



Love and Kindness during wartime in Markus Zusak's The Book Thief

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Abstract

The current study sheds light on the importance of love and kindness during the hard times of wars. The study calls for greater attention to consider the human side and human emotions like love, compassion and kindness for being the best shelters and ways of survival against the destruction of wars. The paper presents an analytical study to the historical novel under study, Markus Zusak's The Book Thief (2005) by exploring the characters and clarifying how their life experiences shaped their destinies using the Sociopolitical Development Theory. The novel demonstrates the impact of the political conflicts and wars on societies and depict the characters' suffering, struggle and resilience in the face of oppression and persecution. The study aims to prove that even through darkness and despair of bleak situations, there can be a glimmer of hope out of unbreakable bonds of love and friendship.

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الملخص:

تهدف الرسالة الحالية لتسليط الضوء على اهمية الحب والعطف خلال الاوقات العصبية للحروب. تدعو الدراسة لابداء المزيد من الاهتمام بالجانب الانساني والمشاعر الإنسانية كالحب والعطف والرحمة كونها الملاذات الامنة والسبل المثلى للنجاة من دمار الحروب. يقدم البحث دراسة تحليلية للرواية التاريخية المدروسة *سارقة الكتب* (٢٠٠٥) لماركوس زوساك وذلك من خلال سير غور الشخصيات واطهار حقيقة ان تجاربهم الحياتية قد ساعدت في تشكيل مصيرهم باستخدام نظرية التطوير الاجتماعي والسياسي. هذه الرواية توضح تأثير الصراعات السياسية والحروب على المجتمعات وتجسد معاناة الشخصيات، صراعهم وصمودهم في وجه الظلم والاضطهاد. تثبت الدراسة انه حتى في احلك الظروف الباعثة لليأس وهناك دائما بريق أمل يشع من اواصر الحب والصدقة المتينة.

Introduction :

War is one of the most terrible things, which may happen to any nation at any time. Not only do war stories hold political and social relevance, but they also deeply affect readers on an emotional level. In them, characters are often dealing with tragedies of losing their loved ones, home or even their past. Wars demonstrate people's best and worst qualities. Wars make people fight against other people, and sometimes they suffer from internal conflicts even with themselves which torture their souls.

In *The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak, even Death comments on war as a whole, saying "I've seen so many young men over the years who think they're running at other young men. They are not. They're running at me." (Zusak 174-175) This is basically death's mockery of the human action of war, saying that they are not protecting anything, they are simply pushing themselves towards tragedy. Nevertheless, these men keep their courage high, and have the hope that they will survive. Zusak describes death as a compassionate character who tries to warm the cold souls he takes away. In this case death becomes their survival from violence and misery where they find comfort and peace. Zusak emphasizes the importance of kindness and compassion shown by some characters to help themselves and others to survive.

Without any doubts, any war symbolizes destructions and changes, which considerably influence each person. The impact of war on people's health and well-being is devastating. Conflict circumstances cause more deaths and disabilities than any major disease, according to studies. In addition to destroying families and communities, war frequently impedes the growth of a country's social and economic fabric. War-related deaths are only the "tip of the iceberg" when it comes to the other fallout, which also includes suffering, poverty, disability, social or economic degradation, and a host of other ailments. Wars bring certain changes into lives and make people look at the same situations and things in different ways. Some people are ready to these changes

and survive after the war; while others are too weak to go against and prove something, this is why they die or hide; and some people have enough power not only to survive, but also to become heroes, help other people cope with all those difficulties, and be free.

Global wars and hostilities are severing families and compelling individuals to flee their residences and close companions in search of refuge in other places. There are many demands from people around the world to think about the moral standards of humanity and the laws of public conscience to stop letting life and death decisions to be made by machines of war. These demands are reflected and emphasized by many authors all over the world in their literary works. Lots of novelists created numerous works in which they represent what a challenge people faced during wars, and *The Book Thief* is a good example. The novel tells stories from the past times based on real historical events. This interest in building up a memory of the past comes to terms with one of the most painful facets in the history of humanity, World War II.

1.2 Sociopolitical Development Theory

Sociopolitical Development (SPD) is the process of how “individuals acquire the knowledge, analytical skills, emotional faculties, and the capacity for action in political and social systems necessary to interpret and resist oppression”. (Watts et al., 2003, p. 185) Sociopolitical Development is an emerging theory that builds upon concepts such as empowerment, oppression, liberation, critical consciousness, and culture that are associated with social change and activism in community psychology.

Sociopolitical Development (SPD) plays a crucial role in human development as it emphasizes the significance of comprehending the cultural and political influences that contribute to an individual's position within society. The scope of this endeavor extends beyond mere resistance against tyranny in pursuit of justice. Rather, an essential component of this undertaking lies in the ability to conceive about and actively contribute to the establishment of a fair and equitable society. At more advanced levels of study, sociopolitical development theory is seen as the mechanisms that enhance an individual's ability to comprehend and change systems. (Swift & Levin, 1987). Rarely do these conceptualizations include an analysis of the ways in which social power produces and perpetuates social inequality, or the psychological, spiritual, and material consequences of dehumanization and marginalization. All of these phenomena may manifest as components of oppressive systems. As posited by Watts, Griffith, and Abdul-Adil (1999), oppression may be seen as a systematic application of authority by a socially prominent group over another, resulting in the continuation of unequal distribution of valuable resources. The perpetuation and propagation of oppression occur through material violence, such as physical

coercion, intimidation, denial of rights and resources, and restrictions on movement. Additionally, additional forms of violence, known as subtle or ideological violence, also contribute to the maintenance of oppressive systems. Physical and intellectual violence exhibit a mutually reinforcing relationship whereby physical violence serves to create social dominance, while ideological violence functions to legitimate and normalize repressive social dynamics and material inequalities. (Williams, 1998). The intricacies of the relationships involved are complex, nevertheless, it is evident that ideological violence serves as a fundamental element in perpetuating systems of oppression. One aspect of ideological violence is the phenomenon of cultural subordination or "natal alienation" (Patterson, 1982), in which the oppressor distorts or eradicates the cultural legacy of the oppressed.

