

The Book Thief

When I first flipped open *The Book Thief*, I thought it would just be another typical war memoir, recounting the horrors and sorrow of war, but always lacking the power to sear a unique story into my mind. However, as the book's unusual narrator: Death, unfolded this haunting fiction set in World War 2, I realized that *The Book Thief* isn't any ordinary novel; it's an extraordinary story about courage, friendship, survival, and the power of words.

Liesel Meminger was only nine years old when she was taken to live with the Hubermanns, a foster family, in Molching, Germany. On her way there, she found in the snow a small black book left by a careless grave digger. Little did she know that this incident would unlock her interest in books and words, and change her life forever. As World War 2 raged on and hardships of all kinds came tumbling into Liesel's life, she became a book thief, rescuing books from Nazi book-burnings and stealing from the mayor's library. Her love for words made her fear nothing, brought her unlikely friendships, and astonishingly, saved her from a bombing that killed everyone on her street.

What makes *The Book Thief* a remarkable book is the way it portrays people. As the narrator, Death, had said, "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." War is cruel and horrid, and it displays the ugliest part of people like Hitler, but it also brings out the best of human. Among the fanatical Germans who worshipped Hitler and hated Jews, there were men and women that chose to oppose the injustice and follow their hearts. Liesel's foster family risked their lives and hid a Jewish man in their house; Liesel secretly gave bread to starving Jews; and her foster father refused to join the Nazi party. The most moving part is when an enemy pilot crashed in a river and was discovered by Liesel's best friend, Rudy, he placed a teddy bear on the dying man's shoulder. The pilot could have been on a mission to bomb Germany, but in the last moments of his life, he was consoled by a German boy. These little actions were like rays of light amid the darkness of war, warming people's despaired hearts with hope.

Another reason that sets *The Book Thief* apart from other novels is one main ingredient: the power of words. In the book, words have done wonders to Liesel and her life. I was so shocked as I saw, in the end, Liesel emerging onto the destroyed street, learning that it was writing in her basement that had let her escape death. I realize that words are more than just clumps of alphabets; they are informative, they are powerful, and

they can be life-changing. Just like humans, words have the capability to be vicious or glorious. Hitler used grand speeches to spread his evil ideas of racism and destroyed people with words; but words have also given helpless people like Liesel opportunities and something to hold on in their hard lives. Today, when we look back in history, many prominent figures had used the power of words not to harm, but to spread peace and change the world, such as Martin Luther King Jr. in his speech *I Have a Dream*.

And I did experience the power of words after finishing *The Book Thief*. I was moved beyond tears after closing the book, amazed at how the sentences seemed to burn into my mind and punch my heart. The author doesn't sugarcoat anything, but the way he describes friendship and love between the characters is so gripping and deep, making me wonder that under the same circumstances, can I be like Liesel and her family, struggling to survive, yet never hesitating to reach out to the needy? Will I be able to follow my heart and do what's right? *The Book Thief* not only offers a beautiful story, but also urges me to examine myself, and is, in short, a life-changing book.