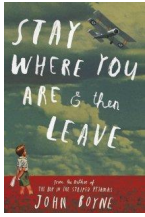


Leon O'Donoghue who is in 5th class in St Peter's Primary School, Bray, Co. Wicklow has sent us this review of *Stay where you are and then leave*, by John Boyne. Thank you Leon.



I have just finished reading 'Stay where you are and then leave' by John Boyne. I found it quite an interesting book because it's a children's book but it is full of surprises... and not all of them good. My class and I are also currently reading 'The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas' by the same author. My teacher asked me to read this book as it was nominated for The Specsavers Children's Book of the Year (senior category).

'Stay where you are and then leave' is set at the start of the First World War, where millions believe the war will simply last until Christmas. Alfie Summerfield is five years old and has a normal childhood (considering the circumstances!) until his father disappears one day. At first, he and his mother are shocked by his father's decision to fight in the war, but get some comfort from his letters. Now, at nine years old, Alfie and his mother have learned to get by with what they have. Soon Alfie is devastated again when the letters from his father stop and he assumes the worst.

The book mainly follows Archie's life, but also gives an insight into the fears in children's hearts at that time and the resolve shown by those children while they waited for their fathers to return. My favourite part of the story was the subplot of a local family targeted by the neighbours because they originally came from Prague, even though they'd been living locally for over a decade.

I would give this book 9.5 out of 10, and that's if I'm being really tough. I liked the way John Boyne portrayed Alfie's life and how he was forced to work to help his mother. You get the sense that even though Alfie is a character in a book, his story could have been any child's story from that time. His experiences were the same for many children who were also wondering when and if their fathers would ever return home from the war. The author manages to paint a very realistic picture of life back then. When I was reading some of the sad parts, I felt very lucky not to have lived through those times.

I would recommend this book to children of ten years and older.