

## Rethinking John Boyne's *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* as Children's Literature

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### ABSTRACT

This article examines whether John Boyne's novel entitled *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* should be categorized as children's literature. The story tells about a nine-year-old German boy named Bruno with his Jewish friend, Shmuel, who lives inside the concentration camp during the Holocaust. This graduating paper applies the genre approach since it is the most suitable approach to analyze the elements of children's literature genre, which are character and characterization, didactic elements, the happy ending, and element of pictures in children's literature. In order to support the analysis, library research was conducted alongside the novel itself as well as supporting articles from reliable websites. The result of the analysis shows that John Boyne's *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* cannot be categorized as children's literature as the characteristics of children's literature suggested by Nodelman are not found in the novel. However, *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* can be categorized as high literature since the characteristics of high literature are primarily found in the novel.

**Keywords:** *children's literature, genre, high literature, Nodelman.*

### INTRODUCTION

Children's literature is one of the genres in popular culture and has been considered an instrument of moral teaching. There are a number of published literary works that can be categorized as children's literature, such as *The Cat in the Hat* by Dr. Seuss, *Charlotte's Web* by E. B. White, and *Harry Potter* series by J. K. Rowling. Oberstein (2002) argues that children's literature is a category of books that depends on supposed relationships with a particular reading audience: children. Therefore, the definition of 'children's literature' is underpinned by a purpose: it wants to be something in particular because this is supposed to connect it with that reading audience—'children'—with which it declares itself to be overtly

and purposefully concerned. Oberstein (2002) explains that children are the center and author's purpose from children's literature. It should be connected with the essential life of children as the primary concern of the work.

Moreover, children's books must fulfill the readers' expectations. The idea of the story should capture the infinite number of imaginations of children delivered in language that is easy to understand, so the readers can still enjoy it. Rose (1984) states that children's fiction rests on the idea that there are children who are there to be addressed and that speaking to them might be simple.

In children's literature, the theme usually tells about fairytales or fables. Children's literature rarely

talks about world wars or other historical events, especially the terrifying ones. One of the most terrifying tragedies in human history was when the Holocaust happened. It reminds people of how the Nazis forcibly took the Jews, imprisoned them in the concentration camp, and eventually killed them brutally. There are no happy memories during that time, and even some sites were built to memorize this event. Since the Holocaust is over, many authors have published their work about this issue; one of them is *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* written by John Boyne, which becomes the focus of this research.

The novel was published in 2011 as a children's book in Ireland. This novel tells about a nine-year-old German boy who lives during the Holocaust, about the year 1940. His father is promoted as a Commandant of Nazi, and the family needs to move from their big house in Berlin to a small house in the countryside, not far from the concentration camp. After a while, Bruno meets a boy named Shmuel, who sits on the ground on the other side of the adjoining wire fence. He is wearing blue striped pyjamas with a series of numbers on his chest. Shmuel was born in a Jewish family, his father owns a watch store, and his mother is a housewife. However, Shmuel is not as lucky as Bruno. At a young age, he had to be separated from his parents after being transferred to the concentration camp. Bruno and Shmuel become friends and set up a meeting every few days. However, their friendship leads to a tragic ending, with them die inside a chamber of gas.

Despite this terrifying ending, the novel has been categorized as children's literature since its publication. On the Guardian website, the novel is put on the page for children's books, while on the Amazon website, it is on vintage children's classics. Moreover, the novel was awarded the Irish Book Award Children's Book of the Year and was shortlisted for Border's New Voices Award, Ottaker's Children's Book Prize, and Flemish Young Readers Award. A producer from the United Kingdom named David Heyman adapted this novel into a movie in 2008, which won The British Independent Film Award for Best Performance by an Actress in a British Independent Film.

There are several important elements in this novel that are not usually found in children's literary work. Thus, the present research addresses the questions of what children's literature is and whether this novel can be categorized as children's literature.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Some studies on this novel have been conducted previously. The first paper was written by Bryannie Kirk in 2010. It was an undergraduate thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in The Faculty of Graduate Studies (Children's Literature), University of British Columbia. The title of this paper was "Space of the Holocaust: Alternative Narrative Forms in *Briar Rose*, *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*, and *the Book Thief*". In this paper, Kirk examined three works from different authors: *Briar Rose* by Jane Yolen, *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* by John Boyne, and *The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak. This paper emphasized the representation of the Holocaust as an alternative narrative for young adults and children. Furthermore, to show which spaces are represented in each text, Kirk used Theresa Rogers' identification of spaces of the Holocaust and Rick Altman's theory of narrative to discuss how the narratives function concerning the framing and following patterns used.

