

A time of peace people

[History](#)



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Lies soon learns the true power of the written word; the power to destroy society, while at the same time, the power of having a calming influence on people. At the beginning of the book, Lies cannot read or write.

However, when she does learn to read, she is able to have a somewhat calming effect on the people around her, but on the other hand, Lies uses the power of words as a way to strip away Hitler's power over the people of Germany. She is able to utilize words in such a way that it abolishes the fear that is constantly looming over Germany during Hitler's sign, if only for a brief moment. The Grave Digger's Handbook is Lies's first theft. The theft of this book represents the last time she sees her brother after he died on the train ride to Mulching. Werner Impinge, Lies's brother, has a coughing fit and when the coughing stops, so does his life. The narrator, Death, comes onto the train and takes his soul as Lies watches the light fade from his eyes (19-20).

At Werner gravesite one of the grave diggers drops his book, The Grave Digger's Handbook (23-24). Because Lies is illiterate she is unable to read this book which makes it more of a memento of the last time that she sees her brother alive. Due to her lack of reading skills she is ostracized in her community.

One day during a school break a classmate, Ludwig Schemers, makes a snaky comment about her inability to read the simplest of materials (78). In this way the author shows that even in the eyes of children the illiterate are seen as inferior intellectually. Though she is unable to read The Grave Diggers Handbook, she still holds onto the book in hopes she will be able to

read it in the future. One morning Hans is changing her sheets when the book falls out from underneath the mattress (53-54). This is how Lies begins her lessons in reading and writing. At the Hibernates' house The Grave Digger's Handbook does not just symbolize the death of Lisle's brother and the last time she sees her mother, but also the strengthening bonds between Lies and the Hibernates.

One night Lies is having a nightmare about her brothers coughing fit and she gets so scared that she soils the sheets. Her screaming has become a common occurrence and brings Hans into her room to comfort her. When he walks into the room, he smells the soiled sheets. As Hans egging to change the sheets on the bed, the book falls from under the mattress. This is the first time that Hans sees the book. He takes Lies down into the basement to begin her reading lessons.

There are paint cans in the basement due to Hans occupation as a painter. Hans paints letters on the walls. (53-54).

This becomes a nightly event thus creating a sense of security, order, calm, and friendship into her unstable life. Throughout the book Doll Hitler is seen as a symbol of many things from multiple perspectives of different people such as Lies, who in the beginning of the book dreams that Hitler is smiling down at her in one of his speeches and asks her a question (20-21). In revealing this to the reader, the author shows the common thoughts of Hitler at the time of his uprising in his " Dictatorship with all its methods of terror, and its cynical and open denial of the rule of law" (" The Nazi Regime" I). However, as time progresses Lies begins to see Hitler as the monster that

the rest of the world sees. Max Vandenberg, a Jew hiding in the Haberdasher's basement, often imagines himself boxing Hitler but most of the time Hitler wins due to his cheating (251-254). The reader can infer that Max isn't just fighting Hitler but also the whole of Germany because of their aversion toward the Jewish populace as a whole, in part because of Hitler's propaganda that the Jews caused the loss of World War One.

Hitler is credited for saying "To conquer a nation, first disarm its citizens" ("Doll' 1). While this quote could be taken as a reference about literal weapons such as guns, knives, and other physical weapons, it is possible to take it that he was talking about books. People throughout history have used books as a way to gain power, knowledge, hope, metaphorical freedom, and influence in their community.

It is shown in the book that Hitler is burning books. This can be seen as his way of "disarming" Germany's people, stripping them of their right to the power that books can grant. This event lays the foundation for future resentment toward Hitler.

After the Hitler Youth's March, and the crowd begins to dissipate, Lies is still standing next to the pyre when she sees a book that isn't burned as bad as the rest. She reaches into the fire to take it out when she thinks that no one is looking. After she leaves, the author warns the reader that while Lies was getting the book out of the fire she was in fact being watched by Sis Hermann, the mayor's wife (108-122).

Even though Sis Hermann has every opportunity to turn Lies in for stealing a book that was being burned, she does not and invites her into her own

personal library to read from her collection of books. By revealing this to the reader the author shows that Sis Hermann also has a passion for reading and books and that Lies isn't the only person in Mulching that does not approve of Hitler's methods on changing Germany. Life in Germany in this time erred is a time of fear and desolation. No one feels safe and no one has any hope or aspirations Of their own makings; the people aren't actually living, they are just existing. One night during an air raid on the next street over everyone on Hummel Street goes to a house down the street with a basement that is deep enough to be a suitable bomb shelter. Children are crying and the adults have concern written plainly on each of their faces. Lies does what she now does best; she reads. At first she reads out loud quietly to herself, but when Lisle's friend, Rudy Steiner, notices what she is doing he test his siblings' attention to quiet them down so that he could hear.

Once the people around her start to notice that she is reading and just trying to be as calm as possible, they quiet their voices down and allow Lisle's voice to bounce off the walls. The children that were crying are now sleeping quietly, while the adults listen raptly to the story that is being told by the little girl with a book (381-382). This scene from the book shows that even in the midst of war and bombings, on the next street over there can be peace and tranquility.

Frau Healthful, the Haberdasher's neighbor and Rojas's nemesis, ekes Lisle's reading so much that she tells Rosa that she will stop spitting on her door every night and give the Hibernates her ration of coffee if Lies will agree to come over and read to her (385-386). This shows that even in a time of

peace people will still listen to the power of words even when there isn't any destruction and that people can still be deeply influenced. In a sense this strips away Hitter's power over the people, even if for a brief moment.

Through the authors methods the reader is able to infer that books can be a source of both great destruction and tranquility. By juxtaposing two polar opposites the author shows that while these two forces are on different ends of the spectrum they can still occur at the same time.