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Mrs. Rutan  
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### The Power of Liesel's Words

The Book Thief-by Markus Zusak-shows the transformation of a young girl named Liesel Meminger from a weak, quiet, uneducated girl into a powerful young woman who is able to influence others with her words. The story begins with Liesel only knowing parts of the alphabet and is unable to read or write words let alone sentences. As the plot further develops and other key characters are introduced, Liesel's bonds with these characters allows her to develop a voice as both a reader and a writer. With this new voice, Liesel gains her independence which ultimately gives her the ability to impact and change other characters and plot points of the story.

Upon arriving to her new home on Himmel Street, Liesel is introduced to the first character that she forms a loving bond with, Hans Hubermann. After Liesel attended school for the first time, it became apparent to everyone including Hans that Liesel was unable to read. One night Hans discovered "*The Grave Digger's Handbook*" that Liesel had stolen, and decided that he would read it to her as well as teach her how to read. A passage that clearly shows Liesel's progress from her midnight reading sessions with Hans is:

"Ah, come on, Liesel," he said when she struggled later on. "Something that starts with S. It's easy. I'm very disappointed in you."

She couldn't think.

"Come on?" His whisper played with her. "Think of Mama."

That was when the word struck her face like a slap. A reflex grin. "SAUMENSCH?" she shouted, and Papa roared with laughter, then quieted (67).

This quote shows that because of his affection for Liesel, Hans is able to take a soft approach to get Liesel to understand the connection of letters to words. With Hans' continued approach on teaching, Liesel is quickly able to grasp the English language and begins to read "*The Grave Digger's Handbook*" on her own. She then takes this same gentle and creative approach when reading each new stolen book to others.

The next key character that contributed to Liesel's transformation is Max Vandenburg. While Max, a Jew, was hiding in the Hubermann's basement, he became very lonely and felt disconnected from the rest of the world. The greatest companionship Max had was with Liesel, and he looked forward to her visits and updates on what was happening outside in the town. One particular day Max asked Liesel to tell him what the weather was like outside. This was a powerful turning point in their friendship. The passage supporting this is:

"Could you go up and tell me how the weather looks?"

"The sky is blue today, Max, and there is a big long cloud, and it's stretched out, like a rope. At the end of it, the sun is like a yellow hole..."

On the wall, he painted a long, tightly knotted rope with a dripping yellow sun at the end of it, as if you could dive right into it. On the rope cloud, he drew two figures - a thin girl and a withering Jew - and they were walking, arms balanced, toward that dripping sun (249).

Instead of the usual response that Max would get from Liesel about the weather, Liesel was asked to REALLY describe what the weather was like to him. She chose such specific imaginative words to describe the day that Max could get a literal picture in his mind and was able to transfer it into a drawing on the gloomy basement wall. This made him feel more connected to the outside and to Liesel. This experience made Max realize how truly powerful Liesel could be with her words. In return, Max decided to write a book for Liesel named "*The Word Shaker*". The book described their friendship and how important it was to Max. It also hinted to Liesel that words are the most powerful weapon on Earth, such

as the words Hitler used that caused the Holocaust. He encouraged her to continue to use her words for good, and to make change in the world.

The third major impact on Liesel's transformation came from Ilsa Hermann. Being the Mayor's wife, Ilsa had access to a full library of books in her mansion. While on a laundry run to the Mayor's house, Liesel met Ilsa when she answered the door. After talking for a while, Ilsa invited Liesel inside and showed her the library. Liesel was allowed to choose from any of the books to read. She returned many times and was allowed to read additional books. The meetings were abruptly stopped as the war was in full force and they had to stop paying for her service. This angered Liesel which led to her sneaking back into the library on later occasions and stealing several books, one at a time. On the final occasion when Liesel tried to sneak into the window of the library to steal another book, there was a dictionary sitting near the window sill. Liesel took the book and as she walked away found a note inside. The note was from Ilsa saying that she was aware she had been sneaking in and would rather have things back to how they were when she would enter through the front door. She explained that she thought the dictionary would be helpful to her. It was indeed helpful to her by allowing her to look up any word she struggled with while reading. Liesel, for the first time, wrote a full letter in response to Ilsa. Because of the impact Liesel and her letter had on Ilsa, Ilsa decided to gift a writer's notebook to Liesel in hopes that she would use her powerful words to write her own story and to share it with her when it was completed. This is supported in the passage:

“I thought if you're not going to read any more of my books, you might like to write one instead.

Your letter, it was...”

“You can certainly write. You write well” (523).

The writer's notebook had such an impact on Liesel that she decided to document her life story in it. This book is what saved Liesel's life when a major air raid hit her town. She fell asleep in the basement

writing, while everyone else was upstairs sleeping. Had she not had the book to write, she would have also been upstairs and killed in the raid.