The next paper was an undergraduate thesis written by Arum Widya Wardani in 2013. It was submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree in the English Department, Satya Wacana Christian University. The title of this paper is "Marginalization as Perceived by Children in *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* and *Life is Beautiful*: a Post-colonialism Perspective". Wardani focused on how the children perceived marginalization toward the Jewish as depicted in these two films, *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* and *Life is Beautiful*. Furthermore, from a post-colonialism perspective and a brief discussion on children's characteristics, the findings revealed that children behave mostly by imitating what the adults do around them or listening to adults' explanation about things.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In analyzing the research objective, the characteristics of children's literature that can be found in *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* is measured with the guidance of Nodelman's *The Hidden Adult: Defining Children's Literature* as the primary references on analyzing the data. In accordance with the objectives, this research applied a genre approach. The genre approach examines the structural elements that combine in telling a story and finds patterns in collections of stories.

### Children's Literature

In order to analyze this novel as children's literature, the characteristics of children's literature implied by Nodelman are used to analyze the subject. In this book, Nodelman serves at least thirteen characteristics of a book categorized as children's literature. In his book, Nodelman (2008) states (1) the protagonists of children's literature should be either children or childlike animals or adults; (2) focalization through a central child character is another quality that marks a text for me as one intended for children readers; (3) the texts are focalized through their child or childlike protagonists and thus offer a childlike view of the events described; (4) the texts are not first-person narratives; (5) the texts report protagonists' perceptions by means of third-person narrators; (6) there are pictures that often accompany the texts providing the visual and emotional information about which the texts themselves remain silent; (7) the contents of children's literatures have to be 'safe' for children and do not contain any bad things children might imitate; (8) there is a focus on actions –on straightforward reports of what people do and what it leads to– and not much detailed description of people, places, or emotion. Thus, the texts do not contain such words or descriptions which have something to do with pragmatics or indirect meaning in their language; (9) sentences that lead to ambiguity are not allowed to be brought in the texts.

Furthermore, Nodelman (2008) declares that (10) happy endings are not only a key characteristic of the texts but the main import of their existence.

Furthermore, since a happy ending inevitably implies an optimistic view of reality, children's literature is characteristically hopeful and optimistic. He also adds (11) children's literature should contain positive role models; (12) the plot usually follows a basic pattern of movement from home to away and then back home again/*home-away-home*; and (13) the texts are didactic and therefore have the shape of traditional fables stories in which happens to characters is meant to represent a path for future behavior in readers (Nodelman, 2008).

### High Literature

The research also used the theory of high literature in analyzing the novel. The theory of high literature has a function to contrast the elements that can be found from the novel with the characteristics of children's literature. According to Adi (2011, p. 76) on her book entitled *Fiksi Populer: Teori dan Metode Kajian* (Popular Fiction: Theory and Method), high literature is defined as,

... karya sastra adalah karya yang mengomentari masyarakat ... Karya sastra yang dimaksud di sini adalah karya sastra adiluhung. Pada dasarnya karya ini cenderung menunjukkan apa yang ada dalam masyarakat dan memberikan penilaian baik dan buruknya masyarakat serta memberikan solusi melalui tema dalam karyanya bagaimana nilai hidup yang harus diadopsi oleh masyarakat sehingga dapat hidup secara baik.

'...literary work is a work that comments on society ... The literary work that is referred to here is high literature. Fundamentally, this work tends to show what actually happens in the society and gives judgment on the good and bad as well as the solutions through the theme in its work, whose values should be adopted by the society so that the society can live virtuously.'

It can be concluded that high literature has distinct characteristics from children's literature. Thus, high literature is usually referred to as serious fiction since the central theme of the novel concerns social issues or human conditions. In other words, the theme of high literature is universal and realistic.

Moreover, Stanton (as cited in Adi, 2011, p. 41) depicts serious fiction as something “difficult and challenging partly because it builds a complex structure of details around a central purpose of idea ... Most serious fiction, thereof, demands careful reading –and careful rereading.”

