



STAY  
WHERE YOU  
ARE & then  
LEAVE



From the Author of  
THE BOY IN THE STRIPED PYJAMAS  
JOHN BOYNE

Educational  
Resources  
by Prue Goodwin

## **Suggestions for educational approaches to *Stay Where You Are & Then Leave* by John Boyne**

Dear Colleague,

The year 2014 will mark one hundred years since the start of the Great War – a war to end all wars but which became known as the First World War (WW1) when, less than twenty years later, the Second World War began.

WW1 is included in the National Curriculum, however, more powerful in terms of learning is the reality that the victims of that war are part of living memory. Political facts, statistics and military strategies are not as significant as stories passed down about one's own family and friends. Equally, the powerful voices of authors and poets writing at that time are readily available. The most effective way to ensure that young people remember both the facts and the impact of such an historic event would be facts about the war combined with a fictional interpretation of events. John Boyne's book, *Stay Where You Are & Then Leave*, offers a perfect vehicle for teaching young students the social and political history of this era. The engaging narrative, with its range of characters to care about, mysteries to unravel and problems to resolve, provides references throughout to essential knowledge about WW1.

Once you have read this book, you will see for yourself its potential to support your teaching. There are many ways it could be used by a variety of people:

- English specialists may use it as a set text to study over a few weeks with students from Year 6 to Year 8.
- Historians may want to focus on chapters which are particularly relevant to the history syllabus.
- Librarians will, of course, be keen to put it into the hands of avid readers.

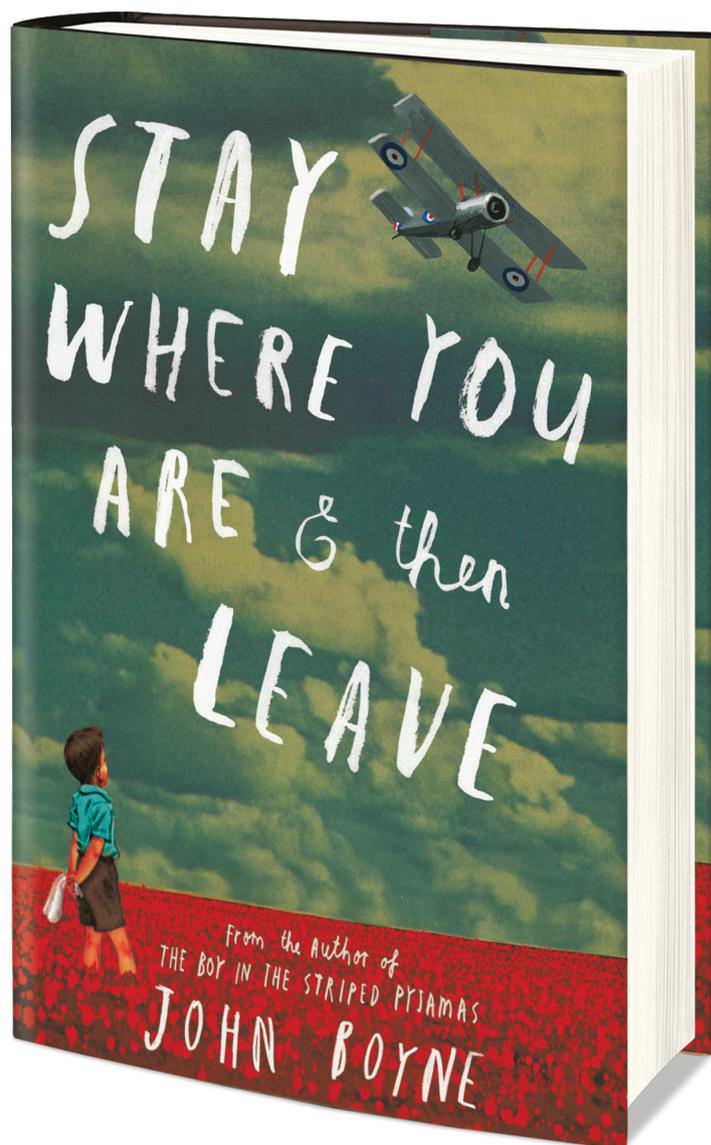
Pupils at the upper end of junior school could get a lot from this book but, as an ex-coordinator of Year 7, I see its real educational value in supporting both English and History in Key Stage Three. The following list of teaching ideas is intended as a springboard for your planning. Each suggestion can either be used as it stands, provide the basis of particular pieces of work or as a starting point for a full scale programme of study.

However you choose to share it with youngsters, I am sure it will be a rewarding read for all.

