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Dear Mr. Markus Zusak,

About three months before I read *The Book Thief*, I went to Poland. I had read several books before I left trying to prepare myself for Poland, for Auschwitz, for Birkenau, for the history. Nothing could prepare me for any of those.

As I was not prepared for Poland, Liesel was not prepared for the challenges she faced. Every moment Liesel was faced with a new challenge until she was backed into a corner. But Liesel put up her fists, like Max, and fought off every one as best she could. Her perseverance and determination are things I hope to learn from.

I know that your book took place in Germany and I make references to Poland, but Poland is very much the same in most aspects. In Poland, I did go to both Auschwitz and Birkenau. There and in the rest of Poland I learned what the Nazi's felt they were driven to do, what they could do. I've seen the victims' hair, pictures, and where they driven to do, what they could do. I've seen the victims' hair, pictures, and where they slept to be devoured by rats. I also saw their hope in a sketch of Jesus on a concrete wall. I think knowing this made me a better person. But all of this was what I wasn't prepared for.

In Nazi Germany I know it was hard to survive. Liesel managed to survive by reading and writing. It was important to her and helped her continue on. It gave her a goal, and hope to fight off the sadness. Reading and writing gave her a different aspect of the world, a part that she had never witnessed. Reading and writing has also showed me that part of the world, knowing of things that may have happened somewhere else, in another time. Her writing saved her life physically, and reading saved her mentally. Together they saved her from Death, and later made her meeting with Death smoother. I found it sad that the world did not get to hear of her writing, but it is good that Death did.

Although Poland showed me many things, and taught me many others, it was hard. I think it prepared me for troubles I will face in the future. But nothing, not even Poland, could prepare me for your story.

An Avid Reader,

Bennett Thompson

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