

# Markus Zusak Biography

Source: [www.litlovers.com](http://www.litlovers.com)



Australian author Markus Zusak grew up hearing stories about Nazi Germany, about the bombing of Munich and about Jews being marched through his mother's small, German town. He always knew it was a story he wanted to tell.

We have these images of the straight-marching lines of boys and the 'Heil Hitlers' and this idea that everyone in Germany was in it together. But there still were rebellious children and people who didn't follow the rules and people who hid

Jews and other people in their houses. So there's another side to Nazi Germany," said Zusak in an interview with *The Sydney Morning Herald*.

At the age of 30, Zusak has already asserted himself as one of today's most innovative and poetic novelists. With the publication of *The Book Thief*, he is now being dubbed a "literary phenomenon" by Australian and U.S. critics. Zusak is the award-winning author of four previous books for young adults: *The Underdog*, *Fighting Ruben Wolfe*, *Getting the Girl*, and *I Am the Messenger*, recipient of a 2006 Printz Honor for excellence in young adult literature. He lives in Sydney. (From the publisher.)

## Book Summary

Source: [www.urbanbooks.net](http://www.urbanbooks.net)

Winner, 2003 Book of the Year Award for Older Readers—Australian Children's Book Council

Meet Ed Kennedy—underage cabdriver, pathetic cardplayer, and useless at romance. He lives in a shack with his coffee-addicted dog, the Doorman, and he's hopelessly in love with his best friend, Audrey. His life is one of peaceful routine

and incompetence, until he inadvertently stops a bank robbery. That's when the first Ace arrives. That's when Ed becomes the messenger.

Chosen to care, he makes his way through town helping and hurting (when necessary), until only one question remains: Who's behind Ed's mission?

Winner of the 2003 Children's Book Council Book of the Year Award in Australia, *I Am the Messenger* is a cryptic journey filled with laughter, fists, and love.

After capturing a bank robber, nineteen-year-old cab driver Ed Kennedy begins receiving mysterious messages that direct him to addresses where people need help, and he begins getting over his lifelong feeling of worthlessness. (From the publisher.)

## Discussion Questions

Source: [www.LitLovers.com](http://www.LitLovers.com)

1. There are many ironies in Ed Kennedy's life. One is in the name of the company for which he works—Vacant Taxi Company. What is "vacant" in Ed's life? Explain the irony in Audrey's statement, "You used to just be.... Now you're somebody, Ed." (p. 232) Discuss how Ed resolves the ironies in his life.
2. Describe Ed's family. Explain what his mother means when she says, "Believe it or not—it takes a lot of love to hate you like this." (p. 245) Ed's mother says that his father promised to take her away. She resents the fact that he never did. Debate whether his mother is simply looking for someone to blame for her unhappiness. How is Audrey's family similar to Ed's family?
3. Discuss Ed and Audrey's relationship. Audrey says that she likes Ed too much to have sex with him, and he says that he wants more than sex from her. Why does Audrey think that sex would ruin their relationship? What does Ed want from Audrey? It is obvious that Audrey is having sex with other guys. How does her attitude toward casual sex indicate disrespect for herself? Ed eventually learns that Audrey is in love with him. Why is she reluctant to reveal her love for him? What might Ed offer her at the end of the novel that he was incapable of offering in the beginning?

4. Ed and his friends are in a bank when it is robbed. Debate whether Ed is in the wrong place at the right time, or the right place at the wrong time.

5. After the robbery, Ed begins receiving the cards in the mail. Explain how Ed knows that each mission he is handed is serious business.

6. One of Ed's first messages is to soothe Milla Johnson's loneliness by posing as her deceased husband. How does this experience show Ed the real meaning of love? Then, Ed delivers a message to Sophie, the barefoot runner. Explain the courage that Ed learns from Sophie. What does Ed learn from each of the twelve messages that he delivers? How is each mission a lesson for the heart?

7. There are times when self-hatred is almost debilitating to Ed. Who is most responsible for his poor self-concept? How do the cards help Ed gain a more positive sense of self? Explain how Ed is both the messenger and the message. How does this support the theory that by helping others, a person helps himself? What does Ed mean when he says, "If I ever leave this place, I'll make sure I'm better here first?" (p. 283)

8. Ed says, "I want words at my funeral. But I guess that means that you need life in your life." (p. 298) How do the missions slowly put "life" in Ed's life? Think about the words that each of the characters might offer Ed by the end of the novel.

9. Some readers like open endings, and others like distinct conclusions. What is your preference? Why do you think the author ended the novel the way he did? Make a case for both types of endings.

(Questions issued by publisher.)

The logo features the word "Book" in a large, bold, sans-serif font at the top. Below it, the words "Club" and "in a Bag" are written in a stylized, blocky font. The "C" in "Club" is particularly large and has a circular shape. The "in a Bag" is written in a smaller, simpler font below "Club". The entire logo is set against a background of a stylized sun or moon with rays, and a banner-like shape behind the text.

# Book Club in a Bag

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## *I am the Messenger* by Markus Zusak

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