

Dear Markus Zusak,

Is death what we fear or is it the challenges of life? I've asked myself this question through this entire piece of literature. Death follows young Liesel Meminger through her life as they meet through death and tragedy. When young Liesel's brother dies, she steals a book at the cemetery--because it is all she has left to remind herself of her brother. I empathize with Liesel in this moment, having to cling on to something to remind you of the one you've lost. When I lost my grandfather, I felt that it wasn't real. I told myself "this isn't real." As we went through his things after he died, I kept something of his: a box of army mementos. At the time I didn't know what many of the things meant, but they helped me feel like he was still with me such as Liesel felt.

When my dearly departed passed away, my heart began to deteriorate. Likewise, Liesel begins to breakdown as the Nazi terrorizing begins to reach a higher brink. She witnesses nightmares about her about her dead brother. On top of this tumultuous mound of dilemmas Liesel has problems at school with bullies and ends up fighting.

I feel that we all go a little bit insane when we lose a loved one. My grandfather's death affected me in a gigantic way. The vacant feeling of that person not being there is like an angel without its wings. But I feel as that angel doesn't have its wings anymore, it will grow them back. I feel that as Liesel had her friend Max to help her grow her wings back, I had my unlikely friend to help me grow mine as well.

Unknown people come into our being at various times in our life. Liesel's foster parents, The Hubermann's twenty four year old son Max comes home. Max hides in the Hubermann's basement for the next two years. Liesel and Max both have nightmares about their families. I feel that Max and Liesel had an gravitation toward each other because of their past. Max rewrites the pages of a book called *Mein Kampf* and gives it to Liesel for a birthday present. I think that book meant so much to Liesel, the feeling of someone actually putting thought into something for her.

The Nazi reign is at an all time high as Liesel learn to read books in the basement with Hans, her accordion playing foster father. In this point in time I feel that Liesel is finally happy on Himmel Street. I get the impression that Liesel is finally starting to have a family, and that's all that we all ever want is to have someone that cares about us and cherishes us. My family was torn apart after my grandfather died, but we all reconnected when we finally realized that we needed to weather the storm before it got out of our grasp. I had to grieve in my own way, and then comfort everyone else. One day I'd found a friend named Arianna, she helped me through my grief and depression. Arianna was my Max. She was that person who knew what I was feeling and she was going through the same thing.

Liesel was finally in her happy place in the midst of all the chaos. Hans and Liesel blacken the windows in the summer of 1942 for the raids. Hans reads and plays his accordion for Liesel and they even

share a glass of champagne with the other residents. I got the feeling of irony in this moment and how they are all staying so calm and happy in this violent Nazi era. In chaos I believe that I find a calm before the storm, that I'm preparing myself for the inevitable. Even in our darkest days we find even an ounce of light.

In October 1943 on Himmel Street, a bomb raid begins as everyone is sound asleep. Liesel finds the bodies of everyone she loves. She is taken away by raid officers. In this moment I feel that her whole world may be ripped away from her at any minute. This book changed my view of the world and myself because it taught me how to cherish life and the power of literature. Family is so powerful, and we have to honor and cherish the gift of life. I believe a lot of humans take for granted the gift of life. Everything in the world about love, hate, sadness, and depression isn't anything if you don't open up to somebody. The power of literature is so important.

Books are stories that need to be heard, need to be read and embraced. Literature is so valuable to Liesel in this book. Liesel wasn't able to read anything in the Nazi Era, she had to read things in secret and stolen newspapers and books from graveyards. I just want to thank you Mark Zusak for writing such a compelling story about the trials and tribulations of a young girl's life, but the sweet bliss of finally finding family a sense of belonging in all the disarray of this point in time. I will always remember this impactful piece of literature.

*"The words. Why did they have to exist? Without them, there wouldn't be any of this."* — Markus Zusak

Taylor Slaughter