### Genre Analysis

In analyzing *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* categorized as children’s literature, a genre approach is applied. In literature, there are three literary genres commonly known; prose, poem, and drama. In his article, Chandler (1977, p. 1) entitled *An Introduction to Genre Theory*, states that the term of the genre is widely used in rhetoric, literary theory, media theory, and more recently, linguistics to refer to a distinctive *type* of a text. Moreover, the way authors and readers define a genre depends on their purposes. He adds,

... the adequacy of our definition in terms of social science at least must surely be related to the light that the exploration sheds on the phenomenon. For instance (and this is a key concern of mine), if we are studying the way in which genre frames the reader's interpretation of a text then we would do well to focus on how readers identify genres rather than on theoretical distinctions. Defining genres may be problematic, but even if theorists were to abandon the concept, in everyday life people would continue to categorize texts (Chandler, 1977, p. 3).

Furthermore, Adi (2011) states that the common ground on the meaning of genre is less than its contradiction since the character of the genre itself is often change. It means research on the genre is needed in various approaches to convey other genre theories that are not only in the context of literature and communication but also in anthropology, history, and society. Genre analysis used in this research focuses on investigating children’s literature aspects of *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* as a work by examining its narration, plot, and characters to get a clearer view of why this novel cannot be categorized as children’s literature.

## METHODS

The primary data source for this research was the novel entitled *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* written by John Boyne and published in 2006 by David Flicking Books. The data were obtained from close reading of the novel and taking notes of several essential aspects of the novel. The primary data for this study were in the form of textual features: phrases, sentences, and paragraphs, as well as visual features: pictures and illustrations. The characteristics of children’s literature suggested by Nodelman were used to analyze the data taken from the novel. Furthermore, the secondary data of this research are journals, articles, and other sources that relatable to the discussion. These data were used to support the analysis of the novel.

In order to analyze the data, the research was conducted in two steps. The first step was reading the novel several times, exploring the storyline and the intrinsic features to examine the formula of the novel as children’s literature. Reading is essential because the elements and information from the novel are needed for the analysis. The second step was analyzing the elements in the novel according to Nodelman’s characteristics of children’s literature. In this step, the data obtained from the novel were contrasted with the major characteristics of high literature to uncover whether John Boyne’s *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* can be categorized as children’s literature.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### The Children Characters in Children’s Literature

In children’s literature, the characters portrayed are mainly children. According to Nodelman (2008), the story's characters in children’s literature should be either children or childlike animals or adults. In this novel, the story is being told from the children's perspective, and all of the characters in the novel are fictional. There are three children characters in this novel; Bruno, Gretel, and Shmuel.

The main protagonist is a nine-year-old boy named Bruno. Bruno portrays as a naïve and innocent little boy who likes to do exploration and adventure. He lives with his parents and an older sister. Bruno's sister, Gretel, is twelve years old who becomes the second protagonist in this novel. She likes to play with her dolls alone in her room. She is very dominating and does not like when someone tries to get into her room or touch her belongings, which often drives Bruno mad.

The other protagonist is a nine-year-old boy named Shmuel. He is a Jew who lives inside the concentration camp with his father and other Nazi's prisoners. Shmuel lost his mother and sister when the soldiers took them from their house in Poland. Shmuel is portrayed as a dirty, unenergetic boy wearing a pair of striped pyjamas with a number tag and a Star of David on them. Shmuel looks downhearted and always sits near the wire fence, playing the dirt with his hand, like he is waiting for someone to take him out from there. Shmuel's character described as someone who gets pessimistic and helpless towards the situation that happens around him. Even though the Nazi's soldiers have brought him to the concentration camp, he insists that he is still in Poland, not Germany.

The similarity between Shmuel and Bruno is that they both are not aware of the situation happening around them as something dangerous, while they witnessed the inhumanity of Nazi with their own eyes. They cannot even put these situations to their logic, which is why they do not realize the terms of Nazi and the Holocaust.

On the other hand, all characters in this novel are very absorbed in their own worlds. Bruno's father is either in his office or going somewhere with his soldiers. Bruno's mother is drowned on her own repentance and despair as they move away from Berlin. Maria does not try to explain to Bruno about Auschwitz and Nazi, even though he asks her. There is also Lieutenant Kotler that sometimes comes to Bruno's house to meet his father. These characters do not appear too much in the story and are limited to their significance to the plot development. However, at the end of the story, they face great sorrow due to Bruno's disappearance from the concentration camp.

