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A Reason for Everything

Twenty-two months; almost two years. Could you survive in a bitter cold, isolated basement in fear for your life and the lives of others for twenty-two months? Well, Max Vandenburg did. A hiding Jew with only a little hope for survival, living in a world who hated him and wanted him dead. In the book, *The Book Thief*, a story of misfortune is told, a friendship is made, and in the end the only one who is left is death.

You feel bad for a lot of people in this book. Good people in terrible situations; one such person is Max Vandenburg. The author does certain things in the book that could make anyone have pity for him. Max had not felt a breeze of fresh air, grass at his feet, or seen a vibrant star in the night sky in almost two years; you start to feel trapped with him. The basement is described so often as a dark, small cage where Max's only *view* of the outside is a painted, dripping sun on the wall. When Max stole a glimpse of the sky one clear night he swore that "the stars set fire to my eyes" (Zusak, 378). Zusak used personification to show how important and inspirational this moment was to him. Max gets very ill and is sleeping for days and weeks straight. The author did a very good job of making sure you felt the absence of Max. The main character and best friend to Max, Liesel, would read and have conversations with Max and of course there would be no response from him. As a reader, you would begin to miss him.

"Living was living. The price was guilt and shame" (Zusak, 208) was how Max Vandenburg felt everyday he breathed. He was the only one out of his family to leave before the

Nazis came. The author added this statement to show the unspoken feelings of Max. Another thing the author did a great job of doing was comparing things. "A voiceless human. The Jewish rat" (Zusak, 215) is what Max is seen as in Germany during the Holocaust, only because of his religion. Zusak compared Max to a rat to show how he was unwanted and a pest to society.

As a writer, Zusak did a very well job with connecting with readers and making the character, Max, liked and made you feel bad for him. Making comparisons to him and unlike things helped readers understand how Max was viewed and his writing style made you feel the same was as characters.

Works Cited

Zusak, Markus. *The Book Thief*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006. Print.