



MARCUS ZUSAK – THE BOOK THIEF

Arrival on Himmel street

ARRIVAL ON HIMMEL STREET

That last time.

That red sky . . .

How does a book thief end up kneeling and howling and flanked by a man-made heap of ridiculous, greasy, cooked-up rubble?

Years earlier, the start was snow.

The time had come. For one.

A SPECTACULARLY TRAGIC MOMENT

A train was moving quickly.

It was packed with humans.

A six-year-old boy died in the third carriage.

The book thief and her brother were traveling down toward Munich, where they would soon be given over to foster parents. We now know, of course, that the boy didn't make it.

HOW IT HAPPENED

There was an intense spurt of coughing.

Almost an inspired spurt.

And soon after—nothing.

When the coughing stopped, there was nothing but the nothingness of life moving on with a shuffle, or a near silent twitch. A suddenness found its way onto his lips then, which were a corroded brown color and peeling, like old paint. In desperate need of redoing.

Their mother was asleep.

I entered the train.

My feet stepped through the cluttered aisle and my palm was over his mouth in an instant. No one noticed.

The train galloped on.

Except the girl.

With one eye open, one still in a dream, the book thief—also known as Liesel Meminger—could see without

question that her younger brother, Werner, was now sideways and dead.

His blue eyes stared at the floor.

Seeing nothing.



Prior to waking up, the book thief was dreaming about the Führer, Adolf Hitler. In the dream, she was attending a rally at which he spoke, looking at the skull-colored part in his hair and the perfect square of his mustache. She was listening contentedly to the torrent of words spilling from his mouth. His sentences glowed in the light. In a quieter moment, he actually crouched down and smiled at her. She returned the smile and said, "Guten Tag, Herr Führer. Wie geht's dir heut?" She hadn't learned to speak too well, or even to read, as she had rarely frequented school. The reason for that she would find out in due course. Just as the Führer was about to reply, she woke up. It was January 1939. She was nine years old, soon to be ten. Her brother was dead. One eye open. One still in a dream. It would be better for a complete dream, I think, but I really have no control over that. The second eye jumped awake and she caught me out, no doubt about it. It was exactly when I knelt down and extracted his soul, holding it limply in my swollen arms. He warmed up soon after, but when I picked him up originally, the boy's spirit was soft and cold, like ice cream. He started melting in my arms. Then warming up completely. Healing. For Liesel Meminger, there was the imprisoned stiffness of movement and the staggered onslaught of thoughts. Es stimmt nicht. This isn't happening. This isn't happening. And the shaking. Why do they always shake them? Yes, I know, I know, I assume it has something to do with instinct. To stem the flow of truth. Her heart at that point was slippery and hot, and loud, so loud so loud. Stupidly, I stayed. I watched. Next, her mother. She woke her up with the same distraught shake. If you can't imagine it, think clumsy silence. Think bits and pieces of floating despair. And drowning in a train. Snow had been falling consistently, and the service to Munich was forced to stop due to faulty track work. There was a woman wailing. A girl stood numbly next to her. In panic, the mother opened the door. She climbed down into the snow, holding the small body. What could the girl do but follow?



As you've been informed, two guards also exited the train. They discussed and argued over what to do. The situation was unsavory to say the least. It was eventually decided that all three of them should be taken to the next township and left there to sort things out. This time, the train limped through the snowed-in country. It hobbled in and stopped. They stepped onto the platform, the body in her mother's arms. They stood. The boy was getting heavy. Liesel had no idea where she was. All was white, and as they remained at the station, she could only stare at the faded lettering of the sign in front of her. For Liesel, the town was nameless, and it was there that her brother, Werner, was buried two days later. Witnesses included a priest and two shivering grave diggers.

AN OBSERVATION

A pair of train guards.

A pair of grave diggers.

When it came down to it, one of them called the shots.

The other did what he was told.

The question is, what if the other is a lot more than one?

Mistakes, mistakes, it's all I seem capable of at times. For two days, I went about my business. I traveled the globe as always, handing souls to the conveyor belt of eternity. I watched them trundle passively on. Several times, I warned myself that I should keep a good distance from the burial of Liesel Meminger's brother. I did not heed my advice. From miles away, as I approached, I could already see the small group of humans standing frigidly among the wasteland of snow. The cemetery welcomed me like a friend, and soon, I was with them. I bowed my head. Standing to Liesel's left, the grave diggers were rubbing their hands together and whining about the snow and the current digging conditions. "So hard getting through all the ice," and so forth. One of them couldn't have been more than fourteen. An apprentice. When he walked away, after a few dozen paces, a black book fell innocuously from his coat pocket without his knowledge. A few minutes later, Liesel's mother started leaving with the priest. She was thanking him for his performance of the ceremony.



The girl, however, stayed.
Her knees entered the ground. Her moment had arrived.
Still in disbelief, she started to dig. He couldn't be dead. He couldn't be dead. He couldn't—
Within seconds, snow was carved into her skin.
Frozen blood was cracked across her hands.
Somewhere in all the snow, she could see her broken heart, in two pieces. Each half was
glowing, and beating
under all that white. She realized her mother had come back for her only when she felt
the boniness of a hand
on her shoulder. She was being dragged away. A warm scream filled her throat.

**A SMALL IMAGE, PERHAPS *
TWENTY METERS AWAY
When the dragging was done, the mother and
the girl stood and breathed.
There was something black and rectangular
lodged in the snow.
Only the girl saw it.
She bent down and picked it up and
held it firmly in her fingers.
The book had silver writing on it.**

They held hands.
A final, soaking farewell was let go of, and they turned and left the cemetery, looking back
several times.
As for me, I remained a few moments longer.
I waved.
No one waved back.
Mother and daughter vacated the cemetery and made their way toward the next train to
Munich.



MARCUS ZUSAK – The book thief

DEATH AND CHOCOLATE

First the colors.
Then the humans.
That's usually how I see things.
Or at least, how I try.

HERE IS A SMALL FACT You are going to die.

I am in all truthfulness attempting to be cheerful about this whole topic, though most people find themselves hindered in believing me, no matter my protestations. Please, trust me. I most definitely can be cheerful. I can be amiable. Agreeable. Affable. And that's only the A's. Just don't ask me to be nice. Nice has nothing to do with me.

REACTION TO THE AFOREMENTIONED FACT Does this worry you? I urge you—don't be afraid. I'm nothing if not fair.

—Of course, an introduction.

A beginning. Where are my manners?

I could introduce myself properly, but it's not really necessary. You will know me well enough and soon enough, depending on a diverse range of variables. It suffices to say that at some point in time, I will be standing over you, as genially as possible. Your soul will be in my arms. A color will be perched on my shoulder. I will carry you gently away.

At that moment, you will be lying there (I rarely find people standing up). You will be caked in your own body. There might be a discovery; a scream will dribble down the air. The only sound I'll hear after that will be my own breathing, and the sound of the smell, of my footsteps.

The question is, what color will everything be at that moment when I come for you? What will the sky be saying?

Personally, I like a chocolate-colored sky. Dark, dark chocolate. People say it suits me. I do, however, try to enjoy every color I see—the whole spectrum. A billion or so flavors, none of them quite the same, and a sky to slowly suck on. It takes the edge off the stress. It helps me relax.

A SMALL THEORY



People observe the colors of a day only at its beginnings and ends, but to me it's quite clear that a day merges through a multitude of shades and intonations, with each passing moment. A single hour can consist of thousands of different colors. Waxy yellows, cloud-spat blues. Murky darkneses. In my line of work, I make it a point to notice them.

As I've been alluding to, my one saving grace is distraction. It keeps me sane. It helps me cope, considering the length of time I've been performing this job. The trouble is, who could ever replace me? Who could step in while I take a break in your stock-standard resort-style vacation destination, whether it be tropical or of the ski trip variety? The answer, of course, is nobody, which has prompted me to make a conscious, deliberate decision—to make distraction my vacation. Needless to say, I vacation in increments. In colors.

Still, it's possible that you might be asking, why does he even need a vacation? What does he need distraction from?

Which brings me to my next point.

It's the leftover humans.

The survivors.

