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just something so...fascinating...about her that I cannot stay away from it.Meanwhile Liesel slowly grows up in the heart of Nazi Germany. Her adoptive Papa and Mama make her bleak life bearable. But Rudy, her best friend, makes everything right in this world. A snowball in the face is surely the perfect beginning to a lasting friendship. But their idyllic lives cannot stay that way forever. Food shortages are rampant, money becomes ever tighter and Papa's son believes every word from Hitler. And throughout all of this, Death watches.... and waits. Even death has a heart. When I have avoided this one for so long...and I'm so glad that I finally took the plunge.Normally, I dislike most books/movies/games set in Nazi Germany.I absolutely hate anything that turns that much pain and sorrow into a gimmick to sell more of the product. I feel that a majority of that entertainment field both cheapens the experience and is hugely disrespectful to the victims. I feel like this subject should be treated delicately - and there are very few bits of media that I feel do it justice.The Book Thief was just absolutely perfect in that sense. This book was just the right mixture of joys and sorrows, of highs and lows, and of good and evil.I loved Liesel and the way she grew up against the ever-present tide of Nazis. The way she and her family struggled against the world, by hiding a Jew or showing sympathy, really made this book shine.Death made an interesting perspective, though I wish the book would have been narrated more from inside his head. Overall, loved this one. Though (and this may be just me), but am I the only one disappointed by the title? really was expecting a bit more book-thievery...instead Liesel was (mostly) given the very few books that she "steals". Audiobook CommentsExtremely well-read - an absolute delight to listen to!YouTube | Blog | Instagram | Twitter | Facebook | Snapchat @miranda_readsSeptember 15, 2007I put off reading this book for the library book club. Here are my three reasons for doing so:1) It's a Young Adult Book. I am an Adult. It can't be that good if it's written for young people.2) It's about the Holocaust, and I think we've all heard enough about that. The author will probably even focus on colors among the grays, as in "Schindler's List."3) I have WAY too many other books to read.After avoiding the book for as long as possible, I sat down, hoping to enjoy it enough to gain some clever comments for the book group.Turns out, most of my concerns were right. But one other thing was also true: THIS BOOK ROCKS.The first thing any review will say about this book is that it is narrated by death. So, I might as well get it out of the way. Death, the Hooded One, the Angel of the Night, narrates. He is very busy during the war years, as you might expect. Some people claim this is a mere gimmick, and that the story is strong enough as it is. I agree that this is a strong story--it moves like a sailboat on a brisk day--but I think the choice to tell it through Death was a good one. Death foreshadows constantly, so we know a bit about which of the characters will die. Instead of ruining the shock value, this heightened my anticipation and dread. And isn't that how people feel during war? They know some of them are bound to die. They know they will lose loved ones. It's one long, hellish wait to see how it will turn out. It's also an unusual take on the Holocaust because it focuses on Liesel, an orphaned German girl living in Hitler's birthplace. Liesel (The Book Thief) and the other characters in this book are rich, interesting, and wily. I say wily because at points in the book you hate them, but they change, and you grow to love them. For instance, Liesel's adopted mother is a foul-mouthed, abusive, sharp woman. (SPOILER-->) When Liesel's orphaned father is shipped off to war, however, Liesel creeps through the house to see Rosa sleeping with her husband's accordion strapped around her waist. Rosa's changes prove one of the greatest reasons to read good literature--to get insight into the type of people we don't usually give a second chance.June 24, 2008I am apparently one of the few people who just do not see what all of the hype is about on "steals one. I was really excited to read this after all of the glowing reviews it got, but I was left extremely disappointed. I found the writing stilted and stuttering (hard to stutter in writing, but this book pulls it off), overly sentimental, and heavy-handed on the symbolism.I also found the author's approach to the story to be just plain gimmicky. The first and foremost gimmick (also see heavy-handed symbolism) is that the story is narrated by Death. Now, this might work in some books, but not this one. The choice of narrator adds absolutely nothing to the story; it is only a distraction to the reader, and it also encouraged the author to add trite observations about Death's perspective (for example, he doesn't carry a scythe, but likes the human image) that add nothing to the story. If Death here had been given developed personality or a unique perspective, then maybe (and even then it's a stretch) the choice of narrator would have worked. As it is, the story is told almost entirely as though by an omniscient narrator (is Death omniscient?) and we get absolutely nothing from the choice of Death to fill the role. It's a gimmick, and it falls flat.The other