

Context
<p><b>Marcus Zusak</b> grew up hearing stories about Nazi Germany, about the bombing of Munich and the Jews being marched through his mother’s small German town. He always knew it was a story he wanted to tell. He was inspired by a story his mother told him, which involved a boy giving bread to a starving Jew who was being marched to a concentration camp. A Nazi soldier noticed and whipped both the boy and the Jew. He describes his book as follows: “I always saw the book as a kind of love story, with Liesel at its centre. There’s her love for Hans, Rosa, Rudy, for life itself, and, of course, for books and stories. Each is a different kind of love – and each adds to the person she is, and becomes.”</p>
<p><b>Adolf Hitler:</b> (20<sup>th</sup> April 1889 – 30<sup>th</sup> April 1945) was an Austrian-born German politician who was the dictator of Germany from 1933 to 1945. World War 2 began when he invaded Poland on 1<sup>st</sup> September 1939. His racist ideology, authoritarian rule and powerful propaganda resulted in the indoctrination of many German people, who accepted his dangerous beliefs as the truth.</p>
<p><b>Kristallnacht:</b> from the 9<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> November 1938, an incident happened that came to be known as ‘Kristallnacht’ (also called the ‘Night of Broken Glass). Nazis in Germany set fire to synagogues, vandalised Jewish homes, schools and businesses and killed close to 100 Jewish people. In the aftermath, 30,000 Jewish men were arrested and sent to Nazi concentration camps. The violence shocked the world. After Kristallnacht, Jewish people increased their efforts to leave Germany as they felt this was only the start of more persecution to come.</p>
<p><b>The Holocaust:</b> the genocide of European Jews during World War 2. Between 1941 and 1945, Nazi Germany systematically murdered some six million Jews across Europe, around two-thirds of Europe's Jewish population. The murders were carried out in pogroms (organised massacres) and mass shootings; by extermination through labour in concentration camps; and in the gas chambers of death camps.</p>
<p><b>Book burning:</b> the Nazi book burnings were a campaign conducted by the German Student Union to burn books in Nazi Germany and Austria in the 1930s. The books targeted for burning were seen as rebellious or as representing ideas that went against Nazi beliefs.</p>
<p><b>Hitler Youth:</b> a youth group begun by the Nazis in the 1920s to create future leaders and soldiers and to instil Nazi beliefs and principles in German children. At the start, the group was only for boys but girls were allowed to join in the 1930s. In 1936, the Hitler Youth became compulsory for children over the age of 10. At the annual Nazi party rally in 1935, Hitler stated “He alone who owns the youth gains the future.”</p>
<p><b>Mein Kampf:</b> (translated as ‘My Struggle’). Hitler’s autobiographical book, published in 1925. ‘Mein Kampf’ describes how and why Hitler became anti-Semitic. It outlines his political ideas and future plans for Germany. For example, he writes about his youth; the First World War and the ‘betrayal’ of Germany’s collapse in 1918; his racist ideas; the need for the German empire to expand and find more living space (<i>lebensraum</i>) in the East; and the need for Germans to become a master race. It is still seen as one of the most notorious and dangerous books ever written.</p>

Themes	
<p><b>The power of words:</b> words and stories hold huge <b>value and power</b> - Liesel grows to understand the influence that words can have in changing the minds of others (both for the better and for the worse). There are various <b>book thieves</b> in the novel: Liesel, Max, Death and even Hitler. Words <b>build relationships</b> and <b>offer comfort:</b> Liesel and Hans develop their deep bond through reading. The greatest gift Max gives Liesel is words in the form of the ‘The Word Shaker’. In it, he suggests that words are the most <b>powerful force</b> there is, as shown by the way that Hitler uses words to take over the world. His story also shows how Liesel and Max use words to <b>shelter</b> themselves from the horrors of Nazi Germany. Liesel uses reading to <b>calm</b> and <b>comfort</b> her neighbours during the air raids – especially Frau Holtzapfel.</p>	<p><b>Duality:</b> characters often have <b>two faces</b>, or sides. It is possible to have inner thoughts that are hidden by a façade we use to face the world. Zusak suggests in the dangerous world of Nazi Germany, many people have to act in <b>secret ways</b> and are forced to <b>hide</b> who they really are. <b>Rudy paints himself black</b> to be like his hero Jesse Owens, but outwardly, he appears to be an ideal Aryan. Max <b>poses as a non-Jewish German</b>, but on the inside he is a terrified Jew who finds the book abhorrent. ‘The Word Shaker’ bears the cover of ‘Mein Kampf’, but the pages within are a story of resistance against Hitler’s evil. The <b>Hubermanns lead double lives</b>. They pretend to be law-abiding citizens but they harbour a dangerous secret.</p>
<p><b>The kindness and cruelty of human nature:</b> Zusak explores how humans are capable of <b>good and evil</b>, of <b>love and hatred</b>, of the <b>greatest kindnesses and the greatest cruelties</b>. Ilsa Hermann invites Liesel into her library and Rudy gives a teddy bear to a dying pilot. This is juxtaposed with Franz Deutcher’s treatment of Rudy. The Hubermanns commit a great act of kindness in hiding Max and they treat him with <b>love and respect</b>, at great risk to themselves. This is juxtaposed with the <b>hatred, violence and genocide</b> against Jews at the time. Death observes moments of kindness and cruelty – even he is shocked by the <b>horror of war</b> that is committed by all sides.</p>	<p><b>Bravery and cowardice:</b> there are many different kinds of bravery and cowardice in the novel. Zusak asks whether it was possible to stand up to the horror of the Nazis. The <b>Hubermanns’ bravery and humanity</b> is shown in the way they hide Max, provide a refuge for Liesel and stand up for Jews. <b>Liesel is courageous</b> - she survives her own personal loss and she defends others. <b>Max bravely leaves the Hubermanns</b> when he realises their lives are endangered. <b>Rudy’s courage</b> is shown when he challenges authority and defends vulnerable friends.</p>

