

*The Book Thief* Study and Activities Guide  
Communication Arts I Pre-AP

**STUDY GUIDE OBJECTIVES**

**Rationale:**

The reality of today's educational world is that students need to be prepared to be successful on state standardized tests. Traditional test preparation has been to use previous tests as practice exercises. For those who relish in the teaching of writing and literature, time for standardized test preparation might be better spent with exercises linked to the literature units. In this way, the literary work is analyzed in depth, critical thinking skills are enhanced and the students are linking the literature units with the types of tasks they will be required to perform on state tests.

**Objectives:**

- After working through this study guide students will be able to:
  - Demonstrate critical thinking skills through interpreting a literary work beyond general plot line.
  - Show an understanding of the writer's craft through the analysis of literary devices.
  - Increase vocabulary skills to enhance performance on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT)
  - Demonstrate thorough knowledge of the literary work through a unit test comprised of:
    - Utilizing vocabulary words in sentences
    - Matching vocabulary words to their definitions
    - Matching character names to brief character statements/sketches
    - Multiple choice questions
    - A thoughtful essay
    - Recognize cross curriculum connections through the writing assignment
    - Demonstrate proficiency in preparing writing assignments based on state standardized tests such as:
      - Analyzing content
      - Analyzing character
      - Creative writing: poetry
      - Creative writing: foreshadowing

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Full Name:

Date and Place of Birth:

Date and Place of Death:

Educational Background:

Family Life:

Describe a significant historical event or personal experience that occurred during the author's life that may have had an influence upon his writing.

Interesting Facts and Other Works:

*The Book Thief* Vocabulary Worksheet

**The Prologue: A Mountain Range of Rubble**

abhorrence

affable

alluding

amiable □□

compelled

genially

hindered □□

increments

intonations

malicious

merges □□

poles □□□□

□

protestations □□

resonate

septic □□

severity

shrouded □□

suffices

traipsing

trepidation

versatility

*The Book Thief* Vocabulary Worksheet

Part One: The Grave Digger's Handbook

atrocious

audacious

auspicious

castigate

catalyst

□

□□ □

culminating

□□

cynicism

derision

□□

dispositions

echelons

□□

futile

gingerly

□□

hiatus

illustrious

implicit

incense

□□

□

□

infamous

innocuously

luminary

maniacally

mediocre

□□

misogynistic

nefarious

obliterated

perverse

□□

prolific

raucous

seethe

□□

touted

utterances

□□

## ***The Book Thief* Vocabulary Worksheet**

### **Part Two: The Shoulder Shrug**

admonish

□□

□

□

animosity

□□

bigots

calamity

□□

□

□

caricatures

□□

consummate

creed

crux

□□

culpability

□□

□

□

decrepit

deterrent

fervent

flippant

□□

□

□

foreboding

forlorn

fruition

□□

□

□

ire

□□

jocular

□□

kinetic

machinations

partisans

precarious

□□

proverbial

succumbing

□□

venue

□□

**The Book Thief Vocabulary Worksheet**

**Part Three: Mein Kampf**

bungling

□□

□

□

conglomerate

congregations

contempt

□□

despondently

diabolical

□□

euphoria

immersed □□

□

□

incongruous

□□

innate

irrefutable

lolloped

obligatory

pensive

proffer

protagonist

repertoire

□□

sedated

□□

□

□

surreal

□□

transcends

## ***The Book Thief* Vocabulary Worksheet**

### **Part Four: The Standover Man**

archetypal

beleaguered

□□

□

□

bemused

□□

capitulate

caustic

dubious

emaciated

emigrating

□□

emulate

girth

□□

□

□

grotesquerie

immutable

inaugural

iridescent

□□

□

□

ludicrous

□□

morose

mortifying

ostracism

□□

notorious

□□

placidity

□□

prudently

quelled

□□

□

□

sadistic

sporadically

□□

tirade

trounced

□□



## ***The Book Thief* Vocabulary Worksheet**

### **Part Five: The Whistler**

accosted

concerted

debilitate

□□

decimated

deseccrated

deviants

□□

□

□

diminutive

dissipated

dour

□□

□

□

entourage

□□

epitome

frugal

gratuitous

□□

□

□

helm

irate

litany

□□

microcosm

nostalgia

□□

plethora

pallid

□□

repugnant

sarcasm

□□

□

□

transfixed

unconscionable

□□□

□

**The Book Thief Vocabulary Worksheet**

**Part Six: The Dream Carrier**

antithesis

□□ □

□

copiously

□□

incessantly

incredulous

□□

□

□

irreparable

□□

paradox

□□

repercussions

resurgence

serpentine

**Part Seven: The Complete Duden Dictionary and Thesaurus**

apparitions

bulbous

clamored □□

□

□

confiscated

□□

demise

feigning

hapless

intuition

□□

opus

stoic

temerity

vindication

□□

□

□

**The Book Thief Vocabulary Worksheet**

**Part Eight: The Word Shaker**

abject

□□

agitators

□□

cultivated

dais

horrendous

miscreants

□□

□

□

perilous

rogue

sentiments

□□

splice

**Part Nine: The Last Human Stranger**

gloated

□□

□

□

semblance

□□

**Part Ten: The Book Thief**

alleviated

apocalyptic

□□

□

□

blaspheme

□

□

bereaved

cantered

**Epilogue: The Last Color**

exquisite

□□

□

□

***The Book Thief* Study Questions Prologue: A Mountain Range of Rubble  
“Death and Chocolate”**

1. From what point of view is the novel told? Who is the narrator of the story? How do you know?
2. What theory does the narrator suggest about colors?
3. What purpose do colors serve for the narrator?  
Why does the narrator need distractions?
4. What elements does the narrator specifically name as critical components of the story?
5. Who might you infer is the book thief? Has he or she already been named? Explain your answer.
6. What might the reader infer about the book thief?

**“Beside the Railway Line”**

1. What purpose does this section of the novel serve?
2. What impression does Death give of himself? Do you feel that you can trust Death as the narrator? Why or why not?
3. Whose death does Death describe first in the novel?
4. What fact does Death clarify for the reader at the end of the chapter?

