2020 Summer Reading Packet: AP English Language

Most of the time in this class will be spent evaluating and creating arguments as you strive to create your own “voice” on paper. With this in mind, pay attention to all of the arguments around you this summer, from TV commercials to your attempts to convince your parents to extend your curfew. Also notice how arguments extend beyond print into visual and audio medium.

In all of your writing this year, you will be arguing. You may be arguing about a specific belief you hold or you may be arguing that your analysis of a text is the only possible analysis. With this in mind, here at long last, are your summer writing activities for AP English Language. The first assignments focus on *The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak, and the second assignment focuses on *Alive* by Piers Paul Read. There is no YouChoose book assignment for AP English Language & Composition.

**Summer Reading Assignment: Part 1**


1. Annotate as you read *The Book Thief*. (25 points: annotations & literary devices)
   - i. See attached sheet on how to annotate a text. You must comment at least once every 5 pages to receive full credit;
   - ii. Review the definitions of the following literary devices. As you read *The Book Thief*, make note of at least five instances of each of these devices. Record the page numbers and details of each instance on the inside cover of the book. You must have both the page number and a brief explanation for each inside the front cover to get full credit.
     - Alliteration
     - Allusion
     - Imagery
     - Irony
     - Metaphor
     - Personification
     - Simile
     - Symbolism

2. One of the most fascinating aspects of this book is the personification of Death. After reading the novel, consider how having Death as the narrator of the story affected you. Then, listen to the NPR interview with Marcus Zusak (you can find this on the NPR website - npr.org) and read the attached resources from New York Times, The Independent and Pan Macmillan. Finally, write an essay in which you argue whether or not the personification of Death was convincing and believable. You must cite from the text and the sources provided in your essay. You may also consider and cite from other sources as well. Required length of essay – 3 pages (50 points)
3. Attached are pictures of the UK and Australian covers for *The Book Thief*. As if you were the artist, explain why each book cover is an ideal visual representation of this book (including the American cover). Additionally, choose the one you think best represents the book and explain why you chose it. Be convincing as you try to get me to agree with you! Your paper should be a total of at least six paragraphs, and it should be written in MLA format. (25 points)

**Summer Reading Assignment: Part 2**

Text: *Alive* by Piers Paul Read (ISBN# 978-0380003211)

“On October 12, 1972, a Uruguayan Air Force plane carrying a team of rugby players crashed in the remote snowy peaks of the Andes [Mountains]. Ten weeks later, only 16 of the 45 passengers were found alive. This is the story of those ten weeks spent in the shelter of the plane’s fuselage without food and with scarcely any hope of a rescue. They survived by protecting and helping one another, and came to the difficult conclusion that to live meant doing the unimaginable. Confronting nature at its most furious, two brave young men risked their lives to hike through the mountains looking for help—and ultimately finding it.”

*Alive*, Piers Paul Read

4. The book, *Alive*, will be a jumping-off point in a joint venture between your English class and your Moral Theology class. As you read *Alive*, consider how you would have handled certain aspects of the multiple dilemmas faced by the passengers on Flight 571 following their crash landing. While you are only required to read the book, annotating and taking notes as you read will help organize your thoughts and ideas for classroom activities using the book.

**All assignments are due on Wednesday, August 12th**
Instructions for Annotating a Text

Annotation is a key component of close reading. Since we will annotate texts all year, you need to develop a system that works for you (within the following guidelines). Effective annotating is both economical and consistent. The techniques are almost limitless, so please feel free to use any combination of the following:

How to Annotate:
- Make brief comments in the margins. Use any white space available - inside cover, random blank pages.
- Make brief comments between or within lines of the text. Do not be afraid to mark within the text itself. In fact, you must.
- Circle or put boxes, triangles, or clouds around words or phrases.
- Use abbreviations or symbols - brackets, stars, exclamation points, question marks, numbers, etc.
- Connect words, phrases, ideas, circles, boxes, etc. with lines or arrows.
- Underline or highlight – CAUTION: Use these methods sparingly. Underline only a few words. Always combine with another method such as comment. Never underline an entire passage. Doing so takes too much time and loses effectiveness. If you wish to mark an entire paragraph or passage, draw a line down the margin or use brackets.
- Use post-it notes only if you have exhausted all available space (unlikely).