gimmick I found most distracting (these are not the only two, but they are the most egregious) is the repeated use of little newsflash-type, bold and underlined notes that appear periodically through the story to highlight some stupid point and add (in the author's mind) dramatic effect. These newsflashes, as I think of them, were irritating and served only to break up the natural narrative flow without adding anything significant. This is another example of the author hitting the reader over the head with his points, rather than trusting his own writing to get the message across. This is another ill-conceived and heavy-handed gimmick intended to correct for a poor narrative.I think it is telling that while this book gets listed as teen fiction, Zusak actually wrote it for adults. For some reason, it got identified as being for teens when it got marketed in the U.S. (it was written in Australia). It seems to me that the explanation for this change is that the novel feels like it was written by a very immature author, and so the prose does not attain the quality one should expect of adult fiction.I think good Holocaust stories need to be told, but the Book Thief fails at that endeavor. The story is trite; the narrative is sentimental and uninspired. I recommend that you look elsewhere for something better. If you want something for younger readers, try Number the Stars, by Lois Lowry. If you're a bit older, also read Night by Elie Weisel or the Diary of Anne Frank. I might even add in Fahrenheit 451 by Ray Bradbury, to counteract the heavy-handed book-burning theme of the Book Thief. There's plenty more out there that better deserve your time and attention than does this book.April 16, 2016I hate it when this happens. I truly do. It makes me feel wrong inside when everyone else loves a book that I find to be underwhelming... I mean, what's wrong with me?? Did I not get it?? Obviously it must be a lack of intelligence or something because everyone seems to rate this 5 stars. I was looking through my friend reviews hoping that someone would share my opinion - at least a tiny bit - and seeing 5 stars, 5 stars, 4.5 stars, 5 stars... I can appreciate that Markus Zusak is a very talented writer, some of the phrases he uses are beautiful and highly quotable - more reminiscent of poetry than prose. And the story idea? A tale narrated by Death and set in Nazi Germany... original and ominous. But it was the story-telling that never really worked for me. This is one of those incredibly slow, subtle books that are told in a series of anecdotes and are meant to cleverly build up a bigger picture... but the stories just didn't interest me.I could imagine I was reading a collection of short stories (and not a full-length novel) about playground fights, developing friendships, WWI stories and death. The book felt almost episodic in nature. These stories are supposed to come together and form a novel that is all kinds of awesome, but it was so bland. I also think that nearly 600 pages of "subtlety" can make you want to throw yourself off the nearest tall building... anyone read To the Lighthouse and spend 99% of it just wishing they'd get to the effin' lighthouse?! I'm giving this book 3 stars for the pretty words and the concept. But other than that this book unfortunately won't stay with me. I find it an easily forgettable novel. I'm sorry (Blog | Facebook | Twitter | Instagram | YouTube | Store2011 historical young-adultDecember 4, 2013I give this 5 stars, BUT there is a disclaimer: If you want a fast read, this book is not for you. If you only like happy endings this book is not for you. If you don't like experimental fiction, this book is not for you. If you love to read and if you love to care about the characters you read about and if you love to eat words like they're ice cream and if you love to have your heart broken and mended on the same page, this book is for you. This story is narrated by Death during World War II, and it is the story of a young German girl who comes of age during one of the most horrific times in recent history. Death has a personality. If something bad is about to happen, Death warns you ahead of time. My favorite part is when "he" stomps on his way to retrieve a thousand souls from a bomb raid. Death is trying to understand the human race as much as the humans are. When "his" job becomes unbearable, he watches the color of the sky as he gathers the souls and carries them away. The descriptions of the sky are like nothing I've ever read. A few quotes: In years to come, he would be a giver of bread, not a stealer - proof again of the contradictory human being. So much good, so much evil, just add water. p.164The town that afternoon was covered in a yellow mist, which stroked the rooftops as if they were pets and filled up the streets like a bath. p.247He was more a black suit than a man. His face was a mustache. p.413He does something to me, that boy. Every time. It's his only detriment. he steps on my heart. He makes me cry. p.531There was once a strange, small man. He decided three important details about his life. 1. He would part his hair from the opposite side to everyone else. 2. He would make himself a small, strange mustache. 