

# Markus Zusak - The Book Thief

When Death has a story to tell, you listen. It is 1939. Nazi Germany. The country is holding its breath. Death has never been busier, and will become busier still. Liesel Meminger is a foster girl living outside of Munich, who scratches out a meager existence for herself by stealing when she encounters something she can't resist—books. With the help of her accordion-playing foster father, she learns to read and shares her stolen books with her neighbors during bombing raids as well as with the Jewish man hidden in her basement. A compelling story by Markus Zusak.

Genre: history, war, survival

Themes: power of words, death & mortality, love & family, courage & resistance, identity

Age: 12-14 years old

Activities:

1. **Symbolism:** Split students into groups of 3 or 4 and assign groups a specific symbol from the novel (the accordion, stolen books, Huberman's basement etc). Have them discuss how these symbols contribute to the themes of the novel and present their findings back to the class.
2. **Character analysis:** Ask students to create a timeline of Liesel's life before, during, and after the events of the book. They could include key events and how they affected Liesel's character development. This activity will help students to understand the challenges and traumas that Liesel experiences and how they contribute to her character development.
3. **Become the author:** Ask students to imagine an event in the life of Liesel after she moves to Australia. They can fill in the gap between the end of the story and the epilogue.
4. **Group research project: The Power of Words.** One of the key themes of the books is how words and language shape our perceptions of the world. Ask students to research examples of how words have been used to inspire or incite people throughout history, and create a presentation on the impact of language on society.
5. **Visual adaptation:** Ask students to create a visual adaptation of a scene from the book. Students could explain their artistic choices and how they represent the themes and mood of the book.

Enjoyed this book? You might also enjoy...

- **Mark Haddon** - The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time
- **Candy Gourlay** - Bone Talk
- **Isaac Blum** - The Life and Crimes of Hoodie Rosen