

The protagonist's transformation in markus zusak's 'i am the messenger' essay sam...

[Literature](#), [Novel](#)



“ It’s not a big thing, but i guess it’s true – big things are often just small things that are noticed” (221). It doesn’t seem like a big thing to Ed Kennedy when he receives his first ace. But after receiving four playing cards, each containing a message to deliver to someone in his community, it becomes obvious that the situation is indeed momentous. In the novel, *I Am the Messenger* by Markus Zusak, Ed Kennedy, the protagonist, is introduced as an underage cabdriver with no goals or ambitions. However, after receiving the playing cards, visiting twelve different people, and helping each one, Ed realizes even an ordinary guy like himself has the potential to live beyond what he initially believes he is capable of. Because of the obstacles Ed endures and overcomes while delivering the cards’ messages, he transforms from his once pessimistic self into a benevolent and capable person. Because of the messages, Ed recognizes his own courage, creates new friendships, and confronts his own issues to improve his life.

Before delivering the messages, Ed turns a blind eye towards any predicaments that require bravery. However, the messages demand a sense of courage. For this reason, Ed is forced to act courageously to deliver the messages, thus attaining a life-long sense of courage. The first playing card Ed receives contains three addresses, the first of which being 45 Edgar Street. At this address, Ed observes an alcoholic husband rape his wife in front of their daughter, Angelina, almost every night. Ed continues to visit the home each night to observe, and after a while, he receives a note and a gun in the mail. He comes to realize that the message he must deliver to the nefarious alcoholic is that of fear. As a result of this realization, Ed chooses a night, picks the man up from the bar in his taxi, stupifies him with a flask of

whiskey containing sedatives, and drives him away from town. Once the man awakens, Ed pulls the lethargic man from the car and jams the gun into his neck.

However, Ed hesitates and stalls, afraid to act because he does not yet possess the courage or strength to complete the task. Although he is fearful, Ed realizes that he must kill the man in order to alleviate the pain the wife and child have been enduring. Ed states that, " I have to kill him because slowly, almost effortlessly and with complete contempt, this man kills his wife and child every night. And it's me alone, Ed Kennedy, a less than ordinary man who has the chance to end it" (88). Eventually, Ed gathers enough courage, pulls the trigger, but fires to the sky, revealing that he has not yet attained a full sense of bravery. Before the man has a chance to recover from the shock of almost dying, Ed flees the scene. Afterwards, the man skips town, never returning, in fear of being targeted in the future.

The following day, Ed recounts what happened: " For a moment . . . I don't seem to recognize who I am. I don't feel like me. I don't even seem to remember who Ed Kennedy's supposed to be" (100). This statement reveals that Ed does not recognize his new, courageous self. He is accustomed to his passive, nonchalant ways. However, the message he delivers requires him to act courageously, and he realizes after the event that he possesses bravery in which he can use to better his community. He uses his bravery in later situations as well, an example being facing a gang of pugnacious boys.

During this situation, Ed does not hesitate or contemplate what to do, unlike in the rape situation, because he recognizes he has the courage to face the

boys and deal with the consequences. Because of the message he delivers to the abusive husband, Ed recognizes his own courage, allowing him to face other predicaments with confidence later in the novel.

At the beginning of the novel, Ed only has three true companions, but after receiving the playing cards and helping countless people in his community, he makes lasting friendships. Although he meets a myriad of people throughout his journey, the person who has the greatest impact on Ed is Milla. Milla, an old woman who lost her husband many years before the novel takes place, leads a lonely life. Because of this, Ed decides to visit Milla often and takes the role as her beloved husband Jimmy, who Milla believes has finally come back for her. At first, Ed feels estranged and confused while playing Jimmy. However, Ed soon realizes his love for Milla, which is revealed in the following lines: The old lady did something to my heart. When her hands reached out and poured the tea, it was as if she also poured something into me while I sat there sweating in my cab. It was like she held a string and pulled on it just slightly to open me up.

She got in, put a piece of herself inside me, and left again. In there, somewhere, I still feel it. (48) This excerpt from the novel is stated by Ed, and it reveals the lasting impact Milla has on him. Milla touches Ed in a way that his other companions have not. Because of this, Ed develops a lasting friendship with Milla, who he visits often, brings gifts to, and spends Christmas Day with. Without the cards and messages, Ed would not have met Milla, nor would he have met or made friendships with Father O'Reilly, his priest, or Sophie, a young girl who runs each morning. Because of the

cards and messages Ed receives, he meets other people in his community, providing him the opportunity to kindle new friendships.

Previous to the messages, Ed is not sure of what he wants to do with his life. However, Ed is put into situations in which he must confront his own problems and his own identity while delivering the final card's messages.

One situation involves Ed's volatile relationship with his mother. Ed's mother despises Ed, constantly assailing and ridiculing him for his incompetence and his similarities to his deceased alcoholic father. She often treats him as being inferior to the rest of his successful siblings, and Ed simply leaves it at that.

That is until one evening when a message leads him to the front porch of his mother's house, where he confronts his mother about the reason for her hate. His mother states, relating Ed to his noteworthy siblings: You could be as good as any of them. As good as Tommy, even . . . But you're still here and you'll still be here in fifty years . . . And you'll have achieved nothing . . . I just want you to make something of yourself.

You have to realize something, Ed . . . Believe it or not - it takes a lot of love to hate you like this. (244-245) With this, Ed comes to the realization that in order for his mother to appreciate him and in order for him to be successful, he needs to change. Ed states after the conversation, " In a way, it has woken me a little. I realize I can't be a cabdriver all my life. It'll drive me crazy" (247). After the conversation with his mother, Ed recognizes he does not desire to drive cabs; he feels as though something else would suit him instead. Another example of Ed finding his identity and what he desires to do is evident when he delivers a message to his best friend, Ritchie. Ritchie,

similar to Ed, is unsuccessful, indolent, and unambitious. Throughout the delivery of the message, Ed and Ritchie discuss their sad lives, how lazy they are, and how taxi driving is an excuse of a job. At the end of their conversation, Ritchie agrees to improve his life and begins searching for a job. Because Ritchie is looking to improve his life, Ed decides he should be doing the same. Ed also ponders how much of his life is convinced.

The next day while at work, Ed reflects on his discussion with Ritchie. He states to himself while driving his taxi: This is what I chose to do. But is it what you want? I ask. For a few kilometers, I lie that, yes, it is. I try to convince myself that this is exactly what I want my life to be, but I know it isn't. I know that driving a cab and renting a fibro shack can't be the final answer of my life. It can't be. I feel like I just sat down at some point and said, " Right, this is Ed Kennedy." Somewhere along the line, I feel like somehow I introduced myself. To myself. And here I am. (305-306) This excerpt from the novel reveals Ed's desire to make something of himself, his desire to do something other than cab driving and squandering his life away in poverty. It also reveals that Ed, up to this point, has convinced himself of who he is instead of actually finding his own identity. But by caring about the people on the cards, Ed begins to care about himself and confront his own problems as well as the problems of others. As a result of the messages, Ed recognizes his need for self-improvement and begins to mend his relationships with others, the first step in his journey to a better lifestyle.

Because of the messages and the obstacles he experiences, Ed evolves from being indolent and incompetent to being ambitious. He recognizes his own

courage, befriends new people, and confronts the problems within himself. Throughout the novel these changes slowly take place as he notices the problems of others, all the small things. These problems may only affect Ed slightly at the time they occur, however, they lead to Ed ultimately recognizing the changes within himself, the big picture. Like Ed says, " Big things are often just small things that are noticed" (221).