They're the ones I can't stand to look at, although on many occasions I still fail. I deliberately seek out the colors to keep my mind off them, but now and then, I witness the ones who are left behind, crumbling among the jigsaw puzzle of realization, despair, and surprise. They have punctured hearts. They have beaten lungs. Which in turn brings me to the subject I am telling you about tonight, or today, or whatever the hour and color. It's the story of one of those perpetual survivors—an expert at being left behind. It's just a small story really, about, among other things:

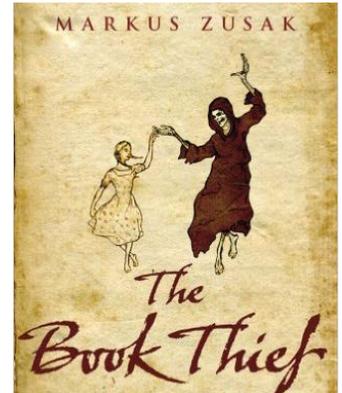
- A girl
- Some words
- An accordionist
- Some fanatical Germans
- A Jewish fist fighter
- And quite a lot of thievery

I saw the book thief three times.



ARRIVAL ON HIMMEL STREET

1. Who is the narrator of the story?
2. What did Liesel dream about? What was her dream like?
3. What did the narrator do when Liesel noticed him?
4. How do most people react when somebody dies?
5. „It was eventually decided that all three of them should be taken to the next township and left there to sort things out.“
Explain the underlined part of the sentence.
6. How was the narrator welcomed in the cemetery?
7. What were Liesel’s feelings like after the death of her brother?

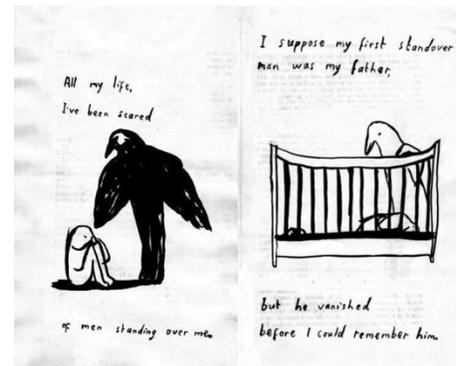


THE SNOWMAN

1. Where were they snowballing? What do you think what the reason was?
2. What was Hans’ relationship like with his family?
3. How did Max name the snowman? Why?
4. „For a few minutes they all forgot.“ What did they forget about?
5. Mama was a strict and very serious lady. Why was she like that inside?

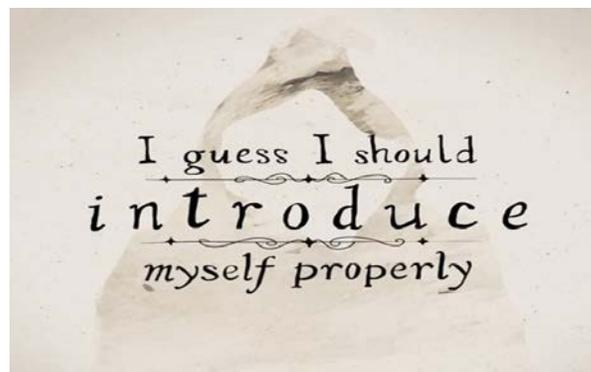
Give examples to support your ideas.

6. Why would the family look suspicious with closed curtains?
7. Who was/were blamed for Max’s illness? Why?
8. What did the author compare Max to?
9. „It was a paradox.“ What does it mean in the text?
10. What nationality was Max?



THIRTEEN PRESENTS

1. What was the cake like which was waiting for Max and Liesel?
2. Who was Max visited by? Who did Max struggle with?
3. What did Papa suggest Liesel to do to help Max?
4. Why Papa didn't believe Liesel that the nuns had given her the book?
5. Why wasn't Liesel able to read every single page of the book?
6. What was the way Mama had to call Liesel home if Max woke up? Why did she want it that way?
7. Why did Mama send Liesel out with her friends?
8. What was Max's opinion on the presents in Liesel's imagination?
9. Why did Liesel decide to bring presents to Max?
10. How did she choose the presents?
11. Which presents weren't material ones? And how was Liesel able to give these presents to Max?
12. What was the genre of the book Liesel read to Max?



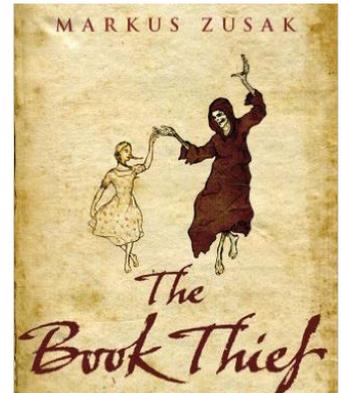


ARRIVAL ON HIMMEL STREET

1. Who is the narrator of the story? **Death**

2. What did Liesel dream about? What was her dream like? **Prior to waking up, the book thief was dreaming about the Führer, Adolf Hitler. In the dream, she was attending a rally at which he spoke, looking at the skull-colored part in his hair and the perfect square of his mustache. She was listening contentedly to the torrent of words spilling from his mouth. His sentences glowed in the light.**

In a quieter moment, he actually crouched down and smiled at her. She returned the smile and said, “Guten Tag, Herr Führer. Wie geht’s dir heut?” She hadn’t learned to speak too well, or even to read, as she had rarely frequented school. The reason for that she would find out in due course. Just as the Führer was about to reply, she woke up.



3. What did the narrator do when Liesel noticed him? **It would be better for a complete dream, I think, but I really have no control over that. The second eye jumped awake and she caught me out, no doubt about it. It was exactly when I knelt down and extracted his soul, holding it limply in my swollen arms.**

4. How do most people react when somebody dies? **And the shaking. Why do they always shake them? Yes, I know, I know, I assume it has something to do with instinct. To stem the flow of truth. Her heart at that point was slippery and hot, and loud, so loud so loud.**

5. „It was eventually decided that all three of them should be taken to the next township and left there to sort things out.“ **To bury Liesel’s brother.**

Explain the underlined part of the sentence.

6. How was the narrator welcomed in the cemetery? **The cemetery welcomed me like a friend, and soon, I was with them.**

7. What were Liesel’s feelings like after the death of her brother? **Her knees entered the ground. Her moment had arrived. Still in disbelief, she started to dig. He couldn’t be dead. He couldn’t be dead. He couldn’t— Within seconds, snow was carved into her skin. Frozen blood was cracked across her hands. Somewhere in all the snow, she could see her broken heart, in two pieces.**



THE SNOWMAN

1. Where were they snowballing? What do you think what the reason was?

In the cellar. Max was a Jew and they were hiding him, so they couldn't go out.

2. What was Hans' relationship like with his family?

He loved his wife and he loved Liesel as well.

3. How did Max name the snowman? Why? **"A midget," because it was so tiny.**

4. „For a few minutes they all forgot.“ What did they forget about?

About the war about the bad conditions they lived.

5. Mama was a strict and very serious lady. Why was she like that inside?

Give examples to support your ideas.

She liked Liesel and she loved her husband. But she was not able to show it. She helped them with the snow in the cellar.

