

Main ideas of the book thief novel

[Literature](#), [Books](#)



Setting

- The Book Thief takes place in Nazi Germany from 1939-1943. The bulk of the story takes place in Molching, a suburb of Munich. The main characters live on Himmel Street.
- Himmel Street is very tight knit. The children and the adults all seem to know each other.
- The whole country is draped on Nazi propoganda. Prisoners from the concentration camp are marched through. One store won't aserve customers unless they " Hile Hitler."

Characters

- Liesel – Liesel is the main protagonist. She has been placed into a foster home on Himmel Street. Much of the begininning of the novel deals with her transition. Her brother was to be placed with her, but he died on the train to Munich. She is very fiesty and free spirited. She's not afraid to break the rules. Her best friend is Rudy Steiner.
- Hans – Hans is Liesel's foster father. He is a painter and an acordian player by trade. He is very tall. He fought in WWI. He has two adult children. He does not support Hitler or the actions of the Nazi Party. He is calm and collected and rarely gets angry.
- Rosa – Rosa is Liesel's foster mother and Hans's wife. She is a homemaker and washwoman. She often complains of people who cancel their washing service. She is fiery and bossy. She uses a great deal of profanity.
- Max – Max is the son of a Jewish man that Hans served with in WWI. He is forced to leave his family on Kristalnacht. He travels in disguise and

is hidden by the Hubermanns. He is angry and guilt ridden for leaving his family. He suffers from nightmares and he and Liesel share theirs when they cannot sleep. He eventually leaves when Hans gives bread to an old Jew.

- Rudy – Rudy is Liesel’s best friend. He lives on Hummel Street and attends the same school. He is obsessed with running, Jesse Owens, and Liesel. He has six brothers and sisters. He is very motivated.
- Ilsa – Ilsa is the wife of the mayor of Molching. She was initially a customer of Rosa’s. She saw Liesel steal the book from the burn pile and allows her into her private library to read. She eventually cancels her washing and this damages her relationship with Liesel. Ilsa is very quiet and rarely leaves her house. She has been traumatized by the death of her child.

Summary

Liesel Meminger is traveling by train to a suburb of Munich to be placed into a foster family with her brother. Her brother dies suddenly and she and her mother stop to bury the body. While stopped, she finds a book in the graveyard entitled, “ The Gravediggers Handbook.” She takes this book with her to Munich. Upon arriving with her new foster family, she initially refuses to enter the house. Her foster father is Hans Hubermann, a painter and accordion player. Her foster mother is Rosa Hubermann, a homemaker and washwoman. They are older and already have two grown children. She does finally enter the house, but continues to suffer from nightmares. Hans would come and sit with her and read to her until she calmed down. She enrolls in a Catholic school, however she is very behind and placed with much younger

children. She is very unhappy about this. She continues to read with Hans and slowly she begins to learn more. Eventually she is moved to her correct year. She plays with neighborhood children. They play soccer in the streets. On Hitler's birthday in 1940, Liesel steals her second book from a burn pile. This act is witnessed by Ilsa Hermann. She begins to allow Liesel into her private library. Hans is contacted by the son of a Jewish man that he served with in the war asking for shelter. Hans agrees and Max begins to live in their basement. Liesel and Max begin to form a friendship over their respective traumas. He eventually writes a book for Liesel called the Standover Man. He has to leave when Hans gives bread to an old Jew. This action also led to Hans being drafted into the army. He serves for some time and is eventually sent back to Munich when he breaks his leg in a crash. Soon after, Liesel sees Max being marched to a concentration camp. She speaks to him and they are both whipped for it. She then attempts to give up books. Ilsa gives her a blank book and tells her to write her story. She was doing this in her basement during an air raid which kills everyone she loves. She goes to live with Ilsa and the mayor and frequently helps in Rudy's father's store. Eventually, Max returns and they are reunited.

Themes

- Bravery – Bravery is in nearly every character of the story. Liesel for stealing books, Max for escaping, Hans for standing up to Hitler, and even Ilsa for letting go of her sadness.
- Perseverance – The characters of this novel were perseverant in many ways. Liesel continued to steal books even though she new the risks. Hans hid Max, even though he knew the risks.

- Language – Throughout the story, Liesel learns the power and importance of words. She arrived on Hummel Street illiterate and grew to be a skilled reader. This leads her to understand that Hitler's propoganda are the source of his power and that he is the reason her mother and father are dead.
- Theft – Theft is one of the overbearing themes, which makes sense, given that the book is called, The Book Thief. Theft is a form of rebellion for Liesel. It is a way for her to stand up to Hitler and the gestapo. It is also a way to get back at Ilsa for firing Rosa.

Style

- Voice – The novel is told through a conscious narrator. The narrator is death, a metaphysical being that observes everything that occurs in the novel. He provides his own commentary and thoughts about events. He “ does not like suprisises” and that is reflected in the way that he tells the story somewhat out of order at times.
- Symbols
- The accordion – Hans's accordion is a symbol of hope and rebirth. It initially provides this to Liesel upon her arrival to Himmel Street. We learn later that it was given to Hans by the man who saved his life.
- Colors – Colors are a big part of the novel due to Death's facination with them. He suggests by focusing on the color of the sky when a person dies that there is a connection between the death of an individual and nature.