What to annotate:
- Have a conversation with the text. Talk back to it.
- Ask questions (essential to active reading).
- Comment on the actions or development of a character. Does the character change? Why? How? The result?
- Comment on something that intrigues, impresses, amuses, shocks, puzzles, disturbs, repulses, aggravates, etc.
- Comment on lines / quotations you think are especially significant, powerful, or meaningful.
- Express agreement or disagreement.
- Summarize key events. Make predictions.
- Note if you experience an epiphany.
- Note anything you would like to discuss or do not understand.
- Note how the author uses language. Note the significance if you can.
  - effects of word choice (diction) or sentence structure or type (syntax)
  - point of view / effect reliability of narrator
  - repetition of words, phrases, actions, events - patterns motifs or cluster ideas
  - narrative pace / time / order of sequence of events tone / mood
  - contrasts / contradictions / juxtapositions / shifts themes/irony/imagery/ symbols
  - allusions setting / historical period
  - any other figure of speech or literary device

The most common complaint about annotating is that it slows down your reading. Yes, it does. That’s the point. If annotating as you read annoys you, read a chapter, then go back and annotate. Reading a text a second time is preferable anyway.
Annotations Grading:
A – Comments at least once every 5 pages. Comments are show evidence of critical thinking. Reader has clearly interacted with the text.
B – Comments at least once every 5 pages. Most comments show evidence of critical thinking, but some just summarize or state facts from the text. Reader may have read but did not engage fully in the text.
C – Comments at least once every 5-7 pages. Some comments show evidence of critical thinking, but many just summarize or state facts. Reader is not fully engaged in the text.
D – Comments at least once every 10 pages. Some comments show evidence of critical thinking, but many just summarize or state facts. Reader is not fully engaged in the text.
F – Does not comment consistently

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Good (-1 point)</th>
<th>Fair (-2 points)</th>
<th>Poor (-3 points)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identifies important details and facts</td>
<td>Student identifies all the main points of the plot. Student could easily identify events of the story. Student has explained the importance of the detail.</td>
<td>The student lists all the main points, but may only be stating the obvious.</td>
<td>The student lists most of the main points. S/he does not highlight any unimportant points.</td>
<td>The student cannot identify important information with accuracy.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inquiry Questioning</td>
<td>Student has added inquiry statements and questions that address actions and events in the story and highlight important points of discussion.</td>
<td>Student has added inquiry questions. Some of the questions may develop into valuable discussion points.</td>
<td>Student has added inquiry questions, but the answers may be easily found through some research.</td>
<td>Student has some questions. Many of the answers are obvious based on the context. Student has only marked: “?”, “Why”, “What”, “How”…</td>
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<tr>
<td>Identifies literary elements</td>
<td>Student has addressed major themes in the story and identified literary elements significant to the understanding of work as a whole. Literary elements include such devices as themes, characteristics, tone, imagery, but also add specific devices such as metaphors, allusions, use of diction, style, irony, symbolism juxtaposition…</td>
<td>Student has highlighted some of the themes and identified literary elements. Literary elements are obvious, but still important to understanding the work. Literary elements include such devices as themes, characteristics, tone, imagery.</td>
<td>Student may have pointed out some of the literary elements, but the devices do not seek to add analysis of the work.</td>
<td>Student has missed pointing out significant details that would lead to analysis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pages annotated</td>
<td>At least 100% of the pages annotated, with more than one annotation on the page.</td>
<td>At least 80% of the pages annotated, with one annotation on a page.</td>
<td>At least 50% of the pages annotated, with one annotation on every page.</td>
<td>At least 25% pages annotated, with annotations distributed throughout the work. Student may only have underlining.</td>
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Markus Zusak talks about the writing of *The Book Thief*

When I was growing up in suburban Sydney, I was told stories of cities on fire and Jews being marched to concentration camps. Both my parents grew up in Europe during World War II, and although they were extremely young at the time, in hindsight, they were able to understand many things. Two stories my mother told me about growing up in Munich always stuck with me. One was about a burning sky when the city was bombed. The other was about a boy being whipped on the street for giving a starving Jewish man a piece of bread. The man sank to his knees and thanked the boy, but the bread was stripped away and both the taker of the bread and the giver were punished.