Best wishes,  
Prue Goodwin

## About the book

*Stay Where You Are & Then Leave* is written from the point of view of a young boy, Alfie, who describes how war affects his life. It is set entirely in England, and concentrates on the impact of the war on the families living in an ordinary London street. Alfie wants to find out what has happened to his father since he enlisted at the beginning of the war, but he is never told the whole truth. Searching for this truth leads Alfie to discover what war is really like. He eventually sees what is happening but he doesn't always understand it. Whilst making reference to the futile loss of life and other horrendous aspects of the war, younger readers (10–12 year olds) only know as much as Alfie can tell us. The writing allows for more mature students to use their growing knowledge of the situation to predict the unfolding narrative. How much any young reader fully understands about the atrocities of war will depend on how the book is used in the classroom with guidance from teachers or librarians.



## In the classroom

*Stay Where You Are & Then Leave* provides an ideal opportunity for collaboration between the English and History departments. If using this book as part of a WW1 programme you could invite other departments (particularly Art, Drama and Music) to contribute to the overall exploration of the era with music and artwork inspired by WW1.

### **NC Ks2 & Ks3 English: Reading**

Reading a wide range of fiction and non-fiction, including in particular whole books, short stories, poems and plays with a wide coverage of genres, historical periods, forms and authors.

Students from 10- to 14-years-old could read this novel independently, but will benefit from being taught it as part of a programme of study for English. It would also make a good choice to study at the time of transition from primary to secondary education. In preparation for teaching, collect together a range of fiction, information and poetry about the First World War. Explore the possibilities of accessing appropriate film extracts from that era and research what is available (and appropriate) on the Internet. Provide a time line to mark key historical events alongside the incidents in the story.

### **NC Ks3 History: Reading**

The twentieth century

The First World War, including:

- key events
- conscription
- trench warfare
- women's role
- political leadership (Lloyd George)
- shell shock

References to all the topics from the NC mentioned above can be found in the book as well as many other relevant elements of social history. In particular, the story provides incidents from life during the war for the families left at home; for example, there are extracts about:

- the treatment of conscientious objectors
- what happened to foreigners who were resident in England
- pressure to join the military followed by conscription
- the effect on different people e.g. doctor, politician, wounded soldiers.
- rationing

## Teaching approaches

Although not the conventional approach with students of 10+, the best way of sharing this book with students is to read it aloud to them. Listening to a book being read well is a valuable experience for all students, not just the less able. Your intonation immediately provides the syntactic patterns of the author's voice and, even if you only read the first couple of chapters, you know how to give attention to the important points of the story. You can also establish your expectations when discussing their initial responses. Reading around the class is not an effective means of sharing a book but, if possible, provide a class set so that each student can have a copy for further reading and for reference purposes.

## Literary study

The NC requires students to read critically. There are many ways in which *Stay Where You Are & Then Leave* can be used to study setting, plot and characterisation.

### *The Plot*

Is Alfie's father alive? And if he is, can Alfie find him and bring him home? This is the basic plot of *Stay Where You Are & Then Leave* but, as in any story, resolution comes only through Alfie's ability to overcome difficult situations and complex personal feelings. To follow the sequence of events that enables Alfie to achieve his goal, create a timeline of incidents as you finish each chapter. Start the line at the beginning of the century, 1900. Alfie was born in 1909. Take the line through to 1922 when the book finishes. Think about what happened to Alfie; his story reflects the lives of people all over the world on whom the First World War had an impact.

### *Setting*

The reader quickly becomes familiar with Alfie's street and his neighbours but, when he starts his travels to find his father, the environment changes to being more hostile (Kings Cross station) or frightening (the hospital). How does setting affect the atmosphere of events in the story?

### *Character development*

Trace the way Georgie's character develops from the beginning to the end of the book. When we first read about him, he is a cheerful and dependable father, clearly greatly loved by his family and popular with his neighbours. Read extracts from the letters Georgie sends from the front (pages 94 to 101) and trace the changes in his attitude and opinions about his situation. Describe how we can tell that his condition has become serious.

### *Language studies*

Many opportunities for language study can be found in this novel. Apart from the vocabulary of the early 20th century which was in common usage (e.g. privy, farthing, bath chair), there is:

- slang used at the time to refer to British soldiers (Tommy), the enemy (Hun, Boche) and to the British Isles (Blighty)
- well-known phrases from propaganda ('Your Country Needs You', 'What did you do in the war, Daddy?')
- popular songs such as *Keep the home fires burning*, *Hush! Here comes a whizz bang* and, one that is still often heard today, *Pack up your troubles in your old kit bag*.

