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Mrs. Rutan
AP Literature and Composition
31 July 2016

Compare and Contrast: The Book Thief vs Night

Elie Wiesel's book, Night, and Markus Zusak's novel, The Book Thief, are among the most prominent WW2 accounts. Both of these novels depict the horrors people faced while living in Europe during Hitler and the infamous Nazi regime's reign of power. Although these two stories share a lot of similarities, there is a definite and clear distinction between the two. Whether it is the theme, tone, mood, or setting, these two books pave two distinctly different paths; while at the same time they co exist with each other perfectly, giving two different points of view.

Setting

Zusak's, The Book Thief, starts in 1939. The bulk of the story takes places in a town just outside of Munich - Molching, Germany. The main character is a little girl named named Liesel Meminger; Liesel is nine years old at the beginning of the book. Liesel lives with her foster parents. On the other hand Wiesel's book, Night, takes place in a variety of different places. Elie and his father travel quite a bit throughout the story. They go from the Transylvanian town of Sighet to a Jewish ghetto (still in Sighet), to a cattle car, then a slew of concentration camps—first, Birkenau, then Auschwitz, then Buna, and last Buchenwald. Elie and his father are separated from the family early in the book at a concentration camp. They face the horrors of the holocaust together.

Storyline/Antagonists

The stories are quite different. Although at their core the danger and all the bad events derive from the same place, nazicism. In Night, that concept is pretty obvious. It is clear that the concentration camps that Elie faces are a result of Hitler and the Nazi's anti-semitism laws placed against him and his people. On the other hand, in The Book Thief, that theme is not as apparent. When you look in depth you realize that all of the problems and suffering the character's face can be traced back to one thing, the ideas of Adolf Hitler and ultimately the Nazi party. Even though it isn't as direct in The Book Thief, the antagonist in both books is the Nazi party.

Mood

Another big difference between the two books is how the stories are told. The Book Thief is written in closed third person with the occasional first person point of view. The narrator is Death. In Night, the story is told in First person, the narrator is Elie himself. A big difference between the two books is Night is nonfiction whereas The Book Thief is considered historical fiction. With Night being based on true events and accounts of a real person you really get a different feel when reading it. All of the terrible things described are heightened because as a reader you know somebody actually went through it.

Themes

A major theme that was mainly expressed in Night is Elie's perpetual loss of faith in God. After all of the pain he was put through he begins to wonder why God keeps allowing him to suffer. Even though Elie prays and prays it seems as if God isn't answering. Elie states, "I no longer accepted God's silence" (Wiesel,66). The way he sees it, he was put into this situation because of his beliefs. When he finds himself and his people in their darkest hour he doesn't

understand why God won't save them from the ultimate horrors of the holocaust. Towards the end of the book Elie's faith slowly slips away.

A theme shown in The Book Thief is not everyone in Germany shared the same views as the Nazi's and Hitler. Rudy, one of Liesel's friends, "smeared the charcoal on, nice and thick, till he was covered in black" (Zusak, 57). Rudy was trying to imitate Jesse Owens. This shows that not every German believed in the dominance of the Aryan race and some were even rebellious. Later in the book Hans Hubermann's (Liesel's Papa) thoughts on Hitler are shared, "A Jew had once saved his life and he couldn't forget that. He couldn't join a party that antagonized people in such a way. Also, much like Alex Steiner some of his most loyal customers were Jewish. Like many of the Jews believed, he didn't think the danger could last, and it was a conscious decision not to follow Hitler. On many levels, it was a disastrous one" (Zusak, 180). This is another example of how not everyone agreed with Nazi ideas.

One major theme in both books is the selfless love each of the main characters has for their loved ones. In Night, Elie on numerous occasions gives up his food rations for his starving father. Even though Elie was very hungry he recognized that his dad needed the food more than he did and willingly gave it up. In The Book Thief Liesel and her family host a Jewish man named Max in her basement. Even though housing a Jew was very dangerous during that time in Germany, Liesel never thought twice about it. She had grown to love Max as if he was a part of her family. She would rather die at the cost of helping her friend than put his life in danger by not helping him at all. Both characters are willing to put their own lives on the line for the people they love.

