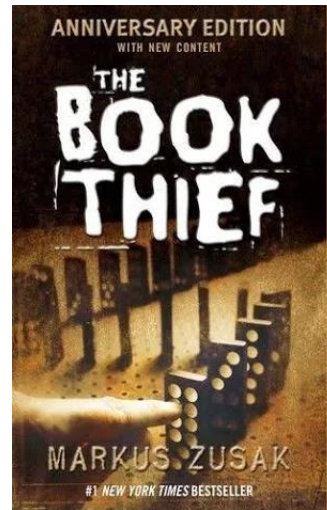


The Book Thief



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Genre Historical fiction

Synopsis It is 1939. Nazi Germany the country is holding its breath. Liesel Meminger find her life changed when she unearths a single object from the snow. It is *The Grave Digger's Handbook* left there by accident at her brother's funeral, and it is her first act of book thievery. But these are dangerous times. When Liesel's foster family hides a Jewish man in their basement Liesel's world is both opened up and closed down [From the softcover edition.]

Themes War and Conflict; Prejudice and Stereotypes

Character-Based Literacy Program Writing Prompts

The Book Thief, Day 1



Analyze the key paragraph.

Day One: p. 31

“Her hair was a close enough brand of German blond, but she had dangerous eyes. Dark brown. You didn’t really want brown eyes in Germany around that time. Perhaps she received them from her father, but she had no way of knowing, as she couldn’t remember him. There was really one thing she knew about her father. It was a label she did not understand.

A STRANGE WORD

Kommunist.”

Write a short product based on today’s prompt to connect to the unit theme. Use as much detail as you can.

When people talk about World War II, they usually refer to the horrors and cruelty of the war. However, it is important to remember all the people who performed random acts of kindness, who have saved lives, and who have made these dark years more bearable to some people. At the end of this unit, you may choose to assemble all your writing products into an essay about this topic.

Create a thesis statement about the importance of kindness in times of war.

Creating a Thesis Statement

- Consider your point of view on the topic.
- Select an argument that you would like to make.
- Phrase your argument in a single sentence.
- Your claim should not be self-evident, but an idea that some people may dispute.
- Use active voice.
- Your first thesis statement will be considered “working thesis.” Throughout this unit, go back to your thesis statement and refine it as needed.

Character-Based Literacy Program Writing Prompts

The Book Thief, Day 2



Analyze the key paragraph.

Day Two: p. 95

“Instead of asking him what was wrong, Liesel began writing immediately, choosing to ignore the sense of foreboding that was quick to accumulate inside her. It took three hours and six drafts to perfect the letter, telling her mother all about Molching, her paper and his accordion, the strange but true ways of Rudy Steiner, and the exploits of Rosa Hubermann. She also explained how proud she was that she could now read and write a little. The next day, she posted it at Frau Diller’s with a stamp from the kitchen drawer. And she began to wait.”

Write a short product based on today’s prompt to connect to the unit theme. Use as much detail as you can.

Write a paragraph introducing the topic, Kindness in Times of War.

Writing an Introductory Paragraph

- Start with a hook – one or two sentences that provide a concrete example (hypothetical or real) and that orients the reader to the focus of the essay.
- Provide a very brief background (e.g., one or two historical facts).
- Present your thesis statement in connection to the hook and background facts.
- Make the case that this is an important issue.
- This will be your “working introduction.” Revisit and refine your introduction paragraph throughout this unit.

Character-Based Literacy Program Writing Prompts

The Book Thief, Day 3



Analyze the key paragraph.

Day Three: p. 113

"The blood enlarged on Ludwig Schmeikl's ankle.

A single word leaned against the girl.

To their left, flames and burning books were cheered like heros."

Write a short product based on today's prompt to connect to the unit theme. Use as much detail as you can.

As you read the book, *The Book Thief*, pay attention to themes and literary devices that convey contradictions such as danger vs. safety; fear vs. courage; cruelty vs. compassion; disengagement vs. engagement; darkness vs. light; censorship vs. books; poor vs. affluent; outcast vs. superior; dominance vs. human rights; and, individuality vs. mob mentality. Identify one or two contradictions in the story and write one or two paragraphs about these contradictions.

Character-Based Literacy Program Writing Prompts

The Book Thief, Day 4



Analyze the key paragraph.

Day Four: p. 158

"I'm leaving soon," his friend Walter Kugler told him. "You know how it is—the army."

"I'm sorry, Walter."

Walter Kugler, Max's friend from childhood, placed his hands on the Jew's shoulder. "It could be worse." He looked his friends in his Jewish eyes. "I could be you."

Write a short product based on today's prompt to connect to the unit theme. Use as much detail as you can.

Write one or two paragraphs about kindness in times of war.

Hans and Walter are both characters who, in their own way, rebel against Nazi rule even though this leads to or could lead to personal consequences for them. What do their motivations tell us about what people were feeling under Nazi rule? Why didn't the people who disagreed openly rebel against the Nazi party?

Character-Based Literacy Program Writing Prompts

The Book Thief, Day 5



Analyze the key paragraph.

Day Five: p. 221

“In the outside world, Liesel was learning to find some more of its uses. One afternoon, when she was walking home with an empty washing bag, she noticed a newspaper poking out of a garbage can. The weekly edition of the *Molching Express*. She lifted it out and took it home, presenting it to Max. ‘I thought,’ she told him, “you might like to do the crossword to pass the time.’

Max appreciated the gesture, and to justify her bringing it home, he read the paper from cover to cover and showed her the puzzle a few hours later, completed but for one word.”