## Reading for research

### Finding out about WW1

Although this novel is packed with relevant information about WW1, the central focus is Alfie's search for his father, Georgie, who has either died in the trenches or is, possibly, wounded. It is possible to construct a fair idea of what the armed forces suffered between 1914 and 1918 but Georgie was one of thousands of men who returned from France alive but broken both physically and mentally. Remember, free healthcare for all was non-existent before 1948. What would have happened to Georgie and all the men like him?

### Wounded soldiers

Between 1914 and 1918, thousands of young men became casualties of the Great War but once they had been 'patched up' by the army doctors, they were deemed fit to fight again. No thought was given to their mental states. Some returned to the Front, some were sent home to be cared for by their families and others never recovered.

### Shell Shock

Studying human behaviour (psychology) and mental disorder (psychiatry) were very new sciences at the beginning of the 20th century. For decades, when soldiers became mentally disturbed following prolonged action in battle, they were described as having 'shell shock', 'battle fatigue' and, most recently, 'Gulf War Syndrome'. Since the two Gulf Wars (1990-91; 2003-11), far more has been learned about these conditions and they are all now recognised as extreme forms of Traumatic Stress Disorder (TSD). These days, sufferers receive treatment and support in order to help them get better. During WW1, soldiers suffering from these chronic illnesses were living in intolerable conditions. If they tried to run away, they were arrested and often executed for cowardice. If they were injured they may have been sent home to hospital – but only so they could be 'cured' and returned to battle as soon as possible.

Use your school and local library to find out about medical treatment around the time of WW1. Find out the roles taken by women in hospitals at home and on mainland Europe. Alfie's mother became a Queen's Nurse. Look them up on [www.qaimns.co.uk/qaimns.php](http://www.qaimns.co.uk/qaimns.php).

Use the Internet to find out:

- the numbers of casualties
- the famous battles (Ypres, Passchendaele, Jutland, Somme)

Look at your local war memorials to see how many men from your city, town or village lost their lives during WW1. Which regiments did they belong to? Visit a local museum to see if there is anything about WW1 in your area.

## Research life in 1914

Extracts from the story serve to highlight the massive differences in everyday life between 1914 and now.

### *Buying milk (page 4)*

Is milk delivered to your home? Do you buy milk in a bottle or a carton? Read the following extract about delivering milk in 1914.

Mr Asquith was Georgie's horse. Or rather, he was the dairy's horse; the one who pulled Georgie's milk float every morning when he was delivering the milk. Alfie had named him the day he'd been assigned to Georgie a year before; he'd heard the name so often on the wireless that it seemed it could only belong to someone very important and so decided it was just right for a horse.

Later on in the book, when Georgie is away in the army, he has been replaced as a milkman by another man.

Mr Asquith trotted by with young Henry Lyons on the bench-seat. Henry couldn't fill a milk jug to save his life; everyone said so. He'd start pouring and half the churn would end up on the side of the road.

### *Going to the toilet (page 40)*

These days the only places you are likely to find outdoor toilets are at camp sites and nature reserves and none of them need you to take a scoop of cinders with you. Read what Alfie had to do if he needed the toilet.

Alfie went downstairs, ran outside for the scoop that sat behind the back door, and filled it with ashes from the base of the kitchen range. Then he ran down to the privy at the end of the garden as quickly as he could, trying not to feel the ice in the air or spill any of the precious cinders. He hated going there first thing in the morning, particularly now, in late October, when it was still so dark and the air was so frosty, but there was no way around it. It was freezing inside, seven different spiders and something that looked like an overfed beetle crawled over his feet as he sat there, he could hear the scurrying of rats behind the woodwork, and he groaned when he remembered that he'd forgotten the squares of yesterday's newspaper that he meticulously cut up every night before going to bed – but fortunately Margie had taken them outside earlier, pinned a hole through their centre and hung them from a piece of string off the hook, so he didn't need to go back indoors. When he had finished his business, he poured the ashes down the toilet and hoped that the compost heap around the back of the out-house – the worst place he had ever seen in his entire life – would not get clogged up again.

## DRAMA

Drama is imagined experience which aids empathy by enabling you to 'stand in the shoes' of other people. It provides the best opportunity for youngsters to understand characters in the novel whilst also introducing the realities of life for people in very difficult circumstances. There are some scenes in the book that lend themselves to improvisation, self-scripted performances or rehearsed readings. Here are three examples of extracts that would work well as dramatic interpretations.

