

A Choose to Read Ohio Toolkit

Use this toolkit to plan book discussion groups or library programs.

Meet Ohio author Anthony Doerr and learn about his works.

Select from a range of discussion questions and extension activities to deepen the experience of reading and sharing *All the Light We Cannot See*.

Discover interviews, informational texts, websites, and documentary videos to explore topics and themes in depth.

All the Light We Cannot See

By Anthony Doerr

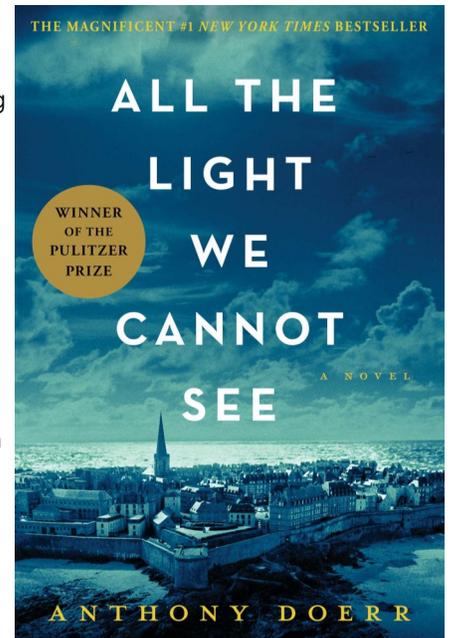


About the Book

From the highly acclaimed, multiple award-winning Anthony Doerr, the beautiful, stunningly ambitious instant New York Times bestseller 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.

Marie-Laure lives with her father in Paris near the Museum of Natural History, where he works as the master of its thousands of locks. When she is six, Marie-Laure goes blind and her father builds a perfect miniature of their neighborhood so she can memorize it by touch and navigate her way home. 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, the orphan Werner grows up with his younger sister, enchanted by a crude radio they find. Werner becomes an expert at building and fixing these crucial new instruments, a talent that wins him a place at a brutal academy for Hitler Youth, then a special assignment to track the resistance. More and more aware of the human cost of his intelligence, Werner travels through the heart of the war and, finally, into Saint-Malo, where his story and Marie-Laure's converge.



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Book Details

All the Light We Cannot See by Anthony Doerr.
Scribner: A Division of Simon & Schuster. 2014. ISBN 9781476746586. 544 pages.
simonandschuster.net/books/All-the-Light-We-Cannot-See

Available as an ebook and digital audiobook through the Ohio Digital Library:
ohiodigitallibrary.com

Available as a downloadable talking book through the State Library of Ohio Talking Book Program: klas.com/talkingbooks/ohio



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About Anthony Doerr

Anthony Doerr is the author of the Pulitzer Prize-winning novel *All the Light We Cannot See*. He is also the author of two story collections, *Memory Wall* and *The Shell Collector*, the novel *About Grace*, and the memoir *Four Seasons in Rome*. He has won four O. Henry Prizes, the Rome Prize, the New York Public Library's Young Lions Award, the National Magazine Award for fiction, a Guggenheim Fellowship, and the Story Prize. Born and raised in Cleveland, Doerr now lives in Boise, Idaho, with his wife and two sons.

Author Resources

Anthony Doerr's official website
anthonydoerr.com

New York Times interview with Anthony Doerr
nytimes.com/2015/07/05/books/review/anthony-doerr-by-the-book.html

Scribner Magazine interview with Anthony Doerr
scribnermagazine.com/2014/10/anthony-doerr-all-the-light-we-cannot-see

For speaking engagement inquiries:

Contact Miriam Feuerle at the Lyceum Agency, miriam@lyceumagency.com

Bulk pricing may be available for libraries, schools, and others who wish to purchase *All the Light We Cannot See* in quantity for CTRO programming. For more information, contact Christine Naulty at Simon & Schuster, Christine.Naulty@simonandschuster.com

“What else can you make?”

“A doorbell, sir? Or a Morse beacon? An ohmmeter?”

The other boys crane their necks. Dr. Hauptmann's lips are pink and his eyelids are improbably thin. As though he is watching Werner even when he blinks.

“Make them all.”

Talk About It

Topics to share when discussing *All the Light We Cannot See*.

- The book opens with two epigraphs. How do these quotes set the scene for the rest of the book? Discuss how the radio plays a major part in the story and the time period. How do you think the impact of the radio back then compares with the impact of the Internet on today's society?
- The narration moves back and forth both in time and between different characters. How did this affect your reading experience? How do you think the experience would have been different if the story had been told entirely in chronological order?
- Whose story did you enjoy the most? Was there any character you wanted more insight into?
- When Werner and Jutta first hear the Frenchman on the radio, he concludes his broadcast by saying “Open your eyes and see what you can with them before they close forever” (pages 48–49), and Werner recalls these words throughout the book (pages 86, 264, and 409). How do you think this phrase relates to the overall message of the story? How does it relate to Madame Manec's question: “Don't you want to be alive before you die?” (page 270)?
- On page 160, Marie-Laure realizes “This . . . is the basis of his fear, all fear. That a light you are powerless to stop will turn on you and usher a bullet to its mark.” How does this image constitute the most general basis of all fear? Do you agree?