In addition, the main focus of the story in this novel is Bruno and Shmuel, which means the other characters only play as supporting characters. The other characters, such as Bruno's parent, Gretel, and Maria, mostly appear at the beginning and end of the novel. It can be concluded that the characters in this novel are limited as high literature mostly have. Children's literature usually has many characters since children tend to like something loud, festive and exciting to bring their happiness. Meanwhile, in high literature, the number of characters is confined to make the readers focus on the main protagonist's story and get a better understanding of the situations experienced by the protagonist of the story.

Furthermore, Nodelman (2008) states that the focalization in children's literature should offer a childlike view of the events described in the texts. It can be concluded that a children character in children's literature has a role to describe the events that take place in the novel as light as possible to make it understandable for its readers. Based on this narration, the text clearly portrays how Bruno, as a child, sees the situation that happens around him. For example, when his family needs to move from Berlin, although his father got a very respective duty from the Fury, he is more afraid that he cannot meet his best friends any longer. It can be stated that the children's perspective on the situation in this novel is nicely described.

Therefore, as Nodelman (2008) states, since the first-person point-of-view is not allowed, the third-person point-of-view is needed in children's literature. Young readers usually prefer novels or books that are not written in the first-person's point-of-view since it often serves the introspective story and does not appeal to them. Thus, the use of the third-person's point-of-view in children's literature has a function to minimize the characteristic of an introspective story in children's literature. The narration in this novel is told from the third-person's point-of-view, which portrays every scene that runs in Bruno's mind. The novel also fills with conversations between the characters that make the story more interesting for its readers.

He made his way up the stairs slowly, holding onto the banister with one hand, and wondered whether the new house in the new

place where the new job was would have as fine a banister to slide down as this one did. For the banister in this house stretched from the very top floor -just outside the little room where, if he stood on his tiptoes and held onto the frame of the window tightly, he could see right across Berlin -to the ground floor, just in front of the two enormous oak doors. And Bruno liked nothing better than to get on board the banister at the top floor and slide his way through the house, making whooshing sounds as he went (Boyne, 2006, p. 9).

According to the narration above, the use of third-person narrators is quite efficient since it describes the protagonist's perceptions clearly, in a light way and understandable for its readers. This makes the readers absorbed in the story and encourages them in enjoying the story in the novel. Furthermore, the childlike perspective of the main protagonist in this novel can also be seen from the narrations in the novel, which portrays Bruno's perspective and feeling on the situation he lives in.

### Didactic Element in Children's Literature

At least five common themes are used in children's literary works: friendship, family, prejudice and bigotry, and growing up. These themes express the feelings and thoughts of the main character in the story and portray the acts of the main character, and they are also easy to understand by its targeted readers. Moreover, Huck (1964), in his article entitled *Children's Literature—Defined*, infers that the theme of children's literature should be simple and appropriate for the age of the children. It cannot detect a sufficiently long 'tradition', or critic's words. As an example, a children's literary work written by Barrie in 1911, *Peter Pan* or *The Boy Who Wouldn't Grow Up* or *Peter and Wendy*, who tells about a mischievous and innocent boy who can fly and has many adventures on the island of Neverland. This novel indirectly fulfills children's imagination and strikes their unconsciousness to learn the good and bad from the characters and the story.

Moreover, Nodelman (2008, p. 81) states that the story in children's literary work should contain positive role models, which means children's

literature should portray 'children' as the story's protagonist to give positive energy towards the actions that take place in the story. However, the main protagonist of this novel, who is Shmuel, does not serve the positivity that the readers can absorb, as we can see in the narration below.

The boy was smaller than Bruno and was sitting on the ground with a forlorn expression...

His skin was almost the colour of grey, but not quite like any grey that Bruno had ever seen before. He had very large eyes and they were the colour of caramel sweets; the whites were very white, and when the boy looked at him all Bruno could see was an enormous pair of sad eyes staring back. Bruno was sure that he had never seen a skinnier or sadder boy in his life but decided that he had better talk to him (Boyne, 2006, p. 106-107).

Furthermore, the novel can also be used as teaching material at school. In the younger age group, this novel is compelling as an introduction to the topic of the Holocaust since the content of the book is not as graphic and confronting as some other texts on the Holocaust are. However, as the novel is not confronting, the novel does not give an accurate description of the Holocaust and does not touch the horrors of the concentration camps. If this novel is used to enlighten the students about the actual event of the Holocaust, there must be other texts that are better and more historically accurate than this novel to accompany the learning process.