**“The Eclipse”**

1. Whose death occurs in this section of the novel?
2. In addition to describing the pilot’s death, what does Death describe for the reader?
3. What does an eclipse frequently symbolize for Death?

**“The Flag”**

1. Judging from Death’s initial description of the setting in this section of the novel, what do you suppose has happened just prior to his arrival?
2. What image does Death paint for the reader when he sees the book thief the third time?
3. How does Death “feel” about the image of Liesel?
4. What opinion do you form about Death following this section?
5. Why does Death not comfort the child? What does this imply about Death’s ultimate power?
6. What item does Death claim from the garbage truck? Why does Death take the item?
7. The narrator associates three colors with the book thief. What are they? What clue to the novel’s historical context does the reader first get from “The Colors?”

## **Part One: The Grave Digger's Handbook**

### **"Arrival on Himmel Street"**

1. Death opens Part I with a flashback. What is a flashback? To what incident does Death flash back?
2. Who are Liesel and Werner Meminger?
3. What is the setting? How old is Liesel?
4. What happens when Liesel wakes from her dream about the *Führer*?
5. What observation does Death make for the reader?
6. What falls from the grave digger apprentice's pocket without his knowledge? What does Liesel do with the object?
7. Why are the Memingers on the train? What is Liesel's ultimate destination?
8. To what does *Himmel* translate?
9. What kind of atmosphere does Death describe on Himmel Street? How does Liesel respond to her new home?
10. Identify and describe Liesel's foster parents.
11. What literary device does Zusak use to close the chapter? What might the reader infer from the final sentence of the chapter?

### **"Growing up a Saumensch"**

1. How many books make up the story of Liesel's life? What similarity do you notice between Death's explanation of Liesel's book collection and the organization of the novel?
2. How does Death's admitted preoccupation with colors show itself in this chapter?
3. What single fact does Liesel know about her father?
4. What act does Liesel refuse to do from the beginning of her stay at the Hubermanns? Who overcomes her unwillingness? How?
5. What does Death explain to the reader regarding Rosa's actions toward Liesel?
6. What is Liesel supposed to call the Hubermanns after a few months? Why do you think Rosa tells Liesel to refer to the Hubermanns in this manner?
7. Which parent does Liesel seem to bond with more easily?

### **"The Woman with the Iron Fist"**

1. What makes Liesel's adjustment to life with the Hubermanns particularly difficult? How does Papa help her?
2. Why is *The Gravedigger's Handbook* so important to Liesel?
3. Identify the Hubermanns' children.
4. What makes school particularly difficult for Liesel?
5. Into what is Liesel enrolled after her tenth birthday?
6. Describe Rosa's feelings and behavior with regard to her laundry clients?
7. Which client does Rosa detest the most? What happens when she sends Liesel to the client's door?

8. Why does Rosa tell Liesel she has to do other people's laundry?
9. What is Frau Holtzapfel known for at the Hubermanns' home? Why? How does this effect Liesel?
10. Briefly identify Frau Holtzapfel in the character grid.

### **"The Kiss (A Childhood Decision Maker)"**

1. Briefly identify each of the following characters on the character grid: Rudy Steiner, Frau Diller, Tommy Müller, "Pfiffikus." Be sure to note any special connections to Liesel.
2. How are friendships between the children made on Himmel Street?
3. Who is responsible for "The Jesse Owens Incident?" Briefly describe it.
4. Who introduces Liesel to the "secrets" of the neighbors? Explain.
5. What is Schiller Strasse?
6. What challenge does Rudy offer Liesel following their taunting of Pfiffikus? What is the outcome?

### **"The Jesse Owens Incident"**

1. Who is Jesse Owens?
2. Was Liesel present for the 'Jesse Owens Incident'? Explain.
3. How does Death's explanation of Mr. Steiner's politics explain his anger with his son's emulation of Jesse Owens?
4. What is Rudy's father trying to make Rudy understand when he tells Rudy that he should be happy that he has blond hair and blue eyes?
5. What is the significance of the event that Death foreshadows at the end of the chapter?

### **"The Other Side of Sandpaper"**

1. What important number does Death provide with regard to the Germans support of Hitler? How does this relate to Hans Hubermann?
2. What event led to Liesel's bed wetting?
3. How is Liesel's bed wetting a defining moment in her life?
4. Why is the sandpaper useful?

### **"The Smell of Friendship"**

1. Where does Papa take Liesel for their reading lessons? How does he get Mama to agree?
2. Liesel notices a change in Hans when they are at the river, but doesn't realize what it means. Why do you believe Hans is going to the river?
3. Where do Papa and Liesel work on reading most often in their home? Why? How does Papa use this area for instruction?
4. What elements blend together to create the "smell of friendship" for Liesel? Why do you think Liesel finds the smell so appealing, and Rosa finds it repulsive?

### **“The Heavyweight Champion of the School yard”**

1. According to Death, what two important events occur in September–November 1939? What do you think is the significance of the fact that Death lists these two events under the same heading?
2. What piece of news arrives at the Hubermann household? How does Papa react?
3. What change does Liesel experience in school? Why?
4. What event in the classroom sets Liesel up for antagonism in the school yard?  
Why does Liesel attack Ludwig Schmeikl and Tommy Müller in the school yard?
5. Why are Liesel classmates silent when Sister Maria beats Liesel for fighting?
6. Why is Liesel overcome with emotion? How does Rudy respond?
7. What literary device does Zusak use in the final line of this chapter to describe Liesel’s future use of words?

### **Part Two: The Shoulder Shrug “A Girl Made of Darkness”**

1. Why is Death’s statistical record of Liesel’s book stealing significant?
2. In a work of literature there are many different methods of arranging the details of the story. Cause and effect is one such method. How does Zusak use cause and effect in this chapter to reveal future events in the story?
3. What is special about the second book Liesel steals? What does it signify?