This showed me that there was another side to Nazi Germany, and it was a side I wanted to write about. At first I thought of a biography, but as a writer of fiction, I knew it wouldn’t take long for the itch to imagine to climb out of me and into the story. Another problem was that Nazi Germany, Hitler and all associated topics had been written about before, so how could I make my own story original?

My first thought was to make it a personal story, about a girl. Then came an idea that I’d had floating in my head for a couple of years about a stealer of books. Soon I realised that words were a good metaphor for Nazi Germany. It was words (and Hitler’s ability to use them) that contained the power to murder and ostracise. What I set out to create was a character to juxtapose the way Hitler used words. She would be a stealer of books and a prolific reader. She, too, would occasionally use words to hurt, but she would understand their power to heal and give life through stories. Immediately, I had dark and light. I had the contradictory element of humanity’s good and evil, but it still wasn’t enough.

For more than a year, I tried everything to make the book work, but somehow it never did. I tried first person, third person, second person, shifting points of view, present and past tense, and none of it gave me what I wanted.

Then I stumbled upon the idea of Death narrating the story, and it all made sense. Who is constantly hanging around in times of war? Who would have the opportunity to pick up a story penned by a girl in a bombed German city? Death was the right answer, although there were still a few decisions to be made.

When I first brought Death into the story, he was sinister. He enjoyed his work a little too much. For months I wrote in this way and again I was falling short in some aspect I couldn’t understand. When I took a break from the book, I was sitting down on the back step and it hit me that Death should actually be afraid...of us. The irony of this was exciting, and it made perfect sense. Death is on hand to see the greatest crimes and miseries of human life, and I thought, *What if he tells this story as a way of proving to himself that humans are actually worthwhile?*

At that point, I started writing and I didn’t stop. In the end, *The Book Thief* took me three years to write. If nothing else, I know it’s a far different book from anything I’ve done before, which is what made it so challenging. I was also finally satisfied that there was a good sense of imagination in it. In three years, I must have failed over a thousand times, but each failure brought me closer to what I needed to write, and for that, I’m grateful.

For media enquiries contact
02 9285 9114 annie.coulthard@macmillan.com.au
-from Pan Macmillan - Australia
-cite as (Pan Macmillan)
The Australian writer Markus Zusak's brilliant and hugely ambitious new young-adult novel is startling in many ways, but the first thing many teenagers will notice is its length: 552 pages! It's one thing to write a long book about, say, a boy who happens across a dragon's egg; it's quite another to write a long, achingly sad, intricately structured book about Nazi Germany narrated by Death itself.

Readers are introduced to this Death-as-storyteller concept in a too-long invocation that begins "The Book Thief." This is no Grim Reaper — we have here a kinder, gentler Death, who feels sympathy for his victims. As Death himself puts it on Page 1: "I can be amiable. Agreeable. Affable. And that's only the A's." Maybe so, but Death is so innocuous that he's not very absorbing. Or affecting. His periodic soliloquies aren't the most effective moments of the novel, and if he took an M.F.A. class, Death would doubtless be criticized for telling instead of showing.

Fortunately, this book isn't about Death; it's about death, and so much else. Principally it is about Liesel Meminger, whose little brother dies just before Liesel's mother leaves her with foster parents in a dismal town in southern Germany (her father, a Communist, has been taken away).

Her new Papa is the implausibly saintly Hans Hubermann (that is, über-man), so good a person he even manages to love his wife, Rosa, who is one of the more memorable foster moms in young-adult fiction. She looks, Death tells us, "like a small wardrobe with a coat thrown over it. There was a distinct waddle to her walk. Almost cute, if it wasn't for her face." Rosa periodically beats Liesel with a wooden spoon, and uses exceedingly foul language. Much of it can't be quoted in a family newspaper, but suffice it to say that she routinely refers to her husband and foster daughter as "filthy pigs." Still, she cares for Liesel — and as Death eventually shows us, "She was a good woman for a crisis."