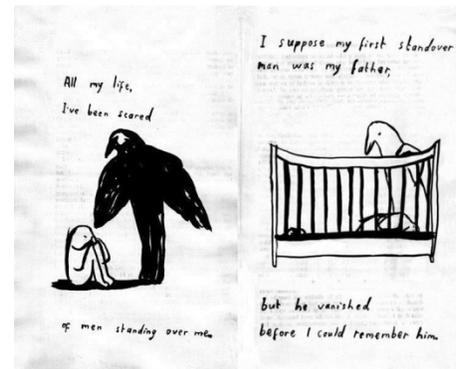
6. Why would the family look suspicious with closed curtains? **Because people would think they are hiding something.**

7. Who was/were blamed for Max's illness? Why? **Liesel blamed herself because she brought him snow to the cellar. Rosa blamed themselves as well for taking snow to the cellar but Hans blamed the war and Hitler.**

8. What did the author compare Max to? **To a snowman because he was melting in front of their eyes. (dying)**

9. „It was a paradox.“ What does it mean in the text? **Because usually when it is cold snowmen do not melt but, Max was getting colder and colder but melting as well.**

10. What nationality was Max? **A Jew.**





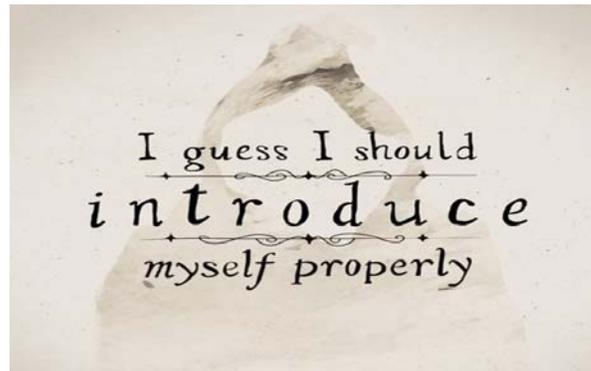
THIRTEEN PRESENTS

1. What was the cake like which was waiting for Max and Liesel? **she told him there was an enormous cake waiting in the kitchen, if only he'd wake up.**
2. Who was Max visited by? Who did Max struggle with? **By Liesel. Struggled with death. I knelt. I readied myself to insert my hands through the blankets. Then there was a resurgence—an immense struggle against my weight. I withdrew, and with so much work ahead of me, it was nice to be fought off in that dark little room. I even managed a short, closed-eyed pause of serenity before I made my way out.**
3. What did Papa suggest Liesel to do to help Max? **Later, he suggested that perhaps she should read to him.**
4. Why Papa didn't believe Liesel that the nuns had given her the book? **He had a feeling.**
5. Why wasn't Liesel able to read every single page of the book? **The one frustration was that she kept having to skip whole chapters on account of many of the pages being stuck together. It had not dried well.**
6. What was the way Mama had to call Liesel home if Max woke up? Why did she want it that way? **"But you'll come and get me if he wakes up, won't you? Just make something up. Scream out like I've done something wrong. Start swearing at me. Everyone will believe it, don't worry."**
7. Why did Mama send Liesel out with her friends? **"Go back out," Mama begged her. "You're chewing a hole in my stomach with all this talking. Go on. Get out there and play soccer, for God's sake."**
8. What was Max's opinion on the presents in Liesel's imagination? **"So what's all this?" Max would say. "What's all this junk?" "Junk?" In her mind, she was sitting on the side of the bed. "This isn't junk, Max. These are what made you wake up."**
9. Why did Liesel decide to bring presents to Max? **Whenever she walked to and from school now, Liesel was on the lookout for discarded items that might be valuable to a dying man. She wondered at first why it mattered so much.**

10. How did she choose the presents? **How could something so seemingly insignificant give comfort to someone? A ribbon in a gutter. A pinecone on the street. A button leaning casually against a classroom wall. A flat round stone from the river. If nothing else, it showed that she cared, and it might give them something to talk about when Max woke up.**

11. Which presents weren't material ones? And how was Liesel able to give these presents to Max? **A cloud. A slab of grief.**

12. What was the genre of the book Liesel read to Max? **A crime.**





Tea room

MARCUS ZUSAK – The book thief



The other side of sandpaper

1. „...and then there were the scatterings of odd men out, like Alex Steiner, who stood like a human- shaped block of wood, clapping slow and dutiful. And beautiful. Submission.“ Explain who the author calls ODD MEN. *Can you explain why those people clapped with SUBMISSION? What attitude of people does the author want to show?*

2. „Hans Hubermann wore a face with the shades pulled down.“ Clarify the metaphor.

3. Can we, according to the excerpt, say how Liesel felt about the historical events of that time? Find the compound noun Liesel uses to call the members of NSPD.

4. Find the expression which we can use to express what woke Liesel up at night.

5. Find the synonyms for shyly and clumsiness.

6. Think about the reasons for Liesel’s eagerness to read books even if she was illiterate.

7. Describe Hans Hubermann’s relationship with the books and reading in general.

8. Why did Liesel and Hans read “*The Grave Digger’s Handbook*.”

9. What positives did Hans see in reading this book?





10. What did people think about Hans?

11. Use five adjectives to describe the relationship between Hans and Liesel.

12. Why did Hans Hubermann admonish Liesel not to laugh aloud?

13. What method did Hans choose to teach Liesel?

14. Explain how Liesel could see words in the dark.

The Mayor's library

15. What expression does the author use to express Liesel's feelings after she stole the book. Explain the expression.

16. Choose an antonym for the word which explains the reason why Liesel did not want to go to the Mayor's house.

a) panic b) fear c) courage d) astonishment

17. Why didn't Liesel want to let Rudy help her with the bag?



18. After the door of the Mayor's house closed, Liesel felt:

- a) anger
- b) relief
- c) regret
- d) shame

19. Mayor's wife:

- a) had very dry complexion
- b) didn't know about the theft
- c) invited Liesel in because she wanted to torment her
- d) initially communicated with Liesel nonverbally



20. Use three abstract nouns to characterise the emotions which overwhelmed Liesel after entering the library.

21. Replace the word book with the expressions which will express what books meant for Liesel, how she valued them.

22. It is clear from the excerpt that:

- a) Liesel considered the library to be huge.
- b) Liesel had no idea that there might be so many books in one place.
- c) The library, Liesel entered wasn't large at all.
- d) Liesel didn't feel good in the library because it invoked unpleasant feelings.

23. It is clear from the excerpt that :

- a) Liesel took a book from the library and started to read it.
- b) Liesel was standing stiffly in the library because she was astonished
- c) Liesel was standing motionlessly because she was frightened.
- d) Liesel thanked and left silently.



24. Think whether Mrs. Ilsa and Liesel had anything in common.



25. Write cinquain (5-verse „poem“) according to the following instructions:

1.verse:

The book thief

2.verse: 2 adjectives (characterising her)

.....

3.verse: 3 verbs (characterising her)

.....

4.verse: 1 sentence containing 4 words (about the thief)

.....

5.verse : Synonym for „the book thief“

.....



MARCUS ZUSAK – The book thief

THE MAYOR'S LIBRARY

Certainly, something of great magnitude was coming toward 33 Himmel Street, to which Liesel was currently oblivious. To distort an overused human expression, the girl had more immediate fish to fry: She had stolen a book. Someone had seen her.

The book thief reacted. Appropriately. Every minute, every hour, there was worry, or more to the point, paranoia. Criminal activity will do that to a person, especially a child. They envision a prolific assortment of caughtoutedness. Some examples: People jumping out of alleys. Schoolteachers suddenly being aware of every sin you've ever committed. Police showing up at the door each time a leaf turns or a distant gate slams shut. For Liesel, the paranoia itself became the punishment, as did the dread of delivering some washing to the mayor's house. It was no mistake, as I'm sure you can imagine, that when the time came, Liesel conveniently overlooked the house on Grande Strasse. She delivered to the arthritic Helena Schmidt and picked up at the catloving Weingartner residence, but she ignored the house belonging to BürgermeisterHeinz Hermann and his wife, Ilsa.

ANOTHER QUICK TRANSLATION Bürgermeister = mayor

On the first occasion, she stated that she simply forgot about that place—a poor excuse if ever I've heard one— as the house straddled the hill, overlooking the town, and it was unforgettable. When she went back and still returned empty-handed, she lied that there was no one home.

“No one home?” Mama was skeptical. Skepticism gave her an itch for the wooden spoon. She waved it at Liesel and said, “Get back over there now, and if you don't come home with the washing, don't come home at all.” “Really?” That was Rudy's response when Liesel told him what Mama had said.

“Do you want to run away together?” “We'll starve.” “I'm starving anyway!” They laughed. “No,” she said, “I have to do it.”

They walked the town as they usually did when Rudy came along. He always tried to be a gentleman and carry the bag, but each time, Liesel refused. Only she had the threat of a Watschen loitering over her head, and therefore only she could be relied upon to carry the bag correctly. Anyone else was more likely to manhandle it, twist it, or mistreat it in



even the most minimal way, and it was not worth the risk. Also, it was likely that if she allowed Rudy to carry it for her, he would expect a kiss for his services, and that was not an option. Besides, she was accustomed to its burden. She would swap the bag from shoulder to shoulder, relieving each side every hundred steps or so. Liesel walked on the left, Rudy the right. Rudy talked most of the time, about the last soccer match on Himmel Street, working in his father's shop, and whatever else came to mind. Liesel tried to listen but failed. What she heard was the dread, chiming through her ears, growing louder the closer they stepped toward Grande Strasse.