### **“The Joy of Cigarettes”**

1. Despite her hardships, several things have brought Liesel happiness. What are they?
2. The last line in *The Grave Digger’s Handbook* reads, “We wish you every success with your career in the funerary arts and hope this book has helped in some way.” How does this relate to Liesel and Papa?
3. Why does Death like Papa?
4. What gifts does Liesel receive for Christmas from the Hubermanns? What question does the receipt of these gifts inspire Liesel to ask? What might you infer about Liesel’s relationship with the Hubermanns based on the answer to Liesel’s question?

### **“The Town Walker”**

1. Why does Mama put Liesel in charge of collecting and delivering the laundry to her customers? How does Liesel feel about her new job?
2. Briefly identify each of the following characters on the character grid: the Pfaffelhürvers, Helena Schmidt, the Weingartners, and Mayor and Frau Hermann.
3. Liesel’s class is instructed to write two letters. To whom does Liesel write her letters? Why does Liesel have the sense of foreboding with regard to one of the letters?
4. What questions/concerns does Liesel now have regarding her mother?

### **“Dead Letters”**

1. Briefly explain why the title for this section is appropriate.
2. Why does Mama reprimand Papa on Liesel’s birthday?
3. Explain why Liesel receives a severe beating from Mama. What does Liesel come to understand that is more painful than Mama’s beating? Why does Mama apologize to Liesel?
4. Why does Liesel write that she has no animosity toward Rosa for the beating, or toward her mother?

### **“Hitler’s Birthday, 1940”**

1. How are Nazi Party members preparing to celebrate Hitler’s birthday? □□
2. What do the Hubermanns search frantically to find and display? Why couldn’t they find it? What might that symbolize?
3. Summarize the unrest between Hans and Hans Junior.
4. What does Death foreshadow for Hans Junior?

### **“100 Percent Pure German Sweat”**

1. Why does Death include Tommy Müller’s inability to hear in this chapter?
2. How does Liesel feel about the book burning? Why do you believe Liesel is compelled to see the fire lit?
3. What realization does Liesel make as she hears the word “Kommunisten” spoken of as an enemy by the German officials? What is her reaction?
4. Describe the episode with Ludwig Schmeickl. Why is the scene important to the novel?

### **“The Gates of Thievery”**

1. What statement does Liesel make about Hitler as a result of the realizations she has made throughout the evening? How does Papa respond? Why do you think he reacts the way that he does?
2. How do you think Liesel feels about Papa’s response?

### **“Book of Fire”**

1. What does Liesel notice when the workmen are cleaning up the remnants of the bonfire? How does Liesel describe what she sees? Why is this significant? What does Liesel do?
2. What realization does Liesel make that causes her fear?

### **Part Three: Mein Kampf “The Way Home”**

1. Why is Liesel afraid when Hans realizes she has stolen another book?
2. What happens to Papa when he discovers the book Liesel has stolen? What factors are involved?



### **“The Mayor’s Library”**

1. Whose home has Liesel been avoiding on her laundry rounds? Why? What happens when she can no longer avoid the home?
2. How does Liesel know that the mayor’s wife did indeed spy her stealing the book from the bonfire? Where does the mayor’s wife take Liesel?
3. Do you believe that the mayor’s wife plans to tell anyone about Liesel’s theft? Explain your answer.
4. What does Liesel find unusual about the library and Frau Hermann?
5. Why does Liesel run back to the mayor’s house?

### **“Enter the Struggler”**

1. The story shifts setting. To where? Why?
2. Briefly identify Max in the character grid.
3. What items does a visitor bring to Max? What might you infer from the man’s visit?
4. To whom does Max plead? Based on your answer, what book was given to Max?

### **“The Attributes of Summer”**

1. How is Liesel’s summer divided?
2. Describe the protagonist, theme, and plot of Liesel’s book. Why might this be a novel that the Nazi party wants to burn?
3. Why does Liesel want to be separated from Rudy?
4. What does Death foreshadow with regard to Liesel’s relationship with Ilsa Hermann?
5. What name does Liesel find on the inside of one of the books? Who is he? Where is he now?
6. What solidifies Liesel and Rudy’s friendship? What is the primary incentive?
7. What is Fritz Hammer’s role in Rudy and Liesel’s thievery escapades?
8. Briefly identify Arthur Berg in the character grid.
9. Why does Arthur Berg allow Rudy and Liesel to join his group?
10. Are Rudy and Liesel successful fruit thieves? Explain.

### **“The Aryan Shopkeeper”**

1. What treasure do Rudy and Liesel discover on their laundry rounds? What do they do with it?
2. What does this episode demonstrate about Frau Diller?

### **“The Struggler, Continued”**

1. What does Death’s title and introduction to this section indicate about the division of the plot?
2. What is Max Vandenburg reading?
3. What number is lucky for Max?

4. What items are in the bag Walter Kugler leaves? Why might these items be important?
5. What is ironic about the book that has saved Max and led him to his freedom?

### **“Tricksters”**

1. Briefly identify Otto Sturm in the character grid.
2. Why is the phrase “the diabolical plan bore its fruit” an apt metaphor for the incident?
3. What do Rudy and Liesel do with the goods they acquire from Otto?
4. How does Rudy justify stealing from Otto when Liesel asks if he feels guilty?
5. What inference can be made about Arthur Berg in regards to the “small tribute” that Death offers?
6. How is the tone of the final passage of the chapter contradicted by the example of foreshadowing in the last line of the chapter?

### **“The Struggler, Concluded”**

1. With what metaphor does Death open the chapter? Do you feel it is an appropriate metaphor? Explain your answer.
2. How does the number 13 come into play again in this chapter?
3. With what internal conflict does Max grapple as he walks towards Himmel Street?

## **Part Four: The Standover Man**

### **“The Accordionist (The Secret Life of Hans Hubermann)”**

1. Which two questions does Max ask Hans Hubermann? Why do you believe Max asks these two questions?
2. Death remembers Hans from World War I and states that they never had a scheduled meeting. How did Hans avoid meeting Death during World War I?
3. What “small but noteworthy note” does Death offer the reader in this chapter?  
Do you feel that this might embody a theme for the novel? Why or why not?
4. Briefly identify Erik Vandenburg on the character grid.
5. How does Hans gain possession of Erik Vandenburg’s accordion?
6. Summarize Hans Hubermann’s political conflict. Name his major mistakes.
7. What life changing event occurred for Hans Hubermann on June 16, 1939?

