*The Book Thief* – Supplemental Text

“The Gift” by John Ciardi

In 1945, when the keepers cried *kaput*

Josef Stein, poet, came out of Dachau

Like half a resurrection, his other half

eighty pounds still in their invisible grave.

Slowly then the mouth opened at first

a broth, and then a medication, and then

a diet, and all in time and the knitting mercies,

the showing bones were buried back in flesh,

and the miracle was finished. Josef Stein

man and poet, rose, walked, and could even

beget, and did, and later died of other causes

only partly traceable to his first death.

He noted - with some surprise at first -

that strangers could not tell he had died once.

He returned to his post in the library, drank his beer,

published three poems in a French magazine,

and was very kind to the son who at last was his.

In the spent of one night he wrote three propositions:

That Hell is the denial of the ordinary. That nothing lasts.

That clean white paper waiting under a pen

is the gift beyond history and hurt and heaven.

Answer the following questions in a two-pace, double-spaced, word-processed response using MLA format.

1. What happens in this poem?
2. Why is what happens important enough to write about?
3. Why is it important that the central figure in this poem about the Holocaust is a poet? What have we learned about the value of passion (artistic or otherwise) in terms of maintaining one’s humanity?
4. The poet describes Josef’s three propositions. How would you define the word proposition as used in this poem? Discuss each of those and hos it applies to *The Book Thief*. Refer specifically to both the poem and *The Book Thief*.
5. Look closely at the words Ciardi uses. What image repeats itself? How is this image especially appropriate in terms of the subject matter of the poem?
   1. Note: In poetry, imagery is the use of sensory word pictures. Here, look for words that repeatedly suggest a visual image.