"What are you doing? Isn't this it?" Liesel nodded that Rudy was right, for she had tried to walk past the mayor's house to buy some time. "Well, go on," the boy hurried her. Molching was darkening. The cold was climbing out of the ground.

"Move it, Saumensch." He remained at the gate. After the path, there were eight steps up to the main entrance of the house, and the great door was like a monster. Liesel frowned at the brass knocker. "What are you waiting for?" Rudy called out. Liesel turned and faced the street. Was there any way, any way at all, for her to evade this? Was there another story, or let's face it, another lie, that she'd overlooked? "We don't have all day." Rudy's distant voice again. "What the hell are you waiting for?" "Will you shut your trap, Steiner?"

It was a shout delivered as a whisper. "What?" "I said shut up, you stupid Saukerl. . . ." With that, she faced the door again, lifted back the brass knuckle, and tapped it three times, slowly. Feet approached from the other side. At first, she didn't look at the woman but focused on the washing bag in her hand. She examined the drawstring as she passed it over. Money was handed out to her and then, nothing.

The mayor's wife, who never spoke, simply stood in her bathrobe, her soft fluffy hair tied back into a short tail. A draft made itself known. Something like the imagined breath of a corpse. Still there were no words, and when Liesel found the courage to face her, the woman wore an expression not of reproach, but utter distance. For a moment, she looked over Liesel's shoulder at the boy, then nodded and stepped back, closing the door. For quite a while, Liesel remained, facing the blanket of upright wood. "Hey, Saumensch!" No response. "Liesel!" Liesel reversed. Cautiously. She took the first few steps backward, calculating. Perhaps the woman hadn't seen her steal the book after all. It had been getting dark. Perhaps it was one of those times when a person appears to be looking directly at you when, in fact, they're contentedly watching something else or simply daydreaming. Whatever the answer, Liesel didn't attempt any further analysis. She'd gotten away with it and that was enough. She turned and handled the remainder of the steps normally, taking the last three all at once. "Let's go, Saukerl." She even allowed



herself a laugh. Eleven-year-old paranoia was powerful. Eleven-year-old relief was euphoric.

A LITTLE SOMETHING TO DAMPEN THE EUPHORIA

She had gotten away with nothing.

The mayor's wife had seen her, all right.

She was just waiting for the right moment.

A few weeks passed. Soccer on Himmel Street. Reading The Shoulder Shrug between two and three o'clock each morning, post-nightmare, or during the afternoon, in the basement. Another benign visit to the mayor's house. All was lovely. Until. When Liesel next visited, minus Rudy, the opportunity presented itself. It was a pickup day. The mayor's wife opened the door and she was not holding the bag, like she normally would.

Instead, she stepped aside and motioned with her chalky hand and wrist for the girl to enter.

"I'm just here for the washing." Liesel's blood had dried inside of her. It crumbled. She almost broke into pieces on the steps. The woman said her first word to her then. She reached out, cold-fingered, and said, "Warte—wait." When she was sure the girl had steadied, she turned and walked hastily back inside.

"Thank God," Liesel exhaled. "She's getting it." It being the washing. What the woman returned with, however, was nothing of the sort. When she came and stood with an impossibly frail steadfastness, she was holding a tower of books against her stomach, from her navel to the beginnings of her breasts. She looked so vulnerable in the monstrous doorway. Long, light eyelashes and just the slightest twinge of expression. A suggestion. Come and see, it said. She's going to torture me, Liesel decided. She's going to take me inside, light the fireplace, and throw me in, books and all. Or she'll lock me in the basement without any food. For some reason, though—most likely the lure of the books—she found herself walking in. The squeaking of her shoes on the wooden floorboards made her cringe, and when she hit a sore spot, inducing the wood to groan, she almost stopped. The mayor's wife was not deterred. She only looked briefly behind and continued on, to a chestnut-colored door. Now her face asked a question. Are you ready? Liesel craned her neck a little, as if she might see over the door that stood in her way. Clearly, that was the cue to open it.



“Jesus, Mary . . .” She said it out loud, the words distributed into a room that was full of cold air and books. Books everywhere! Each wall was armed with overcrowded yet immaculate shelving. It was barely possible to see the paintwork. There were all different styles and sizes of lettering on the spines of the black, the red, the gray, the everycolored books. It was one of the most beautiful things Liesel Meminger had ever seen. With wonder, she smiled. That such a room existed! Even when she tried to wipe the smile away with her forearm, she realized instantly that it was a pointless exercise. She could feel the eyes of the woman traveling her body, and when she looked at her, they had rested on her face. There was more silence than she ever thought possible. It extended like an elastic, dying to break. The girl broke it.

“Can I?” The two words stood among acres and acres of vacant, wooden-floored land. The books were miles away. The woman nodded. Yes, you can. Steadily, the room shrank, till the book thief could touch the shelves within a few small steps. She ran the back of her hand along the first shelf, listening to the shuffle of her fingernails gliding across the spinal cord of each book. It sounded like an instrument, or the notes of running feet. She used both hands. She raced them. One shelf against the other. And she laughed. Her voice was sprawled out, high in her throat, and when she eventually stopped and stood in the middle of the room, she spent many minutes looking from the shelves to her fingers and back again. How many books had she touched? How many had she felt? She walked over and did it again, this time much slower, with her hand facing forward, allowing the dough of her palm to feel the small hurdle of each book. It felt like magic, like beauty, as bright lines of light shone down from a chandelier. Several times, she almost pulled a title from its place but didn’t dare disturb them. They were too perfect. To her left, she saw the woman again, standing by a large desk, still holding the small tower against her torso. She stood with a delighted crookedness. A smile appeared to have paralyzed her lips.

“Do you want me to—?” Liesel didn’t finish the question but actually performed what she was going to ask, walking over and taking the books gently from the woman’s arms. She then placed them into the missing piece in the shelf, by the slightly open window. The outside cold was streaming in. For a moment, she considered closing it, but thought better of it. This was not her house, and the situation was not to be tampered with. Instead, she returned to the lady behind her, whose smile gave the appearance now of a bruise and whose arms were hanging slenderly at each side. Like girls’ arms. What now? An awkwardness treated itself to the room, and Liesel took a final, fleeting glance at the walls of books. In her mouth, the words fidgeted, but they came out in a rush.

“I should go.” It took three attempts to leave. She waited in the hallway for a few minutes, but the woman didn’t come, and when Liesel returned to the entrance of the room, she saw her sitting at the desk, staring blankly at one of the books. She chose not to disturb



her. In the hallway, she picked up the washing. This time, she avoided the sore spot in the floorboards, walking the long length of the corridor, favoring the lefthand wall. When she closed the door behind her, a brass clank sounded in her ear, and with the washing next to her, she stroked the flesh of the wood.

“Get going,” she said. At first, she walked home dazed. The surreal experience with the roomful of books and the stunned, broken woman walked alongside her. She could see it on the buildings, like a play. Perhaps it was similar to the way Papa had his Mein Kampf revelation. Wherever she looked, Liesel saw the mayor’s wife with the books piled up in her arms. Around corners, she could hear the shuffle of her own hands, disturbing the shelves. She saw the open window, the chandelier of lovely light, and she saw herself leaving, without so much as a word of thanks. Soon, her sedated condition transformed to harassment and self-loathing. She began to rebuke herself.

“You said nothing.” Her head shook vigorously, among the hurried footsteps. “Not a ‘goodbye.’ Not a ‘thank you.’ Not a ‘that’s the most beautiful sight I’ve ever seen.’ Nothing!” Certainly, she was a book thief, but that didn’t mean she should have no manners at all. It didn’t mean she couldn’t be polite. She walked a good few minutes, struggling with indecision. On Munich Street, it came to an end. Just as she could make out the sign that said STEINER— SCHNEIDERMEISTER, she turned and ran back.

