

Discussion Questions for *The Book Thief* by Mark Zusak

Some questions taken or adapted from randomhouse.com

1. Did you like the book? Why or why not?
2. Did you find the characters believable? Which of the characters did you like the most? Which did you dislike?
3. What did you think of the plot line development? How credible did the author make the plot? Did the plot take turns you did not expect, or did you find it predictable?
4. Did the author convey the era well? Did it feel like the author did his homework?
5. What is the symbolism of Death as the omniscient narrator of the novel? Did you find Death as the narrator effective? Why or why not?
6. Why is Liesel obsessed with stealing books?
7. *The Grave Digger's Handbook* is the first book Liesel steals. What is significant about the titles of the books she steals? (Other titles include *The Whistler*, *The Shoulder Shrug*, *The Dream Carrier*, and *The Complete Duden Dictionary and Thesaurus*.)
8. Liesel has complex relationships with her foster parents, Hans and Rosa. In what ways do they show how they feel about her and about each other?
9. Abandonment and guilt are two of the book's central themes. Can you discuss examples of how these themes play out?
10. Compare and contrast the lives of Liesel and Max Vandenburg. How does Max's life give Liesel purpose? At what point do Liesel and Max become friends?
11. Death says that Liesel was a girl "with a mountain to climb" (p. 86). What is her mountain? Who are her climbing partners? What is her greatest obstacle?
12. Describe Liesel's friendship with Rudy. How does their friendship change and grow throughout the novel? How does Zusak use the literary device of foreshadowing Rudy's death to pull the reader into the story?
13. Liesel and the mayor's wife also have a complicated relationship. Eventually, the mayor's wife leaves her a plate of cookies, and Liesel later returns the plate to the doorstep. Afterwards, "her brother never climbed into her sleep again." (p 472). Why?
14. Liesel lives to be an old woman. On the last page of the book (p. 550), Death says that he would like to tell the book thief "about beauty and brutality. But what could I tell her about those things that she didn't already know?" How does her life represent beauty in the wake of brutality?
15. Has anyone had an experiences that relate to places or experiences in the book?
16. Any comments about the way the book ended?
17. Are there questions you would like to ask?