

Monday 12, December 2022

Dear Markus Zusak,

If I'm being honest with you, historical fiction isn't my favorite genre. Fantasy, romance, and science fiction are genres I consider appealing. However, when I picked up your book, *The Book Thief*, I was utterly in awe. From the cover design to the last word, I was transfixed. I was consumed in your story. So when I tell you your book will always have a special place in my heart, believe it.

To say the opening took my breath away would be an understatement. The mere fact that you used Death as the narrator was genius. You had Death explain how everyone dies someday, but the rest of the world would carry on. I think it's the intended theme you implanted in the book.

I've always been caught up in the what-ifs, overthinking the finest details and stressing over what is to come. Your story shows how terrible things could happen to someone, but that the best thing to do is to carry on. To continue living the best they could.

Before I read your book, I went about life anxious about every action I made, words I said, moments I experienced—or would experience. I grew up believing everything I did had to be perfect to be happy. If I didn't get a spotless one hundred on every paper I turned in, my mood was ruined. It would be all I thought about. Thinking about the ways I could have studied differently. Pondering the ways I spoke to someone, wondering what I should have changed. I would scrutinize every last thing I did throughout the day. After your book, my outlook on the world flipped upside down. Your book gave my heart a reset on how I went about my day.

I read about how the characters in your book experienced the most gruesome things. You wrote about how your characters chose to persevere, living to the fullest. The main character, Liesel, had to watch her brother die, have her mother abandon her, be pushed around in foster care, and live through the heart-wrenching events of the Holocaust. You wrote how Liesel had countless reasons to just give up, to stop looking for joy in the world, but then you showed us how Liesel found her home in books. Instead of mopping around feeling sorry for herself, Liesel took it upon herself to learn to read. You put obstacles in her way, including not having access to any books—which led to her stealing from the mayor's library—and the struggle of going around the Nazis—who were rounding up books and burning them. She took it upon herself to form her destiny. She took the liberty of making what little she had and turning it into a safe place she could run to, becoming what ultimately saved her. I feel everyone should be like Liesel, changing our views on what we have to make it seem extraordinary.

Your book also showed me how important it is to value what we have while we have it because someday it might be ripped from our grasp. You wrote how Liesel had a strong friendship with a boy named Rudy, about how they connected immediately. They had a unique friendship that I admire, one where no matter what happens, they will always have that friendship. I too have friendships like Rudy and Liesel. One thing you taught me in your book is to value these friendships because there could be a day when I wake up, and that best friend, parent, or sibling, is gone.

In your book, you described how Rudy and Liesel maybe wanted to be more than friends, but Liesel never did anything about it. You tell how one day, their town gets bombed by the

Nazis. Liesel, escaping Death, sees the damage done, finding both her foster parents dead, along with her closest companion. Snap. Just like that, everyone Liesel ever loved was taken away from her. This hit me hard. Realizing that there are a million ways in which the people I hold closest to my heart could be ripped away hurt. I want to cherish every moment I have with the ones I love most, and I found after I read your book, this motive has been more of a priority in the course of my life.

Thank you, Mr. Zusak, for showing me the importance of letting go, of carrying on with my life no matter how hard it may seem. Thank you for showing me that not everything can last forever, and to cherish every moment with everyone and thing. I love your book with all my heart, and I look forward to sharing this brilliant piece of art with everyone I come across.

With sincere gratitude,
Emercyn Looper