This time, there was no hesitation. She thumped the door, sending an echo of brass through the wood. Scheisse! It was not the mayor’s wife, but the mayor himself who stood before her. In her hurry, Liesel had neglected to notice the car that sat out front, on the street. Mustached and black-suited, the man spoke. “Can I help you?” Liesel could say nothing. Not yet. She was bent over, short of air, and fortunately, the woman arrived when she’d at least partially recovered. Ilsa Hermann stood behind her husband, to the side. “I forgot,” Liesel said. She lifted the bag and addressed the mayor’s wife. Despite the forced labor of breath, she fed the words through the gap in the doorway—between the mayor and the frame— to the woman. Such was her effort to breathe that the words escaped only a few at a time.

“I forgot . . . I mean, I just . . . wanted,” she said, “to . . . thank you.”

The mayor’s wife bruised herself again. Coming forward to stand beside her husband, she nodded very faintly, waited, and closed the door. It took Liesel a minute or so to leave. She smiled at the st



MARCUS ZUSAK – The book thief

THE OTHER SIDE OF SANDPAPER

People have defining moments, I suppose, especially when they're children. For some it's a Jesse Owens incident. For others it's a moment of bed-wetting hysteria: It was late May 1939, and the night had been like most others. Mama shook her iron fist. Papa was out. Liesel cleaned the front door and watched the Himmel Street sky. Earlier, there had been a parade.

The brown-shirted extremist members of the NSDAP (otherwise known as the Nazi Party) had marched down Munich Street, their banners worn proudly, their faces held high, as if on sticks. Their voices were full of song, culminating in a roaring rendition of "Deutschland über Alles." "Germany over Everything." As always, they were clapped. They were spurred on as they walked to who knows where.

People on the street stood and watched, some with straight-armed salutes, others with hands that burned from applause. Some kept faces that were contorted by pride and rally like Frau Diller, and then there were the scatterings of odd men out, like Alex Steiner, who stood like a human-shaped block of wood, clapping slow and dutiful. And beautiful. Submission. On the footpath, Liesel stood with her papa and Rudy. Hans Hubermann wore a face with the shades pulled down.

SOME CRUNCHED NUMBERS

In 1933, 90 percent of Germans showed unflinching support for Adolf Hitler.

That leaves 10 percent who didn't.

Hans Hubermann belonged to the 10 percent.

There was a reason for that.

In the night, Liesel dreamed like she always did. At first, she saw the brownshirts marching, but soon enough, they led her to a train, and the usual discovery awaited. Her brother was staring again. When she woke up screaming, Liesel knew immediately that on this occasion, something had changed. A smell leaked out from under the sheets, warm and sickly. At first, she tried convincing herself that nothing had happened, but as Papa came closer and held her, she cried and admitted the fact in his ear. "Papa," she whispered, "Papa," and that was all.

He could probably smell it. He lifted her gently from the bed and carried her into the washroom. The moment came a few minutes later. "We take the sheets off," Papa said, and when he reached under and pulled at the fabric, something loosened and landed with a thud. A black book with silver writing on it came hurtling out and landed on the floor, between the tall man's feet. He looked down at it. He looked at the girl, who timidly shrugged. Then he read the title, with concentration, aloud: "The Grave Digger's



Handbook.” So that’s what it’s called, Liesel thought. A patch of silence stood among them now. The man, the girl, the book. He picked it up and spoke soft as cotton.

A 2 A.M. CONVERSATION

“Is this yours?”

“Yes, Papa.”

“Do you want to read it?”

Again, “Yes, Papa.”

A tired smile.

Metallic eyes, melting.

“Well, we’d better read it, then.”

Four years later, when she came to write in the basement, two thoughts struck Liesel about the trauma of wetting the bed. First, she felt extremely lucky that it was Papa who discovered the book. (Fortunately, when the sheets had been washed previously, Rosa had made Liesel strip the bed and make it up. “And be quick about it, Saumensch! Does it look like we’ve got all day?”) Second, she was clearly proud of Hans Hubermann’s part in her education. You wouldn’t think it, she wrote, but it was not so much the school who helped me to read. It was Papa. People think he’s not so smart, and it’s true that he doesn’t read too fast, but I would soon learn that words and writing actually saved his life once. Or at least, words and a man who taught him the accordion . . .

“First things first,” Hans Hubermann said that night. He washed the sheets and hung them up.

“Now,” he said upon his return. “Let’s get this midnight class started.” The yellow light was alive with dust. Liesel sat on cold clean sheets, ashamed, elated. The thought of bed-wetting prodded her, but she was going to read. She was going to read the book. The excitement stood up in her. Visions of a ten-year-old reading genius were set alight. If only it was that easy.

“To tell you the truth,” Papa explained upfront, “I am not such a good reader myself.” But it didn’t matter that he read slowly. If anything, it might have helped that his own reading pace was slower than average. Perhaps it would cause less frustration in coping with the girl’s lack of ability. Still, initially, Hans appeared a little uncomfortable holding the book and looking through it. When he came over and sat next to her on the bed, he leaned back, his legs angling over the side. He examined the book again and dropped it on the blanket.

“Now why would a nice girl like you want to read such a thing?” Again, Liesel shrugged. Had the apprentice been reading the complete works of Goethe or any other such luminary, that was what would have sat in front of them. She attempted to explain.

“I— when . . . It was sitting in the snow, and—” The soft-spoken words fell off the side of the bed, emptying to the floor like powder. Papa knew what to say, though. He always knew what to say. He ran a hand through his sleepy hair and said, “Well, promise me one thing, Liesel. If I die anytime soon, you make sure they bury me right.” She nodded, with great sincerity.



“No skipping chapter six or step four in chapter nine.” He laughed, as did the bed wetter. “Well, I’m glad that’s settled. We can get on with it now.” He adjusted his position and his bones creaked like itchy floorboards.

“The fun begins.” Amplified by the still of night, the book opened—a gust of wind. Looking back, Liesel could tell exactly what her papa was thinking when he scanned the first page of *The Grave Digger’s Handbook*. As he realized the difficulty of the text, he was clearly aware that such a book was hardly ideal. There were words in there that he’d have trouble with himself. Not to mention the morbidity of the subject. As for the girl, there was a sudden desire to read it that she didn’t even attempt to understand. On some level, perhaps she wanted to make sure her brother was buried right. Whatever the reason, her hunger to read that book was as intense as any ten-year-old human could experience. Chapter one was called

“The First Step: Choosing the Right Equipment.” In a short introductory passage, it outlined the kind of material to be covered in the following twenty pages. Types of shovels, picks, gloves, and so forth were itemized, as well as the vital need to properly maintain them. This grave digging was serious. As Papa flicked through it, he could surely feel Liesel’s eyes on him. They reached over and gripped him, waiting for something, anything, to slip from his lips.

“Here.” He shifted again and handed her the book. “Look at this page and tell me how many words you can read.” She looked at it—and lied. “About half.” “Read some for me.” But of course, she couldn’t. When he made her point out any words she could read and actually say them, there were only three—the three main German words for “the.” The whole page must have had two hundred words on it.

This might be harder than I thought. She caught him thinking it, just for a moment. He lifted himself forward, rose to his feet, and walked out. This time, when he came back, he said, “Actually, I have a better idea.” In his hand, there was a thick painter’s pencil and a stack of sandpaper.

“Let’s start from scratch.” Liesel saw no reason to argue. In the left corner of an upturned piece of sandpaper, he drew a square of perhaps an inch and shoved a capital A inside it. In the other corner, he placed a lowercase one. So far, so good.

“A,” Liesel said. “A for what?” She smiled. “Apfel.” He wrote the word in big letters and drew a misshapen apple under it. He was a housepainter, not an artist. When it was complete, he looked over and said, “Now for B.” As they progressed through the alphabet, Liesel’s eyes grew larger. She had done this at school, in the kindergarten class, but this time was better. She was the only one there, and she was not gigantic. It was nice to watch Papa’s hand as he wrote the words and slowly constructed the primitive sketches. “Ah, come on, Liesel,” he said when she struggled later on. “Something that starts with S. It’s easy. I’m very disappointed in you.” She couldn’t think. “Come on!” His whisper played with her. “Think of Mama.” That was when the word struck her face like a slap. A reflex grin. “SAUMENSCH!” she shouted, and Papa roared with laughter, then quieted. “Shhh, we have to be quiet.” But he roared all the same and wrote the word, completing it with one of his sketches.

