

## **THE BOOK THIEF BY Marcus Zusak**

### **HISTORICAL EVENTS – CHRONOLOGICAL TIMELINE**

*The Book Thief* is a novel set in Germany, during and post-World War II. In the story there are many references to historical events. The chronology below will help you understand these references.

- 1925/1926      Mein Kampf (English: My Struggle/My Battle) is a book by the Austrian-born leader of Nazi Germany, Adolf Hitler. It combines elements of autobiography with an exposition of Hitler's National Socialist political ideology. Hitler uses the main thesis of "The Jewish Peril", which speaks of an alleged Jewish conspiracy to gain world leadership.
- 01-30-1933      Adolf Hitler is appointed Chancellor of Germany - a nation with a Jewish population of 566,000.
- 02-27-1933      Nazis burn Reichstag building to create crisis atmosphere.
- 02-28-1933      Emergency powers granted to Hitler as a result of the Reichstag fire.
- 03-22-1933      Nazis open Dachau concentration camp near Munich, to be followed by Buchenwald near Weimar in central Germany, Sachsenhausen, near Berlin in northern Germany, and Ravensbrück for women.
- 03-24-1933      German Parliament passes *Enabling Act*, giving Hitler dictatorial powers.
- 04-01-1933      Nazis stage boycott of Jewish shops and businesses.
- 04-11-1933      Nazis issue a decree defining a non-Aryan as "anyone descended from non-Aryan, especially Jewish, parents or grandparents. One parent or grandparent classifies the descendant as non-Aryan . . . especially if one parent or grandparent was of the Jewish faith."
- 05-10-1933      Burning of books in Berlin and throughout Germany.
- 1933/1934      Nazis prohibit Jews from owning land. Jews are prohibited from being newspaper editors. Jews not allowed national health insurance. Jews are prohibited from getting legal qualifications.
- 08-19-1934      Hitler receives a ninety percent "Yes" vote from Germany voters approving his new powers.
- 05-21-1935      Nazis ban Jews from serving in the military.
- 09-15-1935      Nuremberg Race Laws against Jews decreed.
- 03-07-1936      Nazis occupy the Rhineland.
- 08-01-1936      Olympic games begin in Berlin. Hitler and top Nazis seek to gain legitimacy through favorable public opinion from foreign visitors and thus temporarily refrain from actions against Jews. Jesse Owens, an African-American wins gold medals, which upsets Hitler.
- 01-1937      Jews are banned from many professional occupations including teaching Germans, and from being accountants or dentists. They are also denied tax reductions and child allowances.
- 03-12/13-1938      Nazis troops enter Austria, which has a population of 200,000 Jews, mainly living in Vienna. Hitler announces Anschluss (union) with Austria.
- 1938      Nazis order Jews to register wealth and property. Nazis order Jewish owned businesses to register. Nazis order Jews over age fifteen to apply for identity cards from the police, to be shown on demand to any police officer. Jewish doctors prohibited by law from practicing medicine. Nazis require Jewish women to add Sarah and men to add Israel to their names on all legal documents including passports. Law requires Jewish passports to be stamped with a large red "J."
- 08-11-1938      Nazis destroy the synagogue in Nuremberg.

- 10-28-1938 Nazis arrest 17,000 Jews of Polish nationality living in Germany, then expel them back to Poland, which refuses them entry, leaving them in "no-mans land" near the Polish border for several months.
- 11-09/10-1938 Kristallnacht – the Night of Broken Glass. A massive, coordinated attack on Jews throughout the German Reich. On November 9, mob violence broke out as the regular German police stood by and crowds of spectators watched. Nazi storm-troopers, along with members of the SS and Hitler Youth, beat and murdered Jews, broke into and wrecked Jewish homes, and brutalized Jewish women and children. All over Germany, Austria and other Nazi-controlled areas, Jewish shops and department stores had their windows smashed and contents destroyed. Synagogues were especially targeted for vandalism, including desecration of sacred Torah scrolls. Hundreds of synagogues were systematically burned while local fire departments stood by or simply prevented the fire from spreading to surrounding buildings.
- 11-12-1938 Nazis fine Jews one billion marks for damages related to Kristallnacht.
- 1938/1939 Jewish pupils are expelled from all non-Jewish German schools. Nazis force Jews to hand over all gold and silver items. Jews in Germany are forbidden to be outdoors after 8:00 p.m. in winter and 9 p.m. in summer. German Jews are forbidden to own wireless (radio) sets. Yellow stars required to be worn by Polish Jews over age ten. German Jews are ordered to wear yellow stars.
- 03-15/16-1939 Nazi troops seize Czechoslovakia (Jewish population, 350,000).
- 09-01-1939 Nazis invade Poland (Jewish population 3.35 million), the largest in Europe.
- 10-02-1941 Beginning of the Germany army drive on Moscow.
- 12-08-1941 In Occupied Poland, near Lodz, Chelmno extermination camp becomes operational. Jews taken there are placed in mobile gas vans and driven to a burial place while carbon monoxide from the engine exhaust is fed into the sealed rear compartment, killing them. The first gassing victims include 5,000 Gypsies who had been deported from the Reich to Lodz.
- 12-11-1941 Hitler declares war on the United States.
- 01-20-1941 Wannsee Conference to coordinate the "Final Solution."
- 03-30-1942 First train-loads of Jews from Paris arrive at Auschwitz.
- 04-20-1942 German Jews are banned from using public transportation.
- 02-02-1943 Germans surrender at Stalingrad in the first big defeat of Hitler's armies.
- 05-19-1943 Nazis declare Berlin to be Judenfrei (cleansed of Jews).
- 06-11-1943 Himmler orders liquidation of all Jewish ghettos in Occupied Poland.
- 10-30-1944 Last use of gas chambers at Auschwitz.
- 01-27-1945 Soviet troops liberate Auschwitz. By this time, an estimated 2,000,000 persons, including 1,500,000 Jews, have been murdered there.
- 04-23-1945 Berlin reached by Soviet troops.
- 04-30-1945 Hitler commits suicide in his Berlin bunker.
- 04-30-1945 Americans free 33,000 inmates from concentration camps.
- 11-20-1945 Opening of the Nuremberg International Military Tribunal.