Characters	
<p><b>Death:</b> the <b>narrator</b>. Death also <b>controls</b> the narrative: he likes to skip around the story's timeline, revealing events to come and then apologising for giving parts of the story away. Death provides <b>humorous, informative, or dark asides</b>, but as World War 2 accelerates, he feels <b>weariness and remorse</b> about having to collect so many souls. He is fascinated by humans but he <b>struggles to understand</b> how they can be capable of ugliness as well as beauty. He believes that Liesel's story is one of a handful of beautiful stories he possesses – her fascination with words and her understanding of their power <b>mirrors Death's feelings</b> about words too. Although Death is all-seeing and all-knowing, he describes how he has to do the bidding of many different bosses –humans like Hitler who exterminate and bring war to others. He is <b>exhausted by humanity's unwavering hunger for war</b>.</p>	<p><b>Rudy Steiner:</b> Liesel's best friend. With his blond hair, blue eyes, and athletic talents, Rudy is the 'perfect' Aryan child, but he has surprising <b>sensitivity and compassion</b>. He is in love with Liesel, but she isn't the only character he tries to protect - he has a strong sense of <b>injustice</b> and will always <b>defend the underdog</b>. Rudy embodies <b>life and vitality</b>: he loves football and winning races. He is <b>brave and courageous</b>, but also <b>mischievous</b>. He is <b>rebellious</b>, refusing to join in completely with the Hitler Youth, and enjoying the thrill of stealing. However, once his father is taken away and forced to join the war effort, Rudy changes. He begins to recognise the effects that political events have on people who are seemingly not involved, and this makes him <b>angry</b>.</p>
<p><b>Liesel Meminger:</b> the protagonist. Liesel changes from an <b>angry, distrustful</b> character to one who deeply loves her family and friends. By the end of the novel, she has a <b>strong personal moral code</b>, and is not afraid to endanger herself to stand up for what is right. The novel follows her growth from the age of nine to fifteen, but she is also described as an old woman at the end when Death comes to collect her soul. At the start of her story, Liesel is without words and cannot read. She understands that there is great power in words, however, and she hungers for them...and so she becomes the book thief.</p>	<p><b>Max Vandenburg:</b> the Hubermanns' <b>secret lodger</b>. When Max comes to hide in the Hubermanns' house, he is <b>cautious and fearful</b>. He is filled with <b>rage</b> towards Hitler, which motivates him to stay alive no matter what. He understands Liesel's feelings: both have experienced <b>unimaginable loss</b>, both are <b>alone</b>, both are <b>fighters</b>, both seek <b>refuge</b>, and both see words as a source of <b>solace and empowerment</b>. Max writes books for Liesel about all that she has done for him and about how her words and her tears are able to save him and give him strength. His book, 'The Word Shaker', describes how Liesel's words give him strength and have the ability to cut down forests of hatred.</p>
<p><b>Hans Hubermann:</b> Liesel's foster father. Liesel is the moral compass of the novel, but Hans is its heart. He is <b>generous, kind, and patient</b>. As a father figure, he represents <b>self-sacrifice and the wisdom of experience</b>. His desire to teach Liesel to read is symbolic: unlike the Nazis who fear and burn books, Hans wants to give them to Liesel to open her view of the world. He is one of the few characters who directly challenges Hitler's regime. He is guided by his <b>conscience</b>, and he suffers greatly when he feels he has acted in error. He cannot stand to see others in pain, and at times this sense of <b>empathy</b> causes him to put himself and his family in danger. By the end of the novel, Hans has made peace with his life and his fate – he accepts his death gracefully.</p>	<p><b>Rosa Hubermann:</b> Liesel's foster mother. At first, she seems to be <b>cross and impatient</b>. However, beneath her tough exterior she is <b>kind and compassionate</b>. Still, to the outside world, she remains a cold and harsh woman. She is a <b>complicated</b> character.</p>