A TYPICAL HANS HUBERMANN ARTWORK



“Papa!” she whispered. “I have no eyes!” He patted the girl’s hair. She’d fallen into his trap. “With a smile like that,” Hans Hubermann said, “you don’t need eyes.” He hugged her and then looked again at the picture, with a face of warm silver.

“Now for T.” With the alphabet completed and studied a dozen times, Papa leaned over and said, “Enough for tonight?”

“A few more words?” He was definite. “Enough. When you wake up, I’ll play accordion for you.”

“Thanks, Papa.”

“Good night.” A quiet, one-syllable laugh.

“Good night, Saumensch.”

“Good night, Papa.” He switched off the light, came back, and sat in the chair. In the darkness, Liesel kept her eyes open. She was watching the words.



MARCUS ZUSAK – THE BOOK THIEF

THE SNOWMAN

For Liesel Meminger, the early stages of 1942 could be summed up like this: She became thirteen years of age. Her chest was still flat. She had not yet bled. The young man from her basement was now in her bed.

Q&A

**How did Max
Vandenburg end up
in Liesel's bed?
He fell.**

Opinions varied, but Rosa Hubermann claimed that the seeds were sown at Christmas the previous year.

December 24 had been hungry and cold, but there was a major bonus—no lengthy visitations. Hans Junior was simultaneously shooting at Russians and maintaining his strike on family interaction. Trudy could only stop by on the weekend before Christmas, for a few hours. She was going away with her family of employment. A holiday for a very different class of Germany.

On Christmas Eve, Liesel brought down a double handful of snow as a present for Max. “Close your eyes,” she’d said. “Hold out your hands.” As soon as the snow was transferred, Max shivered and laughed, but he still didn’t open his eyes. He only gave the snow a quick taste, allowing it to sink into his lips.

“Is this today’s weather report?”

Liesel stood next to him.

Gently, she touched his arm.

He raised it again to his mouth. “Thanks, Liesel.”

It was the beginning of the greatest Christmas ever. Little food. No presents. But there was a snowman in their basement.

After delivering the first handfuls of snow, Liesel checked that no one else was outside, then proceeded to take as many buckets and pots out as she could. She filled them with the mounds of snow and ice that blanketed the small strip of world that was Himmel Street. Once they were full, she brought them in and carried them down to the basement.

All things being fair, she first threw a snowball at Max and collected a reply in the stomach. Max even threw one at Hans Hubermann as he made his way down the basement steps.

“*Arschloch!*” Papa yelled. “Liesel, give me some of that snow. A whole bucket!” For a few minutes, they all forgot. There was no more yelling or calling out, but they could not contain the small snatches of laughter. They were only humans, playing in the snow, in a house. Papa looked at the snow-filled pots. “What do we do with the rest of it?”

“A snowman,” Liesel replied. “We have to make a snowman.”

Papa called out to Rosa.

The usual distant voice was hurled back. “What is it now, *Saukerl!*”

“Come down here, will you!”



When his wife appeared, Hans Hubermann risked his life by throwing a most excellent snowball at her. Just missing, it disintegrated when it hit the wall, and Mama had an excuse to swear for a long time without taking a breath. Once she recovered, she came down and helped them. She even brought the buttons for the eyes and nose and some string for a snowman smile. Even a scarf and hat were provided for what was really only a two-foot man of snow.

“A midget,” Max had said.

“What do we do when it melts?” Liesel asked.

Rosa had the answer. “You mop it up, *Saumensch*, in a hurry.”

Papa disagreed. “It won’t melt.” He rubbed his hands and blew into them. “It’s freezing down here.”

Melt it did, though, but somewhere in each of them, that snowman was still upright. It must have been the last thing they saw that Christmas Eve when they finally fell asleep. There was an accordion in their ears, a snowman in their eyes, and for Liesel, there was the thought of Max’s last words before she left him by the fire.

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS FROM MAX VANDENBURG “Often I wish this would all be over, Liesel, but then somehow you do something like walk down the basement steps with a snowman in your hands.”

Unfortunately, that night signaled a severe downside in Max’s health. The early signs were innocent enough, and typical. Constant coldness. Swimming hands. Increased visions of boxing with the *Führer*. It was only when he couldn’t warm up after his push-ups and sit-ups that it truly began to worry him. As close to the fire as he sat, he could not raise himself to any degree of approximate health. Day by day, his weight began to stumble off him. His exercise regimen faltered and fell apart, with his cheek against the surly basement floor.

All through January, he managed to hold himself together, but by early February, Max was in worrisome shape. He would struggle to wake up next to the fire, sleeping well into the morning instead, his mouth distorted and his cheekbones starting to swell. When asked, he said he was fine.

In mid-February, a few days before Liesel was thirteen, he came to the fireplace on the verge of collapse. He nearly fell into the fire.

“Hans,” he whispered, and his face seemed to cramp. His legs gave way and his head hit the accordion case.

At once, a wooden spoon fell into some soup and Rosa Hubermann was at his side. She held Max’s head and barked across the room at Liesel, “Don’t just stand there, get the extra blankets. Take them to your bed. And you!” Papa was next. “Help me pick him up and carry him to Liesel’s room. *Schnell!*”

Papa’s face was stretched with concern. His gray eyes clanged and he picked him up on his own. Max was light as a child. “Can’t we put him here, in our bed?”

Rosa had already considered that. “No. We have to keep these curtains open in the day or else it looks suspicious.”

“Good point.” Hans carried him out.



Blankets in hand, Liesel watched.

Limp feet and hanging hair in the hallway. One shoe had fallen off him.

“Move.”

Mama marched in behind them, in her waddlesome way.

Once Max was in the bed, blankets were heaped on top and fastened around his body.

“Mama?”

Liesel couldn’t bring herself to say anything else.

“What?” The bun of Rosa Hubermann’s hair was wound tight enough to frighten from behind. It seemed to tighten further when she repeated the question. “What, Liesel?”

She stepped closer, afraid of the answer. “Is he alive?”

The bun nodded.

Rosa turned then and said something with great assurance. “Now listen to me, Liesel. I didn’t take this man into my house to watch him die. Understand?”

Liesel nodded.

“Now go.”

In the hall, Papa hugged her.

She desperately needed it.

Later on, she heard Hans and Rosa speaking in the night. Rosa made her sleep in their room, and she lay next to their bed, on the floor, on the mattress they’d dragged up from the basement. (There was concern as to whether it was infected, but they came to the conclusion that such thoughts were unfounded. This was no virus Max was suffering from, so they carried it up and replaced the sheet.)

Imagining the girl to be asleep, Mama voiced her opinion.

“That damn snowman,” she whispered. “I bet it started with the snowman—fooling around with ice and snow in the cold down there.”

Papa was more philosophical. “Rosa, it started with Adolf.” He lifted himself. “We should check on him.”

In the course of the night, Max was visited seven times.

MAX VANDENBURG’S VISITOR

SCORE SHEET

Hans Hubermann: 2

Rosa Hubermann: 2

Liesel Meminger: 3

In the morning, Liesel brought him his sketchbook from the basement and placed it on the bedside table. She felt awful for having looked at it the previous year, and this time, she kept it firmly closed, out of respect.

When Papa came in, she did not turn to face him but talked across Max Vandenburg, at the wall. “Why did I have to bring all that snow down?” she asked. “It started all of this, didn’t it, Papa?” She clenched her hands, as if to pray. “Why did I have to build that snowman?”

Papa, to his enduring credit, was adamant. “Liesel,” he said, “you had to.”



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For hours, she sat with him as he shivered and slept.
“Don’t die,” she whispered. “Please, Max, just don’t die.”
He was the second snowman to be melting away before her eyes, only this one was
different. It was a paradox.
The colder he became, the more he melted.



MARCUS ZUSAK – THE BOOK THIEF

THIRTEEN PRESENTS

It was Max's arrival, revisited.

