

Lovereadng Reader reviews of *All The Light We Cannot See* by Anthony Doerr

Below are the complete reviews, written by Lovereadng members.

Emma Barton

This is a beautifully written, sensitive account of occupied France during the Second World War, seen through the eyes of two children.

I cannot recommend this novel highly enough and will certainly be seeking out further works by Anthony Doerr.

The book tells the story of Marie Laure, a blind French girl who lives with her father in Paris but flees to Saint-Malo after the Germans occupy France. Her great uncle takes them in and between them they play their part in the war effort.

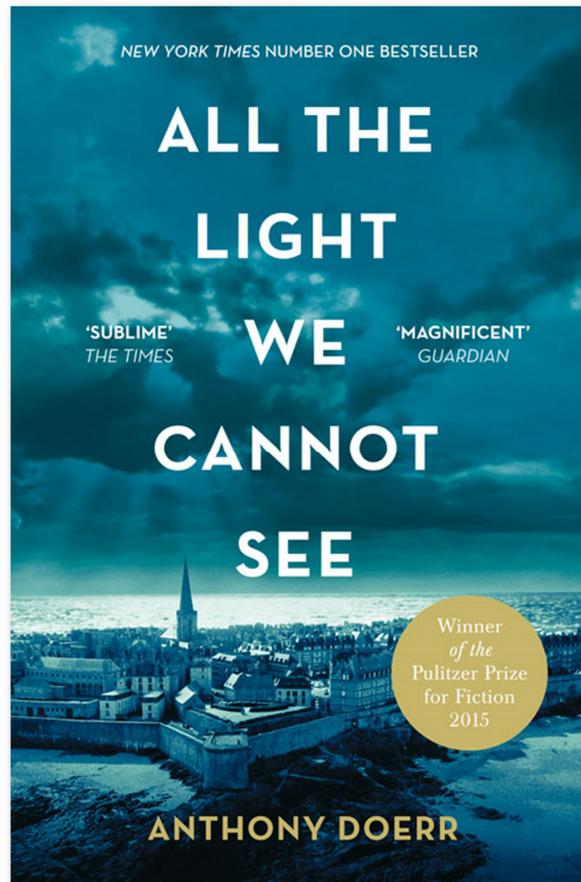
The other main character is an orphaned German boy called Werner whose intellect provides a way out of the mining town he lives in but also creates moral dilemmas for him during the war.

This book is beautifully written, well researched, informative and addictive.

Phyllippa Smithson

Brilliant. Quite brilliant. Want to understand the challenges of living through WW2 in the eyes of a child? Then read and enjoy Doerr's fantastic masterpiece.

Split between the periods of 1934, 1940 and 1944, we follow the very different



lives of Marie-Laure (a Parisian and blind) and Werner (a German and an orphan).

Marie-Laure lives with her Father, her mother having passed away. The mainstay of her ability to adapt to her disability is her father, who encourages and supports her, even building a model of the immediate vicinity of Paris so that she can walk the local streets with confidence. Wealth comes in the form of the love and warmth from her father and not financial.

Werner experiences no such parental love and support. He and his younger sister are orphans and live in the coal mining region near Essen. His young childhood is harsh and despite hopes of applying his obvious talents (he is renowned for his ability to fix radios and aspires to be a successful engineer), his destiny at 15 is the same as all boys of that age, to go underground and mine coal.

What sets this story apart is how we see the children grow up as the war forces them to become new people. She is forced to leave her Paris life for the safety of Saint Malo as war hits and where all her comforts – Father, Paris, reading are lost to her. Werner is given the opportunity follow his dream, believing his selection to an elite German training school will help him realise his ambitions. In time however, he loses his grasp of what he thought he wanted and yearns to return to the comforts of his early childhood.

Will the lives of the two come together to bring them hope to destroy the horrors of their war torn lives? Read and learn the answer.

Sheila Dale

Beautifully written, somewhat of a slow burn but gripping reading.

This book was way outside my comfort zone, I normally read thrillers or the likes of Stephen King, Wilbur Smith, Lianne Moriarty so I approached the book with some trepidation. I found it quite difficult to get into at first - the chapters are very short and switch between characters and events and for a long time you can see no connection between these different people and locations.

It is based mainly in the Second World War although we meet the main characters in 1934 and go through to 2014. I found it unusual in that it deals only with French and German characters. There is very little dialogue so you have to keep reading to get to know the characters, some of them you never really feel you know at all and yet they play a major part in the story.

Reading what I have written so far it sounds a bit negative but as I got into the

book and started to see threads between chapters I found it compulsive reading. It is beautifully written and very descriptive and has a lurking sense of menace. All in all I strongly recommend this book and that you persevere with it, a great story.

Ann Peet

Hugely enjoyable and well written WW2 story.

I really enjoyed this story. It is mainly set during the Second World War but written from an unusual perspective. Marie-Laure is a French girl, blind from childhood, living in Paris with her father who works in a museum. Werner is a German boy living in an orphanage with his sister. The book starts in Saint-Malo in 1944 when the Allies are trying to liberate France but then goes back to 1934 and through flashbacks we see Marie-Laure and Werner growing up and the effect of war.

The characters are sympathetically drawn and the story line is engrossing. The book is very well crafted - beautifully written with a lot of attention to detail yet the short chapters alternating between the two protagonists keep it moving at a fast pace. You know their paths will eventually cross and really care about what will happen then.

