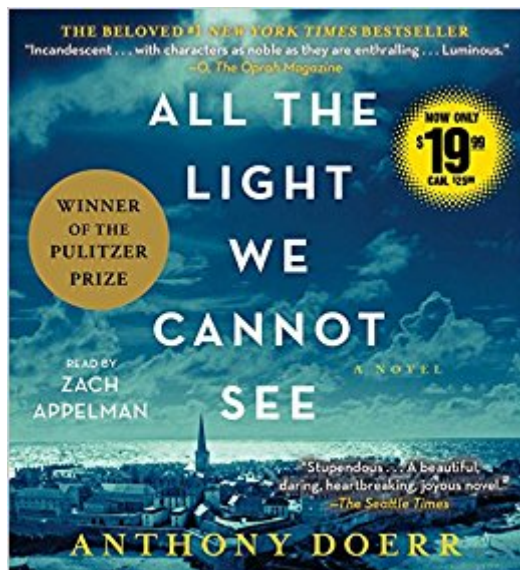


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# All The Light We Cannot See: A Novel



## Synopsis

Over two and a half years on the New York Times bestseller list and winner of the Pulitzer Prize, the stunningly beautiful and captivating story about a blind French girl and a German boy whose paths collide in occupied France during World War II is now available from Encore! Marie-Laure lives in Paris near the Museum of Natural History, where her father works. When she is twelve, the Nazis occupy Paris and father and daughter flee to the walled citadel of Saint-Malo, where Marie-Laure's reclusive great uncle lives in a tall house by the sea. With them they carry what might be the museum's most valuable and dangerous jewel. In a mining town in Germany, Werner Pfennig, an orphan, grows up with his younger sister, enchanted by a crude radio they find that brings them news and stories from places they have never seen or imagined. Werner becomes an expert at building and fixing these crucial new instruments and is enlisted to use his talent to track down the resistance. Deftly interweaving the lives of Marie-Laure and Werner, Doerr illuminates the ways, against all odds, people try to be good to one another. Doerr's stunning sense of physical detail and gorgeous metaphors • (San Francisco Chronicle) are dazzling. Ten years in the writing, a National Book Award finalist, *All the Light We Cannot See* is a magnificent, deeply moving novel from a writer whose sentences never fail to thrill • (Los Angeles Times).

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

An Best Book of the Month, May 2014: Does the world need yet another novel about WWII? It does when the novel is as inventive and beautiful as this one by Anthony Doerr. In fact, *All the Light We*

Cannot See--while set mostly in Germany and France before and during the war--is not really a war novel. Yes, there is fear and fighting and disappearance and death, but the author's focus is on the interior lives of his two characters. Marie Laure is a blind 14-year-old French girl who flees to the countryside when her father disappears from Nazi-occupied Paris. Werner is a gadget-obsessed German orphan whose skills admit him to a brutal branch of Hitler Youth. Never mind that their paths don't cross until very late in the novel, this is not a book you read for plot (although there is a wonderful, mysterious subplot about a stolen gem). This is a book you read for the beauty of Doerr's writing--the abyss in her gut, desert in her throat, Marie-Laure takes one of the cans of food--and for the way he understands and cherishes the magical obsessions of childhood. Marie Laure and Werner are never quaint or twee. Instead they are powerful examples of the way average people in trying times must decide daily between morality and survival. --Sara Nelson

**\*Starred Review\*** A novel to live in, learn from, and feel bereft over when the last page is turned, Doerr's magnificently drawn story seems at once spacious and tightly composed. It rests, historically, during the occupation of France during WWII, but brief chapters told in alternating voices give the overall--and long--narrative a swift movement through time and events. We have two main characters, each one on opposite sides in the conflagration that is destroying Europe. Marie-Louise is a sightless girl who lived with her father in Paris before the occupation; he was a master locksmith for the Museum of Natural History. When German forces necessitate abandonment of the city, Marie-Louise's father, taking with him the museum's greatest treasure, removes himself and his daughter and eventually arrives at his uncle's house in the coastal city of Saint-Malo. Young German soldier Werner is sent to Saint-Malo to track Resistance activity there, and eventually, and inevitably, Marie-Louise's and Werner's paths cross. It is through their individual and intertwined tales that Doerr masterfully and knowledgeably re-creates the deprived civilian conditions of war-torn France and the strictly controlled lives of the military occupiers. **High-Demand Backstory:** A multipronged marketing campaign will make the author's many fans aware of his newest book, and extensive review coverage is bound to enlist many new fans. --Brad Hooper

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's 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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