

Dear incoming English I Honors student,

To fulfill our goal both as a department and a school, our English courses require a summer reading component aimed at developing skills vital to classroom success. This year, your assignment will utilize the literary devices of tone and characterization through the work of Markus Zusak, *The Book Thief*. You may purchase the book at Borders in Dover or Rockaway, or the Barnes and Noble in Ledgewood. This assignment is available online at www.lvhs.org under the Summer Reading heading. Beginning in Germany in the throes of the 1930s Depression, this novel studies the essential questions of human existence through the point of view of Death, as he narrates the story of Leisel Meminger, the Book Thief.

1. Read the novel **by yourself**.

2. Next, focus on the five types of characterization authors use to develop fictional beings in realistic ways. Print out **three copies** of the characterization wheel worksheet provided below; complete one wheel for Leisel, choose one of the following characters to complete for the second wheel: Hans, Rosa, Rudy, Max, Hitler; choose one of the following for the third wheel: Ilsa, Franz, Viktor, Arthur, Frau Holtzapfel, Reinhold, Tommy. Fill out the sheets completely, and **note page numbers** where information was found. Failure to do so will result in a significantly lowered grade. Although much of the sheet is review of characterization details, some may need explaining:

- a. **Indirect characterization** refers to a narrator showing, rather than telling, exactly what a character does (**actions**), says (**words**), thinks (**thoughts/beliefs/feelings**) and how he appears (**appearance**). Note: words are quotes that are said by the character herself, and should have “quotes” around them.
- b. **Direct characterization** refers to a narrator telling, rather than showing, exactly what a character is to be viewed as (for example, “She was an angel. He was a child of the street, directionless and hopeless”). As our novel is written in first-person, and the narrator is a vital part of the story, we would be better off viewing his comments as indirect thoughts about others.
- b. **Static and dynamic characters** are best to be thought of as distinctions referring to a character’s reaction to the major conflict of the story. Static characters remain unchanged in attitude or personality from the work’s beginning to end; in contrast, dynamic characters experience change in attitude and/or personality, usually because of the central conflict. Note: it is the character’s inner being that causes this distinction, **not** their physical/social/economic being. Thus, although Cinderella outwardly changes much in that famous fairytale, she is not considered dynamic, as she remains good at heart and loving to others—even her wicked sisters still.
- c. **Round (developed) and flat (stereotypical, stock) characters** are distinct in the way authors create them. Round characters have full, rich personalities and can be unpredictable, especially in the face of conflicts. Often, round characters are main characters, but this does not always hold true. A good rule of thumb: as we are all (hopefully) round interesting people, the more “real” a character feels to us, the more likely he/she is a round character. Flat characters, by contrast, are less real and more one-sided, or one dimensional. They can be summed up in phrases (the sad clown, the

good housewife, the persistent athlete) and do not offer more than this. A good rule of thumb: if you can explain a character's importance in a work with a few words (the fisherman's annoying son), he/she probably is a flat character.

4. Zusak creates quite an intriguing narrator in *Death*. While reading the novel, select two different sections (think one or two pages) and analyze them for tone. To do this, identify words and phrases that create a certain mood or feeling. Write them in list form—nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, phrases. The more in the list, the more you will prove the tone accurately. Upon finishing the lists, reflect on the dominant mood these words and phrases create and write that word at the top of the page. For a suggested list of words to use, consult the online lists at <http://www.dothgrin.net/tonewords.pdf> or <http://www.como.stpaul.k12.mn.us/Tone.html>. The second site gives some additional advice on interpreting tone.

5. To be a good student, one must be able to ask good questions. As you read, make a short, strong list (three to five) of questions you would like answered on the first day of class. One must also appreciate the beauty of language. Select your three favorite metaphors from the text and write them down as well.

Please note that, as with all assignments herein, the above worksheets are to be the work of **your own intellect, research and words**. Plagiarism in any form (internet, student-to-student, “study guides”) will receive all penalties as per the student handbook. Our school expects academic honesty and integrity.

To recap, bring the novel, the worksheets, and your list of questions/metaphors. A writing prompt that will utilize your notes will be assigned during the first week of school. I wish you all an enjoyable summer, and hope that you find this summer reading experience rewarding.

Sincerely,

Mr. Christopher M. Kisatsky

Tone Analysis

Name _____

Title of Excerpt Analyzed (page numbers): _____ (_____)

Tone word: _____

Words/Phrases that Show Tone:

Title of Excerpt Analyzed (page numbers): _____ (_____)

Tone word: _____

Words/Phrases that Show Tone:

character name:

student name:

thoughts/feelings/beliefs

direct characterization

actions

appearance

“words”

round / flat? (circle one)

static / dynamic (circle one)