As you can see, Liesel started out as a quiet, uneducated young girl that could not complete the alphabet, nor read or write. As she developed her relationship with her new foster father, Hans Hubermann, she slowly transformed to a more vocal girl that could form sentences and read her first stolen book by herself. As time passed and more books were stolen, she met Max. Max assisted in teaching her to be more descriptive and to use her imagination to paint a picture with her words that she could share with others. Liesel often read to Max when he was ill and unconscious in hopes that he would hear her and get better. When he did awaken, he said he didn't want to go back to sleep and wanted her to continue to read to him. She read or told her stories on multiple occasions, such as in the shelters during air raids to comfort the townspeople while her father was in the war and not able to distract them from the sounds with his accordion music. She also read to her neighbor, Frau Holtzapfel, on many occasions to help comfort her after the loss of her son's. In her relationship with Llsa, Liesel was able to make her final transformation into a vocal, educated, well read young lady. She developed the skills she was taught prior to write her own story in the writer's notebook that Llsa gifted her.

Liesel Meminger's impact on the people she met in Munich ultimately had the greatest impact on herself. While she was able to grow up and become connected with all of these individuals, they in turn grew and were able to help develop her into the powerful writer that she has become. It took Liesel meeting all three of these individuals in order for her to really develop her words and become powerful. By having met Hans, she was able to read and form simple sentences. Max helped to turn these simple sentences into more descriptive sentences. Llsa brought Liesel into her final transformation by giving her the tool to write her intricate sentences into a story of their lives. With these three people giving Liesel the tools that she needed to become a successful and independent writer, she was able to tell the story of

all the people she had met on Himmel Street after they had passed. Liesel's transformation gave her the ability to use such powerful words that Death himself will forever tell her story.

Dakota,  
SCORE: MASTERY

You did an absolutely fantastic job in this paper. You have a great progression and evolution of your claim and main thesis (Liesel, words, her change). I am really impressed and you structured this beautifully. It was very interesting to read, and you did a wonderful job intertwining the three focus passages and theme to the characters as well. Characterization is huge in AP, and you are already doing a great job. Once again, great job and good luck with our final reading!

Mastery	Incomplete
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· I fulfill the assignments objectives by either...</li> </ul> <p><i>-Commenting on three correctly cited passages critically and I complete a focused, clearly organized analysis.</i></p> <p><i>-Thoughtfully comparing and contrasting my literary selection with another piece of literature .</i></p> <p><i>-Creating original character letters/journal that shows voice and personality.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· I fail to fulfill the assignment objectives by either...</li> </ul> <p><i>-Not using proper citation or direct evidence.</i></p> <p><i>-Not including three passages</i></p> <p><i>-Not offer analysis, but only a summary.</i></p> <p><i>-Failing to show contrast or comparison to another piece of literature.</i></p> <p><i>-I fail to use a noteworthy piece of literature.</i></p> <p><i>-Just include summary.</i></p> <p><i>-Not using the correct genre of writing.</i></p>

<p><b><i>-I include a reflection explain a couple of my writing choices within the letter(s).</i></b></p> <p><b><i>-Creating a collection of poetry that presents at least 30 lines and reflects aspects of the novel.</i></b></p> <p><b><i>-I include reflection(s) explaining my poems, themes, and poetic structure and techniques.</i></b></p> <p><b><i>-Creating an interesting, personal letter that embraced the genre as well as discusses my likes, dislikes, impacts for the high school reader, etc.</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· I include thoughtful, relevant, and correct information about the literature.</li> <li>· I use several pieces of direct, clearly integrated, and cited evidence from the novel.</li> </ul>	<p><b><i>-Not showing a solid character voice.</i></b></p> <p><b><i>-Not including a reflection</i></b></p> <p><b><i>-Not providing 30 lines of poetry.</i></b></p> <p><b><i>-Not reflecting on aspects of the novel.</i></b></p> <p><b><i>-Not including a reflection.</i></b></p> <p><b><i>-Not using the letter format</i></b></p> <p><b><i>-Not providing personal insight or reflection</i></b></p> <p><b><i>-Just include summary</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· I include incorrect information about the literature.</li> <li>· I do not use direct, well integrated, or cited evidence from the novel.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· I adhere to the necessary page/length requirements for my select project (about 4-5 pages, double-spaced).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· I fail to adhere to my page/length requirements because my piece is:  <b><i>-Too short</i></b>  <b><i>-Incomplete</i></b>  <b><i>-Underdeveloped</i></b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· My piece shows voice, organization, and style.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· My piece fails to show voice, is poorly organize and too generic and/or unoriginal.</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>· I show solid grammar and mechanics.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>· I have poor grammar and mechanics.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>· I use MLA format.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>· I fail to use MLA format.</li></ul>