In order to successfully address oppression, it is essential to critically analyze and deconstruct its underlying ideological frameworks, while simultaneously challenging its explicit manifestations of mistreatment and deprivation. A sociopolitical analysis of oppression is seen as one of the essential abilities or talents necessary for this endeavor. Furthermore, an additional aspect is the use of these observations in the context of social change. An important part of the scholarly discourse around sociopolitical development theory begins by delving into the examination of oppression and the vital function of critical awareness in the perception and resistance of such oppression. The significance of resistance lies in its ability to drive concrete change, while analysis devoid of action fails to provide substantial outcomes.

Sociopolitical development refers to the progressive acquisition of individuals' ability to critically assess the circumstances of their existence, comprehend the mechanisms that subject them to oppression, and then undertake transformational acts. (Watts, Williams, & Jagers, 2003). Critical thinking as well as psychological empowerment are considered to be fundamental components of sociopolitical development. Critical thinking empowers the individuals to identify various issues, construct strong arguments and generate creative solutions for any problem. Nevertheless, when individuals reach more advanced stages of development, there is a notable shift in both cognitive processes and behavior. For instance, psychological empowerment encompasses more than just an individual's self-perceived ability; it also involves active participation within one's society and an extensive knowledge of the sociopolitical context in which one exists. (Zimmerman, 1995, p. 582)

Critical thinking relies on the emotional skills which play a vital role in making relationships and communication with other people in addition to the individuals' ability to survive in the social world. The attainment of liberation requires the presence of foresight, including a shift from a critical mindset to

one that embraces creativity. The act of critique highlights the need for novel concepts and proactive measures, while the ability to think creatively is essential in envisioning an improved cultural and moral framework. The spectrum of goals include endeavors that aim to get concessions from established systems, as well as those that strive for a complete deconstruction and subsequent rebuilding of these institutions.

When formulating a theoretical framework for sociopolitical evolution, it may not be necessary to adopt a certain ideological position when defining the notion of emancipation. Similar to the concept of oppression, freedom may be seen as both a dynamic process and a resultant state. The steps involved include the examination and critique of significant social inequalities across different social groups, as well as the establishment of novel connections that undermine repressive societal narratives, attitudes, and behaviors. The result of this process plays a significant role in the formation of a transformed society that fosters the fulfillment of many demands, including economic, cultural, political, psychological, social, and spiritual, for both people and communities. People need to be liberated from hegemony and oppression to live peacefully. Though being the culmination for freedom, love does depend on freedom to flourish.

Sociopolitical analysis pertains to the cognitive dimension of sociopolitical evolution, including an individual's perspective on the origins and ramifications of a certain sociopolitical occurrence or issue. The analysis of an individual can vary from a perspective that focuses on individual responsibility, including actions, attitudes, and skills, to explanations at the systems level that attribute the origin and continuation of social phenomena to political, societal, and cultural institutions and patterns beyond the individual. The absence of abilities for fostering communal awareness and advancing social justice arises from an over emphasis on individual psychological development. When the integration of both domains is undertaken, it becomes feasible to see personal and communal development as interconnected facets of the broader notion of human development. Sociopolitical development refers to a psychological phenomenon including many cognitive processes, abilities, attitudes, worldviews, and emotions that contribute to and facilitate engagement in social and political endeavors. (Watts, Griffith, & Abdul-Adil, 1999). Sociopolitical conduct, participation, or action pertains to the behavioral dimension of social and political engagement. The many manifestations of social activism include a wide range of activities, such as engaging in community service, organizing community and labor activities, and participating in politically charged actions that carry higher levels of danger and conflict, such as protests and acts of civil disobedience.

The fundamental premise of the sociopolitical development model is that civic activities are informed by critical social analysis. Critical social analysis is an integral component of social and political development (SPD), including a dynamic comprehension of how societal structures, including economic, political, and cultural systems, influence and maintain the functioning of society. This analysis focuses on the effect of society institutions and processes on an individual's personal, familial, and community statuses and experiences, with particular emphasis on oppression and injustice. (Watts, Diemer, & Voight, 2011; Watts & Guessous, 2006; Watts, Williams, & Jagers, 2003). As social political development (SPD) progresses, individuals have a heightened level of consciousness of prevailing inequality in society and their historical context. This encompasses the differentiation between the many components of oppression, such as the mechanisms involved (e.g., rules and practices) and the resulting effects (e.g., obedience ,trauma, and societal and psychological dysfunction). According to Freire (1990), a prominent Brazilian educator-activist, the term used to describe this state of awareness is "critical consciousness".

The Sociopolitical Development theory was developed on the basis of Freire's conceptualization of critical awareness. (Watts et al., 1999; Watts et al., 2003)The origin of critical awareness may be traced back to the field of educational philosophy as the concept was introduced by Paulo Freire (1970) during his engagement in his educational efforts with rural communities in Brazil. Critical awareness is defined as a transformative process in which people who experience oppression get a full understanding of the structural inequalities that shape their social circumstances. Consequently, they are motivated to take actions to confront and address the fundamental factors that contribute to their subjugation (Freire, 1970; Watts et al., 2011). While critical awareness has been used in other fields such as education, philosophy, and psychology, the present research specifically examines its application within the setting of SPD. Critical awareness within a sociopolitical development paradigm encompasses two primary elements: critical reflection and critical action. (Diemer et al., 2014; Prilleltensky, 2012). Critical reflection is a study and comprehension of sociopolitical and structural inequalities, including social, economic, and political circumstances that limit the pursuit of equal opportunities and sustain inequity.(Diemer & Li, 2011; Watts & Flanagan, 2007). The term "critical action" pertains to the active engagement of individuals or groups in endeavors aimed at altering various elements of society, including inequitable laws and practices inside institutions (Watts et al., 2011; Watts & Flanagan, 2007).

