used the "prince-frog" duo to express the Germans point of view for the Jews. Oskar; is the prince who is enchanted by the magic of the Jews. However, Germans think that when the prince kisses the princess, in other words when Oskar helps the Jews, it will have bad consequences for him.

After the war is over, Schindler says: " I request you all keep a three-minute silence, in memory of the countless victims among you who have died in these cruel years." (pg: 372, Keneally) This shows how Schindler respects the lives of the Jews that died.

Religion is another theme that the book expresses. "WHOEVER HELPS A JEW HELPS SATAN" (Pg: 97, Keneally). As it is seen from the quotation, Jews are seen as "devil". This shows that during the years of holocaust, religion was one of the factors that were used to control people. Since people feared God and had strong beliefs, no one helped the Jews, except Schindler. The books most important quotation is also a reference from a Talmudic verse, "He who saves the life of one man saves the entire world." (pg: 48, Keneally). This quote is a foreshadowing of the whole book. It explains what Oskar does throughout the novel. This is his main aim. Also in the movie version, the film starts with the sound of Hebrew prayer and Sabbath candles. The candle symbolizes the hope that people have. As the candle blows away, with the loss of hopes, the movie turns into black and white.

However, in the end of the movie, the Sabbath candle lights again and the prayer starts again. Schindler has lit the hope in the Jews again. "All right, Herr Stern, if God made man in His image, which race is most like Him? Is a Pole more like Him than a Czech?" (pg: 256, Keneally) In this quote, religions' equality is criticized. If people are all equally created then why are we fighting to destroy a race that God has created? However, during disasters in history, selfishness takes over religious beliefs. Also the original title "Schindler's Ark" is a biblical reference. Just like Noah, Schindler embarked his Jews on trains and settled them in his own labor camp. He was like a "prophet" that saved them from the apocalypse.

### **Symbols:**

There are two major symbols that affect the faith of the story. The first one is the "toddler in red". "They permitted witnesses, such witnesses as the red toddler; because they believed the witnesses all would perish too." (pg: 130, Keneally) The girl with the red coat, is one of the important symbols in the book. Children symbolize innocence however children like this little girl, and Bruno and Shmuel from "The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas" go through calamities in their innocent years and become the victims of brutal history. The little girl with the red coat make Oskar realizes the cruelty of the holocaust and made him do something about this cold blooded and remorseless action of Germans. The girl with the red coat triggered his self- conscience and made him take action in saving Jews. This girl figure is also seen at the cover of the book and in the movie version. The movie version is black and white, however, specific things such as "the red coat" is colorful; which shows the importance of this figure. Childrens' innocence is common in both books. Children figure touches the heart of the readers and by that the brutality of the war is pointed out more affectively. Even children had to face the world's most cruel slaughter.

"No thinking person could fail to see what would happen. I was now resolved to do everything in my power to defeat the system." (pg: 133, Keneally) This quotation shows that he had a turning point in his life and decided that he wanted to do something and defeat the system. His rebellion and determination gave him this courage to save people.

The second important symbol that is used in the novel is the "list". Schindler's list was the savior of many people. As opposed to the list that the Nazi created to sum up the Jews and destroy their lives, Schindler's List; "is an absolute good. The list is life." (pg: 290,

Keneally). With that list, he has given hope; life to thousands of people he has never met before.

At the end of the war Schindler's camp, "was the only camp in the Nazi-occupied territories where Jew was never killed, or even beaten, but was always treated as a human being." (pg: 391, Keneally) Schindler was a man who saved many lives putting his life in danger. He treated the Jews as they deserved to be treated; as humans just like Germans.

Schindler is an ordinary man who made great good to save the lives of the people whom he didn't even know. Even though Schindler was broke after the war, because he bribed many people to save his Jews, it was still worth saving the lives of people. During times of war, everyone becomes selfish and only think of themselves. However, there are heroes among us like Oskar, who think for the betterment of others; who have mercy for the many innocent people who are being murdered because of the strong desire of the Nazi Party for creating a "pure" race. Even though Oskar was not ambitious to save people at the first place, he couldn't shut his eyes to the world around him, like many of the Nazis' did. Despite the inhuman story of holocaust, "Schindler's List" is a glimmer of hope for those who are waiting for a savior. The book gives the message that "Anyone can be a hero."

