The Book Thief: The Book Of Pivotal Moments

Books are more than just words on compiled pieces of paper. They help shape a person's thoughts and feelings, even in life-changing moments. In the novel The Book Thief, books are a significant motif, due to the places that they show up within the story. These places include Werner's passing, the departure of Max, and the fatal bombing on Himmel Street. They all happen to be pivotal stages in the life of the main character, Liesel Meminger. Furthermore, books are exhibited in the text amid defining moments in Liesel's life, making them a compelling motif within the novel. The moment of Werner's passing is an example of a vital moment in Liesel's life, in which a book is present. Werner, Liesel, and their mother are on a train that is taking them to meet their foster parents. During the ride, an unexpected visitor enters the train. He goes by the name of Death and has come to harm Werner. He places his palm "over his mouth in an instant", killing the boy (Zusak 20). No one sees, "Except the girl" (20). Liesel is mortified to see her brother "… sideways and dead" (20). Her mind is unable to get this moment out of her head, as he continues to pop up in her life throughout the story, in the form of dreams, hallucinations, and thoughts. Evidently, the death is a pivotal moment of Liesel's life, as it affects her greatly. During the incident is when the first book of the novel makes its appearance. It is called The Grave Digger's Handbook, and it shows up at the funeral of the boy. Despite the significance of the content of the story, the fact that it is present in the moment of Werner's death, a momentous moment, is significant in itself. The departure of Max is another example of a defining moment in Liesel's life where a book is introduced. When Max – the Jew in which the Hubermann household had secretly

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The departure of Max is another example of a defining moment in Liesel's life where a book is introduced. When Max – the Jew in which the Hubermann household had secretly been caring

for – leaves the town, Liesel is affected greatly. Prior to this, they had a close relationship, considering that they came from a similar past and had a similar love for literature. When Max leaves, there is not a day that goes by when she does not think of him. Many times, she "…[sits] at the kitchen table and [wonders] where Max Vandenburg [is]…" (451). Losing Max was like losing her best friend. All in all, the moment of the Max Vandenburg's exit proves to be a life-changing moment in the main character's life. When Max is about to leave, he tells Liesel, "'I have left something for you…but you will not get it until you're ready'" (397). After that statement, Max leaves the town. Leaving the town, however, also means leaving Liesel. When Rosa determines that Liesel is finally ready to receive the gift, she hands her The Word Shaker, written by Max Vandenburg and dedicated to Liesel Meminger. The book highlights the power of Hitler's words, intertwined with the relationship between Max and Liesel. Given these points, it is evident that The Word Shaker book is brought into the story at a moment that changes the life of Liesel.

The bombing of Himmel Street is yet another moment of significance within the life of Liesel Meminger. At the time, Liesel is in the basement of their home on 33 Himmel Street that had once been called "… too shallow…" by German Nazis (345). In other words, that particular basement is not suitable for those who have a goal of surviving a bombing. Liesel contradicts this theory by surviving a bombing in that basement. As she is writing a book of her own in the basement, she falls asleep. It is at that moment that the bombs strike. Surprisingly, she survives. In fact, she is the only one who survives. In that instance, the book that she is writing saves her. As she comes out of the remains of Himmel Street, she is mortified and astounded at the deaths of those around her. Rudy, Rosa, and Hans are those whom she will never forget. Emotions took over and "The book thief wept" (539). She will be forever changed. In fact, in the last minutes of her life, she saw them; "… lit like lanterns, were Hans and Rosa Hubermann" (544). Furthermore, it is clear that the moment of their deaths is life-altering. All things considered, it can be concluded that there is a book that comes up during a life-changing moment in Liesel's life; the bombing and the loss of her new family.

Books are a powerful and compelling motif of the story. In the novel, they always pop up at defining moments in Liesel's life. When Werner passes, The Grave Digger's Handbook is introduced. When Max leaves, The Word Shaker is present. When the bombs drop on Himmel Street, The Book Thief — the book that Liesel is writing — is there. Given these points, books within the novel define life-changing moments in the book thief's life. At the time of those experiences, Liesel did not realize the power of the books, just as we may not realize the power of books in our everyday lives.