According to work by Watts and Abdul-Adil , the proposed theory outlines a framework consisting of five distinct phases that describe the

progression of sociopolitical development. This developmental process starts with an initial stage characterized by a lack of awareness or acknowledgment of social unfairness, or alternatively seeing it as a manifestation of the inferiority of the marginalized individuals. In the second stage, individuals demonstrate an awareness of inequality but stay away from directly addressing or challenging it. Alternatively, individuals turn to uncooperative methods or use the restricted possibilities to get their desired outcomes, without actively questioning an unjust system that imposes unfair constraints. The subsequent precritical and critical phases mark the emergence of new perspectives on injustice, rooted on the concept of critical awareness. The individual's consciousness gradually expands in relation to the presence of oppression, as well as the underlying historical, cultural, and political mechanisms that perpetuate inequality. The last phase, known as liberation, encompasses the active engagement or strong aspiration to enhance societal circumstances and eradicate instances of oppression. Ultimately, individuals assume an active role in the process of transforming the environment in which they live.

Markus Zusak :Young Adults Novelist

Markus Zusak, an Australian author, was born in the year 1975 in the city of Sydney. He is the youngest sibling among a total of four children, including two sisters and one brother. He was raised in the city of Sydney and still resides there with his spouse and children. He enrolled at Engadine High School and afterwards made a temporary return to the institution to instruct English while concurrently engaging in writing activities. He pursued a course of study in English and history at the University of New South Wales, ultimately earning a Bachelor of Arts degree and a Diploma of Education upon completion.

Zusak started his literary career during his adolescence, precisely at the age of 16, and acknowledged *The Old Man and the Sea* and *What's Eating Gilbert Grape* as sources of inspiration. Prior to the publication of his first book, *The Underdog*, in 1999, he engaged in a range of occupations, including janitorial labour, house painting, and teaching at a school. During one of his interviews, Zusak said that one of his primary sources of inspiration comes from engaging in conversations with diverse individuals on their professional occupations, engaging in reading activities, and consuming films. In his statement, he emphasized the importance of books in his life, highlighting their ability to provide a comfort from one's own reality, but without enabling a complete detachment, 'Books allow us to escape ourselves but not escape fully.'

The author first established himself as a proficient writer of literature targeted towards young adults. However, with his fifth literary work, Zusak embarked on a narrative endeavour to depict the personal accounts of his

parents' formative years amongst the backdrop of World War II, intending to cater to a more mature readership.

According to Zusak, a significant portion of the idea of *The Book Thief* may be attributed to the narratives relayed to him throughout his childhood by his parents. According to Zusak, *The Book Thief* represents a departure from his previous works and draws significant inspiration from the narratives his parents shared with him throughout his childhood, namely those pertaining to Munich and Vienna during times of war. Zusak has explicitly identified two narratives relayed by his mother, namely the account of the Munich bombing and the recollection of Jews being forcibly transported through Zusak's mother's town on their way to the Dachau concentration camp. Zusak's parents had direct personal experiences of World War II in their respective countries of origin prior to their relocation to Australia in the latter half of the 1950s. He stated that, "My Mom and Dad came to Australia [from Germany] with nothing — they didn't have a toothbrush. But they had stories." (Berrin, 2013) Zusak's father was an Austrian who spent the war in Vienna, which in 1945 was besieged and captured by the Soviet Red Army. Similar to the character of Hans Hubermann in *The Book Thief*, his father was employed as a house painter. His mother was a German who grew up in Munich, where she witnessed firsthand both the intense bombing of that city by Allied planes and the degradation of the Jews during the Holocaust. Of his mother's influence, Zusak has said:

Two stories my mother told me affected me a lot. The first was about Munich being bombed, and how the sky was on fire, how everything was red. The second was about something else she saw...One day, there was a terrible noise coming from the main street of town, and when she ran to see it, she saw that Jewish people were being marched to Dachau, the concentration camp. At the back of the line, there was an old man, totally emaciated, who couldn't keep up. When a teenage boy saw this, he ran inside and brought the man a piece of bread. The man fell to his knees and kissed the boy's ankles and thanked him . . . Soon, a soldier noticed and walked over. He tore the bread from the man's hands and whipped him for taking it. Then he chased the boy and whipped him for giving him the bread in the first place. In one moment, there was great kindness and great cruelty, and I saw it as the perfect story of how humans are. (Berrin, 2013)

Markus Zusak is the esteemed author of a total of six literary works. The first three literary works, namely *The Underdog*, *Fighting Ruben Wolfe*, and *When Dogs Cry*, have all been published on a global scale. The novel titled *The Book Thief* was first released in the year 2005 and has since undergone translations into over 40 different languages. *The Book Thief* was first released in 2006 in the author's origin country, Australia, and was considered his first "adult" literary work. However, upon its release in the United States, the

American publisher Knopf chose to position it as a work of young adult fiction. *The Book Thief* has achieved significant success since its release, with its worldwide sales surpassing one million copies. Additionally, the work has been recognised with a Printz Honour. The year 2013 saw the adaptation of the book into both a film and a big motion picture, both with the same title. In 2014, Markus Zusak presented a Ted Talk titled 'The Failurist' at the esteemed Sydney Opera House. The primary emphasis of the discussion was on his drafting process and journey to success through writing *The Book Thief*. Upon commencing the composition of his work, the author first had the intention of exploring the concept of a contemporary "book thief" in modern day Australia. However, subsequent to this initial inclination, the author changed his mind.

In 2018, *The Book Thief* was chosen as one of the most beloved literary works in America, securing the 14th spot on the PBS Great American Read ranking. During the act of writing, the author did not consider writing about book burnings or the destructive power of Hitler's rhetoric. He was not aware that the female protagonist would afterwards reclaim words and craft her own narrative of the world. In *The Independent Culture*, Mariannne Brace mentions in her critical review on *The Book Thief* (2006) that "Zusak gives us all you would expect in a novel about wartime Germany: Hungry children pinching food, book burning and bombing attacks."

