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A Carefree *Saumensch*

Markus Zusak’s book, The Book Thief, is a very moving novel. It takes you through the struggles and adventures of Liesel Meminger and her family and friends—written in the perspective of death. This story is so engaging and contains elements that are truly astounding. Friendships are made, books are stolen, and Nazi Germany is discovered.

I think friendship is one of the most important things that you are able to have in life. It is a bond between two people—sharing laughter, jokes, sorrow, secrets, and celebrating achievements. Liesel shares a friendship with her Papa, Hans Hubermann, one of her foster parents. It’s very captivating how much Papa is there for Liesel. He taught her how to read and write; graciously staying up night after night until 3 A.M. reading *The Shoulder Shrug*. Papa has also dealt with Liesel when she’d wet the bed, and had often let her roll his cigarettes for him. I love their relationship because although he may not be her real father, they share a bond that is strong. Papa is very patient with Liesel and despite Mama’s nagging personality; he is always there for her.

I really enjoy all of the personification in this novel. As Liesel is carrying *The Shoulder Shrug*, recently stealing this novel from the pile of burning books in the town hall, Zusak does a great job of expressing the pain Liesel was feeling due to the book burning her underneath her jacket, stating, “*The Shoulder Shrug* has applied itself to her rib cage,” and “Beneath her shirt, a book was eating her up” (122). I think it is very creative how Zusak portrays these personifications; it makes me enjoy the novel even more. As I’m reading, I look forward to hid diverse sentences.

I find it unique how much repetition there is in this novel. Zusak does a great job of exposing Liesel, Mama, and Papa’s personalities by using language. Quite often, these Germans use the term, “Jesus, Mary and Joseph” (95), and Mama also swears a lot by means of German words such as “*Saumensch*” (32) and “*Arschloch*” (32). I find how they talk to really speak about the rough patches people were going through in Nazi Germany during this time; these characters are very outspoken, however, I believe Mama is more defiant and hard- headed than Papa. I feel she tries to protect Liesel and wants her to be the best that she can be.

One thing I really like about The Book Thief is the fact that it is starting to join two different worlds into one-- the lives of Liesel, and Max Vandenburg. Max is a Jew who was sent to Hans Hubermann’s address after a promise Papa had made many years ago to Max’s father. The book briefly talks about Max’s life, explaining how he would always get into fights, fighting one boy, Walter Kugler, thirteen times. Max didn’t have it easy. He was ripped away from his family at twenty-two and had to spend many years in hiding after that. Max has been living in the Hubermann’s basement, and although Liesel was distant at first, I feel they have started to form a friendship. I am excited to see where their friendship goes; however, I’m sure trouble will partake considering they are a German family hiding a Jew.

Death has described just how it works, and I am looking forward to reading how it travels throughout the rest of this book. I love that The Book Thief is in this perspective because the Holocaust was around this time, and as you may know, death was a prime factor. I can’t wait to see what he does next and who he takes; however, I’m hoping it isn’t Liesel. This novel wasn’t exactly what I expected it to be; however, it has been a joy to read so far. I’m looking forward to the challenges and adventures Liesel has next to come and the outcome or her families’secret.