2009

The Book Thief

Pat Frade

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Reviewer: Pat Frade
Reading Level: Young adult
Rating: Outstanding
Genre: Historical fiction;
Subject: Books and reading--Juvenile fiction.; Jews--Germany--History--1933-1945--Juvenile fiction; Germany--History--1933-1945--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

This WWII story, set in Nazi Germany, centers around a young girl named Liesel. For unknown reasons, Liesel’s mother can no longer care for Liesel and her brother. On the train ride to their new foster family, Liesel’s brother dies. When Liesel and her mother stop at a cemetery in the next town to bury the young boy, Liesel finds a book (her first) and picks it up as a remembrance of her brother. She then arrives at the home of her new foster family, a middle-age couple named Hans and Rosa. Hans is a kind, gentle man who comforts the young girl and teaches her to read. Liesel collects more stolen books and finds a group of friends: the boy Rudy, the Jewish refugee Max, and the mayor's wife (who has a whole library from which she allows Liesel to steal). Liesel finds pleasure, comfort, and peace in books--even while living in the midst of war, losing her own family, risking her life with her foster family to help a Jew, and surviving air raids. Books become her lifeline!

The Book Thief is the winner of the 2007 Printz Honor Award and various other awards for 2006 and 2007. The writing of this book is interesting, narrated by Death. It gives the reader a sense of what a child's life (and the average German's life) was like during the war. The author's message lies not only in the power of words, but also in how a young girl finds a way to rise above her difficult life by reading books.

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