Love and kindness in *The Book Thief*

In the historical novel, *The Book Thief*, love is a prominent theme which works to stop the hatred brought along by the war. The love is wide-ranging and includes many kinds of relationships and webs of bonds from family and friendship to the romantic and intimate relationships. The story of *The Book Thief* is set in Germany, during the Nazi reign of Adolf Hitler from 1939 -1943 where even the slightest gestures of kindness and love were occasionally viewed as crimes. Death narrates the events of a story of terror during the World War II which was a time of injustice, inequity, and death. Individuals were the targets of hateful and inhumane behaviors. The start of the infamous Nazi regime was after World War I when Germany lost its power. Hitler, Germany's leader, used his power to start Nazi regime and form the Gestapo, the secret police who stopped people from opposing his ideals. Hitler wanted to exterminate the Jews, so he created the brutal concentration camps where the Jewish people were degraded, tortured and killed.

According to Sociopolitical Development theory, the persecuted individuals can resist oppression and achieve equality by acquiring knowledge, analytical skills and emotional faculties. In *The Book Thief*, Liesel was a communist and Max a Jew, both of them were persecuted and dehumanized. They could use knowledge by reading and writing books to resist the

government. Max used Hitler's book *Mein Kampf* as a protection tool to escape from the Nazis. But, after he was sheltered by the Hubermanns, he started to write his story with Liesel in the same book after painting on the original words of the book. He intended to glorify his own struggle to survive not of Hitler's. Max and Liesel come to realize that books can be used for good and bad purposes. As Hitler used the speeches in his book to encourage the Germans to kill, torture, and destroy, their speeches can help to comfort and forget hatred.

The Book Thief sheds light on individuals who are discovering love despite extreme hate. The book also features romantic love between Liesel and Rudy. Needless to say, Rudy's passing tragically ends their sweet, innocent romance. For the protagonists, love is both a necessity and a victory in such a brutal society in a time of despair and chaos. Through love and kindness, the characters could survive their dreadful world whether it was a profound romantic passion or just a helping hand to someone in need. In *The Book Thief*, the Hubermanns' sheltering and caring for Max, the Jew, is a remarkable act of humanity. They always treat him with the utmost respect and keep him alive at tremendous cost to themselves. Interestingly, they take care of him emotionally, making him feel like a member of the family, in addition to providing for his practical needs like food and housing. Max is treated kindly by Liesel in particular, and the two grow close.

when the war comes to Molching, a tiny German town, Liesel and the Hubermanns discover that love may help create a sense of comfort, protection and security. Max Vandenburg, discovers that the love provided to him by the Hubermanns overcomes the hostility he experiences. During war, the main characters of the story helped each other by showing love and care to live through and pass the hard times. Liesel helped others by creating a distraction in a state of panic and it showcased how her loving act shielded her neighbors from the horror caused by the air raids out of war. Equally important, Rudy also showcased love in the manner of creating a symbol of compassion in the midst of havoc, displaying how love can help overcome hatred even when there seems like everything is hopeless.

Much suffering and struggle was there in Germany during World War II as described by Markus Zusak in this narrative. Death, the narrator, recounts Liesel's upbringing as an orphan brought to a foster home during World War II before being adopted by the kind elderly couple, the Hubermanns ,“ It's the story of one of those perpetual survivors - an expert at being left behind.”(Zusak, p.15) She befriends a Jew who enlightens her about the state of the world and war. In Rudy Steiner, she makes a true friend who begs for a kiss from her. Her stay with the Hubermann's causes her to experience severe trauma. She has never been abandoned before, therefore she needs to do

everything in her power to deal with the anguish and misery of abandonment. There was a terrible war going on between Germany and Russia at that time. Many cities, notably Molching's Himmel Street, were the targets of frequent bombs and raids. The air raids were continuous which came and went at random. Numerous people who might not have agreed with the principles the Nazis were fighting for have died as a result of these raids. Liesel began reading to the terrified group of individuals in the small basement in an attempt to reassure them. She provided consolation to people at this difficult period, and she managed to somewhat improve the situation and lessen fear for a great number of people. Everyone in the room would get calmer after hearing her remarks, and they would stop worrying about their potential demise. Liesel's ability to remain composed in such a crisis was contagious. They just had to be there for one another in difficult times because they loved one other so deeply.

Liesel is portrayed in the novel as an innocent young girl who does not comprehend the world, but tries to overcome great hardships and trials while living and growing up with the Hubermanns on Himmel Street. Throughout the night, she suffers terrible nightmares about her brother's passing. That book she found at her brother's burial, *The Gravedigger's Handbook*, is her last remaining link to her family.

On her first night with the Hubermann's, she had hidden her last link to him- The Gravedigger 's Handbook- under her mattress... It was what it meant that was more important. The books meaning The last time she saw her brother and The last time she saw her mother. (Zusak,2005, p. 38)

Thus, *The Gravedigger's Handbook* had incredible strong sentimental value to Liesel. What makes the book even more important is that when she first began to learn the alphabet, it was this book she was reading at those cherished nights with Hans Hubermann. She utilizes the book as a coping mechanism for her intense loneliness, and Hans, her foster father, provides her courage and helps her get over this loneliness. That is a great way of showing symbolism, as she progresses from not only thinking of her brother and her mother, but also of Hans and all those cherished midnight reading sessions. Liesel had to face the harsh truth of her surroundings, even though she was surrounded by people who loved her. She missed her brother and mother so much that she spent most of her time crying quietly 'she would miss him and frequently cry in the tiny washroom as quietly as possible, but she was still glad to be awake.' (p.43) , 'Sometimes she would whisper the word *Mama* and see her mother's face a hundred times in a single afternoon. But those were small miseries compared to the terror of her dreams.' For this reason the daylight and the sound of the music of the accordion helps her feel safe and comfortable.

Liesel had gone through unspeakable experiences during her years in Nazi Germany ,things that a kid should never have witnessed. In addition to witnessing her younger brother's death and burial, she saw her neighbor, a young soldier in the battlefield, hang himself to end his life. "She had witnessed a Jewish man who had twice given her the most beautiful pages of her life marched into a concentration camp. She had observed the death of an enemy bomber pilot in an aircraft accident close to her home. Liesel suffered psychological harm as a result of numerous traumatic incidents. She was nevertheless one of the book's most compassionate characters. Liesel volunteered to tell stories at the bomb shelter in order to help people relax. Additionally, she was incredibly kind and sympathetic, particularly when Max sought refuge in her basement.