In writing children's literature, authors have to show the readers realistic characters and situations so that the readers will not confuse the author's motive. Current stories dealing with realistic problems will make the readers believe in the experience and then prepare to accept the theme. In accordance with its identification as children's literature, the reader would expect more guidance and have to be informed with more explicit facts since young readers may confuse fiction with historical truth in a way that more informed adults would not. Furthermore, children have a limitation in understanding the author's motives in writing the story and expect what they want to see in the story. As young readers, the choices for them are only between black and white, good and bad, and the

mixed motives of the author can be confusing to the readers. Children may read this novel with their parents or teacher's guidance, who can clearly explain the issues of the Holocaust in the story; even the adult readers should at least have some prior knowledge of the Holocaust.

Moreover, Nodelman (2008) states that the story in children's literature should be safe for its readers and do not contain any bad things they might imitate. In addition, he also says that the texts of children's literature are didactic and represent a path of future behavior for its readers. It can be said that children's literature should contain moral lessons applicable to its readers' daily lives.

The didactic elements in this novel are mainly portrayed through the main protagonist of the story, Bruno. As a children's literature, this novel serves the value of ethics and morality. Bruno, unlike other Nazis, does not view anyone else in the novel differently or as subhuman, including the maids. Bruno's friendship with Shmuel also portrays that he is not interested in what the Nazis do; he is more interested in the trustfulness and kindness of other people. Bruno's character also shows the significance of hope. Throughout the beginning of the story, Bruno believes that someday he and his family will return to Berlin to play with his friends again. However, Bruno's hope changes when he meets Shmuel. He already forgets his friends in Berlin and feels weighed down when coming back to Berlin, as he does not want to leave his best friend alone. The changes in Bruno's hope show that this novel's character develops his confidence according to the conditions he faces. However, this novel also has a role as a guide to learn the historical event that is the Holocaust. It means the readers can learn about the event while reading the novel.

On the other hand, high literature serves as self-improvement as well as the reminder of past events for its readers. In order to understand the values of the story in this novel, the readers have to find the major theme of the story. In this novel, the author shows the portrayal of the actual events, and through the narrations, he gives the moral values that its readers can apply to improve their quality of life. However, since the theme of this novel deals with an actual historical event, it may be too difficult for young readers nowadays to conclude the values

of this novel without other people's help or any other reliable references.

### Happy Ending as an Element of Children's Literature

Children's literature usually ends with a happy ending. *Charlotte's Web* can be seen as an example. Even though it is said that Charlotte dies after she hatches her eggs, three of the little spiders stay with Wilbur in the Zuckerman barn and live a long and happy life. Moreover, most comic books, such as *Cinderella*, *Snow White*, and *Rapunzel*, end with a happy ending where the main characters, the princesses, meet their princes, get married and live happily ever after in the castle.

In accordance with the ending in children's literature, Nodelman (2008) states that happy ending is important to help the readers build hope and an optimistic view of reality. It is not only the character of children's literature but also the significance of their existence. As entertainment, a happy ending in children's literature is served to fulfill the readers' needs. The readers want the protagonist of the story to meet the readers' expectation at the end of the story. However, as a children's literature, this novel portrays the tragic ending of two little boys. At the ending of this novel, the main protagonists face their deaths in the gas chamber in the concentration camp.

It can be concluded that the ending of the story in the novel does not serve an optimistic feeling to its readers. Otherwise, it brings the reckless and clueless side of two nine-year-old boys who do not even realize that they have brought themselves into a dangerous situation by entering the concentration camp.

Shmuel may well have opened his mouth to say something back, but Bruno never heard it because at that moment there was a loud gasp from all the marchers who had filled the room, as the door at the front was suddenly closed and a loud metallic sound rang through from the outside.

Bruno raised an eyebrow, unable to understand the sense of all this, but he assumed that it had something to do with keeping the rain out and stopping people from catching colds.

And then the room went very dark and somehow, despite the chaos that followed, Bruno found that he was still holding Shmuel's hand in his own and nothing in the world have persuaded him to let it go (Boyne, 2006, p. 213).