Now, "The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas" by John Boyne. Despite "Schindler's List", it is a fiction novel based on true historical events but fictional characters. It criticizes the ignorance of a Nazi Party members' family to war. It is a children's novel, it is easy to read and has an easier language. The protagonist of the book, Bruno, is the son of a Commandant of the Nazi Party. He doesn't know anything about the war and what is going on in the world around him. Through the novel, the labor camp and the war is explained from a child's view. The book takes place in the labor camp, Auschwitz. However, in the novel, Auschwitz is named as "Out-With". Bruno can't even pronounce the "Out-with" properly. This reflects a child's perspective. "Bruno think that no ever laughed there, that there was nothing to laugh at and nothing to happy about." (pg: 13, Boyne) Despite his ignorance, he sensed that something wasn't right about Out- With. It was a bad idea that they came there.

Bruno is a naive and ignorant boy to his environment. His naiveness makes him wonder about many things. He is raised thinking that his father was very good at his job, that the Fury had good things in mind for him. The word Fury is another clever symbol Boyne has left to reader. However, he can't understand why he and his family had come to live in Out-With. "I know that everyone says you're an important man and that the Fury has



big things in mind for you, but he'd hardly send you to a place like this if you hadn't done something that he wanted to punish you for. (pg: 50, Boyne) " This quote shows how naïve Bruno is, yet he senses the unpleasantness of where they are. He sees it as a punishment since it is very horrible compared to Berlin. His Nazi father says, "Those people... well, they're not people at all, Bruno." (pg: 53, Boyne) His attitude towards the Jews indicates the reaction of Germans toward Jews. This attitude shows the brutality and selfishness of Germans.

Bruno likes exploring. His passion for exploring is a foreshadowing to the end of the book. Since he left his hometown, like every 9 year old kid, he wasn't happy about this change. Until he found Shmuel, he always complained about Out-With. What he tried to do was what his parents had told him about their move; "It's that we have to make the best of a bad situation." (pg: 14, Boyle), and his father's words "In fact if anything it's going to be a great adventure." (pg: 3, Boyle) From the beginning of the book Bruno tries to take most out of this bad situation.

The other important character of the book is Shmuel, a 9 year old Jew. His birthday is the same as Bruno, which shows how two people born on the same day can have exactly opposite faiths. "We are like twins." (pg: 110, Boyne). The author wanted to create an irony by referencing the boys as twins.

Since the book is written from a child's perspective; Bruno thinks that he is unlucky because he has no friends in that forgotten place. " I don't see why I have to be stuck over here on this side of the fence where there's no one to talk to and no one to play with (...)" (pg: 110, Boyne). Since children can't distinguish the difference between a Pole or a German, everyone is equal in their eyes. Even though Bruno is an ignorant young boy; like the rest of the Nazi he has a love for his country; "Well, because Germany is the greatest of all countries." (pg: 111, Boyne) Children can easily be controlled and brain washed. In spite of his childish perspective, he is convinced that Germany is the best country in the world and that his father is a great man –'Fury' has good things in mind for him.

In contrast, Shmuel is much more aware of the situation; "I know they don't like us." (pg: 195, Boyne). He has grown up in a place where he had seen awful things, where he and his nation are hated. His expression and sad looking eyes that is reflected throughout the novel represents that Shmuel isn't like any other kid Bruno has ever known. "Bruno was sure that he had never seen a skinnier or sadder boy in his life ..." (pg: 107, Boyne)

After going to the other side Bruno realizes that the people on the other side are different; “either happy, laughing, shouting, soldiers in their uniforms or unhappy, crying people in their stripped pyjamas, most of whom seemed to be staring into space as if they were actually asleep.” (pg: 208, Boyne) The description of the people emphasize that Jews couldn’t wake up from this nightmare. They got used to their slavery life so that they don’t even try to put up a fight or rebel. Nothing can change what the Nazis want.

### **Themes:**

The main themes expressed are ignorance and innocence. Since Bruno is a little child, he can’t understand what is going on in Berlin. “Well, I don’t like the way we have to turn all the lights off at the night now.” (pg: 8, Boyle) Bruno is aware that there are some boundaries in the society but he doesn’t know the reason for it. At the beginning of the book, until he goes to Out-With, he has never wondered what was going on around him.

The quote; “Some people make all the decisions for us” (pg: 14, Boyne) is an example to how Bruno’s families life is controlled by his fathers’ job. During the war, not only Jew’s lives were changed, but also Commandants’ families had to move because of the labor camps. This also shows that in times of war, what you think is not important; what’s good for your country is what matters.

