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*English Comp 105*

Analysis Essay – *The Book Thief*

In *The Book Thief* (2005), Markus Zusak, illustrates many different themes but there are two themes that are consistent throughout the book, death and the power of words. The novel has shown the development of Liesel as a citizen in Germany who has a cloudy understanding of death and the power of words in the beginning to a much more matured, knowledgeable view of these themes. There is a relationship between Liesel and the characters that can be portrayed by the connection of death and the power of words ; the demonstration of these two themes are redundant throughout the course of the novel and all leading back to Liesel.

When a spider builds his web he attaches every piece carefully and strategically together to make a strong foundation, like this web the author of this novel, Markus Zusak used death as his web. He brought together every piece into one strong cohesive idea that is the theme of death. From the passing of her brother to the demise of her foster parents, death was always a factor. The different individuals that Liesel met throughout the story all shared something in common with her, death. Either these people have experienced a tragic loss or they were killed themselves. Regardless of what was the cause or how it occurred the connection was the result. Death. For example, the death of both Ilsa Hermann and Frau Holtzapfel sons or the demise of everyone on Himmel street.

The author not only uses death as a theme but he uses it as the narrator. He gives death human like qualities and emotions. He personifies it as a character who has thoughts and can tell the difference between right and wrong. Death is portrayed as having characteristics of a human but it also inhuman as well. The irony of this is that Death, the storyteller is also the biggest reoccurring theme of the story, therefore, it can be said that he is telling a story that revolves around him. Death’s words are very strong and moving. He doesn’t fall far from the power of words himself. He gives a very robust narration a very unique style of telling the story his words consist of pity, envy, and compassion, for example, “Still, they have one thing I envy. Humans, if nothing else, have the good sense to die” (p. 491). Death is jealous, he is stuck in this world of constant war and hate and there’s no way out.

Death is not the only dominant theme; the power of words is also very crucial. Liesel’s didn’t have much of a voice in the opening on the novel but as she matured she became a lot stronger and smart with her words. Stealing the books from Ilsa Hermann’s library wasn’t just a simple robbery of a book it was much more then that. Every visit, every book she took was her way of fighting back and taking what was rightfully hers. Her words.

The power of words connects everyone directly and also indirectly. Liesel achieves her words by stealing books from Ilsa Hermanns library and also at different moments such as, standing up to Ilsa Hermann or writing her own book. Ilsa Hermann’s power of words can be demonstrated by the vast collection of books she possesses in her library, her fortress of solitude where she retreats to engulf herself into the pages due to the painful memory of her late son.

The vast amount of themes that is covered in this novel is on every page, the power of words, death, compassion, and many others. But the most significant two: the power of words and death intertwine with one another. For example, Hitler’s ability to manipulate the minds of Germans to thinking his beliefs of extermination the Jewish race was the only way for Germany to flourish. He used his words to strike fear into the heart of many. He didn’t require any sort of gun or military weapon to be feared, with his words he was able to cause the death of millions of human beings.

The power of words is a very dangerous thing but it also can be a positive thing depending on how we use it. It can be used to cause death or used to cause happiness. Liesel’s journey throughout this book showed the many connections with Hans, Rudy, Frau Hotzlphel, Max, and other character through the power of words and death. In the end all she had left were her words, these very words she fought so desperately to get back, which she got back but at the cost of her friend’s and family’s death.