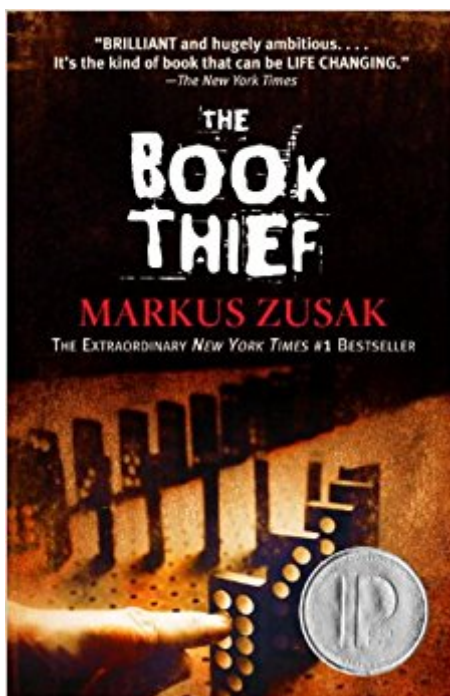


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# The Book Thief (Turtleback School & Library Binding Edition)



## Synopsis

FOR USE IN SCHOOLS AND LIBRARIES ONLY. Trying to make sense of the horrors of World War II, *Death* relates the story of Liesel, a young German girl whose book-stealing and story-telling talents help sustain her family and the Jewish man they are hiding, as well as their neighbors. An unforgettable novel about the ability of books to feed the soul.

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: 730 (What's this?)

Library Binding: 592 pages

Publisher: Turtleback Books; Turtleback School & Library ed. edition (September 11, 2007)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 141779738X

ISBN-13: 978-1417797387

Product Dimensions: 5.2 x 1.4 x 7.8 inches

Shipping Weight: 8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars 17,433 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #799,601 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #122 in [Books > Children's](#)

[Books > Literature & Fiction > Historical Fiction > Holocaust](#) #127 in [Books > Teens >](#)

[Historical Fiction > Holocaust](#) #579 in [Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life](#)

[> Family Life > Orphans & Foster Homes](#)

Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

## Customer Reviews

Starred Review. Grade 9 Up—Zusak has created a work that deserves the attention of sophisticated teen and adult readers. *Death* himself narrates the World War II-era story of Liesel Meminger from the time she is taken, at age nine, to live in Molching, Germany, with a foster family in a working-class neighborhood of tough kids, acid-tongued mothers, and loving fathers who earn their living by the work of their hands. The child arrives having just stolen her first book—although she has not yet learned how to read—and her foster father uses it, *The Gravediggers Handbook*, to lull her to sleep when she's roused by regular nightmares about her younger brother's death. Across the ensuing years of the late 1930s and into the 1940s, Liesel collects more stolen books as well as a peculiar set of friends: the boy Rudy, the Jewish refugee Max, the mayor's reclusive wife (who has a whole library from which she allows Liesel to steal), and

especially her foster parents. Zusak not only creates a mesmerizing and original story but also writes with poetic syntax, causing readers to deliberate over phrases and lines, even as the action impels them forward. Death is not a sentimental storyteller, but he does attend to an array of satisfying details, giving Liesel's story all the nuances of chance, folly, and fulfilled expectation that it deserves. An extraordinary narrative.

Francisca Goldsmith, Berkeley Public Library, CA  
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--This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Zusak, author of *I Am the Messenger*, took a risk with his second book by making Death an omniscient narrator; and it largely paid off. Originally published in Australia and marketed for ages 12 and up, *The Book Thief* will appeal both to sophisticated teens and adults with its engaging characters and heartbreaking story. The *Philadelphia Inquirer* compared the book's power to that of a graphic novel, with its "bold blocks of action." If Zusak's postmodern insertions (Death's commentary, for example) didn't please everyone, the only serious criticism came from Janet Maslin, who faulted the book's "Vonnegut whimsy" and Lemony Snicket-like manipulation. Yet even she admitted that *The Book Thief* "will be widely read and admired because it tells a story in which books become treasures." And, as we all know, "there's no arguing with a sentiment like that."

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This book was advertised as a young adult book. I'm not sure that young adults have enough contact with or knowledge of Death to be able to understand much of the story. Told by Death, this book brings to life the emotions and devastating effects of the war on a neighborhood of regular, 'normal' Germans. The use of English language is strangely poetic for a narrator such as Death. The development of main characters as they grow from children into teens, of the hidden Jew as he wrestles with his past and his future, and of the foster parents as they struggle to survive financially is beautifully handled. Hints from Death of what the book's climax will be does not prepare the reader for the actual events. The ending is like the cymbal clang in the middle of a symphony concert, jarring and, at the same time, inevitable. A book I will read again.