**\*What you already know**

Subject terminology	Definition
<b>Frame narrative</b>	A story in which another story is enclosed or embedded as a ' <b>tale within a tale</b> '. Death is telling other people's stories – Liesel, Max, the German people etc. – within his own e.g. Death says " <i>Which in turn brings me to the subject I am telling you about tonight, or today, or whatever the hour and colour. It's the story of one of those perpetual survivors – an expert at being left behind.</i> "
<b>CHRONOLOGICAL/ NON-CHRONOLOGICAL</b>	Stories written in chronological order are stories which move forward in time, from beginning to middle to end. The events are <b>sequenced in order</b> . Stories that are non-chronological don't follow the chronological order of events - they might start at the end and go backwards, or they feature flashbacks/flash forwards. They tend to <b>jump back and forth in time</b> .
<b>*Narrative perspective</b>	Zusak uses Death as an <b>omniscient narrator</b> (a voice who sees and knows everything that happens), describing all the main characters' thoughts and emotions as well as his own. He mostly describes events in Molching during the years of World War 2, though occasionally he flashes forward to relay different characters' fates and gives a wider perspective about the effects of war upon the world. <b>First person narrative perspective:</b> in this point of view, a character (typically the protagonist, but not always) is telling the story. Pronouns such as 'I' and 'we' are used. <b>Third person narrative perspective:</b> in this point of view, an external narrator is telling the story. Pronouns such as 'he', 'she', 'it' and 'they' are used. If the narrator is omniscient, they can be anywhere, at any time, and inside the minds of all the characters.
<b>*Protagonist</b>	The <b>leading character</b> in a novel.
<b>ANTAGONIST</b>	The character, or a group of characters, which stands in opposition to the protagonist. They are usually an <b>enemy/ adversary/ opponent</b> .
Literary techniques	Definition
<b>FORESHADOWING</b>	Where the author gives the reader <b>hints or signs about the future</b> . It suggests what is to come through imagery, language, and/or symbolism. It does not directly give away the outcome, but rather, suggests it e.g. " <i>Hans Hubermann was not granted membership in the Nazi Party. <u>Not yet, anyway.</u></i> "
<b>IMAGERY</b>	The use of vivid language to evoke a sensory experience or create a picture with words for a reader. Writers often use the <b>different senses</b> to describe something – such as seeing, hearing and touching – in order to help the reader experience what is being described.
<b>*Metaphor</b>	A type of image when <b>one thing is compared to another thing</b> to help the reader to understand an aspect of the original thing more clearly e.g. " <i>When it crashed, three deep gashes were made in the earth. Its wings were now sawn-off arms. No more flapping. Not for this <u>metallic little bird.</u></i> "  In this example, the aeroplane (this is called the ' <b>tenor</b> ') is compared to a bird (this is called the ' <b>vehicle</b> ') to help the reader to understand an aspect of the aeroplane more clearly (understanding the link between the tenor and the vehicle is called the ' <b>ground</b> ').
<b>*Motif</b>	An <b>object, image, symbol or idea that is repeated</b> throughout a literary work. Motifs help to explain bigger ideas or themes e.g. <i>reading and writing books</i> and <i>the act of stealing</i> appear as recurring motifs. Both of these actions are a way of taking back some control over a world that is largely beyond the characters' control.
<b>*Personification</b>	A type of image where a <b>human quality</b> is attached to a thing or idea e.g. " <i>It felt as though the whole globe was <u>dressed</u> in snow. Like it had pulled it on, the way you pull on a sweater. Next to the train line, footprints were <u>sunken to their shins</u>. <u>Trees wore blankets of ice.</u></i> "
<b>*Simile</b>	A type of image that writers use to <b>compare one thing with another, using 'like' or 'as'</b> e.g. " <i>...but when I picked him up originally, the boy's spirit was soft and cold, <u>like ice cream</u>. He started melting in my arms.</i> "
<b>SYMBOL/ SYMBOLISM</b>	A thing that <b>represents or stands for something else</b> – usually, this is an object that represents a much deeper idea, emotion or feeling e.g. <i>books symbolise threat for the Nazis. For Rosa, Hans' accordion symbolises her husband after he is taken away by the Nazis.</i>
	A symbol might occur <b>only once</b> to signify a particular emotion or idea. It becomes a motif if it is repeated at various points in a text. Therefore, a symbol could be described as a 'mini-motif'!