### **“A Good Girl”**

1. What occurs in November 1940?
2. How does Liesel respond to Max’s arrival?
3. What do you believe is the “wild card” to which Death refers?

### **“A Short History of the Jewish Fist Fighter”**

1. Who was Max’s favorite fist fighting opponent? Where did Max train as a child?
2. How does Max personify Death? What is Death’s reaction?

3. In how many fights did Walter Kugler and Max engage over the years? Did they remain friends?
4. How old was Max on the “night of broken glass” (November 9, 1938)?
5. How did Max escape capture? What happened to Max’s family? What is Max’s reaction?
6. What is written on the piece of paper that Max received from his mother? Why is that paper important?
7. Why does the fact that the Hubermanns have a child concern Max?
8. Who speaks first at the end of the chapter?

### **“The Wrath of Rosa”**

1. What startles Liesel from her sleep?
2. What does Liesel find unusual about Rosa’s reaction to the stranger?
3. Explain the final line in the chapter: “Who are these people?”

### **“Liesel’s Lecture”**

1. What important point about character does Death make in the opening paragraph?
2. How are Rosa’s actions and conversations different on this day?
3. What story does Hans offer to Liesel?
4. Of what promise does Hans remind Liesel? What does Hans tell Liesel will happen if she breaks her promise?
5. How does Rosa uncharacteristically greet Liesel when she returns from her talk with Hans?

### **“The Sleeper”**

1. How does Max spend the first three days with the Hubermanns?
2. What does Max say in his sleep?

### **“The Swapping of Nightmares”**

1. Where does Max decide he belongs?
2. Behind what is Max hidden in the basement?
3. Why does Max want to get up and walk out of the Hubermanns’ home? What does he do? Why?
4. What catches Liesel’s eye when she finally goes into the basement? What does Liesel attempt to ask Max?
5. What is the only thing that Mama and Papa argue about after Max’s arrival?
6. What does Liesel learn about Rosa after Max’s arrival, according to Death?
7. What helps Liesel to maintain her sanity?
8. What comparison does Death make to Liesel reading in the mayor’s library and Max living in the basement?
9. How does Hans and Liesel’s reading save Max’s life?
10. What change do the Hubermanns make in their routine in order to

preserve Max's health and safety?

11. How do new stories enter the Hubermanns' home nightly?

12. What word does Max use to characterize himself? Do you agree or disagree with that characterization? Explain your answer.

13. What prompts Liesel to tell Papa she does not need him to stay with her when she has a nightmare? Why do you think Liesel tells Papa she no longer needs him to stay with her?

14. What gift does Liesel bring to Max daily?

15. What gift does Liesel receive for her twelfth birthday? How does she include Max in her special day?

### **"Pages from the Basement"**

1. Why is Liesel kept from the basement?

2. How many pages does Max think he will need?

3. Comment on the book that Max gives to Liesel. What do you feel is the importance of this book?

4. How does Max give the book to Liesel? How does Liesel react to the gift?

### **Part Five: The Whistler**

#### **"The Floating Book" (Part I)**

1. What announcement does Death make about Rudy Steiner? Why would Death characterize the announcement as "small?"

2. What does Death foreshadow regarding Rudy's death? How does Death feel about Rudy's death?

#### **"The Gamblers (A Seven Sided Die)"**

1. Why do you think the symbol of a seven sided die is selected by the author?

2. List the seven sides of the die.

3. Death explains his own interests to the reader. How does that explanation support the idea that the point of view matters to the theme and overall power of a novel?

4. Max asks Rosa to cut his hair, but she is unable to find the scissors. As the scene plays out, what does it reveal about life in the Hubermann household?

5. What is Liesel tempted to tell the mayor's wife? Why?

6. What bonded Erik and Hans? What bonds Liesel and Max? Explain.

7. What inspires Max to draw the picture of himself and Liesel walking the tightrope to the sun?

8. Why does Max exercise?

9. As Max becomes stronger, he imagines he is boxing Hitler. How do the rules the referee states mimic the reality of life in Germany?

10. What does Hitler shout to the audience watching the imaginary fight?

What does he ask them in his rhetorical tongue? How does the audience respond? What does this symbolize?

11. Who is the last individual to enter the ring? What does this symbolize?
12. How does Death relate Max's dream to the well recognized joke, "There's a Jew and a German standing in a basement, right?" Do you find the reference powerful? Explain.
13. Why is the seven sided die an appropriate symbol for this story?
14. What does the mayor's wife give to Liesel? How does Liesel respond?
15. What form does Liesel's subconscious take when she is verbally attacking the mayor's wife?
16. How does Liesel feel after her verbal assault of Frau Hermann? Explain.

### **"Rudy's Youth"**

1. What three problems characterize Rudy's young life? Explain.
2. The story flashes forward two years, what does Liesel long to do? What does Liesel come to understand about her, and Rudy's experiences with the Hitler Youth?

### **"The Losers"**

1. Briefly identify Viktor Chemmel on the character grid.
2. Compare Viktor Chemmel and Arthur Berg as leaders. What parallels might you draw between their leadership styles and leaders from this historical period?
3. On what terms do Viktor and Rudy separate?

### **"Sketches"**

1. Max spends his time writing a book for Liesel. He intends the book to be an autobiography, but that is not what emerges. What inspires Max's writing? How does the book change?
2. What happens when Liesel sneaks a peek of Max's sketches?

### **"The Whistler and the Shoes"**

1. Why does Rudy tell Liesel, "I need a win, Liesel. Honestly."?
2. Liesel decides that stealing something, more specifically, stealing something back, would be the best way to improve Rudy's spirits? From whom does Liesel choose to steal? What does she realize when the opportunity to steal presents itself?
3. Hearing someone walking on the floor above her, Liesel finds the book, goes out the window, and she and Rudy run away. What does Liesel realize has been left behind? What does Rudy do?
4. What indication does the reader have that Liesel has become as attached to Rosa as she has to Hans?
5. What "official title" does Liesel receive in October of 1941? By whom?