Meanwhile, in high literature, the story often ends with a tragic or a sad ending. The tragic or sad ending is used in the novel to portray the actual circumstances in society, which alerts the readers that not all stories fulfill their expectations. As in *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*, the story portrays the horrible situation that some people experienced during the Holocaust and their story obviously does not end with a happy ending. Thus, it can be said that when children read this novel, they can experience the events through the narrations as well as learn from the values in the novel.

Furthermore, Nodelman states that the plot in children's literature usually follows a basic pattern of movement from home to away and then back home again/*home-away-home* (2008, p. 81). The simple and basic pattern in children's literature is vital in giving the readers a clear idea of what will happen in the story. It is also easier for children to understand the orderly sequence of events. Thus, children's literature usually consists of chronological order from the situations in the protagonist's life.

However, if the story in children's literary work is too formal or straightforward, it may bore the readers. It can be said that children's literature has a simple story, but it is not precisely simplistic. In other words, the novel provides a space for its reader to discover a deeper meaning than it appears to be written and described by the author. Children are looking for some boundless imaginations in the novel, and the element of surprise is also needed to excite the readers. In children's literature, the story often fills with actions or adventures that can entice its readers. Adventures or actions are needed in children's literature because the protagonist of the story can experience new things and see more perceptions during the course of the adventures. This aspect is often used in children's literature as the turning point of the protagonist's life. The rising action in this novel develops naturally from the behavior and decision of the main protagonist in the story. In this novel, the protagonist decides to go on

an adventure and eventually meets a friend, which later changes his entire life.

However, the novel serves narratives that descriptively tell the story. The novel also has a complex pattern of the story. In the novel, the narrator often calls back the previous event in the middle of the story and eventually make the readers confused with the actual storyline of the novel. For example, when Bruno gets into a flashback about his grandparents. This flashback merely explains why Bruno's grandparents get mad at Bruno's father after he decides to move from Berlin. The flashback does not correlate with the current events, and the readers may wonder what it has to do with the story of Bruno and Shmuel's friendship.

Moreover, the novel does not follow the plot pattern suggested by Nodelman, which is *home-away-home*. It can be understood that usually, children's literature has an introduction, rising action, climax, falling action and closing or resolution. Meanwhile, in this novel, the story begins with an introduction about Bruno's family with some flashbacks in the middle of the introduction. The rising action in the novel occurs nearly at the end of the story when Bruno decides to help Shmuel find his father. The climax of this novel happens when Bruno and Shmuel are locked in the gas chamber with other prisoners, which also becomes the end of the story of their friendship. The closing of this novel does not explicitly tell the readers how Bruno dies, whereas the narrator only mentions that Bruno is missing and his family is facing the downfall due to his absence.

Therefore, it can be concluded that when the pattern of the story in the novel is too complex and challenging to be understood by its young readers, it may confuse the readers to comprehend the whole story.

### **Picture as an Element of Children's Literature**

Children who start to read and learn will find a children's literary work with picture or illustration fascinating. An illustration is meant to give visualization on a particular point. Nodelman (2008,) states that children's literature should contain pictures that accompany the texts to provide the

visual and emotional information of the story. The captivating pictures or illustrations will help even the least experienced readers understand the story's flow better. The eye-catching picture, especially on the book's cover, is very interesting for children as they choose their book preferences.

Based on the visual element, the picture or illustration on the book's cover at least should represent the story that happens inside the book. The picture in children's literary works communicates more directly than words, and it provides visual and emotional information of the texts, which naturally helps the readers understand the story better. Moreover, in children's literary work, the picture also helps children take their first step to acquaint the words that may be difficult to understand.

As children's literature, *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* does not serve this element. The book does not have any pictures inside the texts that can help the readers understand the story better. In accordance with the theme as well as the setting of World War II, children are going to have a hard time understanding the story and the theme from their own perspectives. In addition, the novel was published in 2006, which is sixty-four years after the Holocaust happened. It will be undoubtedly hard for children nowadays to picture the situation that happened at that time. Moreover, the cover of this novel does not explain anything about the story that will happen inside the book. The original cover of this novel is straightforward with two primary colors, blue and light blue, and a black-colored title.

On the other hand, high literature usually does not need pictures or illustration to convey the story's message. High literature focuses more on the narration of the main protagonist and causations inflicted by the main protagonist in the story (Adi, 2011). The aspect of cause and effect is shown in this novel. This novel focuses on the actions that take place in the story and the interactions between one character to another. The readers will eventually understand the story that happens and the novel's theme by reading the novel thoroughly. Thus, the use of pictures and illustration is not very important in high literature.

