

**The image of Death as a character in Markus Zusak's *The Book Thief*.**

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**Abstract:**

This research paper shows how “Death” plays an important role in literature. To bring this to light, the paper deals with Markus Zusak's *The Book Thief*. As a child Zusak gets inspired by the stories which were narrated by his parents, both his mother and father who lived in the period of World War II. His mother told him stories about the Munich bombings. His father is inspired by the character of Hans Hubermann who is a commercial painter during World War II. Markus Zusak characters are dynamic. Each main character goes through tremendous growth and change. At the end of each character they realize who they are and how important they are.

Keywords: War, Death, Humanity, Colourful soul.

Markus Zusak needed a narrator who can provide him a clear insight of Worlds War II outside of Himmel Street. Zusak found Death as an only character who can give a real impact to the reader about the World War II. Death is inevitable and that is the most fearing aspect of his

persona. In Zusak's *The Book Thief*, Death has been portrayed characteristics of human. Death also introduces a unique description and definition of colours makes the readers to engage into the events which occurring in the book. When the character of Death has been analyzing he was travelling with the character Liesel throughout the novel.

“Death” is a word which filled with the image of fear, horrifying figure, sorrow and most hated word in the mind of people. But Zusak just made it to be a different figure which gives positive thought to the readers. Death's narration made the reader to picturize World War II and its horrific incidents. Death also makes the reader to travel to the period of Hitler. Death's style makes a novel to achieve the heart of reader and leads to successful path.

Zusak's image of death was totally contradictory to the image which people have in their mind. Taking lives is Death's job and he has to perform it for eternity. Deaths perception has been seen to be interestingly artistic and colorful, but from the very beginning of the novel Death used to describe and sees everything in colours. “First the colours. Then the humans. That's usually how I see things.”(3). Later Death used to aloof from the human inspite of his curious and human nature, but his job doesn't allow him to maintain distance from human.

“Where are my manners?” (4). It clears Zusak has introduced Death as a narrator, and also has given it the characteristic of human because usually ‘Manners’ is a term which is used to describe human beings. Along with the colours, it's the food imagery he uses to describe what he sees. “The sky was like soup, boiling and string.” (13). Death describes sky as a soup and it makes a curious expectation on reader towards the novel. Death symbolically exposes the lack of colourful event and food during the time of World War II. “One of six Steiner children, he was permanently hungry.” (49). Here, Death describes Rudy Steiner and his poverty. Later, Rudy and

Liesel steal apples with other kids to fulfill their starving. This is the most crucial impact of World War II.

Most of the readers are associated with the author and not with the narrator. In this novel as a narrator, Death stands out on his own without any dependency upon the content, the protagonist and the plot. Normally World War II is not the most cheerful topic so reader used to expect it to be a sad, holocaust, descriptive, and history oriented story. Themes and roles like death, hunger, torture and hurt has been expected but unexpected twist is about narrator to be humorous. Death has been attractively describing the events in colours, food imagery and humorous way to arouse curiosity, interest and make the reader to have a smile.

Death has a sense of humour throughout the novel. It was usually known as black comedy. When sorrow over flows in the mind of people, the humour of the death makes the reader to get relief for a bit. "Mama loudly slept. She gave the snorer on the train a goodrun for her money." (239). This line proves the Death's sense of humour, sleeping and snoring is a simple thing but Death's unique way of narrating makes the novel to be humorous. Sometimes Death sounds quiet philosophical too. His work is to collect colourful souls of the human. Though he cannot help humans he helps them with his philosophical idea.

Though Death's work is to collect the soul of the human he has deep feeling for them. Especially he does not want to see the suffering of the people in the war time. When he took the soul, he feel miserable for their loved one who used to cry bitterly aside them. "Even death has a heart." (262). Zusak presented the character Death to be unique and gives his reader a different perspective of thinking. Due to his job description requires him to stay aloof and simply just to do his job which entails collecting human's colourful souls and only that.

Death also makes a clear insight of human characteristics and their lack of humanity. Having an appearance of human does not make them a human but humanity does. When it comes to death, he may not have the appearance of human but he has humanity. Each time he caught the colourful soul of human he feels pity for them. Due to the job description, he does not help them but tries to console them with his philosophical words and sense of humour.

Thus this paper deals with “The Image of Death as a character in Markus Zusak’s *The Book Thief*.” Being a single character Death plays a vital role of various features and makes a fruitful and spicy essence to the reader.

Work cited:

Zusak, Markus. *The Book Thief*. Definitions, 2016.