### **"Three Acts of Stupidity by Rudy Steiner"**

1. List the three acts of stupidity that Death provides.
2. Why is Rudy's behavior so dangerous? Why does Rudy behave so dangerously? What is the result of Rudy's behavior?

### **“The Floating Book (Part II)”**

1. When and how does Rudy finally get his victory? 2. Why does Rudy remain in the freezing water longer than necessary? 3. Does Rudy finally get his kiss?

### **Part Six: The Dream Carrier**

#### **“Death’s Diary: 1942”**

1. Death shifts the focus of the story to himself in this chapter.
  - a. What frustrates Death with regard to his appearance?
  - b. Why is Death overwhelmed in 1942?
  - c. Why does Death refer to the years 79 and 1346?
  - d. What is Death’s opinion of war?
2. How does Death find relief from the strains of his job?

#### **“The Snowman”**

1. What does Liesel bring Max on Christmas Eve? Why is it important?
2. If there are no presents and little food, why does Liesel consider this the best Christmas ever?
3. What happens to Max in mid February, a few days before Liesel’s birthday? Who takes charge of the situation and what do they do?
4. Why does Liesel feel guilty?
5. What is a paradox? Explain the paradox in the final line of the chapter.

#### **“Thirteen Presents”**

1. What happens when Death visits Max? Why is this significant?
2. What happens on the fifth day of Max’s stay in Liesel’s bed?
3. How does Liesel spend her time with Max?
4. Mama forces Liesel to go out and play. What promise does Liesel extract from Rosa before leaving? Why does this make Rosa smile?
5. What is the first gift that Liesel brings to Max? List the other gifts and comment on Liesel’s selections.

#### **“Fresh Air, an Old Nightmare, and What to Do with a Jewish Corpse”**

1. What desire does Liesel express to Rudy? How does he respond? What is the outcome of the venture? What does Death suggest about the open window?
2. Describe the dilemma, or conflict, that the Hubermanns face if Max does not survive his illness.
3. How does Liesel put an end to Mama and Papa’s conversation about Max’s death?
4. How would you interpret Liesel’s dream in which Max replaces her brother?
5. Why does Mama come to Liesel’s class? What ploy does Mama use that was inspired by Liesel? What does Liesel endure to ensure that no one will

question Mama's presence at school?

6. What fear does Max admit to Liesel? Why might he fear such a thing? How does Liesel ease Max's fear?

7. Max recovers and returns to the basement, returning Liesel's inside world to normal. How does this contrast to the world outside?

8. Death states that "Yes, the boss was at my shoulder. Get it done, get it done." In your opinion, who is "the boss?" Explain your answer.

### **"Death's Diary: Cologne"**

1. What event does Death describe in this chapter?

2. What do the children collect as Death collects souls? What might this symbolize?

### **"The Visitor"**

1. Who is the "visitor"? What implications might such a visitor have for the Hubermanns?

2. What clever stunt does Liesel pull while playing soccer? Why does she do so?

3. What is the outcome of the episode? In what condition do the Hubermanns find Max?

4. How do you believe Max intended to use the scissors?

### **"The Schmunzeler"**

1. A second visitor arrives following the Nazi's departure. Who is it?

2. How does Liesel classify her condition after the day's events?

### **"Death's Diary: The Parisians"**

1. Death claims that "the sky was the color of Jews." What color do you suppose that is? Why might Death classify the sky as the color of Jews?

2. Death struggles with his own inner conflict. Describe the conflict and your reaction to it.

## **Part Seven: The Complete Duden Dictionary and Thesaurus**

### **"Champagne and Accordions"**

1. In the summer of 1942, what is the inevitable event the people of Molching are preparing for?

2. How does this benefit Hans Hubermann?

3. What does Liesel find most interesting about painting? How would you characterize Hans

based on Liesel's explanation of these experiences? How does she perceive him?

4. What does Liesel experience for the first time in one of the customer's homes? What is Hans's explanation?

5. Liesel writes about her life and vows never to drink champagne again, why?

6. What does Death foreshadow? How do you explain the author's use of the simile, "Hard times were coming. Like a parade."?

### **“The Trilogy”**

1. To what three installments does the chapter title refer?
2. How does Rudy spend his time while Liesel is working with Hans? What is his goal?
3. Summarize Rudy’s successes at the festival. How does Liesel perform?
4. When Rudy and Liesel finally talk about the 100 race final, Rudy tells Liesel that his disqualification was intentional. How does Rudy respond when Liesel asks why he would do such a thing?  
Why do you think Rudy got himself disqualified from the race?
5. What does Rudy do with his medals?
6. What does Liesel do after she finishes *The Dream Carrier*?
7. Why does Rudy take Liesel to the mayor’s house?
8. What causes Liesel to stop and look back at the mayor’s house? How does Liesel react?
9. What does Rudy find in the book? How does Liesel respond?
10. Why does Liesel consider herself a criminal?

### **“The Sound of Sirens”**

1. What dilemma confronts the Hubermanns with regard to the air raids? Who resolves the problem?
2. Identify the people who take shelter in the Fielders’ basement. Which individuals does Liesel determine to be the most fearful?
3. How does Death feel about the individuals in the shelter? Do you agree or disagree? Explain.
4. Consider the quote, “For those people, life was still achievable.” Comment.
5. What is on the Hubermanns’ minds as they return to their home from the shelter?
6. What does Max admit to the family? How long has it been since Max viewed the outside? How does the family react?

### **“The Sky Stealer”**

1. How does the first raid compare with the second?
2. What superstition does Hans practice?
3. How does Liesel cope with being in the shelter the second time? What reaction does she receive from the others in the shelter?
4. Do the families return home as soon as the raid is over? What effect does the raid have on Himmel Street?
5. What impact does Rosa’s retelling of Liesel’s actions in the shelter have on Max?
6. What is Liesel’s central thought about future bombings on Himmel Street?