Even though the two books are pretty similar, they have their fair share of differences. It is important for us as a society to have many references; having a variety of different points of view is good. It gives us a better understanding of the time. In a way it shows us just how large the problem was, not only were the Jews suffering, German citizens were feeling the affects of Hitler too. Having so many accounts of how terrible the war/ Nazi regime was will hopefully help us steer clear of ever having another event like that in the future.

Connor,

SCORE: MASTERY

I really liked you did a compare/contrast paper--not many kids pick this option--and you had a great piece of literature, *Night*, to use. I also liked the different things you focused on (setting, mood...) and how you set it up with the mini-headers. Your best discussion was on theme. You had some thoughtful evidence and really pushed that AP level analysis that you need for class; you discuss why the authors' did what they did, and the lessons you learned from each book. Next time, just beware doing too much summary and not adding in enough evidence early in your writing. Summary is important for context, but think about adding in some of your own thoughts after you give those summary points. For instance: *Zusak gives us a more German setting to help show us the good in some people, while Wiesel's setting shows us just how far the Germans were able to go, and the real horrors so many Jews faced in the actual camps*. You still did a fantastic job and I enjoyed hearing the parallels and contrasts you came up. Nice work!

Mastery	Incomplete
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<p>· I fulfill the assignments objectives by either...</p> <p><i>-Commenting on three correctly cited passages critically and I complete a focused, clearly organized analysis.</i></p> <p><i>-Thoughtfully comparing and contrasting my literary selection with another piece of literature .</i></p> <p><i>-Creating original character letters/journal that shows voice and personality.</i></p> <p><i>-I include a reflection explain a couple of my writing choices within the letter(s).</i></p>	<p>· I fail to fulfill the assignment objectives by either...</p> <p><i>-Not using proper citation or direct evidence.</i></p> <p><i>-Not including three passages</i></p> <p><i>-Not offer analysis, but only a summary.</i></p> <p><i>-Failing to show contrast or comparison to another piece of literature.</i></p> <p><i>-I fail to use a noteworthy piece of literature.</i></p> <p><i>-Just include summary.</i></p> <p><i>-Not using the correct genre of writing.</i></p> <p><i>-Not showing a solid character voice.</i></p> <p><i>-Not including a reflection</i></p>
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<p><i>-Creating a collection of poetry that presents at least 30 lines and reflects aspects of the novel.</i></p> <p><i>-I include reflection(s) explaining my poems, themes, and poetic structure and techniques.</i></p> <p><i>-Creating an interesting, personal letter that embraced the genre as well as discusses my likes, dislikes, impacts for the high school reader, etc.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · I include thoughtful, relevant, and correct information about the literature. 	<p><i>-Not providing 30 lines of poetry.</i></p> <p><i>-Not reflecting on aspects of the novel.</i></p> <p><i>-Not including a reflection.</i></p> <p><i>-Not using the letter format</i></p> <p><i>-Not providing personal insight or reflection</i></p> <p><i>-Just include summary</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · I include incorrect information about the literature. · I do not use direct, well integrated, or cited evidence from the novel.
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · I use several pieces of direct, clearly integrated, and cited evidence from the novel. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · I adhere to the necessary page/length requirements for my select project (about 4-5 pages, double-spaced). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · I fail to adhere to my page/length requirements because my piece is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -<i>Too short</i> -<i>Incomplete</i> -<i>Underdeveloped</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · My piece shows voice, organization, and style. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · My piece fails to show voice, is poorly organize and too generic and/or unoriginal.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · I show solid grammar and mechanics. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · I have poor grammar and mechanics.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · I use MLA format. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · I fail to use MLA format.

