

Self interest
motivates



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Humans have always wondered what drives them to make the choices they make. One of the theories people have come up with is that self-interest primarily motivates mankind. This theory is defended in the actions of Luba and her suitor in *Angels of Bergen-Belsen*, the decisions made by Ilsa Hermann and Hans Hubermann in *The Book Thief*, and the struggles with death in *Night*. In *Angel of Bergen-Belsen*, Luba, a Polish Jewish woman, loses her son as she is taken prisoner into a concentration camp in Bergen-Belsen where she saves the lives of forty-eight abandoned children in the camps in hope that someone is caring for her son as she cares for them.

She takes care of the children because she misses her son, Isaac, who was taken away from her at the time of the selection process during the entrance to the camp. To make up for the loss, she fulfills her motherly instincts by feeding and comforting the children who were abandoned. The children also motivate her to live because they are dependent on her and make her feel obligated to keep living for them. If Luba dies, they will be less likely to survive in the hardships of the camps. They make her feel wanted and needed. With this her she is able to answer her urge to live and can face the harsh situations presented to her.

Her desire to live lets her adapt to harsh circumstances presented to her so with the misfortune of losing her son, she lets the new children she finds replace her son. Her suitor, a German officer in charge of her barrack, however, was not able to gain her affection like the children. He does his best to try and capture her heart by bringing her gifts like wood, which Jews were not allowed to have. It seems as if he is trying to help the woman he

loves get what she needs, but the real motive for it is that he is trying to win her heart.

Even though he does actually want to help Luba, he wants to satisfy his own desire and self-interest for her love more. In *The Book Thief*, Ilsa Hermann does not report Liesel to the authorities for taking a book from a bonfire during Hitler's birthday in Molching because she is intrigued by her. She does that not because she cares about Liesel's future, but because she has taken an interest to Liesel and wants to get to know her. To get closer to Liesel, she invites her into her library and shares her book with her.

She tries to keep Liesel close because Liesel's provocative behavior distracts her from her depression from her son's death. She basically wants Liesel around because Liesel is able to draw away the depressing thoughts Ilsa has. On the other hand, Hans Hubermann helps hide Max Vandenburg from being captured by the Nazis because "he had Erik Vandenburg to thank" (Zusak 176) for saving his life during the First World War. He offers Erik's wife to call him whenever she needs help as compensation. He feels obligated to do this because he would feel guilty if he did not do anything in return for the man that saved his life.

When Max's call for help comes, Hans wants to fulfill his promise to the Vandenburg family so that he won't feel any guilt for being the sole survivor of the battle. In order to fulfill his sense of justice, he agrees to hide Max in his house. He does not want to shoulder the burden of knowing that he allowed his savior's son to die when he had an opportunity of saving him or at least increasing his chances of survival. He also wants to be true to

himself and do what he believes is the right thing to do because “ A Jew once saved his life and he could not forget that” (Zusak 180).

Furthermore, in *Night*, Elie and his father struggle to keep each other alive because they give each other a reason to continue living in the world. Elie does his best to persuade his father to keep living, and he tells himself that he “[has] no right to let [himself] die” because he “ is his [father’s] sole support” (Wiesel 87). They both do not want to be left to fend for themselves in the work camps and to have to face the harshness of the world themselves. Their dependency for each other is shown when the “ father and son often walk together holding hands in the camps, afraid that they will be separated.

They ask for the same work assignments, sleep in the same building, share food, and sing Hasidic songs together” (Wiesel 29). Elie looks towards his father for guidance, and his father looks towards Elie for strength. They keep each other alive for their own self benefit so that they will have someone to lean on for help. Despite Elie’s close relationship with his father, that wasn’t the case for all fathers and sons. As the Jews were being transported to a different camp, German workers would take “ a piece of bread out of [their] bag and [throw] it into a wagon” (Wiesel 100). The men inside the wagon fight like animals for a few crumbs.

One old man manages to get a piece. His son sees and attacks his own father for the bread. He is motivated to kill his own father for it for his desire to survive and live on. He is not interested in the well-being, but only of his own. He will do whatever is necessary for survival. Angel of Bergen-Belsen,

The Lunch Date, The Book Thief, and Night all show the same trait of self-interest being the main cause for motivating people to make the decisions they make. Even though their actions will have a good effect, their intentions behind them are actually for their own self-interests and benefits.