Max paints over pages of "Mein Kampf" and draws a comic book for Liesel.

Liesel finds ways of coping with her losses. But she is disruptive in school (she volunteers answers to questions) and is predisposed to fighting with boys. More important, she becomes a thief. She commits her first theft at her brother's funeral, taking "The Grave Digger's Handbook," which had fallen on the ground. Hans teaches her to read it at night. While Liesel sometimes joins up with a gang to steal food and the like, her only thieving passion is for books. Not good books or bad books — just books. From her bedroom to the bomb shelter down the road, reading helps her commune with the living and the dead — and finally, it is the mere existence of stories that proves to be her salvation.

Liesel is a very well-drawn character (and immensely likable), but many young readers will find the going slow until Max Vandenburg, a 24-year-old Jewish boxer, shows up at the family doorstep. Hans, as it happens, owes the fighter's dead father a favor, so he houses Max in the basement.
Aside from his friendship with Liesel (in one of the book's many resonant metaphors, he makes her a comic book using painted-over pages from "Mein Kampf"), Max is arresting because of his situation. He has abandoned his doomed family in order to live in hiding. After leaving them, "the relief struggled inside him like an obscenity. It was something he didn't want to feel, but nonetheless, he felt it with such gusto it made him want to throw up. How could he? How could he? But he did." There is a cowardice to Max's fight for survival, and his guilt and shame tear at him. He and Liesel both suffer from nightmares— but Liesel's grief is relatively uncomplicated. She must live with her mother's choices. Max must live with his own.

Max isn't the only fighter Marcus Zusak has written about. His first novel published in America, "Fighting Ruben Wolfe" (2001), follows the fistic exploits of Cameron and Ruben Wolfe, brothers who scrape by in a working-class neighborhood in Sydney. As boxers in an illicit league, Ruben becomes a champion and his little brother Cam, an inferior boxer, is known for his strong chin and resilience. In the end, it's Ruben who wants to be like Cam— better to be a fighter than a winner.

That novel was followed by a sequel, "Getting the Girl" (2003), which is about learning to fight for, and open up to, love, and then by the award-winning "I Am the Messenger" (2005), a strange and alluring novel about a 19-year-old compelled to vigilantism by anonymous instructions delivered on playing cards.

All of Zusak's protagonists have been fighters, whether born or made. But while his writing has always been ambitious and his characterizations precise, his early books merely celebrated fighting. In "The Book Thief," where battling to survive is sometimes an act of weakness, we see fighting in all its complexity. Max dreams, for instance, that he is boxing with the Führer. "There was only one round, and it lasted hours, and for the most part, nothing changed. The Führer pounded away at the punching-bag Jew." But then Max recovers and knocks Hitler down. Hitler takes off his gloves, seemingly defeated— until he whips the crowd into a fury. The "fists of an entire nation" attack Max, and he cannot fight them all off. This is fighting as "The Book Thief" understands it: winners often lose.

Indeed, everything is upside down in Zusak's Nazi Germany. Sounds are tasted, visions are heard, death has a heart, the strong do not survive, and your best chance of living may be a concentration camp. The entropy of this world is near complete.

Some will argue that a book so difficult and sad may not be appropriate for teenage readers. "The Book Thief" was published for adults in Zusak's native Australia, and I strongly suspect it was written for adults. Adults will probably like it (this one did), but it's a great young-adult novel. Many teenagers will find the story too slow to get going, which is a fair criticism. But it's the kind of book that can be life-changing, because without ever denying the essential amorality and randomness of the natural order, "The Book Thief" offers us a believable, hard-won hope. That hope is embodied in Liesel, who grows into a good and generous person despite the suffering all around her, and finally becomes a human even Death can love. The hope we see in Liesel is unassailable, the kind you can hang on to in the midst of poverty and war and violence. Young readers need such alternatives to ideological rigidity, and such explorations of how stories matter. And so, come to think of it, do adults.