3. He would one day rule the world. ...Yes, the Fuhrer decided that he would rule the world with words. p.445Crowd-pleasers fiction teen April 28, 2020I devoured this. I read it, then I read it again, and now I want to read it for a third time. I've really got to move on, but this was just so good for all. I loved it, and I think the heroine is just superb. A book thieving heroine? Say no more! For me, one of the most important aspects of a well written character is someone I can sympathise with and feel vast quantities of empathy for. So, when the protagonist is in love with reading and appreciates the freedom it can grant, I find myself somewhat immediately won over to her cause. Liesel's story is woe begotten and tragic yet she always seems to carry on; she always seems to realise that there are good things in this world. And they're not just books; they're people too. She doesn't give up and fall into a pit of self-pity. You've got to hand it to her for that. For a young girl she is incredibly strong. She's written so well, it's so easy to invest in her story and wish for her to have an ending she deserves. But, death, by its very nature, doesn't work that way. "A small fact: You are going to die...does this worry you?" Indeed, Death is cold and indiscriminating; he can come at any time and take anyone. I should have known this was going to be a sad one. Death pretty much said so from the start. But one can hope: one can hope that someone who has gone through so much will get a happy ending, though that's not the point of this book. I'm saddened by the ending, but it was necessary. This book's impact would have been marginally lessened if the deaths didn't happen at the end. At least Liesel found some degree of comfort, which lifted the veil of misery somewhat. The ending of this book is precisely what made it so powerful. I wouldn't want it's sadness any other way. A fantastic story Liesel is an orphan, and when she was adopted I expected her to have an absolutely terrible time. I expected her adopted parents to be awful. This just seemed like the predictable route this story would take, and I'm glad it didn't go that way because Liesel learnt the value of human kindness. In the Hubermann household she received warmth and comfort. Hans Hubermann is an excellent man; he is open-hearted and genuine in his affection. He is everything the young orphan needed in a parent, and he is everything that was needed to balance the darkness in the book. He is a true figure of strength and someone who represents the underappreciated resistance to Nazism within Germany during WW2. He refuses to become a member of the political party and even hides a Jew in his basement. He's a good man, a great man. He is Liesel's rock and figure of morale guidance. He's a great character. I know I keep saying that but it is so true. Everything about this book is just brilliant. I think this is such an accomplished story. It takes a lot to write a book like this, and to end it like this. The temptation to end it differently must have been humongous. It's refreshing to see a modern story actually end how it should rather than the easier route of a happy ending. This certainly won't be the last book I'll be reading by Marcus Zusak. An outstanding five stars You can connect with me on social media via My Linktree. January 27, 2023Wow. Words cannot describe how much I loved this book, what impact it had on me. But, like Liesel, words is all I have, so I will have to try. This is a lyrical, poignant, heartbreaking, soul-shattering story disjointedly told by a nearly-omniscient, fascinated by humans narrator - Death. (***I must confess that I kept imagining Death as the small-caps speaking Grim Reaper from Pratchett's Discworld, baffled by humans and loving cats and curry. Don't judge me - I needed a glimpse of fun in the bleakness of Zusak's story.***) Death has plenty to keep it busy, as the story is set in Nazi Germany during World War II. ""Please believe me when I tell you that I picked up each soul that day as if it were newly born. I even kissed a few weary, poisoned cheeks. I listened to their last, gasping cries. Their vanishing words. I watched their love visions and freed them from their fear.""And yet he becomes strangely fascinated with one particular human, the titular book thief, a young German girl Liesel Meminger, whose childhood is marked by war, who learns to read and love and treasure books, who has her small rebellions against the force of society, who learns to love and be loved. Who has to learn to lose what she loves. Because the world is baffling, because it is a cruel place, because often it tries to stomp out love and beauty."I guess humans like to watch a little destruction. Sand castles, houses of cards, that's where they begin. Their great skills in their capacity to escalate."The book is beautifully surreal, and the masterfully written language reflecting the alien, non-understandable, strangely fascinating nature of the narrator - Death. It is the mix of colors and strange metaphors, semi-dictionary entries and frequent strange asides, with skipping time, with complete disregard for spoilers. "Of course, I'm being rude. I'm spoiling the ending, not only of the entire book, but of this particular piece of it. I have given you two events in advance, because I don't have much interest in building mystery. Mystery brags me. It chores me. I know what happens and so do you. "It will note the strangest things, ruminate about the weirdest subjects, and casually in the middle of a lyrical passage, omnisciently will tell us that terrible things are about to occur. It is its job to know, after