There are so many aspects to this story that it is difficult to describe. I found it absorbing and enlightening, thought provoking with serious themes and yet easy to read. Highly recommended.

Sarah Webb

Beautiful writing and a great story.

This book tells the story of Marie-Laure, a blind French girl, and Werner, an orphaned German boy. It starts before WWII and mainly focuses on their wartime experiences when they are teenagers. Her father is the locksmith at the Natural History Museum in Paris and his daughter shares his interest. Werner is very bright and fascinated by radio, and their stories are told alternately through the book.

The writing is beautiful. It's nowhere near as sparse as Hemingway but it reminded me of 'A Farewell to Arms' in that much of the harrowing wartime detail takes place in the gaps in the sentences. Its interest in the Natural History Museum also reminded me of Rebecca Stott's 'The Coral Thief'.

The story doesn't head where you think it might, and it's much the better for that. I loved this book and can't wait to check out everything else Anthony Doerr has written.

Victoria Whish

An epic tome of a book that tells the stories of a blind girl, Marie Laure and an orphan, Werner and their lives as they gradually intersect in WW2 Saint-Malo.

I really wanted to love this book more than I did but I'm afraid that it was a bit of a slog and I wanted it to hurry up and get to the finale which is very rare for me to feel about a book. I'm not sure what it was, as the central stories surrounding Marie Laure and Werner are engaging. It might be the flipping between the different time periods as the stories unfold or the break in the narratives when the author inserts slightly jarring descriptive passages but whatever it is, it doesn't quite gel.

The ways in which the war impacts on blind Marie Laure in France and orphan Werner in Germany are both savagely and sensitively realised and the framing of the convergence of their parallel lives is expertly done.

It is an intelligent book and if you don't mind a slower pace and a more complicated style then this is the book for you. A slightly shorter, faster paced book would have worked better for me but this is certainly a worthy addition to WW2 set literature.

You can follow Victoria on Twitter: @VicKWhish

Sue Broom

A deeply moving story of interconnected lives set in World War II, focusing on how we use our senses to experience the world - indescribably well written.

'Open your eyes and see what you can with them before they close forever'

A deeply moving story of interconnected lives set in World War II, focusing on a blind girl in occupied France and a young boy in the German military. Nicely plotted, with a bit of a mystery involved and unrelenting mounting tension. I became very involved with the characters and their fates. As the war came shuddering to a close, my worry about who would make it through safely

became almost unbearable.

Short chapters (most often of two or three pages) alternate between the two characters and the action flows at a brisk pace. But many of these chapters could almost stand alone and convey a single quality of light or of sound or of feeling - a voice emerging from radio static, a glow within the depths of a diamond, the sensation of waves dragging sand between toes. This is above all a book about the senses, how we experience the world through them and especially how a blind person's remaining senses are heightened by their lack of one. Indescribably well written.

Cat Hogwood

An inspirational story of courage and love, laced with loss and fear.

This book follows the story of Marie Laure, a French blind girl who is extremely close to her father and also Werner, an orphan boy whose incredible mind for repairing radios leads him into a dark future.

This story is full of courage and is told mainly from the children's point of view - allowing you to see deeper into the troubles they are unaware they are facing. The way the book is written allows you to connect with all the characters and I was completely engrossed in the story.

Words cannot describe how much I enjoyed reading this book. The alternating character chapters keeps you on the edge of your seat. The characters felt real and I wanted a happy ending from them all, however in war this is sadly always unlikely.

A heartwarming, inspiring story of love and courage. I highly recommend this book, especially for those that enjoyed reading 'The Book Thief'.

Suzanne Beney

A completely absorbing and compelling story, I love how the story unfolds.

From the first page to the last, I was completely absorbed in Marie-Laure and Werner's worlds. I really enjoyed the way Doerr kept their worlds separate for much of the book and painted two very different pictures but drew on similarities.

The style of Doerr's storytelling transported me into the characters' lives, and I certainly felt like I was with them on their intrepid journey's through WWII. I

really enjoyed how each of the characters had a vulnerability about them but also real strength.

I think a sign of a good book is where you can't put it down and yet you don't want it to finish - and this was exactly how I felt about 'All The Light We Cannot See'.

Victoria Emerson

Beautifully written.

An extraordinary book set during World War 2. It is a huge book but I couldn't put it down and read it in a couple of days.

This book affected me very deeply and I still think about it long after finishing reading it. I would recommend it to everyone.

Edel Waugh

*The young blind girl that is the narrator for half this book is one of the nicest and sweetest children to read about who loves her father and reading despite not being able to see. The war is beginning to effect where she lives in France so with her father she goes on a journey in a bid to stay safe at her strange Uncles house. The other half of the book is told by a young boy who begins training in the German army , having not been thought much of before he joined the army he likes the respect he has gained since joining up and he has real skills that will be very valuable during war time. These two young people are destined to meet. Both from different sides who find comfort together. I loved reading about this incredibly brave young girl who loved reading and could memorise where she walked and the little structures her father built her that were miniatures of their town. **A beautiful story that does not shy away from grizzly descriptions of war time.***

<http://www.edelwaugh.blogspot.com>

Kathy Martin

*This is an incredible book! On the title page it clearly states that it is "a novel", yet throughout it feels like a true story. The lives of the main characters are separate but entwined in a way that I found absorbing. **The attention to detail at times can be quite fascinating, and the contrasts of beauty, loyalty, fanaticism, cruelty and love at times left me breathless. In***

fact, I actually found myself actually holding my breath at one point.