### **“Frau Holtzapfel’s Offer”**

1. What damages were incurred as a result of the raid?
2. Why does Frau Holtzapfel visit the Hubermanns?



3. What are Liesel's feelings on the deal Mama makes with Frau Holtzapfel?
4. Interpret the last line of the chapter: "*That makes two weeks, she would later write in the basement "Two weeks to change the world, and fourteen days to ruin it."*"

### **"The Long Walk to Dachau"**

1. What are the wishes Death hears as he exits the truck with the dead Jew?
2. What arrives in Molching?
3. What is Hans' reaction when he sees Liesel and Rudy on the street?
4. What is the significance of Death's statement that many of Jews would greet Death like their last true friend?
5. Liesel will later write that these were the poorest souls alive. What impacted Liesel the most about the Jews passing through Molching on their way to Dachau?
6. Why is Papa beaten by a German Soldier?
7. Who stands beside Liesel as the drama is taking place on the street? How does the crowd react?
8. Why is Papa suddenly overwhelmed by what has happened? What consequences does Papa fear?

### **"Peace"**

1. How does Max react to the events of the day? What is scheduled for four days later?
2. When Hans goes to the Amper River he only finds a note saying, "You've done enough." Why is this significant?
3. Why do you think that Death does not equate the word *silence* with the words *peace, quiet, or calm* following this event?

### **"The Idiot and the Coat Men"**

1. Describe Hans' feelings following Max's departure.
2. Why might the Hubermanns be hoping that the Party comes to search their home for evidence of a Jew?
3. Who are the coat men? Why are they on Himmel Street? What does Hans shout at them?

### **Part Eight: The Word Shaker "Dominoes and Darkness"**

1. What concerns Rudy about the two men talking with his parents in the kitchen?
2. Why have the men come to the Steiners' home? What do the men propose to the Steiners?
3. Why might the author have chosen to intersperse the conversation in the kitchen with the conversation about dominoes that Rudy and his siblings hold outside of the kitchen?

### **“The Thought of Rudy Naked”**

1. How does this chapter connect with the previous chapter?
2. What is the purpose of the inspection of Rudy and his classmates?
3. What does Rudy finally explain to Liesel? How does she react?

### **“Punishment”**

1. Why might Hans Hubermann be grateful for punishment by the Nazi Party?
2. What paper arrives at the Hubermann household? Why is Hans immediately suspicious?
3. What arrives later in the week? What is Papa’s wish?
4. What does Liesel discover as she walks outside several days later? What is Barbara Steiner’s explanation?

### **“The Promise Keeper’s Wife”**

1. How do Alex Steiner and Hans Hubermann spend their evening? What is Rosa’s reaction?
2. What do Liesel and Hans discuss at the train station?
3. Twelve days after Alex Steiner’s departure, Rudy decides he has had enough and gets Liesel to go out with him. Where does Rudy tell Liesel they are going? Why? In what way is this characteristic of Rudy?
4. What does Liesel mean when she states to Rudy, “... and you’ve only lost your father ...”?
5. Rudy and Liesel discuss their mothers’ appearance on the sidewalk. Do you believe their mothers are more worried, more angry, or a different adjective entirely? Explain.
6. What image does Death provide of Rosa on the night Hans leaves? How does this image affect your perception of Rosa?

### **“The Collector”**

1. Where are Hans Hubermann and Alex Steiner stationed? What duties are they assigned?
2. What does Hans learn about the men in the LSE? Why have they been selected for service in the LSE?
3. Where is Hans Hubermann’s seat on the vehicle? Why is this important?
4. Why does Death explain that Hubermann would “need to perfect the art of forgetting?”
5. Death presents a letter that Hans writes home, which is very short. Death then follows with the details of Hans’ task and the reasons for the brevity of his letter. Did the vivid explanation change your initial impression of Papa’s short letter? Why or why not?

### **“The Bread Eaters”**

1. Who are the “three desperate men” that consume Liesel’s thoughts?

What has become one of Liesel's favorite distractions?

2. What does Rudy plan to do with the sackful of bread that he shows Liesel? What argument does he use to convince Liesel to help him?

3. How does the incident strengthen or alter the reader's characterization of Rudy? Explain.

4. Why does Liesel attend the parades of the Jews? What conflicting feelings does Liesel have as she watches the Jews in the parades?

### **"The Hidden Sketchbook"**

1. As the neighbors congregate in the Fiedlers' shelter, what instruction from Papa does Liesel recall?

2. After returning from the shelter, Rosa goes to her mattress and opens a slit to give Liesel a gift. What is the gift? Why would Rosa have chosen this particular time to present Liesel with the gift?

3. What is your impression of *The Word Shaker*? Why do you believe Max chooses to keep the story of the *Word Shaker* in the book?

4. What secret does the story impart to Liesel? Does the story reveal the same information to you?

### **"The Anarchist's Suit Collection"**

1. How and where does Liesel obtain Rudy's Christmas gift? What is the gift? 2. What does Death urge Liesel to do when Rudy falls? Does she oblige? What might the scene suggest about the upcoming events of the novel?

## **Part Nine: The Last Human Stranger**

### **"The Next Temptation"**

1. What does Liesel find when she and Rudy go to the mayor's library after Christmas? What does Liesel realize about the library?

2. Who enjoys the gift of cookies?

### **"The Cardplayer"**

1. Briefly identify Reinhold Zucker in the character grid.

2. Explain the last line of the chapter: "It kills me sometimes, how people die." Which literary devices are used in the last line?

### **"The Snows of Stalingrad"**

1. Who answers Frau Holtzapfel's door in January 1943?

2. What news does Michael bring to Rosa?

3. How does the description of the battlefield and Death's presence there affect your impression of Death?

### **"The Ageless Brother"**

1. What does Liesel take to 8 Grande Strasse? How does she know that she has done the right thing?

2. When Liesel thinks of the brother, what fills her with sadness and then a smile? Explain.
3. After Liesel has accepted the death of her brother, he no longer invades her dreams, but appears to Liesel another way. Why is this significant?
4. What prayer does Rosa offer as she clutches the accordion? What does Liesel think about Rosa's prayers?