Talk About It (continued)

- Reread Madame Manec's boiling frog analogy on page 284. Etienne later asks Marie-Laure, "Who was supposed to be the frog? Her? Or the Germans?" (page 328) Who did you think Madame Manec meant? Could it have been someone other than herself or the Germans? What does it say about Etienne that he doesn't consider himself to be the frog?
- On page 368, Werner thinks, "That is how things are . . . with everybody in this unit, in this army, in this world, they do as they're told, they get scared, they move about with only themselves in mind. Name me someone who does not." But in fact many of the characters show great courage and selflessness throughout the story in some way, big or small. Talk about the different ways they put themselves at risk in order to do what they think is right. What do you think were some shining moments? Who did you admire most?
- On page 390, the author writes, "To shut your eyes is to guess nothing of blindness." What did you learn or realize about blindness through Marie-Laure's perspective? Do you think her being blind gave her any advantages?
- One of Werner's bravest moments is when he confronts von Rumpel: "All your life you wait, and then it finally comes, and are you ready?" (page 465) Have you ever had a moment like that? Were you ready? What would you say that moment is for some of the other characters?
- Why do you think Marie-Laure gave Werner the little iron key? Why might Werner have gone back for the wooden house but left the Sea of Flames?
- Von Rumpel seemed to believe in the power of the Sea of Flames, but was it truly a supernatural object or was it merely a gemstone at the center of coincidence? Do you think it brought any protection to Marie-Laure and/or bad luck to those she loved?
- When Werner and Marie-Laure discuss the unknown fate of Captain Nemo at the end of **Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea**, Marie-Laure suggests the open-endedness is intentional and meant to make us wonder (page 472). Are there any unanswered questions from this story that you think are meant to make us wonder?
- The 1970s image of Jutta is one of a woman deeply guilt-ridden and self-conscious about her identity as a German. Why do you think she feels so much guilt over the crimes of others? Can you relate to this? Do you think she should feel any shame about her identity?
- What do you think of the author's decision to flash forward at the end of the book? Did you like getting a peek into the future of some of these characters? Did anything surprise you?
- Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn once wrote that "the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being." **All the Light We Cannot See** is filled with examples of human nature at its best and worst. Discuss the themes of good versus evil throughout the story. How do they drive each other? What do you think are the ultimate lessons that these characters and the resolution of their stories teach us?

Discussion questions courtesy Simon & Schuster, from the **All The Light We Cannot See** Reading Group Guide, simonandschuster.net/books/All-the-Light-We-Cannot-See/Anthony-Doerr/9781476746586/reading_group_guide. Used with permission.

Go Further

*Ideas for extending the experience of reading **All the Light We Cannot See**.*

- To learn more about the Battle of Normandy, visit Explora and other subscription research resources freely available to all Ohio residents through the Ohio Web Library (ohioweblibrary.org).
- Take another look at Werner's redacted letter to Jutta on page 283. There's so much blacked out that it's hard to take any meaning from his message. What do you imagine he might have been writing about? Try to fill in the blanks with your best guess.

Go Further (continued)

- Radio was such an important part of Werner's and Marie-Laure's stories, and World War II in general. Visit the BBC archive collections at bbc.co.uk/archive/collections.shtml to listen to clips of Nazi propaganda, news reports, and personal accounts of World War II.
- Have you ever read any Jules Verne? If not, you can always check out some of Verne's work from your local library. For a list of Ohio public libraries, see Find A Library: oplin.org/fal. Discuss why you think Anthony Doerr decided to make Verne's fiction such a big part of his own.

Go Further activities based on the **All The Light We Cannot See** Reading Group Guide, simonandschuster.net/books/All-the-Light-We-Cannot-See/Anthony-Doerr/9781476746586/reading_group_guide, courtesy Simon & Schuster. Used with permission.

Explore More

*Additional ideas and resources to use with **All the Light We Cannot See**.*

Mollusks

oceanicresearch.org/education/wonders/mollusk.html

Jonathan Bird's Oceanic Research Group has a feature on mollusks, including vibrant photographs and a video of a starfish on the hunt. If you enjoy marine photography, you may also enjoy **Curious Critters: Marine** by David FitzSimmons, another Choose to Read Ohio selection.

The Delhi Purple Sapphire

gemselect.com/help/newsletter/newsletter-mar-12.php

The Delhi Purple Sapphire is the real-life amethyst that inspired the Sea of Flames diamond, as Anthony Doerr revealed in a 2014 interview with *Bookselling This Week* (available at goo.gl/4HjiVd). GemSelect.com ran the above article about the Delhi Purple Sapphire and its reputed curse in its March 2012 newsletter.

Ohio Library for the Blind & Physically Disabled

cpl.org/thelibrary/ohio-library-for-the-blind-physically-disabled

The Ohio Library for the Blind and Physically Disabled (OLBPD) is part of the Cleveland Public Library, and partners with the State Library of Ohio to provide free access to braille and audio materials for eligible borrowers in the State of Ohio via postage-free mail. OLBPD serves as the Regional Library for the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS) of the Library of Congress.

The Museum of Radio & Technology

ohio.edu/people/posr/mrt

If you're interested in antique radios and related technology like the kind featured in **All the Light We Cannot See**, you might be interested in visiting the Museum of Radio & Technology in Huntington, West Virginia (near the Ohio border). Admission is free and hours are available on the MRT website.

World War II Registry

wwiimemorial.com/Registry/Search.aspx

A searchable online registry of those who contributed to the American war effort during World War II, whether in uniform or on the home front.

Choose to Read Ohio, a project of the State Library of Ohio, the Ohioana Library Association, and the Ohio Center for the Book, encourages public libraries, schools, families, and others to build a community of readers and an appreciation of Ohio authors, illustrators, and literature. CTRO is adaptable for use in classrooms, libraries, bookstores, by book discussion groups, families, and other community groups.

Explore Choose to Read Ohio resources & toolkits:
library.ohio.gov/ctro

This toolkit revised
December 2016.