all. And this prescience does not soften the blows when they finally come; it only brings anticipatory dread and loving appreciation for things and people while they still ARE."Years ago, when they'd raced on a muddy field, Rudy was a hastily assembled set of bones, with a jagged, rocky smile. In the trees this afternoon, he was a giver of bread and teddy bears. He was a triple Hitler Youth athletics champion. He was her best friend. And he was a month from his death." Love Beauty. And books. This is what the story set against the terrible backdrop of war is about. Zusak accomplished a difficult feat - making me ache for the children of the enemy, the children and people of Nazi Germany, because even when caught in the middle of destruction, even ending up on different sides of artificial barricades people are still people, still deserving of love, still beautiful.This book is the ode to those who kept their humanity in the middle of war, who were so human that nothing could ever change that. Rudy Steiner; the boy with the "hair the color of lemons", who has so much love and integrity and life that I cried myself to sleep over his fate that Death so casually and cruelly revealed to us, who was by Liesel's side since the beginning of their friendship. "A snowball in the face is surely the perfect beginning to a lasting friendship." - Rudy, who dreamed about the kiss from Liesel until the end of his bright and too-short life."She leaned down and looked at his lifeless face and Liesel kissed her best friend, Rudy Steiner, soft and true on his lips. He tasted dusty and sweet. He tasted like regret in the shadows of trees and in the glow of the anarchist's suit collection. She kissed him long and soft, and when she pulled herself away, she touched his mouth with her fingers... She did not say goodbye. She was incapable, and after a few more minutes at his side, she was able to tear herself from the ground. It amazes me what humans can do, even when streams are flowing down their faces and they stagger on.""He does something to me, that boy. Every time. It's his only detriment. He steps on my heart. He makes me cry."Hans and Rosa Hubermann, who possessed so much integrity and courage, who became real parents to Liesel, who risked everything for what they thought was right. Max Vandenburg, the Jewish fistfighter, who dreamed of battling Hitler and gave Liesel the perfect gift with everything he had."[...] Papa, you saved me. You taught me to read. No one can play like you. I'll never drink champagne. No one can play like you.""Make no mistake, the woman had a heart. She had a bigger one than people would think. There was a lot in it, stored up, high in miles of hidden shelving. Remember that she was the woman with the instrument strapped to her body in the long, moon-slit night.""And Liesel herself, lost and broken, but finding comfort and strength in family, friends, and books. Liesel, who learns more about the cold cruelty of this world than most children should ever know. Liesel, who learns to read from the Gravedigger's handbook, who rescues the book from fire, who would rather steal books than food, who is not afraid to show kindness in the face of very real threat, who finally gives Rudy that overdue kiss, who fascinates even Death itself. All of them remained human despite the circumstances, despite the pressure to do otherwise, despite anything. And I love them for that.This is a wonderful, lyrical, surreal, excellent book that broke my heart into tiny little pieces and yet gave me hope that even in the worst of times we can find beauty. 5 stars is not enough, but this is all I can give. "I have hated words and I have loved them, and I hope I have made them right."-----DISCLAIMER: This is the first review that I've wrote after working four 14-hour days in a row followed by endless reading of textbooks and paperwork, all sore from endless and painful retracting in surgery, having composed this review in my head as a means to not pass out from hunger in the endless surgery. So if something in it seems incoherent - that's why.2011-reads 2012-reads awesome-kickass-heroines October 10, 2023 Saumensch. 1939, Nazi Germany. Liesel Meminger is an impoverished and fragile ten years old girl barely scrapping by with her foster parents, the Hubermanns; the ever loving Hans and the deathly strict Rosa. On her spare time Liesel plays with her neighbor Rudy, and secretly steals books, any book she can find. Dedicated studies, work commitment and fierce sacrifices the daily routine; until one day an injured agonizing Jewish man collapses at the doorstep of their home. His mere presence endangering all their lives, if someone ever finds out.By far the best WWII Historical Fiction I've ever read methinks, with an infinity of quotes and moments to remember by. Literary perfection as far as I'm concerned, especially for a lover of words, and a bookworm. A beautifully crafted unforgettable story, equally heartbreaking and heartwarming to no end; exquisitely weaved, with a flawless style of writing. So many terribly endearing characters; Liesel, Hans, Max, Rudy, and even Rosa, sometimes. The hairbrush whisper! Amazing progression and character development. Consistently captivating storytelling, and even sporadically funny at times; with a completely unexpected and devastating ending that I'll never forget, or get over from. My Rudy

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