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THE PROBLEM OF GROWING UP DURING THE WARTIME IN MARKUS ZUSAK'S NOVEL "THE BOOK THIEF"

Markus Zusak was born in 1975 in Sydney, Australia, as the youngest of four children of German and Austrian immigrants. His novel "The Book Thief" is the tale of orphan Liesel Meminger, who finds companionship and a new family in a tiny village in Germany during World War II. Zusak picked the topic in part to relate the experiences his parents told him about growing up during the war in Austria and Germany. "What I wanted to do... was write someone's favourite novel," Zusak explained in an interview.

"The Book Thief" is set in Germany in the years 1939-1943 and relates the narrative of Liesel, as told by Death, who has in his hands the book she wrote about all these years. In that sense, they are both book thieves. Liesel steals haphazardly at first, then deliberately, yet she is never greedy. Death takes Liesel's notebook when she leaves it in her torment, among the ruins of what was once her home, and carries it with him.

The beginning of the book tells us that Liesel is almost an orphan. Her father was never known to her, her mother vanished after giving her to her new foster parents, and her younger brother died on the train to Molching, where the foster parents dwell. Death first meets nine-year-old Liesel after her brother dies, and he stays long enough to see her grab her first book, "The Gravedigger's Handbook," which was left lying in the snow beside her brother's grave.

Her foster parents, Hans and Rosa Herbermann, are impoverished Germans who were granted a little stipend to care for her. Liesel becomes close friends with her next-door neighbour Rudy, a child with "lemon-coloured hair." Zusak writes, "A snowball in the face is surely the perfect beginning to a lasting friendship."

One night, a Jew appears in their home. He's the son of Hans's WWI fellow, the man who taught him to play the accordion, and whose widowed wife Hans promised to help if she ever needed it. Max and Liesel become good friends, and he creates a stunning narrative for her called "The Standover Man," which can be called heartbreaking.

The subject of books, which is hinted at even in the novel's title, is related to words and language. The Nazi book-burning is a crucial aspect of the story which depicts both the restriction of free speech and the power of books themselves – Hitler is afraid of books that contradict his propaganda. By grabbing a book from the flames, Liesel is able to combat Hitler in her own little way.

Language, reading, and writing are presented as metaphorical components of self-expression and freedom throughout the story. They provide the characters who have or achieve the power of literacy with individuality and personal liberation: "the actual power of words." They also serve as a framework for Liesel's growth and development.

Books are nearly like characters in the narrative. Each of the novels is linked to a tale of a girl's life. Liesel's adventure begins with "The Gravedigger's Handbook." Her brother's

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death marked the first gloomy point in the novel. Liesel was damaged and disturbed by this for the rest of her life. It's her sole recollection of her brother and mother.

Liesel rescued "The Shoulder Shrug" from the ashes of a flaming celebration of Hitler's birthday. The novel is about a Jewish man who is depicted positively, which is why it was condemned. She steals it because she is filled with rage for Himmel Street, her mother, and the Führer.

In the bomb shelter, she reads "The Whistler." Frau Hermann hands Liesel "The Whistler" and invites her to come and read in the library. It represents her complicated connection with Ilse as well as a significant point in her personal development.

The book "Mein Kampf" exemplifies the hate-filled ideals of Hitler and his supporters that Liesel and her foster family fear. Despite their fears, they conceal Max in their basement, where he records his own struggles and experiences on the pages of Hitler's writings. The meaning of this scene is that anything bad or wrong may eventually be used for good. Max is eventually able to paint over the pages of "Mein Kampf" and compose a tale for Liesel, allowing him to get revenge on Hitler by painting over the horrible words with his own compassionate language.

Ilse lends Liesel a black diary in which she may write her own stories when she is alone at home. Liesel walks down to the basement to compose her narrative. She is mute and unable to read at the start of her narrative. "The Book Thief" is the title of the book Liesel writes in the months leading up to the Himmel Street explosion. It is the book that Death retrieves from the ashes and gives it to Liesel after she dies. Liesel's own book literally and metaphorically saves her life. It keeps her in the basement for the final bombing, and writing it allows her to dissolve all of the pain she has witnessed and experienced. She says, "I have hated the words and I have loved them, and I hope I have made them right."

The author establishes the premise that books mean considerably more to Liesel than it appears as the tale progresses. They nourish her spirit, provide food for her mind, and provide the basis for her development. She steals the book to exact revenge on her new sworn foe. In the girl's terrible existence, books are her sole source of happiness. Books are more than simply an occupation for a girl; they are her salvation and her heart.

This novel shows us the frightening example of war, violence and Nazism. Here we can see little Liesel go through her horrible reality. If only it happened in books and books only. But, nowadays, Ukrainians have to face the same problems. The terrorist state has been trying to deprive our culture, our freedom of speech and our lives. They destroy our museums and steal our cultural heritage. They burn books written by Ukrainian authors. Our children have to spend their childhood in the bomb shelters because Russia is shelling Ukrainian territory. For us, "The Book Thief" is more than just a novel. It is the portrait of our reality.

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