Heather McDaniels

Mrs. Rutan

AP Literature and Composition

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Dear Markus Zusak,

I have recently just finished reading your book, The Book Thief. I absolutely loved this book. I couldn’t put it down. While I was reading, I learned so many different things from the way you wrote the book, to the actual facts of the story. I thought it was absolutely brilliant how you wrote the book in Death’s eyes. I have never read a piece of literature in such a strange and demented perspective before. I also liked how you kind of broke up the chapters with bold and capital letters that described what Death was thinking, or hinted at an up and coming event. I also enjoyed how you incorporated a little bit of the German language into the story on occasion. It really added to the feel of the story and made me feel like I was actually in a different country. Before reading this story, I didn’t know a lot about the German people and what they had to endure during the Holocaust. I have learned that it wasn’t a pleasant time for anyone in Germany. The poorer people still were hungry, cold, and miserable—just like the Jewish people. Before reading this book, I had a picture in my head that all the Germans were just stupid, oblivious people that had no idea what was going on within their own country. Now I know the truth. Not all Germans were bad. Not all Germans hated the Jews… just the vast majority of them. It was interesting for me to learn how it felt to actually hide a Jew. The fear of being discovered, the fear of Max dying, and the fear of not enough food or money to support all of them.

There weren’t many things that I disliked about the book. However, there was one major thing. The ending. Why did you have to kill off everyone that Liesel loved besides Max? This was completely ironic to me because the whole story I was thinking that in the end Max would be found and killed in a concentration camp. I know it’s terrible for me to say that, but it’s how I felt. When we first learned about Max, he was in a tiny room and could barely move. He had nothing and he was no one. I felt so bad for Max in the beginning of the story because all I could think about was how he was probably going to die. When Max got to Himmel Street to live with the Hubermanns, I thought he was going to die there. Then when Max got sick over the winter I believed it was the end there too. I guess I’m only upset because the entire story I was preparing myself for Max’s death and then out of no where you decided to kill Papa, Mama, Rudy, and many others. Even though I didn’t really enjoy this ending personally as a reader, deep down I know that this ending made the story. Without this ending, the book wouldn’t have been as shocking or interesting.

This book should definitely be read in a high school context because I feel as if history teachers only teach one side of the Holocaust. They only teach the cruel and demented ways of Hitler and his followers, not of the people who stood up to Hitler and opened up their homes to the struggling Jewish people. This book is very insightful. It has revealed a side of the Holocaust that I’ve never seen before. I believe that it is great for students to read this book along with learning about the Holocaust. It promotes a more well-rounded idea of what actually happened during that terrible time, and it also can expose them to thinking outside of the box and experimenting with new writing techniques.

I would just like to thank you for writing this wonderful book and opening my eyes for the future. I look forward to using different narrators to my stories in the future, along with learning more and more about the Holocaust.

Sincerely,

Heather McDaniels