

The Book Thief: A 6th Grade Literature Focus Unit
Created By
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FEATURED SELECTION:

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

Death narrates a story about a young foster child named Liesel Meminger who lives in Nazi Germany during WWII with her foster parents. She steals books to keep them from being burned and learns to read them with help from the Jewish man living in her basement.

RELATED MATERIALS:

Hide and Seek by Ida Vos

A young Jewish girl and her sister are separated from their family when the Nazis invade Holland. They try to evade the Nazis by moving from house to house.

The Upstairs Room by Johanna Reiss

A Jewish girl, Annie, and her Jewish sister leave their parents to live in a friendly family's upstairs room to hide from the German soldiers. They must be careful and stay quiet when the German soldiers come and set up a headquarters out of the living room downstairs.

Tell Them We Remember: The Story of the Holocaust by Susan D. Bachrach.

This is book has pictures and stories from different people across the world who were affected by the Holocaust. It helps children better understand the Holocaust and other events surrounding it.

No Pretty Pictures by Anita Lobel

This is a book about the author Anita Lobel and her story of surviving the Holocaust, beginning when she is five years old living in Krakow, Poland and ending when she is sixteen years old living in America. Her story is about struggling to be brave and survive.

The Island on Bird Street by Uri Orlev

Alex, a Jewish boy, hides from the Nazis in an abandoned building in a Polish ghetto during World War II, waiting for his father to come for him. The entire time he's there, Alex struggles with fear, loneliness, and starvation.

The Night Crossing by Karen Ackerman

Clara, a Jewish girl from Austria, learns that she and her family must leave the country. They can only take with them what they can carry and Clara decides to take two straw dolls that once belonged to her grandmother.

GOALS:

- Students will examine and identify the character Death and gain an understanding of his/her character.
- Students will gain an understanding of WWII and the Holocaust.
- Students will examine the effect of tragedies on Jewish families during WWII and the Holocaust.
- Students will compare and contrast the different points of view of different Jewish families during WWII and the Holocaust.
- Students will learn what colors mean to Death and why it is a recurring theme in The Book Thief.
- Students will learn what Hitler's goal was during the Holocaust.
- Students will understand why Liesel was stealing books and be able to empathize with her.

UNIT PLAN:

Pre-reading

Activity: Teacher talks with students about what narrators are and what they do. Teacher introduces idea of Death being a narrator. Students lead the discussion. "Art Activity" – study Jewish art during era, study pictures of Holocaust (age appropriate), and create own paintings of Holocaust.

Reading

Activity: Complete The Book Thief and two related materials of choice. Keep a double-entry journal for The Book Thief, and complete a quickwrite for each related material (quickwrite will be no more than two paragraphs and no less than one, and it will compare and contrast the related material to The Book Thief). "Social Studies Activity" – study Jewish culture before and after WWII, and plot maps of WWII battle sights and where Jewish communities were during that time.

Responding

Activity: Students participate in a class discussion on The Book Thief and well as a group discussion on the related materials they read. They also participate in (before the class discussion) a small group discussion of the related materials they read. “Written Language Activity” – choose one of the following options: rewrite a condensed version of the story from the girl’s perspective, write your story (your life story) from Death’s perspective, or write a story about Jewish life during WWII.

Exploring

Activity: “Science Activity” – follow Jewish recipes from era and create a meal (to be done as a class) for the entire grade or parents. “Math Activity” – learn about the different monies used during WWII in Europe and create a market in the classroom to use bartering skills.

“PE/Movement Activity” – pack and prepare for hiding, and play a Jewish game from the era.

“Music Activity” – learn about Jewish songs from era, and create a dance to tell a story of life for Jews during WWII/the Holocaust.

Applying

Activity: “Culminating Activity” – Reader’s Theatre of condensed version of story to be performed in front of school and community. “Oral Language Activity” – choose from one of the following options: narrate a story as Death, or narrate a traditional Jewish story (from WWII or before).

TIME SCHEDULE:

Day (One) 1 Talk about narrators (intro idea of Death as a narrator) Read aloud prologue “Art Activity”	Day (Two) 2 Buddy read the first five sections of part one Read at home the last four sections of part one	Day (Three) 3 Group read the first four sections of part two Read at home the last four sections of part two “Math Activity”	Day (Four) 4 Buddy read the first five sections of part three Read at home the last four sections of part three	Day (Five) 5 Individually read the first five sections of part four “Social Studies Activity”
Day (Six) 6 Group read the last four sections of part four Read at home the first five sections of part five	Day (Seven) 7 Buddy read the last four sections of part five “PE/Movement Activity”	Day (Eight) 8 Individually read part six	Day (Nine) 9 Group read the first four sections of part seven Read at home the last four sections of part seven “Science Activity”	Day (Ten) 10 Individually read the first five sections of part eight Read at home the last four sections of part eight
Day (Eleven) 11 Buddy read part nine “Music Activity”	Day (Twelve) 12 Group read the first five sections of part ten Read at home the last four sections of part ten	Day (Thirteen) 13 Individually read part eleven and the epilogue “Written Language Activity”	Day (Fourteen) 14 “Oral Language Activity”	Day (Fifteen) 15 “Oral Language Activity”

Day (Sixteen) 16 Prepare Reader's Theatre "Culminating Activity"	Day (Seventeen) 17 Prepare Reader's Theatre "Culminating Activity"	Day (Eighteen) 18 Prepare Reader's Theatre "Culminating Activity"	Day (Nineteen) 19 Prepare Reader's Theatre "Culminating Activity"	Day (Twenty) 20 Present Reader's Theatre "Culminating Activity"
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ASSIGNMENT CHECKLIST:

- _____ Activity One (Math)
- _____ Activity Two (Social Studies)
- _____ Activity Three (Science)
- _____ Activity Four (PE/Movement)
- _____ Activity Five (Music)
- _____ Activity Six (Art)
- _____ Activity Seven (Culminating Activity)
- _____ Activity Eight (Written Language)
- _____ Activity Nine (Oral Language)