

Members of the Board:

It is with great conviction that I highly recommend *The Book Thief* for inclusion in the English curriculum this year. A good book tells a story and leaves an impression; however, a great book takes its reader on an unforgettable journey, challenging him or her to ponder its elements and strive to find and hold on to its deeper message. *The Book Thief* is one such great book, a multifaceted masterpiece which is nothing short of all one could ask for in an educational text. I can attribute such praise to this work because, along with the traditional abundance of literary genius for students to study and analyze, it offers readers innovative perspectives and the opportunity to really think, rounded characters from which to learn and, most importantly, it offers them words.

The Book Thief is an excellent book to read in the English classroom because it teaches students to think and view the world from different perspectives. Instead of seeing Germans in World War II as oppressive monsters, the reader is offered a window into the lives of compassionate though imperfect humans, Germans who reach out in kindness while, conversely, often berating each other. Through this is shown the paradox of life, a thing of “beauty and brutality” (550). The novel encourages the reader to struggle with the ugliness of the war and the beauty and simplicity of the world around it, as seen through Liesel’s budding relationships with Rudy, Hans, Rosa, and especially with words. As she writes at the end of her own book, “I have hated the words and I have loved them, and I hope I have made them right” (528). The powerful change from the hackneyed Nazi perspective used by Zusak inspires the mind to ponder the deeper significance of the novel.

Furthermore, *The Book Thief* would be an exceptional addition to the curriculum because it teaches readers about reality. Many realistic lessons may be taken out of *The Book Thief*, such as that life is not a fairytale and everything does not always work out fine in the end, as is seen through the demise of Himmel Street. Through the example of Hans Hubermann, the reader can see that in life one has to be brave and stand up for what he or she believes in, even though that may be in a quiet, subtle way. Most importantly, it teaches the readers to think for themselves and take care concerning what

words they hear; as Max writes in “*The Word Shaker*,”(443) “[The Fuhrer] invited his people toward his own glorious heart, beckoning them with his finest, ugliest words, handpicked from his forests. And the people came” (445). Not only does the reader learn to listen carefully, but also to choose his or her words wisely, as Liesel learns after criticizing Ilsa Hermann.

Further lessons may be learned from Markus Zusak’s novel simply by observing the actions and lives of the characters. Liesel’s perseverance and determination to learn to read and write illuminate the importance of these characteristics as well as of words, reading, and writing. The genuine friendship between Max and Liesel, fostered by words, depicts that happiness can be found in a life devoid of comfort and riches. The value of a friend and the significance of standing by his or her side, even when it hurts, is constantly shown between the unbreakable friendship of Liesel and Rudy. Furthermore, the novel explores deep into the recesses of humanity and the beauty of giving of oneself to others, as is seen in the death of Hans Hubermann: “His soul sat up. It met me. . . . Those souls are always light because more of them have been put out. More of them have found their way to other places” (531-2). Thus, not only will the student read and analyze the novel, but also learn intriguing lessons about life along the way.

Markus Zusak achieves literary greatness through his writing style, insightful viewpoints, and masterfully developed plot and characters. Along with being a deeply historical, credible book, *The Book Thief* offers so much more to those who read it, both book lovers and haters alike: an unforgettable and insightful story from which the reader learns invaluable analytical skills and life lessons.

Work Cited

Zusak, Markus. *The Book Thief*. Random House, Inc. New York: 2005.

I confirm that this essay is my independent work and is submitted without the assistance of mentor or peer review. _____