

Individual Learning Packet

**Teaching Unit**

**The Book Thief**

by Mark Zusak

written by Stephanie Polukis and Priscilla Baker

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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?

# The Book Thief

## Prologue

### Vocabulary

**abhorrence** – disgust, hatred  
**affable** – good-natured  
**amiable** – sociable and friendly  
**array** – an assortment  
**buckled** – collapsed or gave in  
**compelled** – felt driven to do something  
**concoction** – something created using various parts or ingredients  
**deliberate** – thought-out  
**disjointed** – pieced together; lacking unison  
**diverse** – having variety  
**fanatical** – obsessed with a single idea  
**formulate** – to create using a formula or method  
**gauging** – judging, measuring, or determining the state of something  
**genially** – warmly and kind-heartedly  
**hindered** – prevented or held back  
**increments** – additions in fixed amounts  
**intersect** – to divide into parts by something passing through  
**intonations** – pitches or tones, usually made by the voice  
**jittered** – trembled with nervousness  
**legion** – a group of people or things  
**murky** – hazy; gloomy  
**perched** – sitting on an unstable object  
**perpetual** – never-ending  
**poles** – positions that are opposite of each other  
**protestations** – expressions of disapproval  
**resigned** – yielded or submitted to  
**ruptured** – burst or exploded  
**septic** – infected or polluted  
**spectated** – watched; witnessed  
**spectrum** – a series of colors that blend from one into the next like a rainbow  
**traipsing** – walking without plans; wandering  
**trepidation** – nervousness or anxiousness  
**variables** – differences or options in a single category  
**versatility** – the ability to adapt or change  
**wavered** – hesitated; swayed or trembled with indecision

**Part One: “The Kiss” – “The Heavyweight Champion of the School-Yard”**

## Vocabulary

**abducted** – taken away secretly and forcefully; kidnapped  
**absurdity** – ridiculousness  
**adrenaline** – the hormone produced when a person is stressed, angered, or afraid  
**amplified** – made greater  
**audacious** – outgoing and fearless  
**collaborated** – worked together  
**commentate** – to comment on an event while it is taking place  
**conceded** – admitted to be true  
**coping** – dealing with a difficult situation  
**culminating** – concluding in or reaching the highest point  
**cynicism** – a distrust of others; a belief that people are motivated only by self-interest  
**demolition** – destruction  
**deprivation** – lacking something essential  
**disclosed** – made known  
**elated** – extremely happy  
**excruciating** – unbearably painful  
**flanked** – having people or things positioned on the left and right side  
**fluency** – the ability to speak, read, or write accurately  
**goaded** – prodded; pressured  
**gravitating** – being attracted or drawn to  
**implicit** – implied  
**infamy** – fame for some bad behavior; a bad reputation  
**lacerated** – ripped or torn  
**lodged** – housed; fixed in something  
**luminary** – an important person who inspires others  
**materialized** – took on a physical form  
**melancholic** – depressed  
**misogynistic** – tending to hate women  
**morbidity** – having disturbing and gruesome characteristics  
**nefarious** – wicked; evil  
**obliterated** – destroyed  
**prelude** – an introduction  
**prodded** – nagged into doing something  
**regimen** – a routine  
**relinquished** – gave up a hold on or claim to something  
**rendition** – version; interpretation  
**scythe** – a long pole with a curved blade at the end used for cutting grain  
**seethe** – to become overwhelmed with anger  
**serenity** – a calm and peaceful state  
**steadfast** – fixed; unwavering  
**strewn** – thrown about randomly

**Reichstags** – governmental buildings in Germany  
**resolve** – the will or courage to do something  
**succumbing** – surrendering; giving in to  
**suppressed** – held in or prevented from surfacing  
**synagogues** – Jewish places of worship  
**transgressor** – a person who breaks a law or commits a wrong  
**unfurling** – unraveling; unrolling; becoming spread out  
**vigilant** – watchful; alert

1. Analyze the narrator's use of flashback and foreshadowing in Part Two. How is his use of these devices here similar to those in the two earlier sections?

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2. Explain the significance of the chapter title, "The Joy of Cigarettes."

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3. At the start of the chapter "The Joy of Cigarettes," what is Liesel's emotional state?

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4. What pivotal event occurs just after Liesel and Papa finish *The Grave Digger's Handbook*, and how does it reflect their relationship?

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5. In "The Town Walker," what is Mama's plan? How effective is her plan, and how does Liesel feel about it?

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**Part Five: “The Floating Book (Part I)” – “The Gamblers (A Seven-Sided Die)”**

## Vocabulary

barren – empty  
bellowed – roared  
commenced – began  
debilitate – to weaken  
decimated – destroyed  
depleted – used up the supply of  
despicable – wretched; loathsome  
diplomatically – negotiating in a polite, sensitive way  
dissipated – scattered in many directions  
dividend – an amount of money paid regularly  
dour – gloomy and depressing  
envisaged – imagined  
gratuitous – uncalled for; unreasonable; unnecessary  
hoisting – lifting; raising up  
hypocrite – a two-faced person  
malice – evil or bad intent  
methodically – done according to a procedure  
neutralized – counteracted and made harmless  
pallid – pale  
periphery – on the outer sides or limits  
plethora – an overabundance  
proximity – nearness  
rebounding – bouncing off of something  
refrained – avoided doing something  
respective – belonging to a particular person or group  
riffing – going through quickly and casually  
seeping – leaking through small holes  
sustained – bore the weight of  
toiled – worked  
transfixed – paralyzed with fear or awe  
unconscionable – dishonest; unreasonable  
unnerving – causing one to lose confidence  
vociferously – noisily and wildly  
withering – decaying; shriveling

1. What two events are depicted in “The Floating Book”?

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## 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?

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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?

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**Part Seven: “The Sky Stealer” – “The Idiot and the Coat Men”**

## Vocabulary

**akin** – like; similar to  
**clamored** – made a loud uproar  
**conceived** – thought up  
**consolations** – comforting words given after a loss or disappointment  
**derision** – ridicule  
**din** – a loud, unpleasant, and disordered noise  
**flak** – anti-aircraft fire  
**futile** – hopeless  
**hapless** – unfortunate  
**literally** – according to the exact meaning of the words  
**nonchalance** – indifference  
**plastered** – laid flat against something  
**shuffling** – walking by dragging one’s feet  
**subdue** – to calm  
**temerity** – boldness  
**wayward** – movement that is irregular and unable to be predicted

1. How does the chapter “The Sky Stealer” emphasize the theme of the power of words?  
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2. Explain the significance of Death’s comment: “A voice played the notes inside her. This, it said, is your accordion.”  
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3. Given the information known about Frau Holtzapfel’s character, how might her curious offer to Rosa and Liesel be explained?  
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## Part Ten

### Vocabulary

**alleviated** – made free of pain or suffering; lessened  
**anarchist** – a person who believes in a society without a government  
**bereaved** – suffered from the loss of a loved one  
**cantered** – galloped  
**detriment** – a state of being harmed or disadvantaged  
**entwined** – twisted together  
**insolent** – disrespectful  
**irretrievable** – unable to be fixed  
**lustrous** – glowing; bright  
**unkempt** – disordered; untidy  
**vantage** – a viewpoint

1. What is the primary function of the first chapter in Part Ten?

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2. Explain the significance of the chapter title “The Ninety-Eighth Day.”

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3. How and why does Michael Holtzapfel kill himself?

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4. Characterize Hans Hubermann’s actions in this chapter.

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