Feathers turned to twigs again. Smooth face turned to rough. The proof she needed was there. He was alive.

The first few days, she sat and talked to him. On her birthday, she told him there was an enormous cake waiting in the kitchen, if only he'd wake up.

There was no waking.

There was no cake.

A LATE-NIGHT EXCERPT

**I realized much later that I actually visited
33 Himmel Street in that period of time.**

**It must have been one of the few moments when the
girl was not there with him, for all I saw was a
man in bed. I knelt. I readied myself to insert
my hands through the blankets. Then there was a
resurgence—an immense struggle against my weight.**

**I withdrew, and with so much work ahead of me,
it was nice to be fought off in that dark little room.**

**I even managed a short, closed-eyed pause of
serenity before I made my way out.**

On the fifth day, there was much excitement when Max opened his eyes, if only for a few moments. What he predominantly saw (and what a frightening version it must have been close-up) was Rosa Hubermann, practically slinging an armful of soup into his mouth. "Swallow," she advised him. "Don't think. Just swallow."

As soon as Mama handed back the bowl, Liesel tried to see his face again, but there was a soup-feeder's backside in the way.

"Is he still awake?"

When she turned, Rosa did not have to answer.

After close to a week, Max woke up a second time, on this occasion with Liesel and Papa in the room. They were both watching the body in the bed when there was a small groan. If it's possible, Papa fell upward, out of the chair.

"Look," Liesel gasped. "Stay awake, Max, stay awake."

He looked at her briefly, but there was no recognition. The eyes studied her as if she were a riddle. Then gone again.

"Papa, what happened?"

Hans dropped, back to the chair.

Later, he suggested that perhaps she should read to him. "Come on, Liesel, you're such a good reader these days—even if it's a mystery to all of us where that book came from."

"I told you, Papa. One of the nuns at school gave it to me."



Papa held his hands up in mock-protest. "I know, I know." He sighed, from a height. "Just . . ." He chose his words gradually. "Don't get caught." This from a man who'd stolen a Jew.

From that day on, Liesel read *The Whistler* aloud to Max as he occupied her bed. The one frustration was that she kept having to skip whole chapters on account of many of the pages being stuck together. It had not dried well. Still, she struggled on, to the point where she was nearly three-quarters of the way through it. The book was 396 pages.

In the outside world, Liesel rushed from school each day in the hope that Max was feeling better. "Has he woken up? Has he eaten?"

"Go back out," Mama begged her. "You're chewing a hole in my stomach with all this talking. Go on. Get out there and play soccer, for God's sake."

"Yes, Mama." She was about to open the door. "But you'll come and get me if he wakes up, won't you? Just make something up. Scream out like I've done something wrong. Start swearing at me. Everyone will believe it, don't worry."

Even Rosa had to smile at that. She placed her knuckles on her hips and explained that Liesel wasn't too old yet to avoid a *Watschen* for talking in such a way. "And score a goal," she threatened, "or don't come home at all."

"Sure, Mama."

"Make that *two* goals, *Saumensch!*"

"Yes, Mama."

"And stop answering back!"

Liesel considered, but she ran onto the street, to oppose Rudy on the mud-slippery road.

"About time, ass scratcher." He welcomed her in the customary way as they fought for the ball. "Where have you been?"

Half an hour later, when the ball was squashed by the rare passage of a car on Himmel Street, Liesel had found her first present for Max Vandenburg. After judging it irreparable, all of the kids walked home in disgust, leaving the ball twitching on the cold, blistered road. Liesel and Rudy remained stooped over the carcass. There was a gaping hole on its side like a mouth.

"You want it?" Liesel asked.

Rudy shrugged. "What do I want with this squashed shit heap of a ball? There's no chance of getting air into it now, is there?"

"Do you want it or not?"

"No thanks." Rudy prodded it cautiously with his foot, as if it were a dead animal. Or an animal that *might* be dead.

As he walked home, Liesel picked the ball up and placed it under her arm. She could hear him call out, "Hey, *Saumensch.*" She waited. "*Saumensch!*"

She relented. "What?"

"I've got a bike without wheels here, too, if you want it."

"Stick your bike."

From her position on the street, the last thing she heard was the laughter of that *Saukerl*, Rudy Steiner.

Inside, she made her way to the bedroom. She took the ball in to Max and placed it at the end of the bed.



“I’m sorry,” she said, “it’s not much. But when you wake up, I’ll tell you all about it. I’ll tell you it was the grayest afternoon you can imagine, and this car without its lights on ran straight over the ball. Then the man got out and yelled at us. And *then* he asked for directions. The nerve of him . . .”

Wake up! she wanted to scream.

Or shake him.

She didn’t.

All Liesel could do was watch the ball and its trampled, flaking skin. It was the first gift of many.

PRESENTS #2–#5

One ribbon, one pinecone.

One button, one stone.

The soccer ball had given her an idea.

Whenever she walked to and from school now, Liesel was on the lookout for discarded items that might be valuable to a dying man. She wondered at first why it mattered so much. How could something so seemingly insignificant give comfort to someone? A ribbon in a gutter. A pinecone on the street. A button leaning casually against a classroom wall. A flat round stone from the river. If nothing else, it showed that she cared, and it might give them something to talk about when Max woke up.

When she was alone, she would conduct those conversations.

“So what’s all this?” Max would say. “What’s all this junk?”

“Junk?” In her mind, she was sitting on the side of the bed. “This isn’t junk, Max. These are what made you wake up.”

PRESENTS #6–#9

One feather, two newspapers.

A candy wrapper. A cloud.

The feather was lovely and trapped, in the door hinges of the church on Munich Street. It poked itself crookedly out and Liesel hurried over to rescue it. The fibers were combed flat on the left, but the right side was made of delicate edges and sections of jagged triangles. There was no other way of describing it.

The newspapers came from the cold depths of a garbage can (enough said), and the candy wrapper was flat and faded. She found it near the school and held it up to the light. It contained a collage of shoe prints.

Then the cloud.

How do you give someone a piece of sky?

Late in February, she stood on Munich Street and watched a single giant cloud come over the hills like a white monster. It climbed the mountains. The sun was eclipsed, and in its place, a white beast with a gray heart watched the town.

“Would you look at that?” she said to Papa.



Hans cocked his head and stated what he felt was the obvious. “You should give it to Max, Liesel. See if you can leave it on the bedside table, like all the other things.”

Liesel watched him as if he’d gone insane. “How, though?”

Lightly, he tapped her skull with his knuckles. “Memorize it. Then write it down for him.”

“. . . It was like a great white beast,” she said at her next bedside vigil, “and it came from over the mountains.”

When the sentence was completed with several different adjustments and additions, Liesel felt like she’d done it. She imagined the vision of it passing from her hand to his, through the blankets, and she wrote it down on a scrap of paper, placing the stone on top of it.

PRESENTS #10–#13

One toy soldier.

One miraculous leaf.

A finished whistler.

A slab of grief.

The soldier was buried in the dirt, not far from Tommy Müller’s place. It was scratched and trodden, which, to Liesel, was the whole point. Even with injury, it could still stand up.

The leaf was a maple and she found it in the school broom closet, among the buckets and feather dusters. The door was slightly ajar. The leaf was dry and hard, like toasted bread, and there were hills and valleys all over its skin. Somehow, the leaf had made its way into the school hallway and into that closet. Like half a star with a stem. Liesel reached in and twirled it in her fingers.

Unlike the other items, she did not place the leaf on the bedside table. She pinned it to the closed curtain, just before reading the final thirty-four pages of *The Whistler*.

She did not have dinner that afternoon or go to the toilet. She didn’t drink. All day at school, she had promised herself that she would finish reading the book today, and Max Vandenburg was going to listen. He was going to wake up.

Papa sat on the floor, in the corner, workless as usual. Luckily, he would soon be leaving for the Knoller with his accordion. His chin resting on his knees, he listened to the girl he’d struggled to teach the alphabet. Reading proudly, she unloaded the final frightening words of the book to Max Vandenburg.