### **"The Accident"**

1. What order does Zucker give to Hans? How does Hans respond?
2. What happens on the drive back to the camp? What are the results?
3. What does Hans claim after he is safely pulled from the vehicle? What incident does this recall from a past war?
4. What does Schipper explain to Hans about his injuries? What does this tell the reader about Hans' character?

### **"The Bitter Taste of Questions"**

1. What letter do Rosa and Liesel receive in mid February? 2. What is Rudy's response when Liesel tells him the contents of the letter?

### **"One Toolbox, One Bleeder, One Bear"**

1. What has happened to Rudy since his father's departure and the news of Hans Hubermann's return?
2. What does Liesel realize when she sees Rudy walking down the street with his tool box?
3. What commentary does Rudy offer regarding Liesel's thieving?
4. What unusual item does Rudy have in his tool box? What is its purpose? 5. What does Rudy end up stealing?
6. Why does Michael Holtzapfel come to the Hubermanns' home when the sirens sound? How do Rosa and Liesel respond? Are they successful?
7. What internal conflict plagues Michael at the shelter? Who arrives at the last minute?
8. How does Liesel's role change from thief to provider in the shelter?
9. What causes Rudy and Liesel to run to the Amper River? What do they find when they reach the river?
10. Why is this event significant for Liesel and Death?
11. What do Death and Liesel watch Rudy do? Based on Rudy's recent feelings of anger, do you consider this strange? Why?
12. Analyze the final paragraph in this chapter.

### **"Homecoming"**

1. How many years have passed between Liesel's arrival to the Hubermanns' home and Hans's return?
2. Who answers the door when Hans returns home?

3. What is Death's implication in the last two lines of the chapter? How do Death's words affect the tone of the chapter?

**Part Ten: The Book Thief**  
**"The End of the World (Part I)"**

1. Death again gives the reader a glimpse of the end of the story. Death reveals that Himmel Street will be bombed and it will be raining when the world ends for Liesel. How does Death feel about the bombing of Himmel Street?

2. Throughout the novel, Zusak has stressed the power of words. How does this theme ring true in this chapter?

3. When Liesel is rescued, Death states that he could not fully share in the rescuers' enthusiasm. Why?

4. What does Liesel scream as the soldiers pull her from the rubble? Why is the scream significant?

**"The Ninety Eighth Day"**

1. Why do you think Death describes the first ninety seven days after he has already told the reader the outcome of the ninety eighth?

2. Why are the Jews brought to the town during this period? For whom does Liesel look?

3. Death presents the image of Michael Holtzapfel on July 24 as a "pendulum, another clock, stopped." Identify and explain the figurative language.

4. What does Death learn about Michael's death from The Book Thief?

5. Who gives the news of Michael Holtzapfel's death to his mother?

**"The War Maker"**

1. What does Death reveal with regard to the war and the situation in Germany?

**"Way of the Words"**

1. While watching the parade of Jews through Molching, Liesel tries to decide the best way to identify Max in the crowd of downcast faces.

How does Liesel identify Max?

2. Max and Liesel are reunited when she runs to him on the street. A soldier sees her and forces her away. How does Liesel reach out to Max the second time she runs into the parade? What happens?

3. Why would Max think that it was a great day to die?

4. What happens to both Max and Liesel? Who comes to Liesel's aid?

5. What do Rudy's actions reveal about his and Liesel's relationship? Explain.

**"Confessions"**

1. Where does Liesel go after seeing Max? What does Rudy do?

2. In what way does Liesel demonstrate her supreme trust in Rudy? What does she show him?

3. What does Liesel realize about Rudy and what does she want from him? Why is this ironic?

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### **“Ilsa Hermann’s Little Black Book”**

1. Where does Liesel go to rejuvenate in mid August? What act of vandalism does she commit? Why?
2. What does Liesel leave for Frau Hermann? How has the power of words changed for Liesel?
3. Frau Hermann arrives at 33 Himmel. Why has she come and what advice does she offer Liesel?
4. In addition to the blank book, what other gift does Frau Hermann give to Liesel?

### **“The Rib Cage Planes”**

1. How has the content of the bold sections changed in this chapter? 2. What literary device does Liesel use to describe Papa?

### **“The End of the World (Part II)”**

1. Why is Death telling the story of the book thief?
2. What is the sequence of events the night of the air raid?
3. Death provides the reader with a detailed description of the order in which he collects the souls on Himmel Street and how they are found. Why might Death be providing such a detailed description for the reader?
4. Explain Death’s ironic memories of life. How is Death characterized in this scene?
5. What point does Death hope to stress by listing the good things that Rosa has done in her life?
6. What does Liesel do when she sees Rudy’s lifeless body?
7. What does Liesel say to Rosa?
8. What metaphor does Death offer for Hans’ body?
9. When Liesel is finally able to look at Hans, what does Death see?
10. What vision, which Liesel later reveals to Death, does she have of Papa as she kneels next to his dead body?
11. What two items does Liesel leave beside Papa’s body? What happens to these items?

### **Epilogue: The Last Color “Death and Liesel”**

1. What does Death tell the reader about Liesel’s life?
2. How does Death describe Liesel’s passing?

### **“Wood in the Afternoon”**

1. With whom does Liesel live after the bombing? What connection does she maintain with Alex Steiner?
2. What does Alex Steiner regret? Why?

## “Max”

3. Who arrives in October 1945?

## “The Handover Man”

4. What discussion does Death have with Liesel when he finally takes her? What is the last note that Death offers us as readers?

5. What play on words does Death use?

Quote/Example

Explanation

## Writing Assignment #3: Creating Poetry

### Emulating the narrator

In *The Book Thief*, the narrator emphasizes the power of words and language throughout the novel. Ironically, Death begins to infuse life into language as he creates poetry from the experiences he records. In Part Six, “Thirteen Presents,” for example, Death describes the gifts that Liesel brings to Max as Max maintains a precarious hold on life. Rather than simply listing the objects, however, (as a reader might expect a cold, lifeless narrator to do), he creates poetry from the list of objects...he gives the objects life through his words. One ribbon, one pinecone. One button, one stone. One feather, two newspapers. A candy wrapper. A cloud. One toy soldier. One miraculous leaf. A finished whistler. A slab of grief. (321-2)

**Step 1: (Observation)** Consider ordinary items that you encounter every day that somehow represent your personality, your beliefs, your life, or your struggles. Look through your backpack, your car, or your room, for examples. List those objects in the far left column of the *Record Log*.

