

Be Brave

Life abounds with obstacles. Obstacles that we all encounter at different extremes, but experience nonetheless. When difficulties arise, we strive to resolve them. In some instances, our struggles overtake us. We are sometimes unable to lift the weight of our troubles alone. We sometimes need the help of others. The help that does not always come easily.

The Book Thief by Markus Zusak reminds us that supporting other people can be difficult. It presents us with the challenge we all must face – to do the right thing.

This book illustrates the life of a young girl named Liesel whose family has taken a Jewish man into hiding during the Holocaust. Fully aware of the danger they face from the Nazis, Liesel's family chooses to protect Max from torture and death.

Choosing to do the right thing is often much different from choosing the easy thing. It requires you to dig deeper, ponder, and reflect. The right thing often involves risk and hardship. Doing right is honorable. When you do what you know is right, you gain respect for yourself.

In all honesty, I do not take as many risks as I wish I did. At times, my desire to protect myself stands in the way of trying to improve the lives of people around me. To avoid being labeled a goody-goody, I sometimes keep my thoughts to myself. My fear is that calling people out on the prejudice in their jokes will make them decide that they don't want to be friends with me because I can't simply take a joke.

What I would like to be is more like Liesel's best friend, Rudy. When Rudy sees his friend Tommy being bullied by their Hitler Youth leader it doesn't take long for him to step in. Well aware of the consequences, Rudy refuses to sit back and watch as his friend is tormented. I admire Rudy's courage.

Liesel and Rudy take many risks. One of these occurs when the Nazi soldiers are marching Jewish prisoners through the town. Rudy shows Liesel a bag full of bread and says, "Take a handful." Liesel replies, "I'm not sure this is a good idea." Rudy responds with, "Your papa did" (440). Liesel and Rudy demonstrate a desire for making other people happier, even when it brings them danger. This is another example of great courage.

People that put others before themselves are extremely courageous. When we are fearful, we often keep ourselves from doing impactful things. Following the examples of Liesel and Rudy, we can learn from *The Book Thief* that doing what is right is not necessarily rewarded by society. Sometimes doing the right thing means challenging societal norms, which can be dangerous and uncomfortable. After running to Max in the march of the Jewish prisoners, Liesel is met with harsh consequences. "The whip sliced her collarbone and reached across her shoulder blade" (513).

The Book Thief inspires me to try to be courageous. Liesel, her family, and Rudy cast aside what dangers might come to them and do things because they are simply right. It inspires me to think of the people who have more obstacles than I do. I want to go through life bettering the lives of people around me. I want to make a difference.

Everyone needs to read *The Book Thief* because people of all cultures struggle with prejudice and discrimination. Reading about people like Liesel and Rudy can inspire readers of all ages to stand up against injustice. We are different, but also the same. We must unite to help one another through the hardships we all must endure because that is what is right.

Works Cited:

Zusak, Markus. *The Book Thief*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006.