With a prodigious use of allegory, Marcus Zusak has written an enthralling human story of ordinary people caught in the trauma of Second World War Germany. In each of the captivating pages of *The Book Thief*, an ethos and optimism arises from the hearts of children, momentarily displacing the horrors of the war. Zusak chose Death, The Grim Reaper, as the narrator of his story. The

protagonist is a young girl, Liesel Meminger, handed off by her mother to German foster parents after Liesel's brother dies in her arms on the floor of an unheated rail car. At her brother's burial Liesel recovers the only memory available, an abandoned copy of *The Grave Diggers Handbook*. Thus *The Book Thief* is born. This is a story of words, an accordionist, fanatical Germans, a Jewish fist fighter, thievery, friendships, love and family and above all a relationship between a daughter and step-father. *The Book Thief* is a portrait of how war and the Holocaust causes ordinary people and families to reshape their lives to survive. Meet Liesel's step-father and mother Hans and Rosa Hubermann, her best friend and partner in book thievery Rudy and the Jew Max, hidden from the Nazis for two years in the basement of the Hubermann home. Zusak is such a marvelous story-teller that the journey is never predictable, even as death himself narrates the tale. The story is told so beautifully that the reader may consider clearing the time for the final 200 pages in one sitting. A word from the Narrator: "I wanted to tell the book thief many things about beauty and brutality. But what could I tell her about those things that she didn't already know? I wanted to explain that I am constantly overestimating and underestimating the human race-that rarely do I simply estimate it. I wanted to ask her how the same thing could be so ugly and so glorious, and its words and stories so damning and brilliant." I have not seen the motion picture but as stated many times before, a good rule of thumb is to always read the book first!! highly recommend *The Book Thief* for readers of any age. Other books by Markus Zusak are *Fighting Ruben Wolfe*, *Getting the Girl* and *I Am the Messenger*. Read more reviews at [gordonsgoodreads.com](http://gordonsgoodreads.com) Enjoy!

A beautiful book that really illustrates how people struggled just to survive and the things they did just to survive one more day. The characters were well developed and the guider of the souls perspective speaks to your heart and not your brain. There were areas that made me gasp; stories that made me cry and other areas where I laughed and laughed. Truly a magnificent book that I recommend for people who want to read a book that will touch their hearts, stimulate their minds and stir their inner being over the injustices and inequalities of the time Patricia Trone

Fantastic book. A friend loaned me her book and I read and fell in love with this story. I watched the movie with my family (2 sons, ages 9 and 13) and they suggested we read the book together. This copy was purchased for our home library for this purchase. It should be on the shelf of every home library - fantastic book!

I'm going to be honest.. it took me almost two months to finish this book. It is a VERY slow read but

torally worth it because this book was written so beautifully. The only thing I really didn't like about the book is that Death (The narrator) has very loose lips. He likes to spoil the book and tell you the ending. Now, I watched the movie before getting to the book, so I already had an idea what would happen.. but if this was my first time ever dabbling into the world of The Book Thief, I wouldn't appreciate the spoilers. However, I didn't knock it down a star because the ending still gave me some undeniable feels. And if you watched the movie before reading the book, you would agree the movie is FANTASTIC!! The book was also amazing, but I'm surprised how much the book was chopped up for the movie. It still worked! They both worked for me. Five stars.

It was a unique book and from a unique perspective - death. This is not a spoiler, it is spelled out in the beginning. I felt a real kinship with the characters and didn't want the book to end. If you've seen the movie and liked it, which I did, the book supplies so much more detail. I saw the movie when I was only a third of the way through the book, but it made me want to get back to it to learn as much as I could about the characters. The book touches on the Holocaust, but it is mostly about the average German families and what they endured under Nazi rule. I had it downloaded to my Kindle and read it only while I used the treadmill. My sessions were quite long and frequent because I wanted to keep reading.

It was my second read. The author's alliterations give the book a new, vivid language. I loved it. Having lived in Germany during the time Markus Zusak describes, I can appreciate the settings described, although my family was sophisticated and never used a "four-letter-word." What bothered me was the name Saumensch, something I heard living in more southern German areas--sometimes used a teasing-kind of nick-name. It jarred me never-the-less. Maybe intentionally, as it never took me out of the story. The movie was equally good.

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