In *The Book Thief*, Liesel finds in the Hubermann's home two caring and loving people, Hans and Rosa Hubermann who would support her and impart survival and growth skills. Liesel was fatherless for nine years until she met Hans Hubermann, who was the ideal father figure for her. Since he persuaded Liesel to leave the foster care car and accompany him to their house, Hans and Liesel have had a close relationship. Hans would come to her chamber and read *The Graves Digger's Handbook*, the first book she had stolen, whenever she had nightmares about her brother's death. As Hans shared Liesel's struggles and taught her to read, they became closer and closer. Christmastime also meant that Hans Hubermann would roll cigarettes to pay for Liesel's books. Liesel felt supported by Hans during her horrific nightmares. Because Hans and Liesel trust each other, it's wonderful that their friendship has survived Liesel's nightmares. Liesel feels a strong connection to Hans Hubermann right away in the beginning. He was incredibly kind, which made it simple for her to love and trust him. He was the one that reassured Liesel and made her feel better during her nightmares. Possibly the only good to come out of these nightmares was that it brought Hans Hubermann , her new papa ,into the room ,to sooth ,to love her. He came in every night and sat with her. The first couple of times, he simply stayed-a stranger to kill the aloneness. A few nights after that, he whispered, 'Shhh, I'm here, it's all right.' After three weeks, he held her. Trust was accumulated quickly, due primarily to the brute strength of the man's gentleness, his thereness. The girl knew from the outset that Hans Hubermann would always appear midscream, and he would not leave. (Zusak, 2005,p.36)

Hans had instantly gained importance in Liesel's life by just being there for her. Liesel believes Hans will always treat her with respect and that he won't ever lie to her. The letters Liesel wrote to her birth mother serve as an example of this. When her mother did not write back, Hans intended to write a response and sign it, but he was unable to accomplish it. Hans is too concerned about their

relationship to risk it as he knows Liesel would never trust him again if she discovers it was him who composed the fake responses. Liesel did not take the place of Hans Junior and Trudy, his biological children, despite Hans's intense love for her. Hans loved them with the same fervor he had for Liesel, despite the fact that they had turned away from their family (particularly Hans Junior, who even denied them) Hans forgave his son and told him ‘After all, you should know it yourself – a young man is still a boy, and a boy sometimes has the right to be stubborn.’” (p.216)

Although Hans Hubermann was a poor house painter and lived through rough times during war, he has taken care of Liesel and tried his best to make her happy. He introduced her to the glories of written language after discovering that she is illiterate. “Over the next few weeks and into summer, the midnight class began at the end of each nightmare” (Zusak,69). When Liesel's only thought is of her deceased brother, Hans begins teaching her how to relax in what death calls “the midnight class, even though it commenced at around two in the morning.” (39) Liesel and Hans develop a close bond during their midnight courses, which also teach Liesel that she can confide in Hans about any issue. The wonderful bond between Liesel and Hans is established during the midnight classes, which also teach Liesel that she may confide in Hans about any issue. Hans does not chastise Liesel or notify Rosa about the book she has stolen for the second time. Rather, he informs her “This is our secret, this book. We’ll read it at night or in the basement, just like the others.” (127).

On one occasion, Liesel asked Hans Hubermann whether her mother had been a communist and whether Hitler had taken her mother away. Seeing no way to lie, Hans answers in the affirmative. Later, Liesel became furious and denounced the Fuhrer explicitly. Hans gave Liesel a face smack and, not knowing what to do, made her give Hitler a negative compliment while making her do the Nazi sign and yell "Heil Hitler." She could face harsh punishment from the Nazi troopers for offending the Fuhrer, but his act of slapping her across her face serves as a sort of shield. This demonstrates how Hans becomes Liesel's real father figure when she knows he won't ever make her feel afraid and that he would always love and care for her, even if she makes errors.

Liesel was loved by Rosa Hubermann just as much as Hans, but in a very different way; yet, it was not just Hans who felt this way about Liesel. She had a special talent for causing annoyance to practically everyone she encountered. Still, she cherished Liesel Meminger. It just so happened that she showed it in an unusual way. “It involved her with wooden spoons and words at various intervals.” (p.35) Rosa was very hard and not very warm, being shown to be quite verbally abusive ,but she wasn’t a cruel person; that was only her personality. The same for Liesel, it also took her some time to get used to and

be comfortable with her foster mother. Even in the beginning, Liesel "... loved her foster mother, despite the abusages and verbal *assaults*." (p.85) However, her relationship with Rosa wasn't as deep like with Hans. But over time, they both grew to have better understanding of each other, enabling them to become closer. This change is even more pronounced by the time Liesel had become a teenager, and Rosa had decided to give her the book Max wrote for her *The Word Shaker*, telling her that, 'He said to give this to when you were ready I think you've always been ready, Liesel. From the moment you arrived here, clinging to the gate, you were meant to have this.' (p.443) Rosa recognizes how well Liesel had grown. As for Liesel, "There was also a great longing to tell Rosa Hubermann that she loved her."

Rosa plays a good mother to Liesel in the novel; she just expresses it in a different way. Rosa constantly watches out for Liesel's well-being and makes sure her requirements are satisfied. Rosa does not express her affection for Hans and Liesel in an open manner. She enjoys making fun of Liesel and getting her way. She expresses her love in a more useful way. She considers love in acts more when they are taken care of and food is always on the table. When Liesel watched Rosa tending to Max upon his arrival and holding the accordion tightly at night after Hans was dispatched to the war, she revealed her compassionate side to Liesel. Liesel was quite impressed with Rosa Hubermann when she came to her school and created a code that allowed Max to come out of a coma. When Rosa passed away, Liesel sobbed and told her that she was truly wonderful and beautiful.

One of the main influential character's in Liesel's life is Ilsa Hermann ,the mayor's wife, She kindly allows Liesel to use her library and who receives cleaning services from Rosa Hubermann. Ilsa obviously has a great deal of affection for Liesel. She gives her a warm welcome and gives her free reign to utilize the books however she pleases. After that, Ilsa gives Liesel a blank book and the suggestion to write in it. Liesel writes on the beauty of life as well as her suffering in doing so.

