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Prestwick House
Literature
Teaching Unit
Chapter-by-Chapter Study Guide



The Book Thief

by Markus Zusak

- Learning objectives
- Study Guide with short-answer questions
- Background information
- Vocabulary in context
- Multiple-choice test
- Essay questions
- Literary terms



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Objectives

1. examine the significance of both the title of the novel and the individual chapters.
2. analyze the pros and cons of the chosen point of view and understand the effect that choice had on the novel as a whole.
3. discuss the function of setting and the time period in the novel.
4. examine the impact of the social and political issues present in the novel on plot, character, and theme.
5. trace the character development of the novel's protagonist, Liesel.
6. identify and describe the following characters and explain their function in the plot, taking into account the ways in which they support some of the novel's major concepts and/or themes:
 - Hans Hubermann
 - Rosa Hubermann
 - Rudy Steiner
 - Max Vandenburg
 - Ilsa Hermann
 - Frau Holtzapfel
 - Frau Diller
 - Werner Meminger
7. discuss characters in terms of whether they are flat or round, static or dynamic.
8. explain how Zusak uses figurative language in the novel to develop character and theme, and to create mood.
9. identify instances of tone and attitude and the literary devices the author employs in each case.
10. cite examples of foreshadowing in the novel and their importance to the novel as a whole.
11. point out instances of flashback in the text and their importance to the scenes in which they occur.
12. identify the story's climax.

Questions for Essay and Discussion

1. What are the pros and cons of Zusak's choice of using Death as the narrator? How might the novel have been different had the author chosen a different character to tell Liesel's story?
2. How important is it that the reader be fully acquainted with the setting and time period to fully understand the novel? That is, in what ways, if any, does the story stand on its own regardless of the historical facts of wartime Germany? Conversely, how does a historical knowledge enhance the reader's understanding of the novel?
3. Identify the novel's exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution.
4. Zusak has carefully chosen the chapter titles for his novel. Identify at least three chapter titles and their significance to both the chapter's content and to the novel as a whole.
5. The narrator uses several flashbacks in the novel. Identify at least three and explain their importance to the scene, chapter, and novel as a whole.
6. Identify several instances of foreshadowing in the novel and the effect on the chapter, part, or novel as a whole.
7. Identify all major characters in terms of being round or flat, static or dynamic.
8. In what ways does Zusak use figurative language to develop character and theme and to create mood?
9. Compare and contrast the two stories Max writes for Liesel, "The Standover Man" and "The Word Shaker."
10. The role of chance plays a significant part in several characters' lives in the novel. Cite at least three characters who are affected by chance and note both the short and long-term results.
11. Discuss the changes in Liesel and Rudy's relationship throughout the novel.
12. Explain how promises and secrets play a significant role in the novel.
13. Describe the relationship between Liesel and Hans Hubermann and what ties the two together.
14. Give three examples of characters who suffer from guilt and explain the circumstances. Do others judge them in the same way that they judge themselves?
15. Compare and contrast Liesel and Max. How does each person give the other's life more purpose?

2. What are some suggestions in the “How it Happened” section that death, although still undesirable, can be a healing experience?

3. How did Liesel acquire her first book? What is it?

4. Describe Himmel Street. Why does Death find the street’s name ironic?

5. How do Hans and Rosa Hubermann differ from each other in both appearance and personality?

touted – publicized or promoted
vicinity – the area near a certain place
whittled – shaped by carving away pieces

1. Who is Rudy Steiner, and how is he characterized? How do he and Liesel meet?

2. How does Liesel and Rudy's friendship evolve throughout these chapters?

3. Discuss Tommy Müller's role in these chapters.

4. Who is Frau Diller, and what is her "one golden rule"?

5. Explain the allusion present in the narrator's interjectory title "The road of yellow stars" in the chapter "The Kiss." How does the reader then know what the section will be about, and how does this relate to the setting for the novel?

6. Examine the significance in these chapters of the following motifs: colors, dreams, and books.

7. What occurs when Liesel and Rudy meets Arthur Berg and the other boys?

8. Identify the additional details about Max presented in “The Struggler, Continued.”

9. Note two examples of irony present in the chapter, “The Struggler, Continued.”

10. Explain the significance of Arthur Berg’s statement, “We might be criminals, but we’re not totally immoral” and how his comment relates to Liesel as well.

11. Explain the significance, and irony, in the last chapter title in Part Three.

Part Six

Vocabulary

abridged – shortened
adamant – unwilling to change one’s mind
alluded – referenced; called attention to
antithesis – the opposite
contorted – bent out of normal shape
copiously – in great abundance
disgruntled – annoyed
fatigued – tired
generated – created
incessantly – without stopping
incredulous – shocked or disbelieving
indulging – taking pleasure in something
irreparable – unable to be repaired
paradox – a statement that seems to contradict itself, but actually expresses a truth
premonition – a vision of the future
repercussions – consequences
resolute – firm and determined
resurgence – a renewal or revival
scouring – searching
serpentine – moved like a snake
sustained – prolonged
unflappable – calm in a crisis situation
unwavering – steady or unrelenting
waned – gradually lessened

1. How does Death describe his own appearance?

2. Examine the paragraph in “Death’s Diary: 1942” beginning with “They say that war is death’s best friend...” What literary devices is Death using in this paragraph? How does this paragraph reiterate Death’s sentiments about his job?
