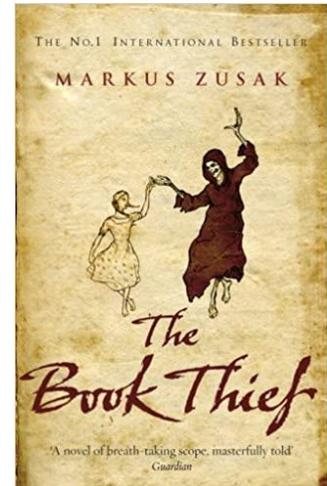


The Book Thief

Markus Zusak

Reading Group Questions

1. What do you think is the purpose of having the story narrated by Death? Did you think the narrator added to or distracted from the story on the whole? Why does Death give his readers so many 'spoilers'?
2. Liesel steals six books in all. What does each one mean to her?
3. Why do you think Frau Hermann lets Liesel steal the book from the bonfire?
4. What were your thoughts on the relationship between Liesel and Rudy? Did you think there should have been more of a romantic development?
5. Why do you think Zusak chose to focus his novel on a young German girl's perspective?
6. Which group of characters do you feel best represent the German public at the time – the Hubermanns or the Nazis? What do you think of the book's portrayal of the 'Good German' trope?
7. What are your thoughts on the character of Max? Is he portrayed more as a victim or as survivor?
8. What did you think of the book that Max creates for Liesel? What is its function in relation to the rest of the novel? What is its relation to the book Max paints over in order to create it – Hitler's *Mein Kampf*?
9. How does Zusak represent Nazis and Nazism? Was there anything unusual or surprising about this?
10. *The Book Thief* is focused on the experience of German life in the Third Reich, and it side-lines the events of the Holocaust. How would you react to the suggestion that this choice of focus is problematic?
11. If the novel were to be told from a different character's perspective, who would that character be, and how would their perspective change our insight into the novel's themes and relationships?



12. The book is marketed as both literary fiction and as young adult fiction. Would you recommend this book be read by younger demographics? And why?

A Survivors Perspective

Suzanna Rappaport Ripton

Suzanne Rappaport Ripton was a young Jewish girl growing up in Paris when the Nazis invaded and took away her family. As the commotion of this traumatic experience was going on, the family's neighbour Madame Collomb entered the home and said 'What's my child doing here?' She proceeded to take Suzanne to her home and hide her in her house. Madame Collomb could not keep Suzanne for long because of the risk of being caught, so it was arranged that Suzanne would be secretly transported to the French countryside. This is where she lived out the rest of her childhood, helping on a family farm. In a way, her story combines Liesel's with Max's. Like Liesel, she was a young girl taken in by kind strangers after the Nazis arrested her family. Like Max, Suzanne had to make the secret journey to safety and follow strict rules both in Madame Collomb's residence and on the farm in order to keep herself, and her rescuers, safe.



<https://holocaustlearning.org.uk/stories/suzanne-rappaport-ripton/>