

The Boy in the Striped Pajamas: Literary Devices Chapters 1-5

Literary Device: Making Inferences

While reading, good readers make inferences. An inference is the act or process of forming logical conclusions by combining the text and past knowledge. In the first chapter, we must make several inferences to gain understanding. Read each of the following passages from the novel, and explain what is able to be inferred from each.

1. *"...he was surprised to find Maria, the family's maid – who always kept her head bowed and never looked up from the carpet – standing in his bedroom..."* What does this passage let us know about Maria, the family maid?

2. *"'What are you doing?' he asked in as polite a tone as he could muster, for although he wasn't happy to come home and find someone going through his possessions, his mother had always told him that he was to treat Maria respectfully and not just imitate the way Father spoke to her."* What does this passage reveal about Mother and Father?

3. *"...because there were always so many visitors to the house – men in fantastic uniforms, women with typewriters that he had to keep his mucky hands off – and they were always very polite to Father and told each other that he was a man to watch and that the Fury had big things in mind for him."* What does this passage allow the readers to infer about father?

Literary Device: Context Clues

Often times, readers must use context clues to determine the meaning of an unknown word. Readers use words or phrases surrounding an unfamiliar word to gain understanding of the word. These words or phrases are referred to as context clues. If you become more aware of the words around the difficult words you encounter in your reading, you will save yourself many trips to the dictionary. You will be able to make logical guesses about the meaning of many words.

Use context clues to determine the meaning of the bolded word in each passage. In each passage, underline the word(s) that help you determine the meaning of the word.

1. *"The new house, however, stood all on its own in an empty, **desolate** place and there were no other boys to play with, neither friends nor trouble."*

Desolate: _____

2. *"...a ground floor with a kitchen, a dining room, and a new office for Father (which he **presumed** had the same restrictions as the old one), and a basement..."*

Presumed: _____

Literary Device: Idiom and Hyperbole

What are idioms and hyperbole? Both an idiom and hyperbole are types of figurative language. Hyperbole is an extravagant exaggeration. For example, you have a mile-high ice-cream cone. You have a large ice-cream cone, but it is not a mile high! An idiom is a common expression that cannot be taken literally. For example, she is on cloud nine. This means that she is happy. No one would actually think she is on a cloud!

Read the following passages from the novel. Underline the figurative language in each and label it as hyperbole or idiom.

1. *"...they had no time to stop, not today, not when they had a hundred and one things to do."*

2. *"'I think the best thing to do would be to forget all about this and just go back home. We can chalk it up to experience,' he added."*

Literary Device: Point of View

The point of view of a story makes all the difference in the world. If a character is telling the story, the first person point of view is used. This point of view provides the reader with the advantage of really getting to know the character who is narrating. If none of the characters are telling the story, and an unseen narrator is telling it, the third person point of view is being used. If the narrator focusses on one character’s perspective, the third person limited point of view is used. When the narrator allows the reader to see the story through the perspective of several characters, the third person omniscient point of view is used.

1. What point of view is used in The Boy in the Striped Pajamas?

2. Who is telling the story?

3. What are some things that we have already learned that we may not have learned if another point of view were used?

4. If it were told from a different character’s point of view, what are some things that we may know about that we do not know about now?

Literary Device: Setting

In literature the setting is the time and place in which a story occurs. Setting is especially important in a historical novel such as this one.

1. What is the setting of this novel?

2. What details about the setting help make the characters' times and lifestyles seem real?

Literary Device: Simile

A simile is a figure of speech in which two unlike objects are compared using the words "like" or "as".

For example: As they [the Nazi soldiers] left they stood in a row together like toy soldiers...

1. What is being compared?

2. What does the comparison suggest about the Nazi soldiers?

Literary Elements: Imagery

Imagery is language that creates a sensory impression within the reader’s mind. Imagery consists of words and phrases that appeal to readers’ senses. Writers use sensory details to help readers imagine how things look, feel, smell, sound, and taste. In Chapter Four, Boyne uses a great deal of imagery to create a contrast in the areas the children see out of Bruno’s window (pages 31 and 32). On a separate sheet of paper, draw the scene from outside Bruno’s window. Be sure that you focus on the imagery in the novel to create the same sense of contrast in the two areas. To help you get started, make a list of the way the narrator describes the scene. The list has been started for you.

1. Complete the chart below before you start your drawing.

The Area Surrounding Bruno’s House	The Area On The Other Side Of The Fence
...a garden...a large one...full of flowers...in neat orderly sections.	
...soil that looked as if it was tended very carefully...	
	...low huts and large square buildings dotted around and one or two smoke stacks in the distance.

Literary Device: Capitalization – When to capitalize family names (words such as mother, father, aunt)

Capitalize mother, dad, and other family names if they are being used as a formal name. Let’s look at the author’s use of these words in Chapter Five.

There was only one thing for it and that was to speak to Father. In this sentence, Father is capitalized because it is replacing the man’s name. Hint: if you can replace the “mother/mom” or “father/dad” with the person’s formal name (Betty, Jim, or Alice) “Mother/Mom” or “Father/Dad” should be capitalized. For example, the above sentence could be rewritten: *There was only one thing for it and that was to speak to Jim.*

Now take a look at this sentence: *“Yes, but I also knew that my father, your grandfather, knew what was best for me....”* In this sentence, neither father nor grandfather is capitalized because neither is replacing a formal name. Thinking back to the earlier hint, this sentence would not make sense if we substituted Jim for father – reread it rewritten: *“Yes, but I also knew that my Jim, your grandfather, knew what was best for me...”* This sentence does not make sense rewritten. This suggests that “father” is a general term, not a formal name and should not be capitalized.

Practice the rule: read and rewrite each of the following sentences if it is incorrect.

1. My mother took me to Grandmother’s house.

2. Sally, dad, and I went to the store.

3. Gena’s mom is our art teacher.

4. Until now I thought mom was perfect.

Literary Element: Flashback

A flashback is a scene or series of scenes showing events that happened at an earlier time.

1. Indicate where and when the flashback begins and ends in Chapter Five.

2. What purpose does this flashback serve?