The friendship of the two boys from two enemy countries, reflects that no matter what your race is, from the eyes of a child everyone is equal. “He took hold of Shmuel’s tiny hand in his and squeezed it tightly.” (pg: 212, Boyne) The power of their friendship and Brunos’ quote; “You are my best friend, Shmuel, (...) My best friend for life.” (pg: 213, Boyne) shows the bond between them. When countries are in war, all they think is their own ego and wills. They neither care about their citizen, nor care about killing thousands of innocent people. Revenge deceives their eyes and they brutally destroy.

### **Symbols:**

The weather is used in various important parts of the book. “Gretel looked through the window, but after a moment her eyes adjusted and the sun disappeared again and she saw exactly what Bruno had been talking about.” (pg: 29, Boyle) The sun is a like a mask; represents the happiness and hope. The sun covers all the bad events that take place in Out-With. However, as the sun goes away, the truth comes alive, the camp becomes visible. Despite this, at the end of the book, while Bruno was trying to go to the camp the weather was like the beginning scene of the book; “the hint of sunshine coming from behind a black

cloud.” (pg: 201, Boyne) As the two boys lead their innocent lives to death, the weather is changed; “quickly the sky seemed to grow even darker, almost black, and the rain poured down even more heavily than it had in the morning.” (pg: 211, Boyne) Everything becomes even darker like they are dragging to the bottom of a well, and eventually to death.

The fence represents the distinction between the two enemy countries and people. “the fence isn’t there to stop us from going over there. It’s to stop them from coming over here.” (pg: 182, Boyne) Bruno starts to realize the truth about the fence and the people behind it. “Don’t Jews like the Opposite then? No, it’s us who don’t like them, stupid.” (pg: 183, Boyne) The questions that Bruno asks represent the naïve and curious nature of a child. The little whole that Bruno had crawled under symbolizes that you can’t keep some people in chains. Even the borders can’t stand the non-sense events that take place behind the fence.

The plays that Bruno and his family performed is a foreshadowing to the ending of the book. Wearing the stripped pyjamas and acting like a Jew was Brunos’ final act. “You wear the right outfit and you feel like the person you’re pretending to be.” (pg: 205, Boyne) He performed his last play in a place which was far away from home, being in the stripped pyjamas, to help his best friend for life.

The use of the word pyjamas for working clothes represents child’s perspective. Again Bruno questions the people behind the fence. “Who decided which people wore the stripped pyjamas and which people wore the uniforms?” (pg: 100, Boyne) The simple questioning exposes the inequality of holocaust and war. Who has the power, makes the weaker suffer. But what’s the peoples’ fault in this? The author wants to emphasize the inequality, suffer, and unfairness that the Jews had to put up with.

Another symbol is armbands that the Nazi and Jews used. “No one’s given me an armband.” (pg: 127, Boyne) says Bruno. Shemuel replies “But I never asked to wear one,” (pg: 127, Boyne) Armband represents the nationality and the difference of the two groups. Shemuels’ reply indicates that he has no right to choose, the Jews only have to obey.

The bench is another symbol. “The seat was turned to face the house- which, usually, would be a strange thing to do but on this occasion she could understand why.” (pg: 31, Boyne) Usually benches are places where people sit and enjoy. However, this bench is turned back like it is trying to avoid the biggest calamity of humanity, the camp.

“A story of innocence in a world of ignorance” is a quote that is written at the cover of the book. It describes the purpose and the message that the book gives. Bruno and Shemuels’ friendship is innocence; Brunos’ families’ attitude about the war is ignorance. Even though this is a children novel gives very important messages. Everyone deserves to be treated equally.

In both books, the protagonists try to save Jews. The two protagonists- both German- represent the holocaust from the eyes of an adult and a child thus reflecting the target audiences. At first both of them are ignorant to the world around them; however, in both books they end up caring and helping Jews. Everyone can be a hero no matter what their age is.

Like Schindler, you can be a daily life hero; or like Bruno you can only try to save one Jews life in order to help your friend. But in both cases, they do what they do because they care about the Jews in spite of the Jewish fear and hatred in their country. The books reflect that in every calamity there will a person with a conscience, or a friend that will help you through, and in those circumstances a hero will emerge through the darkness.

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