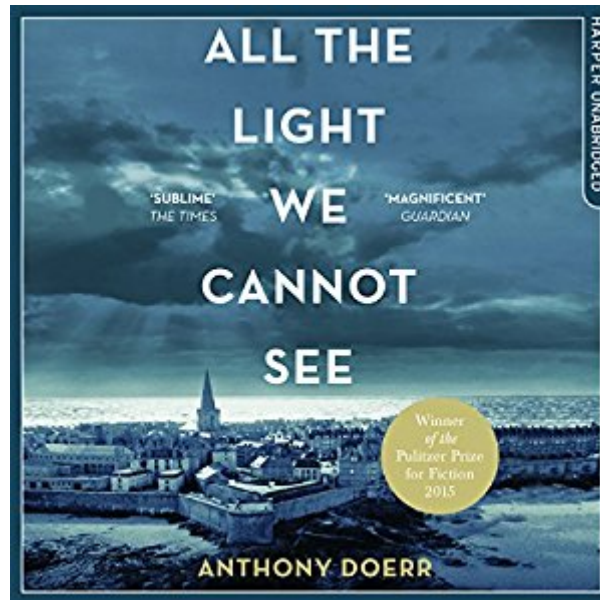




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All The Light We Cannot See



Synopsis

Winner of the 2015 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction National Book Award Finalist New York Times Bestseller A beautiful, stunningly ambitious novel about a blind French girl and a German boy whose paths collide in occupied France as both try to survive the devastation of World War II, from the highly acclaimed, multiple award-winning Anthony Doerr. Marie Laure lives with her father in Paris within walking distance of the Museum of Natural History where he works as the master of the locks (there are thousands of locks in the museum). When she is six, she goes blind, and her father builds her a model of their neighborhood, every house, every manhole, so she can memorize it with her fingers and navigate the real streets with her feet and cane. When the Germans occupy Paris, father and daughter flee to Saint-Malo on the Brittany coast, where Marie-Laure's agoraphobic great uncle lives in a tall, narrow house by the sea wall. In another world in Germany, an orphan boy, Werner, grows up with his younger sister, Jutta, both enchanted by a crude radio Werner finds. He becomes a master at building and fixing radios, a talent that wins him a place at an elite and brutal military academy and, ultimately, makes him a highly specialized tracker of the Resistance. Werner travels through the heart of Hitler Youth to the far-flung outskirts of Russia, and finally into Saint-Malo, where his path converges with Marie-Laure. Doerr's gorgeous combination of soaring imagination with observation is electric. Deftly interweaving the lives of Marie-Laure and Werner, Doerr illuminates the ways, against all odds, people try to be good to one another. Ten years in the writing, *All the Light We Cannot See* is his most ambitious and dazzling work.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

It has been a while since I have found a book that I wanted to read slowly so that I could soak in every detail in hopes that the last page seems to never come. When reading the synopsis of this novel, I never imagined that I would feel so connected to a book where one of the main characters is blind and the other a brilliant young German orphan who was chosen to attend a brutal military academy under Hitler's power using his innate engineering skills. This novel was so much more than the above states. The idiosyncrasies of each individual character are so well defined and expressed in such ways that come across the page almost lyrically. I was invited into the pages and could not only imagine the atmosphere, but all of my senses were collectively enticed from the very first page until the last. I was so amazed with the way that the author was able to heighten all my senses in a way that I felt like I knew what it was like to be blind. In most well-written books you get of a sense of what the characters look like and follow them throughout the book almost as if you are on a voyage, but with this novel, I could imagine what it was like to be in Marie-Laure's shoes. The descriptives were so beautifully intricate that I could imagine the atmosphere through touch and sound. It was amazing, really. There were so many different aspects of the book that are lived out in separate moments and in different countries that find a way to unite in the end. What impressed me most was that I could have never predicted the outcome. It was as though all cliches were off the table and real life was set in motion. Life outside of books can be very messy and the author stayed true to life but in a magical and symbolic way. I have said in other reviews that just when I think that I have read my last book centered around the Second World War, another seems to pop up. I should emphasize that this book created an image of war in a way that I have never imagined before. I truly got a sense of what it must have been like for children who lived a happy life and then suddenly were on curfew and barely had food to eat. It also showed the side of young children who are basically brainwashed by Nazi leaders and made into animals who seem to make choices that they normally wouldn't in order to survive. And by survive, I mean dodging severe abuse by their own colleagues. This book may haunt me for some time. I can't express enough how beautifully written the pages are. I highly recommend this read as it is my favorite so far for 2014.

ALL THE LIGHT WE CANNOT SEE is one of the best books you'll read this year. On one hand, the title implies the lessons learned by a young German orphan boy about radio waves. On the other hand, as the author describes it, it's also a metaphorical suggestion that there are countless invisible stories still buried within World War II. Add in a newly blinded French girl who is forced to leave her familiar

surroundings, and you'll soon find yourself in literary heaven. The layered meanings run deep in this book. No wonder nearly every advanced review uses the word "intricate" to describe this masterpiece. The German boy and his sister discover an old radio, where they hear science lessons from afar. There are lessons about the brain, sitting inside the darkness of our skull, interpreting light; there are lessons about coal having been plants living millions of years ago, absorbing light, now buried in darkness; lessons about light waves that we cannot see—all applicable as the story unfolds. Readers will appreciate the short, almost lyrical chapters of alternating characters. The author helps by italicizing earlier mentioned quotes and then leaving almost every chapter closing with a message to ponder. Take for example: "a real diamond is never perfect", "open your eyes and see what you can with them before they close forever", and "the entropy of a closed system never decreases". All of this is explained in a natural way, but never given out in an assuming manner. The story flows and draws your heart into its deep meaning. Having personal connections to both veterans of World War II and members of the blind community, I can attest to the authenticity of this story as writing. Author Anthony Doerr brings out lovely characters, along with their own fascinations: seashell collecting, bird watching, locksmithing, electronics, and geology. The history surrounding these personal stories is real and deep. You will fall in love. The author also includes connections to the song Clair de Lune, the book 20,000 LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA, and a fictional story about a priceless diamond called the Sea of Flames, whose owner "so long as he keeps it, the keeper of the stone will live forever." I cannot proclaim loud enough how much this book means to me; I have been left awe-inspired. So, thank you to Scribner for making this book available for me to review. It has been an honor.

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