Write a short product based on today’s prompt to connect to the unit theme. Use as much detail as you can.

Write one or two paragraphs about kindness in times of war.

Liesel and Max sympathize with each other’s nightmares and show kindness to each other. In your opinion, how does their friendship help them cope with the war?

Character-Based Literacy Program Writing Prompts

The Book Thief, Day 6



Analyze the key paragraph.

Day Six: p. 287

“She didn’t care about the food. Rudy, no matter how hard she tried to resist the idea, was secondary to her plan. It was the book she wanted. *The Whistler*. She wouldn’t tolerate having it given to her by a lonely, pathetic old woman. Stealing it, on the other hand, seemed a little more acceptable. Stealing it, in a sick kind of sense, was like earning it.”

Write a short product based on today’s prompt to connect to the unit theme. Use as much detail as you can.

Write one or two paragraphs about kindness in times of war.

In this section, Death describes the dreams Max has of fighting Hitler and also describes his need to start writing/drawing his life story. What do you think we can understand about Max’s moral character based on this?

Character-Based Literacy Program Writing Prompts

The Book Thief, Day 7



Analyze the key paragraph.

Day Seven: p. 345–346

“Max Vandenburg sat beneath the steps, holding his rusty scissors like a knife. His armpits were soggy and the words fell like injuries from his mouth.

“I wouldn’t have used them,” he quietly said. “I’m...” He held the rusty arms flat against his forehead. “I’m so sorry I put you through that.”

Papa lit a cigarette. Rosa took the scissors.

“You’re alive,” she said. “We all are.”

It was too late now for apologies.”

Write a short product based on today’s prompt to connect to the unit theme. Use as much detail as you can.

Write one or two paragraphs about kindness in times of war.

The kindly party man, who has helped Liesel when she hurt her knee, and has shown empathy towards her when inspecting the basement, also represented danger to the family. Prejudice and compliance with immoral authority can keep people from showing their kindness to outgroup members including political dissidents and religious or ethnic minorities. Write 1–2 paragraphs about the moral virtues that enable people to show kindness to all people without discrimination.

Character-Based Literacy Program Writing Prompts

The Book Thief, Day 8



Analyze the key paragraph.

Day Eight: p. 94

“Papa reached into his paint cart and pulled something out. He made his way through the people, onto the road.

The Jew stood before him, expecting another handful of derision, but he watched with everyone else as Hans Hubermann held his hand out and presented a piece of bread, like magic.

...

When the elderly Jew climbed to his feet for the last time and continued on, he looked briefly back. He took a last sad glance at the man who was kneeling now himself, whose back was burning with four lines of fire, whose knees were aching on the road. If nothing else, the old man would die like a human. Or at least with the thought that he was a human.

Me?

I’m not so sure if that’s such a good thing.”

Write a short product based on today’s prompt to connect to the unit theme. Use as much detail as you can.

Write one or two paragraphs about kindness in times of war.

Hans regretted his kind gesture of giving a piece of bread to an elderly Jew. He has put himself, his family, and Max in danger. Yet, he has shown the people of Molching what an act of kindness looks like. Did he do the right thing? Write 1–2 paragraphs explaining your reasoning.

Character-Based Literacy Program Writing Prompts

The Book Thief, Day 9



Analyze the key paragraph.

Day Nine: p. 440

“They pedaled ahead of the parade, toward Dachau, and stopped at an empty piece of road. Rudy passed Liesel the bag. “Take a handful.”

“I’m not sure this is a good idea.”

He slapped some bread onto her pal. “Your papa did.”

How could she argue? It was worth a whipping.”

Write a short product based on today’s prompt to connect to the unit theme. Use as much detail as you can.

Write one or two paragraphs about kindness in times of war.

In this section of novel, Hans and Alex Steiner are drafted into the army as a result of them doing what they think is right. Do you think they were right to act the way they did, despite the consequences? Write 1–2 paragraphs explaining your reasoning.

Character-Based Literacy Program Writing Prompts

The Book Thief, Day 10



Analyze the key paragraph.

Day Ten: p. 487

But the young man with only a few remaining fingers on his right hand was inconsolable. He crouched in Rosa's eyes.

"Tell me something," he said, "because I don't understand..." He fell back and sat against the wall. "Tell me, Rosa, how she can sit there ready to die while I still want to live." The blood thickened. "Why do I want to live? I shouldn't want to, but I do."

Write a short product based on today's prompt to connect to the unit theme. Use as much detail as you can.

Write one or two paragraphs about kindness in times of war.

Rudy and Liesel gift a teddy bear to the American pilot they find dying. Why is this an important act of kindness for Rudy and Liesel, especially since he would be considered an enemy of the Germans? Write 1–2 paragraphs explaining your reasoning.

Character-Based Literacy Program Writing Prompts

The Book Thief, Day 11



Analyze the key paragraph.

Day Eleven: p. 521

“Soon, there was nothing but scraps of words littered between her legs and all around her. The words. Why did they have to exist? Without them, there wouldn’t be any of this. Without words, the Fuhrer was nothing. There would be no limping prisoners, no need for consolation or wordly tricks to make us feel better.

What good were the words?

She said it audibly now, to the orange-lit room. “What good are the words?”

Write a short product based on today’s prompt to connect to the unit theme. Use as much detail as you can.

Write one or two paragraphs about the theme, kindness in times of war.

Max is looking for Liesel when he and other Jews are marched to the concentration camp. Why is it important for Max that he find Liesel? Why is it important for Liesel? What can we learn about their experiences together? Write 1–2 paragraphs explaining your reasoning.