**Step 2: (Diction and Description)** Notice the simplicity of Death’s language. He does not use many additional words in his poetic speech, yet his simple language carries tremendous weight. Consider adjectives or alternative phrases that you might use to descriptively list each of the items that you entered in the *Record Log*.

**Step 3: (Composition)** Select the items you want to include in your final poem, **which should be a minimum of ten lines**. Experiment with the diction that you have brainstormed for each item; consider a variety of organizational patterns for your poem. Do not copy the narrator’s form exactly ... use Zusak’s style as inspiration for creating your poem. Consider assigning a title to your poem, as well.

**Step 4: (Reflection)** Use the box at the bottom of the *Record Log* to write a brief paragraph describing the creative choices you made throughout the

composition of your poem. What did you learn about yourself through the writing process in general and this assignment in particular? Death offer for the final chapter?

### **Writing Assignment #2: Analyzing Character: Liesel Meminger and Max Vandenburg**

Throughout *The Book Thief*, Death highlights similarities and differences among the human population in general and between Liesel and Max in particular. Such comparisons are evident throughout the novel. In order to *prove* that similarities exist between the two characters, however, a reader must first gather *evidence* that such similarities exist, just as an attorney must provide evidence in a court of law in order to prove his or her case.

**Assignment:** Examine the novel for comparisons between Liesel's and Max's characters and experiences. For each of the comparisons that you record, you should include three quotes or examples as evidence of that comparison.

#### **Example**

In Part Four, "The Sleeper," the narrator states that "Liesel, in the act of watching, was already noticing the similarities between this stranger and herself. They both arrived in a state of agitation on Himmel Street. They both nightmared." (206) Additional quotes regarding the Liesel's and Max's nightmares can be found throughout the novel.

#### **TCharacter:**

Character's physical description:

Character's personality traits:

Character's occupation/hobbies/activities:

Character's importance to the plot (including conflicts):

### ***The Book Thief* Literary Analysis Questions page 2**

1. **Understanding point of view:** The *narrator* of a story provides the details of the story from his or her *point of view*.

Since *The Book Thief* is told from the perspective of a narrator who is also a character in the story, it is told from the *first person point of view*.

Why might Zusak have chosen to tell the story using first person narration?

How does Zusak's choice of Death as the narrator affect the story? What aspects of the novel would change if another character narrated the tale? Provide quotes and examples to support your response. You might consider the following characters as possibilities: Liesel, Liesel's brother, Frau Diller, Rosa Hubermann, Hans Hubermann, Ruby Steiner, Max Hubermann.

2. **Understanding literary devices:** Authors use a variety of literary devices, or strategies, in order to get their meaning across to their readers. The type of literary devices an author uses may depend on his or her audience, purpose, or style of writing. In *The Book Thief*, Markus Zusak uses many examples of figurative language, such as simile, metaphor, personification, and



onomatopoeia. The following passages are examples. Why might Zusak have chosen to

use the following literary devices in his writing? What purpose might he have? Does *The Book*

*Thief's* intended audience have anything to do with the figurative language that Zusak chose to include?

Why or why not? List and discuss any other examples of figurative language that you find throughout the novel.

1. Simile: "To her right, a book protruded like a bone." (450)
2. Personification: "The sound of crying children kicked and punched" (380).
3. Onomatopoeia: "Grimly she realized that clocks don't make a sound that even remotely resembles ticking, tocking." (259)
4. Metaphor: "Another human pendulum. Another clock, stopped." (502)

3. **Exploring theme:** The *theme* of a piece of literature is the message or point that an author attempts to pass along to the reader. Within a given novel, various themes might operate simultaneously. Using the chart below as a possible format, brainstorm various themes in *The Book Thief* and list quotes and examples from the text (evidence) that serve as evidence to support your claim, or thesis.

### Theme Quotes/Examples (page #)

How do the quotes and examples listed in the second column support the theme listed in the first column?

### *The Book Thief* Literary Analysis Questions page 3

5. **Understanding Irony:** Irony occurs when the outcome of a particular event is the opposite of what is expected to happen. Consider the following two passages.

**Passage #1:** The following excerpt from Part III, "The Struggler Continued," refers to Max Vandenburg (159-160). "Papers" That was what he dreaded to hear. It was bad enough when he was stopped on the platform. He knew he could not withstand it twice. The shivering hands. The smell—no, the stench—of guilt. He simply couldn't bear it again. Fortunately, they came through early and only asked for the ticket, and now all that was left was a window of small towns, the congregations of lights, and the woman snoring on the other side of the compartment. For most of the journey, he made his way through the book, trying never to look up. The words lolled about in his mouth as he read them. Strangely, as he turned the pages and progressed through the chapters, it was only two words he ever tasted. *Mein Kampf*. My struggle. The title, over and over again, as the train prattled on, from one German town to the next. *Mein Kampf*. Of all the things to save him.

**Passage #2:** The following excerpt from the Epilogue, "Wood in the Afternoon" focuses on Alex Steiner (546-7). There were two ceremonies for the Steiner family. The first was immediately upon their burial. The second was as soon as Alex Steiner made it home, when he was given leave after the bombing. Since the news had found him, Alex had been whittled away. "Crucified Christ," he said, "if only I'd let Rudy go to that school." You save someone. You kill them. How was he supposed to know?

The only thing he did know was that he'd have done anything to have been on Himmel Street that night so that Rudy survived rather than himself.

1. How are the above excerpts examples of irony?
2. Why might Zusak have chosen to use irony in the novel?
3. How does the use of irony in *The Book Thief* affect the tone, characterization, and/or theme of the novel?