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**The Power of Words**

Mark Zusak’s book, The Book Thief, is a very unique piece of literature. Most books about WWII describe war zones, concentration camps, and Nazi soldiers. The Book Thief tells the other side of the story; what it’s like to grow up in the middle of Nazi Germany. The detail in this book puts a whole new light on WWII.

Going into this book, I knew next to nothing about it. I was aware that the main character was a young girl around the age of twelve that lived in Nazi Germany. Since this was all that I knew, I expected that she would narrate the story. Shock and confusion encompassed me when the narrator referred to himself as “he” (5). The narrator piled on more confusion when they began to describe doing strange things. In the prologue, the narrator described being in a train with the book thief. To me, this was proof that the narrator had to be just another person in the same situation as the book thief. He could have been a soldier, or just another person being transported in the same fashion as the book thief. As the narrator exited the train, he was carrying “a small soul” (8). At this moment, it struck me that the narrator was not human; the narrator was Death. During the time period that this book took place-WWII-death was everywhere. Death hung in the air just waiting for its next victim.

The author uses colors to add depth and description into the text. Everything that happens is in relation to a color. The book starts out describing Death seeing the book thief three different times, in three different colors: white, black, and red. In the scene where Liesel’s brother dies, the scene is portrayed as “white” (6).The white in this has both physical and symbolic characteristics. The white in this scene displays the winter setting where the death occurs as well as the innocence of the young boy. Color is also used randomly throughout the text to help generate an image. “The day was grey” (27) when Liesel moved in with the Hubermann’s. The day was described as grey to show Liesel’s apprehension of moving in with her new foster family. I believe that using colors in the text was a very creative tool that Zusak used.

The structure of this story impressed me. Throughout some of the pages, there were small notes that Death used to explain what was happening. At one point, the narrator describes Hans Hubermann being in the army. A small tidbit of information on that page describes Death’s perspective on war. According to Death, soldiers in combat think that they are running at other men, but in reality, “they’re running at me” (175). These small notes throughout the book help to regroup your thoughts on the story at that point; they also help to spark questions in your mind about what is happening. At the beginning of each “Part,” (17) there are small fragments that help you prepare for what is to come. Each small fragment is foreshadowing to what each chapter will describe. These fragments help spark excitement for what is coming, and it allows you to make your own predictions.

The absolute best part of the book so far was the book that Max wrote for Liesel. On Liesel’s twelfth birthday, Max felt bad because he had nothing to give her. To show her appreciation for his concern, she “walked over and hugged him for the first time” (222). Max decided he would give her something back. My anticipation bubbled, until I saw the book that Max wrote her. I was completely blown away with the detail that was put into the book. Max ripped pages out of “Mein Kampf and painted them white” (223). I was shocked to see that some of the words from Mein Kampf were still slightly visible, as if they had been actually painted with white. I was in awe at how Max opened himself up to Liesel; he wrote out all of his true feelings and fears in that book-allowing himself to be vulnerable around Liesel. The images that he drew in his book showed himself as a bird. He represented himself in this way because Liesel once stated to Hans that Max’s “hair is like feathers” (216). Because of this, Max only saw it as appropriate to portray himself as a bird.

So far this book has fascinated me. It blew my expectations out of the water with each intricate detail. The prologue left me wondering, many questions swarming throughout my mind; as I read on I find answers hidden in the text. I am extremely curious about what is to come. I’m afraid that Max’s guilt and fears of being caught hiding in the Hubermann’s house could be foreshadowing. Nevertheless, there is still much of the book to be read, and I can only hope that Death does not have to use his abilities on Liesel or any of her new family.