### Getting bad news

Information about war casualties nowadays is sometimes made public through news broadcasts and social media even before families have been told. Imagine a time when no ordinary home had a hand-set telephone (let alone a mobile), the Internet hadn't been invented and there was no television. Following a WW1 battle, families had to wait days for news of their loved ones. Officers' families received telegrams but other ranks were sent forms with the merest of details about the dead and wounded. As in the book, sometimes they had to wait until someone was free to visit the family to tell them the bad news. Mothers, wives and children dreaded the sight of unknown British soldiers arriving in their street.

Extract for drama work 1 (page 45).

'Mrs Slipton, I'm Sergeant Malley,' said the man. 'This is Lieutenant Hobton. May we come in for a moment?'

'No,' said Margie.

'Mrs Slipton, please,' he replied in a resigned tone, as if he was accustomed to this type of response. 'If we could just come in and sit down, then—'

'You've got the wrong house,' said Margie, her words catching in her throat, and she almost stumbled before putting her hand on Alfie's shoulder to steady herself. 'Oh my God, you've got the wrong house. How can you do that? This is number twelve. You want number twenty-one. You've got the numbers backwards.'

The older man stared at her for a moment; then his expression changed to one of utter dismay as the redhead pulled a piece of paper from his inside pocket and ran his eyes across it quickly.

'Sarge,' he said, holding the paper out and pointing at something. The sergeant's lip curled up in fury and he glared at the younger man as if he wanted to hit him. 'What's wrong with you, Hobton?' he hissed. 'Can't you read? Can't you check before we knock on a door?' He turned back then and looked at Margie and Alfie, shaking his head. 'I'm sorry,' he said. 'I'm so very, very sorry.'

And with that the two men turned round but remained on the street, looking left and right, their eyes scanning the numbers on the doors before turning in the direction of Mr Janáček's sweet shop, where the windows were still boarded up from when they'd been smashed a couple of years before and the three words painted in white remained. No Spies Here! Margie stepped back into the hall, gasping, but Alfie stayed in the doorway.

He watched as the two soldiers made their way slowly along the street. Every door was open now. And outside every door stood a wife or a mother. Some were crying. Some were praying. Some were shaking their heads, hoping that the men wouldn't stop before them. And every time Sergeant Malley and Lieutenant Hobton passed one of the houses, the woman at the door blessed herself and ran inside, slamming it behind her and putting the latch on in case the two men changed their minds and came back.

Finally they stopped at number twenty-one, where Charlie's mother, Mrs Slipton, was standing. Alfie couldn't hear what she was saying but he could see her crying, trying to push the soldiers away.

## Dealing with aliens

Nowadays we think of aliens as creatures from Outer Space. During WW1, almost any strangers were described as aliens and fear of foreigners led to some dreadful things being done. Even people like the Janáček family, who had been part of a community for years, were rounded up like criminals, sent to prison camps and treated like enemies.

Extract for drama work 2 (page 32).

And then, one evening, as Kalena was playing hopscotch on the street, the squares marked off in chalk on the pavement, and Alfie was sitting on the kerb watching her, an army van appeared and pulled up outside number six; when Mr Janáček opened the door they told him that he was to come with them immediately or there'd be trouble.

'But I have done nothing wrong!' he protested.

'You're a German,' shouted Mrs Milchin from number seven, whose two oldest boys had already been killed at Ypres and whose youngest son, Johnny, was about to turn eighteen.

'But I'm not!' protested Mr Janáček. 'I am from Prague. You are aware of this!' You are aware of this! 'I have never even been to Germany!'

Kalena ran to her father and he threw his arms around her. 'You're not taking us,' he shouted.

'Come on now,' said the army men. 'It'll be easier for you if you come peacefully.'

'That's right, take him away. He's a spy!' shouted Mrs Milchin, and now Margie was out on the street too, looking aghast at what was taking place.

'Leave him be,' she shouted, running down and jumping in between the Janáčeks and the soldiers.

'He just told you that he's not German, and anyway, he's lived here for years. Kalena was born on this street. They're no threat to anyone.'

'Step aside, Mrs,' said the army man, signalling to one of his colleagues to open the back doors of the van.

'You're a traitor, Margie Summerfield!' cried Mrs Milchin. 'Cosying up to the enemy! You ought to be ashamed!'

'But he hasn't done anything! My husband's a soldier,' she added, as if this would help.

‘Step aside, Mrs,’ repeated the army man, ‘or you’ll be taken into custody too.’

A lot of fighting happened then, and it took almost twenty minutes for the Janáčeks to be loaded into the van. They weren’t allowed to go back into their house or to take anything with them. Mr Janáček pleaded to be permitted to take a picture of his wife, but he was told that they could take the clothes they were standing up in and nothing else. Kalena ran to Alfie’s mum and threw her arms around her, and one of the soldiers had to drag her away as the little girl screamed and wept. The last Alfie saw of them was Mr Janáček weeping in the back of the van while Kalena stared out of the window behind her at Alfie, waving silently.

