Year 10 Revision Checklist: The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas by John Boyne (Chapters 1–14)

1. Learn the Key Events

Make sure you can explain:

- Why Bruno's family is forced to move away from their home in Berlin (Father's promotion by "The Fury").
- The major differences between the house in Berlin (enormous, 5 storeys, full of nooks and crannies, busy city) and the house at 'Out-With' (3 storeys, isolated, desolate, empty).
- How Bruno first meets Shmuel along the high wire fence in Chapter 10.
- How Pavel (a former doctor turned kitchen helper) treats Bruno's injured knee when he falls off the tyre swing.
- Why Mother lies and takes credit for cleaning Bruno's wound (*"If the Commandant asks, we'll say that I cleaned Bruno up"*).
- How Gretel's behaviour and interests change from playing with dolls to studying political maps and Nazi propaganda under Herr Liszt.
- How Bruno misunderstands the camp, the uniforms ("striped pyjamas"), and his father's role as Commandant.

2. Know the Important Characters

Revise:

- **Bruno**
    - His naive perspective and innocence regarding World War II and the Holocaust.
    - How he views the "striped pyjamas" and envies Shmuel for having children to play with.
    - His pride in his father's title as "Commandant" without understanding what it actually means.
- **Shmuel**
    - His forlorn appearance on the other side of the high wire fence.
    - His quiet realization of his situation compared to Bruno's lack of understanding.

- **Pavel**
    - An older Jewish man forced to work in the kitchen at Out-With.
    - Formerly a qualified doctor; demonstrates kindness by dressing Bruno's wound.
- **Mother & Father (The Commandant)**
    - Mother's desire to protect Pavel from Father/Kotler while experiencing tension at Out-With.
    - Father's authority, high status, and strict adherence to his duty.
- **Lieutenant Kotler & Maria**
    - **Lieutenant Kotler:** A young, cruel Nazi soldier with slicked-back blonde hair who mistreats servants.
    - **Maria:** The family maid who remains loyal to Father because of past kindness to her family.
- **Gretel ("The Hopeless Case")**
    - Her shift from childhood play (dolls) to political indoctrination and Nazi ideology.

3. Key Vocabulary

Be able to define and use:

- **Solemnity** (Formal seriousness, gravity, or sombre mood)
- **Desolate**
- **Forlorn**
- **Dramatic Irony**
- **Social Hierarchy**
- **Indoctrination**

You may be asked to define these words, find synonyms (e.g., seriousness/gravity for solemnity), or explain their meanings in context.

4. Important Quotations & Techniques

Revise these quotes and what they reveal:

- *"The room was filled with an air of uncomfortable solemnity."*
    - **Vocabulary:** Highlights a heavy, serious atmosphere.
- *"They're not pyjamas... We have to [wear them]."*
    - **Dramatic Irony:** Reader understands these are concentration camp uniforms, while Bruno thinks they are sleepwear.
- *"If the Commandant asks, we'll say that I cleaned Bruno up."*
    - **Significance:** Shows Mother protecting Pavel from severe punishment/retaliation and reveals the dangerous racial/social hierarchy at Out-With.
- *"The silence out here was heavy... It felt watchful, as if the fence itself were waiting for him to make a mistake."*
    - **Technique:** Personification / Foreshadowing (presents the fence as a threatening, vigilant organism).

5. Themes to Revise

- **Innocence vs. Awareness (Dramatic Irony)**
    - How Boyne uses Bruno's childlike worldview to highlight the horrors of the Holocaust.
- **Social Hierarchy, Power, and Prejudice**
    - How Jewish characters (like Pavel) are dehumanized and forced into subservient roles regardless of past accomplishments.
- **Indoctrination and Loss of Innocence**
    - How Gretel transitions from playing with dolls to absorbing Nazi propaganda.
- **Boundaries and Division**
    - The physical fence separating Bruno and Shmuel, symbolizing social, political, and physical barriers.

6. Inference Questions Practice

Be prepared to explain:

- How John Boyne uses **dramatic irony** during Bruno and Shmuel's first meeting at the fence.
- Why Mother takes credit for cleaning Bruno's wound and what this reveals about life at Out-With.
- How Gretel's character changes between Chapter 1 and Chapter 14 and what causes her transition.
- What Pavel's treatment by the family reveals about the social hierarchy of Nazi Germany.

7. Language & Tension Analysis Practice (13-Mark Question)

When analysing how Boyne builds tension as Bruno approaches the fence, make sure to examine:

- **WHAT? (Techniques & Observations)**
    - **Repetition & Scale:** *"walked and walked"*, *"smaller and smaller"* (emphasizes distance and growing isolation).
    - **Rule of Three / Visual Absence:** *"no one about... no small boys... no families"* (creates a desolate, unnatural environment).
- **HOW? (Sensory Details & Personification)**
    - **Personification:** Describing silence as *"watchful"* and the fence as *"waiting for him to make a mistake."*
    - **Atmosphere & Weather:** The dropping sun and *"chilly wind"* building a sinister, time-pressured mood.
- **WHY? (Effect on Reader & Structure)**
    - **Pacing & PEE Structure:** How the gradual transformation from a *"tiny dot"* to a person sitting cross-legged builds anticipation, leading to a visceral physical reaction (*"heart gave a sudden thud"*).

Night Before the Test: Quick 10-Minute Revision

- ✅ Learn character roles: **Lieutenant Kotler** (cruel soldier), **Maria** (loyal maid), **Pavel** (former doctor/kitchen worker).
- ✅ Memorise definitions and synonyms for **solemnity** (*seriousness*, *gravity*).
- ✅ Review the difference between the Berlin house (5 storeys, grand) and Out-With (3 storeys, isolated).
- ✅ Be ready to explain 3 examples of **dramatic irony** (the "pyjamas", the "fence", and the title "Commandant").
- ✅ Practice explaining why Mother lied about Pavel treating Bruno's knee.
- ✅ Review language techniques for the 13-mark question (**personification**, **repetition**, **sensory details**, **rule of three**).

Top Tip: High marks in Section C (13 marks) come from analysing **how** specific language devices (like personifying the fence as "watchful") build tension, rather than just telling the story of Bruno walking!