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REVIEW: The Book Thief

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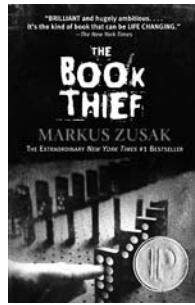
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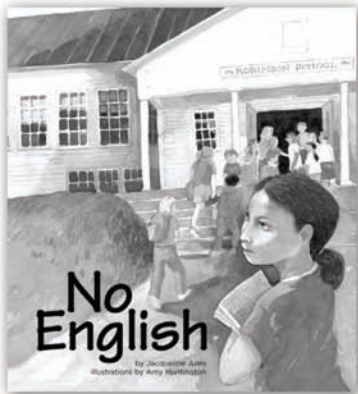
The Book Thief by Marcus Zusak
(Alfred A. Knopf, 2005; ISBN 978-0375-93100-0, \$16.95).

The Book Thief, narrated by the perceptive Death, presents hauntingly beautiful visions of Nazi Germany during the Second World War. Despite efforts to avoid the living, Death comes to observe the young Liesel Meminger, rightfully dubbed “the Book Thief,” on three occasions. At the age of nine, Liesel and her younger brother are brought to Molching, Germany, to live with a foster family. After the funeral of her brother, who dies in transit to the foster home, Death witnesses an illiterate Liesel stealing the *Gravedigger’s Handbook* from the snow. She subsequently arrives alone at her foster parents’ house on the poor Himmel (Heaven) Street. By day, Liesel is cursed by her foster mother Rosa Hubermann, who secretly possesses a heart of gold. By night, she has her nightmares comforted by her silver-eyed foster father Hans, who paints houses, plays the accordion and is a man who can keep a secret. During these sleepless



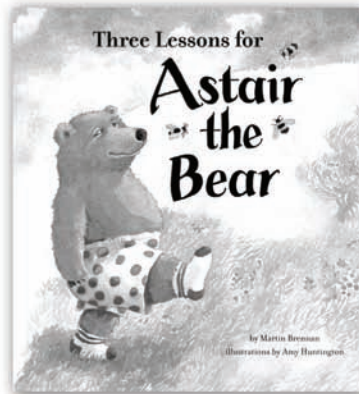
nights, Hans teaches Liesel to understand the writing in her stolen handbook. As Liesel learns to read, she craves more books and risks her life to obtain them, even stealing one from a fire. She also discovers that Molching is full of interesting people like her best friend Rudy, a boy with hair the color of lemons, and the distraught mayor’s wife, Ilsa Hermann, who simply looks away when Liesel steals books from her large library. When a man named Max arrives on the Hubermann’s doorstep appearing weary, broken and clutching the copy of *Mein Kampf* that saved him on his journey, Liesel’s life is forever changed. Liesel’s friendship with the Jewish fist-fighter and her willingness to keep her foster father’s secret help her realize the extreme power of words and their use in good or evil. *The Book Thief* deserves a place in every library. The novel is one of the nominees for the 2007-2008 Georgia Peach Book Award for Teen Readers, a 2007 Printz Honor Book, and is recommended for ages 15 through adult readers. ▶▶

— Reviewed by **Traci Peter**
Brenau University Trustee Library



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