

Irony in the book thief



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Irony, in many ways, is always all around us. It can come as a way to ease the truth of what's going on around you. In the novel, *The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak, irony plays a theme in blocking out what is really happening in the 1940s era of Germany.

During *The Book Thief*, irony contributed to helping the formation of other themes such as foreshadowing and also themes of loneliness and despair that are presented in the storyline. In the beginning of the story, Zusak begins to use irony when Liesel first finds *The Gravedigger's Handbook* after her brother Werner was buried. The book that she found is what she uses to remember the past of her mother and brother before changes started to happen. This is ironic as Liesel uses the book as a way to bring back memories but at the time she has little to no knowledge on how to properly read a book. As you continue through the book, you are introduced to Liesel's new home on Himmel Street, which translates to Heaven.

However, the use of irony when naming the street soon shows up as Zusak writes that it wasn't a living hell " but it sure as hell wasn't heaven, either" (26). Liesel is then introduced to her new foster parents Hans and Rosa Hubermann. Rosa " possessed the unique ability to aggravate almost everyone she ever met" (35). However, she did strongly care for Liesel but " her way of showing it just happened to be strange. It involved bashing her with wooden spoon and words at various intervals" (35). These quotes start to show the type of irony that Rosa possesses. She shows that she truly does care about Liesel however, she doesn't involve the usual I love you that we get from our parents. With Rosa, her love consists of a beating with a wooden spoon to teach her to do something correct ways.

Markus Zusak shows the irony in Liesel's book stealing by making her not able to read, not actually stealing books, and by making her more interested in more books than another object. Many of the books Liesel ends up having in her possession were given to her in an indirect way. The irony comes to play when Liesel retrieves *The Shoulder Shrug* from the bonfire, which was not actually stolen, as it was not possessed by anyone and was actually going to be fuel for the fire to keep burning. This is a very ironic statement because she doesn't really "steal" many of the books, but she happened to be in the right place at the right time to retrieve the books.

Another example of irony comes into play when the mayor's wife, Ilsa Hermann, begins to leave the main window open in the hopes that Liesel's would continue to come into the library and "take" more books. Liesel's book stealing still does not really count as thievery.