***The Book Thief* – Death Evaluates Humans**

Directions: Each group has been given a number of moments within *The Book Thief* wherein Death evaluates the humans he sees. Examine the quotes you have been assigned and prepare an explanation of their context and what insight they offer into Death’s character. I would also like you to consider any universal truths these quotes may reveal. You will share your thoughts with the class.

Group One

* “I witness the ones who are left behind, crumbling among the jigsaw puzzle of realization, despair, and surprise. They have punctured hearts. They have beaten lungs” (Zusak 5).
* “It [Liesel’s story] is one of the small legion I carry, each one extraordinary in its own right. Each one an attempt – an immense leap of an attempt – to prove to me that you, and your human existence, are worth it” (Zusak 14).
* “How could that woman [Lieslel’s mother] walk? How could she move? That’s the sort of thing I’ll never know, or comprehend” (Zusak 25).
* “People have defining moments, I suppose, especially when they’re children” (Zusak 52).

Group Two

* “Although something inside her told her that this was a crime – after all, her three books were the most precious items she owned – she was compelled to see the thing lit. She couldn’t help it. I guess humans like to watch a little destruction. Sand castles, houses of cards, that’s where they begin. Their great skill is their capacity to escalate” (Zusak 108).
* “’Don’t remind me.’ But Rudy couldn’t resist smiling. 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” (Zusak 164).
* “’When death captures me,’ the boy vowed, ‘he will feel my fist in his face.’ Personally I quite like that. Such stupid gallantry. Yes. I like that a lot” (Zusak 189).
* “As is often the case with humans, when I read about them in the book thief’s words, I pitied them, though not as much as I felt for the ones I scooped up from various camps at that time. The Germans in basements were pitiable, surely, but at least they had a chance. That basement was not a washroom. They were not sent there for a shower. For those people, life was still achievable” (Zusak 376).

Group Three

* “The consequence of this is that I’m always finding humans at their best and worst. I see their ugly and their beauty, and I wonder how the same thing can be both. Still they have one thing I envy. Humans, if nothing else, have the good sense to die” (Zusak 401).
* “O, Crucified Christ, Rudy…He lay in bed with one of his sisters. She must have kicked him or muscled her way into the majority of the bed space because he was on the very edge with his arm around her. The boy slept. His candle-lit hair ignited the bed, and I picked both him and Bettina up with their souls still in the blanket. If nothing else, they died fast and were warm. They boy from the plane, I thought. The one with the teddy bear. Where was Rudy’s comfort? Where was someone to alleviate this robbery of his life? Who was there to soothe him as life’s rug was pulled out from under his sleeping feet? No one. There was only me” (Zusak 531).
* “Lastly, the Hubermans. Hans. Papa. He was tall in the bed and I could see the silver through his eyelids. His soul sat up. It met me. Those kinds of souls always do – the best ones. The ones who rise up and say, ‘I know who you are and I am ready. Not that I want to go, of course, but I will come’” (Zusak 531).
* “She [Liesel] did not say goodbye. She was incapable, and after a few more minutes at his side, she was able to tear herself from the ground. It amazes me what humans can do, even when streams are flowing down their faces and they stagger on, coughing and searching, and finding” (Zusak 536).

All Groups:

“I wanted to tell the book thief many things, about beauty and brutality. But what could I tell her about those things that she didn’t already know? I wanted to explain that I am constantly overestimating and underestimating the human race – that I rarely ever do simply estimate it. I wanted to ask her how the same thing could be so ugly and so glorious, and its words and stories so damning and brilliant. None of those things, however, came out of my mouth. All I was able to do was turn to Liesel Meminger and tell her the only truth I know. I said it to the book thief and I say it now to you.

A LAST NOTE FROM YOUR NARRATOR

I am haunted by humans.