

BOOK CLUB IN A BOX

Bookclub-in-a-Box presents the discussion companion for Markus Zusak's novel The Book Thief

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Quotations used in this guide have been taken from the text of the paperback edition of *The Book Thief*. All information taken from other sources is acknowledged.

This discussion companion was written by Marilyn Herbert, B.Ed. She is the founder of Bookclub-in-a-Box, and an international speaker with more than 30 years experience as a teacher and school librarian. Bookclub-in-a-Box is a unique guide to current fiction and classic literature intended for book club discussions, educational study seminars, and personal pleasure.

This guide was co-written by Adina Herbert. For more information about the Bookclub-in-a-Box team, visit our website.

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BOOKCLUB-IN-A-BOX

Markus Zusak's *The Book Thief*

READERS AND LEADERS GUIDE 2	Death as Narrator 44
INTRODUCTION	Transformations, Rescue . . . 46
Novel Quickline 7	WRITING STYLE AND STRUCTURE
Keys to the Novel 8	Foreshadowing 51
Author Information 10	Personification 53
BACKGROUND INFORMATION	Irony 54
Hitler Youth 17	Illustrations, Typeset 55
Dachau 19	Open-endedness 56
The Jesse Owens Incident . . 19	SYMBOLS
Book Burning 20	Color 61
CHARACTERIZATION	Fighting 64
Death 26	Book Burning 67
Liesel, the Book Thief 28	Heroes 67
Hans Hubermann 30	The Domino Effect 68
Rosa Hubermann 31	LAST THOUGHTS
Rudy Steiner 32	Perspectives of Good, Evil . . 71
Max Vandenburg 34	Big Questions, Social Commentary 73
Ilsa Hermann 36	Importance of Storytelling . . 74
The Others 37	Suggested Beginnings 75
FOCUS POINTS AND THEMES	FROM THE NOVEL (QUOTES) . . 79
The Power of the Book 41	ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS 89
The Book Thief, Stealing . . 43	

BOOKCLUB-IN-A-BOX

Readers and Leaders Guide

Each Bookclub-in-a-Box guide is clearly and effectively organized to give you information and ideas for a lively discussion, as well as to present the major highlights of the novel. The format, with a Table of Contents, allows you to pick and choose the specific points you wish to talk about. It does not have to be used in any prescribed order. In fact, it is meant to support, not determine, your discussion.

You Choose What to Use.

You may find that some information is repeated in more than one section and may be cross-referenced so as to provide insight on the same idea from different angles.

The guide is formatted to give you extra space to make your own notes.

How to Begin

Relax and look forward to enjoying your book club.

With Bookclub-in-a-Box as your behind the scenes support, there is little for you to do in the way of preparation.

Some readers like to review the guide after reading the novel; some before. Either way, the guide is all you will need as a companion for your discussion. You may find that the guide's interpretation, information, and background have sparked other ideas not included.

Having read the novel and armed with Bookclub-in-a-Box, you will be well prepared to lead or guide or listen to the discussion at hand.

Lastly, if you need some more "hands on" support, feel free to contact us.

What to Look For

Each Bookclub-in-a-Box guide is divided into easy-to-use sections, which include points on characters, themes, writing style and structure, literary or historical background, author information, and other pertinent features unique to the novel being discussed. These may vary slightly from guide to guide.

INTERPRETATION OF EACH NOVEL REFLECTS THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE BOOKCLUB-IN-A-BOX TEAM.

Do We Need to Agree?

THE ANSWER TO THIS QUESTION IS NO.

If we have sparked a discussion or a debate on certain points, then we are happy. We invite you to share your group's alternative findings and experiences. You can contact us via our website (www.bookclubinabox.com), by email (info@bookclubinabox.com), or by phone (1-866-578-5571). We would love to hear from you.

Discussion Starters

There are as many ways to begin a book club discussion as there are members in your group. If you are an experienced group, you will already have your favorite ways to begin. If you are a newly formed group or a group looking for new ideas, here are some suggestions.

- Ask for people's impressions of the novel. (This will give you some idea about which parts of the unit to focus on.)
- Identify a favorite or major character.
- Identify a favorite or major idea.
- Begin with a powerful or pertinent quote. (Not necessarily from the novel.)
- Discuss the historical information of the novel. (Not applicable to all novels.)
- If this author is familiar to the group, discuss the range of his/her work and where this novel stands in that range.
- Use the discussion topics and questions in the Bookclub-in-a-Box guide.

If you have further suggestions for discussion starters, be sure to share them with us and we will share them with others.

Above All, Enjoy Yourself

INTRODUCTION

Novel Quickline

Keys to the Novel

Author Information

INTRODUCTION

Novel Quickline

In 1939, 10-year-old Liesel Meminger arrives at the Hubermann household as their foster child. Her younger brother has died en route to Molching and it is at his burial that Liesel steals her first book, *The Grave Digger's Handbook*. Although Liesel cannot read, she takes the book as a connection to the brother she is leaving behind.

We follow Liesel through the war years and watch as she grows, makes friends, learns to read, steals books and other things, rescues and protects a Jewish person, and records her own story.

Death narrates Liesel's tale and shares it with the reader because, of all the humans Death has encountered over time, Liesel fascinates him. What Death seeks to unravel is how and why people act as they do during times of horror and hatred. In the process, he discovers the capacity of humanity to shine, even through the despairing clouds of war. Zusak's book is a unique look at another side of Nazi Germany during the Second World War.

notes

Keys to the Novel

Narration

- The narrative style of this novel is truly unique. While Death has been used before as a commentator in film and in fiction, nowhere does he appear with the warmth, humor, and sensitivity that we see in Zusak's novel.
- Death, a definite non-human, is humanized in this story. Because he is not a person, Death has no self-interest in the events around him and, therefore, he can and should be objective. His job is to collect souls, no matter who they are or what they've done, not to talk about them.
- Yet, here we have Death — the narrator, the tour guide, the scene stealer, and our half-time entertainment. With his natural state of detachment, he qualifies as the key narrator because he has the ultimate view of the unfolding story. Because he always knows what will happen in the future, Death sometimes reveals forthcoming events. (see **Foreshadowing**, p.51)

Is Death the most appropriate narrator for this story? Consider how the story would change if one of the other characters were to narrate it, for example, Liesel or Hans.

Perspective

- Death sets out on his journey looking to make sense of the differing perspectives of good and evil that people represent. His search teaches him, as well as us, that these two ideas are never far apart from one another. He discovers that humans have the capacity for



**Thanks for previewing this
Bookclub-in-a-Box discussion guide.**

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print or PDF format, just visit:**

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