*John Green's novel "Looking for Alaska" was the winner of the 2006 Michael L. Printz Award.*
How do you write a fresh story about the Holocaust? Australian novelist Markus Zusak has cracked it with The Book Thief, which sailed to the top of the New York Times bestseller list. Here The Book Thief is being published simultaneously for both teenage readers and for adults, and a Hollywood weepie is on the cards.

Like other fiction which has successfully crossed the divide, such as The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time, this is essentially a book for the young that adults might also enjoy. While ambitious and knowingly post-modern - it includes typographical symbols, illustrations and handwritten passages - The Book Thief has an innocent sensibility. There are no hidden depths. It wears its heart on its sleeve, which feels entirely appropriate for a novel about a child.

In 1939, nine-year-old Liesel is being taken to live with foster parents in Molching, a town outside Munich on the road to Dachau. All we know about Liesel's parents is that they are communists. Within pages, Liesel's small brother dies on the train journey and Liesel is cast as a survivor, "an expert at being left behind".

A plucky heroine who sometimes steals and lies, Liesel soon settles into life on the ironically named Himmel (Heaven) Street. In this poor district, the kids play soccer, drill in the Hitler Youth and receive daily drubbings from parents, teachers and each other. The relationships are well drawn, from Liesel's friendship with lemon-haired Rudy who idolises the black athlete, Jesse Owens, to that with her foster parents, the Hubermanns. Built like a small wardrobe, harridan Rosa takes in washing for local residents. Her husband, Hans, is a housepainter who comforts Liesel through her nightmares and shows her how to roll cigarettes.

Zusak gives us all you would expect in a novel about wartime Germany: hungry children pinching food, book burnings and bombing attacks. But his trick is to make Death his narrator. Not a million miles from Terry Pratchett's Grim Reaper in the Discworld series, Death is wry, tender and overworked. War, he complains, is like having a new boss who expects the impossible, constantly nagging "Get it done, get it done." In 1942, he can hardly keep up. "Forget the scythe, --- damn it, I needed a broom or a mop."

But Death has a heart and is haunted by the terrible things humans do. "For me, the sky was the colour of Jews," he says. No point in seeking explanations. "God never says anything. You think you're the only one he never answers?" By having Death commenting on the action and offering pithy asides, this Holocaust story becomes everyone's story. This isn't just about them. It's about us. And in case we don't get it, Death reminds us in the very first paragraph:

"HERE IS A SMALL FACT

You are going to die."

Initially Death notices Liesel when he comes for her brother. And it's at her brother's burial that the girl first steals - a gravedigger's handbook dropped in the snow. Although she cannot read, the book represents Liesel's last connection with the sibling and mother she will never see again. Using this manual the gentle Hans teaches Liesel to read.

Ten books make up Liesel's story and all mark important moments. Liesel saves one volume from the smoking remains at a public book burning and steals others from the personal library of the Mayor's wife - a withdrawn woman still mourning her dead son. Mein Kampf plays an unlikely role helping a young Jew in his struggle to survive. Max arrives at the Hubermanns' bearing the tome and is hidden in their basement for two years. The last of all the books is the one 14-year-old Liesel is writing about herself on the fateful night of the final air raid.

In Hitler's Germany, Liesel comes to understand the power of words. Being able to read them empowers her, but it empowers others, too. "Without words, the Führer was nothing. There would be no limping prisoners, no need for consolation or wordly [sic] tricks to make us feel better. What good were the words?"

The Book Thief is full of visually strong moments: a snowball fight in the basement, the young Jew's fantasy boxing match with Hitler; the literal whitewashing of a "bad" book (Mein Kampf) into a good one (painting over the pages to write a new story for Liesel). But it could be much tighter. While some images are spot on (the dying Max: "The colder he became, the more he melted"), some struggle too hard to be profound and end up meaningless ("a septic truth bleeds towards clarity").

This is a moving work which will make many eyes brim. Zusak shows us how small defiances and unexpectedly courageous acts remind us of our humanity. It isn't only Death who is touched. Liesel steals our hearts too.