In *The Book Thief* the main characters; Liesel, Max have many things in common and their lives have been marked by death, struggle and survival. Because of life's difficulties they face, they create strong bonds with people they love which last for a lifetime. In *The Book Thief* ,both Liesel and Max have a strong relationship since they evaded Nazi persecution, were subsequently taken up by the Hubermanns after losing their families. When Max abruptly entered Liesel's life, she was first anxious to see him, but as they shared their sorrows and nightmares, they finally grew close. Upon hearing Max awaken in the middle of the night, Liesel realizes he experiences nightmares similar to hers ,so she decides to tell him about her suffering and that she "also has nightmares

about a train, and dead brother.” (220) Her and Max's connection starts to grow and strengthen as a result. “One night, after my usual nightmare, a shadow stood above me. She said, ‘Tell me what you dream of.’ So I did” (Zusak 235). At this point in the narrative, Max has written a book specifically for Liesel. They talked about how terrible their lives have been at this particular moment. Through the words, they form a friendship and share life's various challenges with one another. Liesel's direct enquiries to Max, ‘are you communist,’ ‘did he take away your mother?’ and her reassurance ‘don't worry, I cried a lot when I first came here too,’ demonstrates Liesel connecting the dots. Through the questions and answers, Liesel develops an understanding of Max's experience and realizes that she is not the only victim of the Nazi regime.

Liesel and Max were hiding From the German authorities. The author claims that Liesel “saw it all so clearly. Her starving mother, her missing father. Kommunist” (p. 111). As Zusak begins telling Max's story, his origin is revealed. There is danger to their lives and persecution because the Nazi Party does not support any of their backgrounds. Furthermore, Liesel and Max experience nightmares about their biological families after losing them due to various circumstances such as death or terror. Experiencing pain and suffering, Liesel lost her younger brother to pneumonia., “With one eye open, one still in a dream, the book thief, also known as Liesel Meminger could see without question that her younger brother, Werner, was now sideways and dead. His blue eyes stared at the floor. Seeing nothing” (p. 26). Similar to this, Max experiences regret and sadness after leaving his family to preserve his own life, this painful feeling is illustrated in the book, “They left, without looking back. It tortured him. If only he'd turned for one last look at his family as he left the apartment. Perhaps then the guilt would not have been so heavy. No final goodbye” (p. 193).

As Liesel spends her days in the cellar, she grows close to Max. Liesel became such a good friend with Max that she celebrated (her) birthday by giving him a gift. The very fact that they are together makes each other happy, and their bond gets stronger every time. In the end, their relationship will keep them together because of the mutual love and trust that exists between them. Words have the power to make people feel needed and important in the world. Liesel makes Max feel important and special in many ways. For example, the text states that, “ ...she walked over and hugged him for the first time. ‘Thanks Max.’ At first, he merely stood there, but as she held onto him, gradually his hands arose up” (Zusak 222). This quote shows how Liesel makes Max feel special by showing him love and compassion in the form of a hug. Liesel also gives hope to Max through the thirteen gifts, dream sharing, and the words past from Liesel to the Jew. “ He moved slightly to the right. ‘ I'm afraid, ‘ he said, ‘ Of falling

asleep again.' Liesel told him ' Then I'll read to you. And I'll slap your face if you start dozing off. I'll close the book and shake you till you wake up.'" (Zusak 221) This quote shows how compassionate Liesel is with her words toward Max. It also shows that Liesel's words give Max courage. Liesel is like a symbol of freedom and comfort in Max's. Liesel and Max's relationship continues even after the war. Liesel's positive words were the foundation for an everlasting friendship. Their friendship grew when Max made a book for Liesel during her birthday. More of Max's darkest thoughts are exposed when Max writes "*The Standover Man*" for Liesel's birthday. In it, Max describes his life as a children's book, and tells of when he arrived at the Huberman's and met Liesel. Max writes "It makes me understand that the best stand over man I've ever known is not a man at all" (235). By referring to a girl he meets in his book, Max explains that Liesel is one of the best people he has ever met, showing that Liesel means a lot to Max, and Max means a lot to Liesel because of what they have both been through. "Now I think we are friends, this girl and me. On her birthday it was she who gave a gift to me." Those lines are from *The Standover Man*, Max's loving gift to Liesel after she hugs him on his birthday. The hug, at that point, is more out of pity than love.

Liesel was alarmed and concerned about Max when he became ill for eight days due to the basement's low temperature and the snow they had brought in. She would spend time with him, reading books and informing him about the outside weather. In addition to teaching Liesel how to express what she sees and feels in her surroundings, Liesel has assisted Max with her language. As war gets worse, Liesel and Max find calm and comfort in words which distract them from the adversities caused by war besides missing their families who are dead or lost. Max, as a Jew in Germany, needed help hiding from the Nazis and the Huberman's took him in. Max and Liesel grew very close, so when he left, it upset Liesel greatly. She even suffered for Max, she "prayed. Hands and knees, forearms against the mattress, 'Please, God, please let Max survive. Her suffering knees. Her painful feet," (400). Liesel wanted Max to be safe and she went through so much for him. Liesel was always okay with carrying around the burden that was brought by Max and his secret. Because of the care Liesel had for Max, she felt abandoned when he left her for what he thought was a good reason. Max and Liesel share a connection that drives them to do thing that even the law prohibits, such as Liesel joining the Jew parade to see Max. The unique kinship between the two is highlighted when Max returns to Alex's shop after the war ends and finds Liesel., "Yes, she's in the back," said Alex. He was hopeful, but he wanted to be sure. "May I ask who is calling on her?" Liesel came out. At that moment "they hugged and cried and fell on the floor." (548) Their months-long separation and uncertainty about each other's survival has a

significant psychological impact on them both. When they are reunited at last, their happiness is beyond words.