In addition, Nodelman (2008) argues that the focus in children's literature is actions that take place in the story, the reports of what the characters do and

what it leads to. In children's literature, detailed description of people, places and emotion are not needed. The words or descriptions that have pragmatics or indirect meaning are also not allowed in children's literature. In this novel, the deep emotion is expressed through Bruno and Shmuel's faithful friends as well as at the ending of the story. Even though the author focuses more on the main protagonists' stories, some detailed information about other characters actually does not directly correlate with the main protagonist's action. One of the examples is the detailed information about Pavel's previous job.

'Well, how do you know?' asked Bruno quickly, growing irritable now despite the fact that this was the same man who had come out to pick him up off the ground and brought him in and taken care of him. 'You're not a doctor.'

Pavel stopped peeling the carrots for a moment and looked across the table at Bruno, his head held low, his eyes looking up, as if he were wondering what to say to such a thing. He sighed and seemed to consider it for quite a long time before saying, 'Yes I am.' (Boyne, 2006, p. 82).

The detailed information above has no direct correlation with the story of Bruno and Shmuel, and it also does not affect the rest of the story in this novel. When children's literature contains much information without any relationship with the main story, the readers may get bored and uninterested in the novel. On the other hand, high literature does not pay attention to the setting of place and time that occur in the story, as it focuses more on the values of humanity, which means the story can happen anywhere and anytime (Adi, 2011).

Thus, it can be said that the author of this novel has no intention to explain deeply the historical event that happened at that time. Otherwise, he wants to show the readers about the main protagonist's journey as a little boy. This novel also wants to show the event from a children's perspective, which is different when it is told from an adult's perspective.

Nodelman (2008) also claims that the sentence that leads to ambiguity is not allowed to be brought in the texts or narrations in children's literature. In children's literature, every action in the story must

be explicit for its readers to make the readers easier in identifying the actual situation in the story. It can be concluded that a picture or illustration is needed to eliminate the ambiguity inside the narrations and helps children understand the narrative in this literary work better. Children's literary works that provide pictures also make children remember the story better than those that use many words and explanations.

On the other hand, some ambiguities can be found in this novel. The first one can be seen from its title, 'the boy in the striped pyjamas'. It is unclear whether 'the boy' that is referred to here is Bruno or Shmuel. When the readers begin to read the novel, they may realize that the 'the boy' as written on the title is Shmuel, though, at the end of the story, Bruno also dies while wearing the striped pyjamas. Another ambiguity occurs at the end of the novel when Bruno's father runs toward the place where Bruno usually talks with Shmuel. The readers may question whether they need to feel sorry for him or deserve this due to his behavior towards the Jews. Furthermore, in the story, Bruno always refers to the uniforms as 'striped pyjamas' when it is the prisoner's uniform. In accordance with avoiding the texts' ambiguities, in high literature, the readers need to read the novel thoroughly and interpret it based on their own interpretations.

In addition, in high literature, careful reading and rereading are essential since the novel categorized as high literature usually builds a complex structure. It requires some detailed information around the central theme or idea of the story. In this novel, the central theme is the innocent and pure friendship between two little boys during the Holocaust. Bruno and Shmuel's desire for friendship is firm, and they become attached, which eventually make them ignore their differences. It can be concluded that the ambiguities that occur in high literature force the readers to read the novel repeatedly since they need to search for the central theme of the story. Meanwhile, in children's literature, the story has to be understandable in one complete process of reading, which means ambiguities are not allowed. The authors of children's literature should have the ability to tell the whole story in limited explanation.

## CONCLUSION

As a genre with intended readers, a literary work should fulfill the requirements categorized as children's literature. This research aims to analyze the characteristics of children's literature in John Boyne's *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* and analyze the aspects that prove the novel cannot be categorized as children's literature.

Based on Perry Nodelman's theory and the above discussion, it can be concluded that John Boyne's *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* is not children's literature since four major elements are proven to belong to high literature instead of children's literature, such as 1) the limited number of characters, 2) the sad or tragic ending of the story, 3) the complex pattern of the story, and 4) the purpose of the novel as the reminder of the past events as well as self-improvement for its readers.

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