### ‘The Conchie from number 16’

During WW1 laws were made about men being conscripted into the army. Some young men refused to fight. They were called conscientious objectors. Some felt it was wrong to fight wars on moral or religious grounds; others believed the Germans were not enemies; very few were cowards – as the authorities tried to claim. Many ‘conchies’ acted as medics or ambulance drivers on the battlefields, putting themselves into great danger by doing so. In the book, Joe Patience is a ‘conchie’ who is shunned by his neighbours, put on trial and jailed for cowardice.

Extract for drama 3 (page 175).

‘Were you afraid?’ asked Alfie.

‘Yes!’ said Joe, leaning forward and looking the boy directly in the eyes. ‘Of course I was afraid. What kind of fool wouldn’t be afraid, going over to some foreign country to dig out trenches and to kill as many strangers as you could before some stranger could kill you? Only a lunatic wouldn’t be afraid. But it wasn’t fear that kept me from going, Alfie. It wasn’t because I knew I’d be injured or killed. It was the opposite of that. It was the fact that I didn’t want to kill anyone. I wasn’t put on this earth to murder my fellow man. I’d grown up with violence – can’t you see that? I can’t bear it. What my old man did to me . . . it broke something in my head, that’s all. But if I went down the street now and hit a man on the head with a hammer, sent him to his Maker, then they’d put me in jail for it. They might even hang me for it. But because I wouldn’t go over to France and do the same thing, they put me in jail anyway. Where’s the justice in that, can you tell me? Where’s the sense?’

Alfie thought back to that long period when he hadn’t seen Joe Patience for almost two years. And then, when he had reappeared on Damley Road, he looked different. He looked older and sadder. And he had all these scars.

‘So what happened to you?’ asked Alfie.

‘They brought me in,’ said Joe with a shrug, looking away. ‘Put me on trial. Said I was a coward. I got sent to jail. It made a change from being given white feathers everywhere I went anyway.’

Alfie frowned. ‘White feathers?’ he asked.

‘That’s what they do. Women, mostly. Men just attack. Women, they hand out white feathers. To any young man they see who isn’t in a uniform. It means you’re a coward.’

## **Further topics for research**

Politics and David Lloyd George

Women's Suffrage

The Battlefields of WW1

Other excellent books to have available in the classroom

*Archie's War* by Marcia Williams

*War Game* by Michael Foreman

*Private Peaceful* by Michael Morpurgo

*War Horse* by Michael Morpurgo

**You are strongly advised to view all website material before pupils use it.**

Visit the website of the Imperial War Museum [www.iwm.org.uk](http://www.iwm.org.uk)

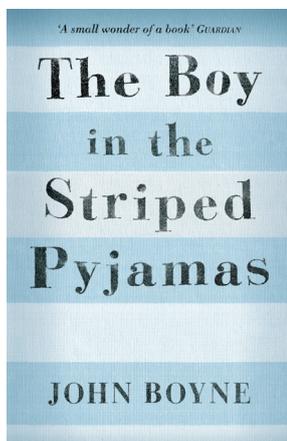
On YouTube there is a section on *The Home Front WW1* (including BBC documentaries).

John Boyne was born in Ireland and is the author of eight novels for adults and four for young readers. His first novel for children, *The Boy In The Striped Pyjamas*, won two Irish Book Awards, was shortlisted for the British Book Award and was made into a film. His novels are published in over 40 languages.

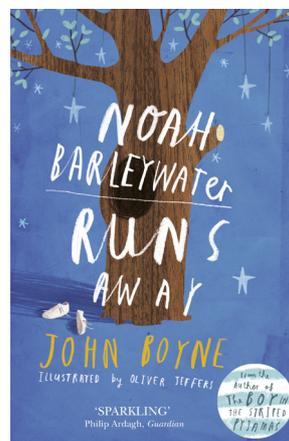


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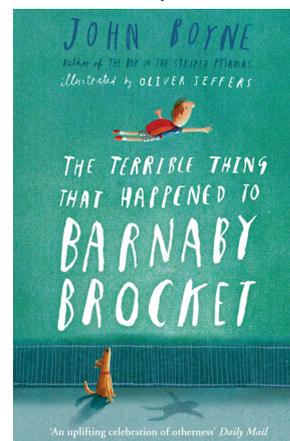
The Boy in the Striped  
Pyjamas



Noah Barleywater Runs  
Away



The Terrible Thing  
that Happened  
to Barnaby Brocket



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