In *The Book Thief*, the stories on Himmel Street dealt with extreme subjects like the Holocaust and World War II. All around Munich, bombs went off, Jews were marched along the streets to camps, and loved ones were dispatched to fight in order to fulfill their obligations to the fuhrer. Rudy and Liesel's fathers were drafted into the military, inflicting immense suffering for their respective families. The other neighbor of the Hubermanns, Frau Holtzapfel, too lost a son in the war, along with a great number of people worldwide. The author conveys in this novel the emotional suffering that many families, including the Hubermanns and Steiners had endured in the 1940s. In the novel, Death emphasizes people's suffering saying, "I witness the ones who are left behind, crumbling among the jigsaw puzzle of realization, despair, and surprise. They have punctured hearts. They have beaten lungs". (Zusak 5) The novel certainly shows a great deal of human suffering. Numerous individuals endure persecution and live in continual danger for their lives.

As rationing grows more severe and fears increase, Rosa and Hans' lives become more and more difficult, even though Hans Hubermann is not a member of the Nazi party since he does not entirely agree with their beliefs. They also took in Max Vanderburg and hid him in their cellar during hard times, which added to their already heavy load. Liesel becomes confused by this because, although she witnesses Nazis abusing Jews on the streets, at home she meets Max, who is quite different from what she was told at school or in the Hitler Youth. Hans would have to go through a rough time after taking in Max, the Jew, and also losing his son. A World War I veteran, Hans detested his time in the German army. Once, he came back from the war, he didn't like hurting other people, and he was nicer to people that that were in trouble. This was the only positive effect from being involved in the war. But after that, Hans loses his son , Hans Junior to the Nazi Party and to World War II . He leaves, because he thinks that Hans is not patriotic enough for Nazi Germany , "You've never cared about this country," said Hans Junior. "Not enough, anyway." This is sadly, a pretty negative effect of the war.

Through her love and friendships with Hans Max and Rudy, Liesel maintains her positive attitude despite her difficult circumstances. After being taken from her mother and placed in a foster home, Liesel holds onto the belief that this will only last short term. She has been able to read and write thanks to her foster father, Hans, and she tries so hard to write letters to her mother but gets no reply. Liesel has her family and friends to support and spend time with despite her sad trip. These connections set off a series of events that culminate in disaster. Regarding Hans, "Liesel observed the strangeness of her foster

father's eyes. They were made of kindness, and silver. Like soft silver, melting” (Zusak 34). His generosity allows Liesel to witness the catastrophe as well. Liesel witnessed the repercussions of sticking up for one's own values and convictions when she watched Hans get whipped in front of a large crowd several times for assisting a Jew and later being drafted into the military for doing the same. Liesel's passion of reading was also cultivated by Hans, which is why she stood witnessing the book burning ceremony in terror. Max describes to Liesel the human agony he went through in firsthand terms. Liesel eventually comprehends their surroundings owing to Max being the only one who gave her the truth. Rudy Steiner followed Liesel everywhere, motivated by his love for her. He is described in the novels as “ Rudy Steiner, the boy next door who was obsessed with the black American athlete Jesse Owens.” For the sake of Liesel, he spent a whole day only to show her around. They ultimately decided to wager on a 100-meter race. Rudy, the lover had an idea coming from his heart. “If I beat you, I get to kiss you.” He stooped to roll up his trousers. Although Liesel won the race, they grew closer over time and became great friends. When Rudy died out of the bombing attacks on Himmel Street ,she realized how much she loved him, “She kissed him long and soft, and when she pulled herself away, she touched his mouth with her fingers.” This causal chain determines the Book Thief's own fate, which can be both good and evil. Near the end of the book, Liesel fell asleep in the basement as she was spending the night writing her life tale. ‘what page she was up to when I walked down Himmel Street in the dripping-tap rain, five nights later’(Zusak, 528)

Liesel's world collapses when her town, Himmel Street, is bombed that night. “Mounds of concrete and earth were stacked and piled. The streets were ruptured veins. Blood streamed till it was dried on the road, and bodies were stuck there, like driftwood after the flood” (Zusak 12). Liesel was the lone survivor who was left all by herself after everyone she had loved and cared for were killed as they were asleep. She realised at this moment in her life that this is the toughest and final abandonment she would ever experience. She used to be abandoned, hurt, and forced to continue fighting through her challenging life. Because Liesel had experienced sorrow in the past, she views it differently this time. She comes to the realisation that everything she had ever desired or needed had been smashed and destroyed in front of her. At first, losing a best friend may seem surreal, but reality eventually takes over. She was experiencing a range of emotions, including dread of losing that one person in her life in addition to despair and rage. “She leaned down and looked at his lifeless face and Liesel kissed her best friend, Rudy Steiner, soft and true on his lips...She did not say goodbye.” (Zusak 536)She has become considerably stronger during the period of time after the death of her brother and the loss of her mother which

made her capable of coping with the bombing of Himmel Street. "She did not say goodbye. She was incapable, and after a few more minutes at his side, she was able to hold herself from the ground. It amazes me what humans can do, even when streams are flowing down their faces..." (Zusak 536). Liesel gains the ability to resist her overwhelming need to remain at the side of the deceased. Even though this is the most tragic thing that has ever happened to her, her newfound resilience and determination make it easier to deal with. Though they may have destroyed her life in some manner, words ultimately kept her alive—both physically and symbolically. She survived to live a good life and make a family. Concerning Max, he made it out of the Holocaust and remained a close friend to her. Despite being assured repeatedly that she was loved, she was always being abandoned and left alone.