THE LAST REMNANTS OF THE WHISTLER

The Viennese air was fogging up the windows of the train that morning, and as the people travelled obliviously to work, a murderer whistled his happy tune. He bought his ticket. There were polite greetings with fellow passengers and the conductor. He even gave up his seat for an elderly lady and made polite conversation with a gambler who spoke of American horses. After all, the whistler loved talking. He talked to people and fooled them into liking him, trusting him. He talked to them while he was killing them, torturing and turning the knife. It was only when there was no one to talk to that he whistled, which was why he did so after a murder. . . .



“So you think the track will suit number seven, do you?”

“Of course.” The gambler grinned. Trust was already there. “He’ll come from behind and kill the whole lot of them!” He shouted it above the noise of the train.

“If you insist.” The whistler smirked, and he wondered at length when they would find the inspector’s body in that brand-new BMW.

“Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.” Hans couldn’t resist an incredulous tone. “A nun gave you *that?*” He stood up and made his way over, kissing her forehead. “Bye, Liesel, the Knoller awaits.”

“Bye, Papa.”

“Liesel!”

She ignored it.

“Come and eat something!”

She answered now. “I’m coming, Mama.” She actually spoke those words to Max as she came closer and placed the finished book on the bedside table, with everything else. As she hovered above him, she couldn’t help herself. “Come on, Max,” she whispered, and even the sound of Mama’s arrival at her back did not stop her from silently crying. It didn’t stop her from pulling a lump of salt water from her eye and feeding it onto Max Vandenburg’s face.

Mama took her.

Her arms swallowed her.

“I know,” she said.

She knew.



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Germany 1939 - 1942



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Nemecko 1939 - 1942



- **Third Reich(Nazi Germany)**; period in German history, when Germany was ruled by national socialism (Nazism), the period between 1933 and the end of the WWII 2. May 1945.



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Adolf Hitler

- 30. January 1933 - Adolf Hitler started to rule Germany legally
- He quite early eliminated those members of the Cabinet who were not members of the Nazi party
- leader of National Socialist German Workers' Party – NSDAP, author of national-socialist concept of the state (*Mein Kampf*, 1927),
Reichs-chancellor- the highest member of the Cabinet (30. January 1933 – 1934) and „the leader and Reichs-chancellor “
(2. August 1934 – 1945).

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- After the Nazi regime started to rule, they restored the economic stability and ended mass unemployment using heavy military spending. The economic prosperity led to the growth of popularity of the regime among German citizens who manifested great loyalty towards their Government.
- the opposition (Liberals, Socialists and Communists) was suppressed by the secret state police Gestapo





Hitlerova politika

- In the beginning of the Nazi Germany existence Hitler started the politics of fear and blackmailing
- He had seemingly legitimate requirements towards the neighbouring countries and if they were not able to meet them he threatened them with the war.
- If they tried to calm him using some concessions he agreed and focused on a different area.
- This way he managed to get relatively large territory without starting a war.



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Thank you for your attention!



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MARKUS ZUSAK

Biography



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1975 in Sydney

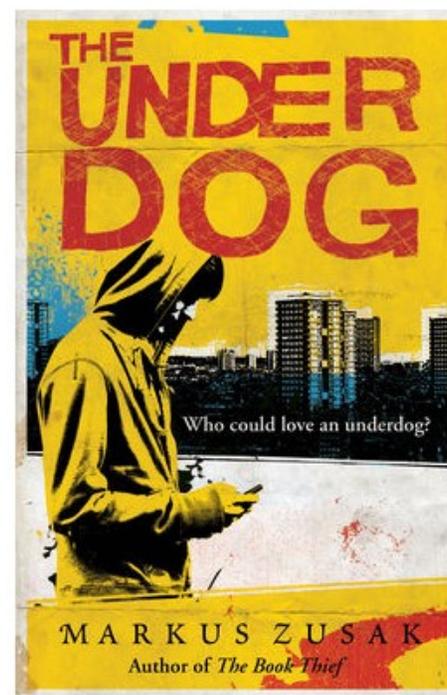
- the youngest of four children
- immigrant German and Austrian parents
- neither parent could read or write English when they first arrived in Australia
- began writing fiction at age 16
- a degree in teaching at the University of Sydney





TRILOGY

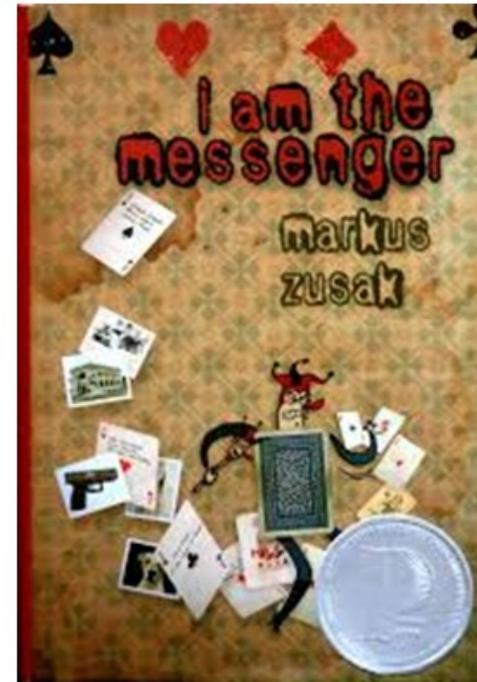
- *The Underdog*
- It is the first book in a trilogy narrated by Cameron, the youngest child in the working-class Wolfe family.
- *Fighting Ruben Wolfe*
- tells of the brothers' participation in an illegal boxing ring as a means of supporting their family.
- *When Dogs Cry*
- examines the complications of loss, death and falling in love.





The Messenger

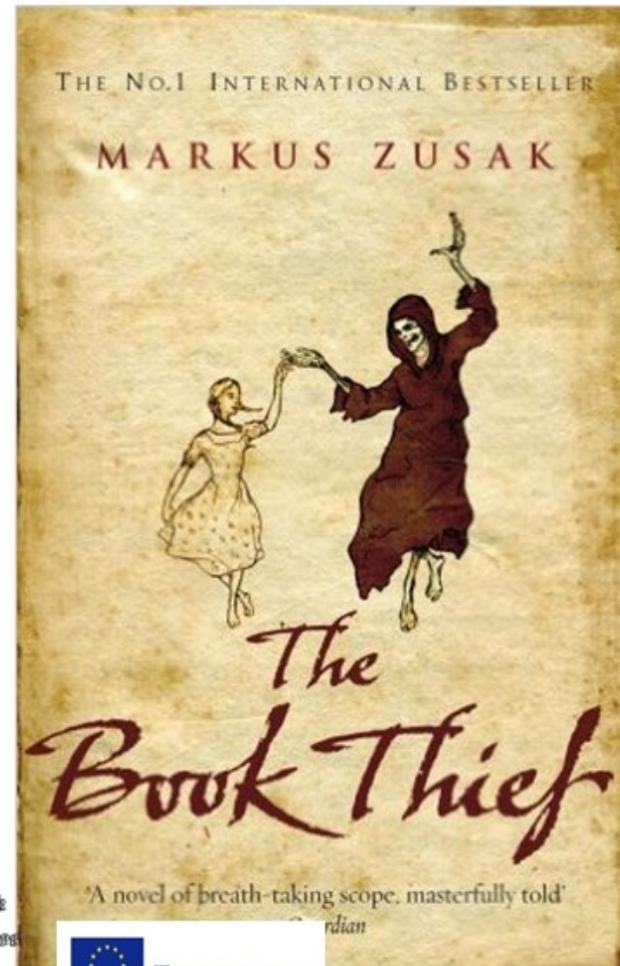
- It is the story of down-and-out teenage cab driver Ed, who receives cryptic messages via playing cards that direct him to help strangers in need.
- In the process of deciphering the clues and completing the tasks, he ultimately discovers his own purpose in life.





The Book Thief

- 2006
- Zusak received many awards for *The Book Thief*, including the Michael L. Printz Honor and the Kathleen Mitchell Award (Australia).
- It was named a Best Book by the *School Library Journal* and the Young Adult Library Services Association, and was the Editors' Choice in the *Kirkus Review* and *Booklist*.
- Zusak lives in Sydney, Australia and continues to write fiction.





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