

2018 Summer Reading Assignment for English 9 Honors

Ms. Abshire and Mrs. Jackson

Read **The Book Thief** by Markus Zusak before school begins in August. You may either purchase your own copy or check out the book from your local library. Discussion questions have been provided by Random House to guide your reading and to stimulate your thinking. (See below.) *Because the book is lengthy, you should be certain to give yourself enough time to complete a thoughtful and thorough reading of the book.* If you finish the reading early in the summer, you should review the novel prior to the first day of school.

Directions: Be prepared to participate in class discussions, complete in-class writings over the novel, and/or begin writing a formal essay about the novel during the first week of school. Also be prepared to **take an objective test over the plot of the novel** during the first full week of school.

These are just for your consideration; you do NOT need to write responses to these.

Plot Questions by Section:

➤ **Prologue, Part One:**

- What did Death find painful about his duties?
- Why did Death think it was foolish for the poor to travel to escape poverty?
- What was Rudy's father trying to teach his son on the night of the Jesse Owens incident?
- Why did Liesel insist on participating in the reading examination? Why did it end in disaster?
- Why did the narrator's workload increase in the beginning of September 1939?

➤ **Parts Two, Three:**

- How did Hans Hubermann's Christmas gift to Liesel reveal the depth of his feelings for her?
- Why did Mama Hubermann decide to risk sending Liesel on the important business of laundry pickup and delivery?
- Why did the Hubermann's avoid any discussion of Liesel's mother in front of her daughter?
- In what important respect did Hans Junior differ from his father?
- Why did Hans Junior accuse his father of cowardice? What was the "mistake" Papa Hubermann had committed?
- Why did the people of Molching hold a bonfire? What shocking realization met Liesel when she listened to the speaker at the bonfire? Why did Papa Hubermann slap Liesel?

➤ **Part Four:**

- How did Erik Vandenburg save Hans Hubermann's life in the first World War?
- Why did Hans's business go into decline after 1933?
- What burden of guilt did Max Vandenburg bear?

➤ **Part Five:**

- Why did Liesel scavenge from the garbage on the days she went on her laundry route?
- Why was Liesel outraged against the mayor's wife?
- Why didn't Rosa punish Liesel after learning how Liesel had insulted the mayor's wife?

➤ **Parts Six, Seven:**

- Why did Liesel blame herself for bringing snow into the basement in order to build the snowman?
- What did Liesel hope to accomplish by bringing presents to the unconscious Max?

- Why did Rosa make an unplanned visit to Liesel’s classroom?
 - Why did Liesel deliberately injure her leg while playing outside?
 - Why did Death say that the sky was “the color of Jews”? How did Death respond to the mass destruction of lives?
 - Why did the possible bombing of Molching place Max in particular danger?
 - What service did Liesel perform during the second air raid on Molching?
 - Why did Max leave 33 Himmel Street?
- **Parts Eight, Nine, Ten:**
- Why did the “coat men” visit Alex Steiner’s house?
 - Why was Rudy selected for examination by the Nazi authorities? What was ironic about his selection?
 - How did Ilse Hermann prepare for Liesel’s next visit?
 - What finally laid the ghost of Liesel’s brother to rest?
 - Why did Hans Hubermann change seats on the military vehicle?
 - What do you suppose transformed Rudy from an apple thief into a bread giver?
 - How did Liesel survive the air strike on Himmel Street?
 - Why did Liesel attend each time Jews were marched through Molching?
 - Who took care of Liesel after she was orphaned for the second time?
 - Who was an unexpected survivor of the war?

Analysis Questions:

- Discuss the symbolism of death as the omniscient narrator of the novel. What are Death’s feelings for each victim?
 - Describe Death’s attempt to resist Liesel. Death states, “I’m always finding humans at their best and worst. I see their ugly and their beauty, and I wonder how the same thing can be both” (491).
 - What is ugly and beautiful about Liesel, Rosa and Hans Hubermann, Max Vandenburg, Rudy Steiner, and Mrs. Hermann? Why is death haunted by humans?
- What is ironic about Liesel’s obsession with stealing books? Discuss other uses of irony in the novel.
- *The Grave Digger’s Handbook* is the first book Liesel steals.
 - Why did she take the book? What is significant about the titles of the books she steals?
 - Discuss why she hides *The Grave Digger’s Handbook* under her mattress.
 - Describe Hans Hubermann’s reaction when he discovers the book.
 - What does the act of book thievery teach Liesel about life and death?
 - Explain Rudy’s reaction when he discovers that Liesel is a book thief?
 - How does stealing books from the mayor’s house leads to a friendship with the mayor’s wife?
 - Explain how Liesel’s own attempt to write a book saves her life.
- Liesel believes that Hans Hubermann’s eyes show kindness, and from the beginning she feels closer to him than to Rosa Hubermann. How does Hans gain Liesel’s love and trust? Debate whether Liesel is a substitute for Hans’s children, who have strayed from the family. Why is it so difficult for Rosa to demonstrate the same warmth toward Liesel? Discuss how Liesel’s relationship with Rosa changes by the end of the novel.
- Abandonment is a central theme in the novel. The reader knows that Liesel feels abandoned by her mother and the death of her brother. How does she equate love with abandonment? At what point does she understand why she was abandoned by her mother? Who else abandons Liesel in the novel? Debate whether she was abandoned by circumstance or by the heart.
- Guilt is another recurring theme in the novel. Hans Hubermann’s life was spared in France during World War I, and Erik Vandenburg’s life was taken. Explain why Hans feels guilty about Erik’s death.
- Guilt is a powerful emotion that may cause a person to become unhappy and despondent. Discuss how Hans channels his guilt into helping others. Explain Max Vandenburg’s thought, “Living was living. The price was guilt and shame” (208). Why does he feel guilt and shame?

- Compare and contrast the lives of Liesel and Max Vandenburg. How does Max's life give Liesel purpose? At what point do Liesel and Max become friends? Max gives Liesel a story called "The Standover Man" for her birthday. What is the significance of this story?
- Death says that Liesel was a girl "with a mountain to climb" (86). What is her mountain? Who are her climbing partners? What is her greatest obstacle? At what point does she reach the summit of her mountain? Describe her descent. What does she discover at the foot of the mountain?
- Hans Junior, a Nazi soldier, calls his dad a coward because he doesn't belong to the Nazi Party. He feels that you are either for Hitler or against him. How does it take courage to oppose Hitler? There isn't one coward in the Hubermann household. Discuss how they demonstrate courage throughout the novel.
- Describe Liesel's friendship with Rudy. How does their friendship change and grow throughout the novel?
 - Death says that Rudy doesn't offer his friendship "for free" (51). What does Rudy want from Liesel?
 - Discuss Death's statement, "The only thing worse than a boy who hates you [is] a boy who loves you" (52).
 - Why is it difficult for Liesel to love Rudy?
 - Discuss why Liesel tells Mr. Steiner that she kissed Rudy's dead body.
- How does Zusak use the literary device of foreshadowing to pull the reader into the story?