**Maturation of Liesel Meminger in “The Book Thief”**

**1) Initially what would you imagine a person who steals books to be like? Untrustworthy? Mysterious? Evil? How does Liesel differ from your initial notions of who a “book thief would be”?**

**Early on in the text**

Childhood was anything but easy for Liesel. Her parents were considered enemies of the Nazi Party and were unable to care for their children. They were eventually taken 'away.' She and her brother are given to a foster family, but on the way to their new home, her brother dies due to an unknown illness. Alone, nine-year-old Liesel is left to be acquainted with the Hubermanns - gruff Rosa and sweet Hans - her new foster parents.

At this point in the story, Liesel is illiterate, but has stolen her first book, *The Gravediggers Handbook,* at her brother's burial. She remains haunted by his death and by her mother's abandonment, and this book becomes a source of comfort for Liesel.

**2) Explain how these early experiences in Liesel’s life would have affected her as a child? What do these early references to Liesel indicate about how she is going to interact with others? What will be her goals/ objectives in life? What conflicts/difficulties may she have as she matures?**

**Life on Himmel Street**

It's tough to get used to new places and faces, isn't it? For Liesel it's no different. Rosa's a grumpy, foul-mouthed woman who isn't really appealing to a young, vulnerable girl. Fortunately for Liesel, she has Hans. He comforts Liesel through her nightmares and reads from Liesel's book of choice: *The Gravedigger's Handbook.* Together they build their bond and work on Liesel's literacy in these late-night readings.

**3) Why are books and words so important to Liesel? How does she learn that words can be used for good and for evil?**

**Rudy Steiner**

Liesel becomes fast friends with her favorite 'lemon-haired' boy, Rudy Steiner. These two pal around and get into more hijinks than readers can count. On any given day, Rudy and Liesel can be found playing a rough soccer match in the street, thieving together in a fruit-stealing gang, and standing up for one another the way true friends do. In Nazi-controlled Germany, they still find ways to have fun and make childhood exciting.

**4) Why does Liesel vow that she will never kiss Rudy?**

*“As long as both she and Rudy lived, she would never kiss that miserable, filthy Saukerl.”*

**What is the purpose of Liesel and Rudy’s friendship in the text? How does this relationship alter Liesel’s life?**

*“At school, Rudy made a special point of seeking Liesel out during the breaks. He didn't care that others made noises about the new girl's stupidity.”*

**Max Vanderburg**

Another important relationship Liesel forms is with the Jew, Max, whom the Hubermanns hide from the Nazis. Even though she's a young child, Liesel keeps this secret because it means certain punishment for all if it gets back to the Nazi Party. While in their house, Max and Liesel bond together over words and reading and drawing. Max even creates a handmade book for Liesel called *The Standover Man*.

Once Max is believed to be taken by the Nazis, Liesel religiously watches the parades of Jews to the concentration camps to see if she can see Max. On one occasion, Liesel even risks her own safety by leaving bread for those in the parade because it's the right thing to do.

**5) How does Max’s experience in Nazi Germany alter how Liesel views her own suffering?**

*“You could argue that Liesel Meminger had it easy. She did have it easy compared to Max Vandenburg. Certainly, her brother had practically died in her arms. Her mother abandoned her. But anything was better than being a Jew.”*

**Words and Power**

Liesel learns through her experiences that words hold immense power as shown with the propaganda that Hitler uses to fuel his hateful reign. She starts out the novel nearly illiterate, and through commitment and much thievery, she becomes a skilled, voracious reader and writer by the end of the novel.

**6) Liesel continues to steal books throughout the novel. Why is this act important to her? What purpose does it serve?**

**Liesel Meets Death**

Unlike most others on Himmel Street, Liesel survives the surprise air raid because she's editing her work in the basement when it hits. Liesel lives on to be reunited with Max - who was taken by the Nazis - and to move to Australia to live a long life with a husband, children, and grandchildren. After many years of following Liesel and growing attached to her, Death describes her passing in the colors of the sky like he's done so many times before. For hers, the sky was the 'best blue of the afternoon.'

**7) Does Liesel live a fulfilled life? What does she ultimately teach us in the novel?**