**The Power of Words**

*Source(s):* <http://thekoolaidmom.wordpress.com/2009/03/21/the-book-thief-by-markus-zusak/> *Feb 28, 2012 9:13 AM*

Zusak writes with **a poetic beauty** that captures the way children take in the world around them. He often crosses the communication of the five senses:   
  
At times, in that basement, she woke up tasting the sound of the accordion in her hears. She could feel the sweet burn of champagne on her tongue. -p. 365   
  
One line I remember but was unable to find said something like “The smell of the sound of my footsteps,” and there are so many more lines like these in the book.   
  
Another concept Zusak descriptively conveys is **the power of words**.   
  
Once, words had rendered Liesel useless, but now, when she sat on the floor, with the mayor’s wife at her husband’s desk, she felt an innate sense of power. It happened every time she deciphered a new word or pieced together a sentence. -p. 154   
  
She couldn’t tell exactly where the words came from. What mattered was that they reached her. They arrived and kneeled next to the bed. -p. 246   
  
After a miscarriaged pause, the mayor’s wife edged forward and picked up the book. She was battered and beaten up, and not from smiling this time. Liesel could see it on her face. Blood leaked from her nose and licked at her lips. Her eyes had blackened. Cuts had opened up and a series of wounds were rising to the surface of her skin. All from words. From Liesel’s words. -p. 273   
  
Yes, the Fuhrer decided that he would rule the world with words. “I will never fire a gun,” he said. “I will not have to…” His first plan of attack was to plant the words in as many areas of his homeland as possible… He watched them grow, until eventually, great forests of words had risen throughout Germany. It was a nation of Farmed thoughts. -p. 451   
  
Frighteningly, it was exactly through the power of words and a healthy dose of charisma that Hitler was able to accomplish all the evil that was done in his name. He himself didn’t do the physical work, that would have required him to be in several places at once making that impossible, but through the words of his speeches and policies others took up his cause. Even more frightening is that his words are still used and followed to this day by some.   
  
Also, **through the use of Death**, the ultimate impartial onlooker, as narrator Zusak is able to make **epiphanic observations** about human beings:   
  
In years to come, he would be a giver of bread, not a stealer – proof again of the contradictory human being. So much good, so much evil. Just add water. -p. 171   
  
I’ve seen so many young men over the years who think they’re running at other young men. They are not. They’re running at me. -p. 182   
  
Death also points out that, beginning with houses of cards and sandcastles, humans “watch everything that was so carefully planned collapse and… smile at the beauty of destruction.” And he states a couple of times that the human child is much cannier than the adult.   
  
By far, however, the most important observation Death makes, the concept that sets the tenor of the entire book is this:   
  
AN OBSERVATION   
A pair of train guards.   
A pair of gravediggers.   
When it came down to it, one   
of them called the shots. The   
other did what he was told.The   
question is, what if the   
other is a lot more than one?   
-p. 30   
  
What happens when there are a lot more people who simply do as they’re told, without question? What happens to a society when a madman can rule through eloquent speeches, expressing ideals of hatred, and inspiring others to carry out morally reprehensible acts of violence and wickedness?