Kindness may be seen differently by various individuals; to some, what seems good may really be harmful to others. The mayor might have easily told the police that Liesel was taking his books, and she would have faced harsh consequences, when Liesel began to take books to read to Max in the hopes that he would wake up and recover from his illness. Rudy also goes anywhere with her, putting his life in jeopardy. Liesel's closest friend Rudy Steiner demonstrates this risk she takes to achieve her goals when he remarks, "You didn't go in for food, did you? You got what you wanted..." (289). The quote illustrates Liesel's determination to go to any lengths in order to get a book, despite the fact that she could steal food since they were very hungry. Liesel seeks to talk to Max without pausing to consider the possibility that doing so may put both of them in danger. On page 513, the book narrates "He cried as the soldiers came and a small collection ...Standing, he was whipped". The forces observed Liesel holding and speaking with Max, so they gave him the lashing. Liesel believed that by talking to Max, she was being compassionate, which put Max's life in jeopardy. It seems sense that she wanted to talk to Max after spending so much time apart, but the way she expressed her feelings to him was too visible for the troops to witness. If Rudy had not rushed to her aid, she would have suffered harsher consequences for talking to Max. Apart from the direct harm caused, those who saw the incident may conclude that Liesel's family was pro-Jewish, which was not a positive perception at the time. The long-term effects of Liesel's decision to talk to Max had a larger impact when Hans handed the Jews the bread, putting her and her family in more risk. This is just one more instance of Liesel's supposed benevolence turned stubbornness endangering her life as well as the lives of others.

In *The Book Thief*, Liesel learns that books are very valuable and that individuals may use words for good or harm. Throughout the narrative, Liesel turns to books and tales for solace while she is surrounded by suffering and loss. As the

narrative draws to a close, Liesel comes to the realisation that words are all that remain of a person, even in the face of tragedy and suffering, and that how others use them may have a profound impact on their lives. Liesel experiences several profound changes in her identity and her whole life especially after the loss of her family. Her ease with this transformation comes from discovering her unique personality via reading. Liesel recalls the first time she and Hans had an early-morning lesson: “She had done this at school, in the kindergarten class, but this time was better. ... It was nice to watch Papa’s hand as he wrote the words and slowly constructed the primitive sketches.” (Zusak 67) This quote describes Liesel’s first time feeling positively towards reading, something that she quickly grows to love and find comfort in.

The Grave Digger's Handbook was the first book that Liesel had stolen when she was grieving the death of her beloved brother in order to remind her with the last time and moment she saw her mother and brother. She started to value books greatly- not only for their educational value but also for their role in her rebellion and self-discovery. She stole *The Shoulder Shrug* from the bonfire minutes after getting confirmation that her mother and her father disappeared most likely because of Hitler. She realized that her parents were communists and that Hitler was the cause of their tragedy. Moreover, she also considered this as confirmation that her brother’s death, which she still had nightmares about, was due to Hitler and the poverty that her family fell into because of him. When she took the book, it was still on fire: “The heat was still strong enough to warm when she stood at the foot of the ash heap.” (Zusak, p.120) Stealing *The Shoulder Shrug* was a form of Liesel’s rebellion against everything she has been taught and her wish to get revenge against Hitler and his government, the man she once admired for all of the pain he caused her and her family. She continued stealing more books from the Mayor’s house for different reasons. When she finally got down to writing her narrative at the conclusion of the book, she found herself wondering when the words and the books began to mean everything instead of just something. When she dies in the book and reunites with Death, he gives her the book she wrote and she asks if it really is it. Death responds with a yes and then he takes her soul with him to the other world.

Max encourages a more expansive view of society and develops Liesel's own journey of realizing the power of words. gaining awareness that there are those in society that suffer under the Nazi regime. In this moment when Liesel comforts Max on his second night with the Hubermans, Liesel discovers the power of words to provide comfort. Max's book hints to an additional layer of protection and highlights the significance of the book to the personality traits. Thus proving the importance of words in giving the character a feeling of

security. Max leaves Liesel a book that she will carry with her for the rest of her life. It contains lines he had written over the pages of *Mein Kampf* that he had painted over. It speaks to the power of words and how pleasant ones may triumph over unpleasant ones. Max writes in *The Word Shaker*, “It could never destroy all of it, but if nothing else, a different-colored path was carved through it” (Zusak 150).

Giving bread is a demonstration of compassion and understanding. It gives the protagonists the opportunity to demonstrate their altruism and selflessness in aiding others. This act of caring and empathizing is also seen during the march of the Jews to Dachau. During the procession, Hans and his family, who had few finances, choose to distribute bread to others experiencing severe hunger. More than care and empathy, the giving of bread is also a symbol of sacrifice, as Hans has the awareness that engaging in actions aligned with his own moral compass will result in severe penalties. Liesel and Rudy, who also have very little to eat, give bread to the Jewish prisoners being marched through the town.

Conclusions

The research explores the role of love, kindness, friendship and care in helping people go through the hard times during wars and conflicts. Much ink has been spilt on the destruction and devastation of war, but little is shown about the human side of people during wartime. The narrative analyzed in this paper depicts the characters’ suffering, oppression and struggle for survival. The main characters are often dealing with tragedies of losing their loved ones, home or even their past. The study concludes that war which exists out of hatred and animosity cannot be masked only by love and compassion. In the novel there are many scenes on love, identity, and friendship which emphasize the importance of these topics. According to the research, individuals are exposed to new experiences—both positive and negative—during times of conflict that they may not have faced previously.

Concludingly, the characters realize that love in this cruel world represents a necessity and an achievement because war cannot get rid of hate, only love is capable of that. In *The Book Thief*, Liesel feels the deep anguish of losing her family when her mother and brother leave her. Her determination to write about her lost family and Hans Hubermann's love and support give her newfound bravery as she continues with her life. Liesel is terrified of losing another loved one to Death as Max falls ill. However, she keeps her optimism alive by expressing her love and strength to Max via words and presents. Max could survive due to the Hubermann’s help, protection and care as well as love and friendship with Liesel. In the end of the novel, when Liesel finds the dead corpses on Himmel Street, her whole world is turned upside down. With all of her desertion in the past, she conjures amazing courage and freely departs the



scene of her devastated neighborhood. Despite the loss and suffering that comes with abandonment, it aids Liesel in developing a new persona and discovering her inner power. She discovers strength and drive as a result of her love, destruction, and terror; nevertheless, this type of brutal, incredible force only arises at the weakest and most difficult periods. The study concludes that wars and conflicts not just impacted the lives of the characters but also shattered and destroyed them mentally and physically. The study proves that through love and kindness ,some characters could survive their dreadful world and war's devastation.

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