September 14th 2016

Dear Honors Language Arts Students,

Have you ever wondered how one seemingly unimportant event can actually become extremely important? If you have, then *I Am the Messenger* is the book for you; if you haven’t, you should still read *I Am the Messenger* because it will change your life. Don’t believe me? Well, maybe I can convince you with this letter.

This book by Markus Zusak starts with a bank robbery. Underage cab driver Ed Kennedy and his friends happen to go to the bank on the wrong day, and they aren’t afraid to let the bank robber know that. When the cops show up, and the robber tries to escape, Ed takes matters, and a dropped gun, into his own hands. He stops the robber, and thus starts his journey. A few days later, Ed—who is not the most confident or motivated teenager in Australia—receives an Ace of Diamonds in the mail with three addresses written on it. With this first Ace, Ed becomes the messenger. At each address, he must deliver a message for those people, a lesson that will affect each of their lives, and Ed’s as well. Eventually, he makes his way through the three addresses on the Ace of Diamonds, but then he receives another Ace, and another three people. Some of the messages are easy for him. For instances he helps a young girl realize she doesn’t need fancy running shoes to be the best runner she can be. Some of the messages are more painful. One example is he lets two brothers beat him up in order for them to realize they care about each other. With each message he delivers though, Ed can’t help but wonder who is sending him out to deliver these messages, and why he of all people has been chosen.

Zusak does a good job of using the plot pyramid to structure his novel, however, he doesn’t wait until the rising action to start the excitement. By beginning his novel with the bank robbery, he grabs his reader’s excitement right off. It is also an important event for Ed because he firmly believes that there is some connection between him stopping the bank robbery, and him being chosen to be the messenger. Also, by writing all of this from Ed’s perspective, and using a 1st person POV, Zusak makes you feel as though you are right in the action.

After the bank robbery, Zusak uses the plot pyramid to a T. He builds excitement and tension in the story because each person’s message that Ed has to deliver comes with some sort of task he must do. By alternating between easier tasks and more difficult tasks, Zusak makes sure he keeps his reader’s attention. He wants you to stay involved, but he also gives you some breathing room in-between the intense moments. For instance, after Ed finishes the first Ace, he is visited by two hitmen who come to deliver the next Ace. They aren’t very polite about the situation, and it makes you wonder even more who is the instigator of the messages. After getting the Ace, he has to try and figure out what his next messages are. It takes a little bit of time, so you’re given a bit of a break from all of the action. All of the Ace messages eventually lead up to the climax, and Ed finds out who has sent him to deliver the messages, but of course, you’ll have to get to almost the very end before you find out who it is. Trust me: you’ll never see it coming!

The title *I Am the Messenger* is the perfect title for this book. It describes who Ed becomes with that very first Ace, but it is also an important role for Ed. With each message he delivers, Ed learns more about himself and the type of person he is capable of being. In other words, Ed’s life changes drastically when he becomes the Messenger. He learns to be more confident, more observant, and more present in his everyday interactions. If he never became the Messenger, he would be the same, underage, unmotivated taxi driver he was before the first Ace arrived. I don’t think I could pick a better title for this book.

I loved this book! I highly recommend it to any teenage reader. It is both a mystery and adventure. Ed has to figure out who sent him the Aces, but he also goes on an adventure as he delivers each message. If you are a fan of either genre, you’ll like this book. If you like romance, you’ll like this book as well because there is an underlying will-they/won’t-they plot line between Ed and his friend Audrey. There’s also a lot of humor, which is what I like most about this book. Ed’s friends are great supporting characters, even though they might not always be the most helpful, and they add the most humor. For example, Ed constantly talks about his smelly dog and how Marv, another friend, hates that dog. Marv, however, is forced to kiss The Doorman (Ed’s dog) as a Christmas present to Ed, and the build up to the event had me laughing loudly.

Overall, *I Am the Messenger* is a great, fast-paced read that anyone could enjoy. You should read it the next time you want to read a fun, mysterious adventure novel.\*

Sincerely,

Miss Miles

\*With parent permission—it’s got some inappropriate content in it ☺