

# All the light we cannot see book analysis



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All The Light We Cannot See is a historical fiction book written by Anthony Doerr, which tells a story on the different perspectives of World War II. The characters Marie-Laure, Etienne Leblanc, Daniel Leblanc, Werner, Volkheimer, and Jutta all demonstrate the different relationships that developed during the war. Although the war forced them to endure certain conditions, it helped the characters develop new relationships which helped them survive the war.

The definition of surviving varies with each relationship, from Marie-Laure to Frederick. Family is a long lasting theme presented in this book, and the importance of family doesn't alter despite the war. Doerr conveys that war convinces people they should do anything to survive; even if it endangers themselves or goes against their interests. For some people, protecting family is a major part of surviving.

When inhabitants of Paris were first told to leave the city, Daniel Leblanc took Marie-Laure and left to go to the safe house of Francois Giannot. When they arrived at the safe house, despite it being destroyed, Daniel Leblanc had the determination to go to Saint Malo to protect Marie-Laure. He carried on despite limited amounts of rations and energy that remained. Again he carries his daughter. One more half mile. The windows of the house stay unlit as they approach. Its barn sits a hundred yards beyond. He tries to listen above the rush of blood in his ears. No dogs, no torches. (Doerr, 110) This quote uses imagery to paint a picture of the path Daniel Leblanc was taking to survive. He was willing to do anything that would help him and Marie-Laure survive, no matter the cost. Werner and Jutta were curious kids whose worlds were lit up when they tuned into stations on the radio. They spent

most of their time at night modifying the radio or listening to science broadcasts. Werner especially loved the radio because he could listen to science broadcasts, which gave him a sense of happiness, despite the morbid circumstances he was in. When reports spread that listening to certain broadcasts from foreign nations would endanger Jutta, Werner suddenly had thoughts about crushing the radio. Werner didn't want to destroy the radio, but Jutta had begun to listen to broadcasts from Paris. What are you listening to? She crosses her arm and puts the earphone back and does not answer. Are you listening to something you're not supposed to be listening to? What do you care It's dangerous, is why I care (Doerr, 73) When Werner walks in one night, Jutta had been listening to a Paris broadcast, and overheard that Germans were bombing the city of Paris. This quote shows his genuine caring for Jutta, which eventually led to Werner destroying the radio.

He wanted to protect Jutta, even if by destroying the radio he was destroying a part of himself. And yet at other times, despite his ambitions, he is visited by instants of vertigo; he sees Jutta holding the smashed pieces of their radio and feels uncertainty steal into his gut. (Doerr, 144) When Jutta picked up the pieces, Werner knew that she felt betrayed, but she would at least survive this threat. When Werner attends Schulpforta, he meets Frederick. Frederick is a boy from Berlin, who is described as thin and pale. When Frederick takes Werner to his home in Berlin, Werner asks why Frederick would put up with the torture initiated by Bastian and the other boys. Werner believes that Frederick has the choice to leave and be free of the torture. Frederick simply says, Father needs me at Schulpforta. Mother too. It doesn't

matter what I want (Doerr, 223) This quote, regardless of the war, demonstrates that people cannot choose their lives, and by joining this school, the fuhrer ultimately controls them. Frederick knows that by joining Schulpforta, he will probably have no choice but to fight in the war, but agrees to go there because his family needs him to. He understood this when he said, Your problem Werner, says Frederick, is that you still believe you own your life. (Doerr, 223) Frederick's loyalty to his family's wishes show that he is willing to be tortured for his parents.

In his perspective, to survive would be to survive Schulpforta to make his parents happy, despite the abuse he endures. Uncle Etienne and Marie-Laure's relationship develops throughout the war. Etienne feels as if Marie-Laure is his responsibility, and feels the need to protect her. In the earlier chapters of the book, when Madame Manec was still alive, he says, Don't. He won't know. She is my responsibility (Doerr, 230) He develops a strong connection with Marie-Laure through his numerous books and knowledge of the radio transmitters. His incentive for surviving is similar to Daniel Leblanc's, to protect Marie-Laure. When Marie-Laure doesn't return on time from the bakery, Etienne starts becoming anxious. Now Etienne hyperventilates. At thirty four minutes by his wristwatch, he puts on his shoes and a hat that belonged to his father. Stands in the foyer summoning all his resolve.. His heart beats icily in a faraway cage. steps outside (Doerr, 417) At this point of the book, Etienne's closest family is Marie-Laure, with Madame Manec dead, and Daniel Leblanc missing. To think that Marie-Laure is lost or kidnapped out in the outside world scares him. In his time, to survive was to just protect himself from the dangers and criticizing looks of

the outside world. Now that Marie-Laure has become his responsibility he feels as if her safety is a part of his survival. All throughout the book, Etienne didn't step outside the house until this moment.

He was filled with dread when he stepped outside, but he knew that he needed to save her. When Werner attended Schulpforta, he worked with Dr. Hauptmann. Along with Dr. Hauptmann, he worked with another student named Volkheimer. Volkheimer's relationship with Werner was an important relationship that helped them both survive. After attending Schulpforta, Werner continued to work with Volkheimer. They would try to locate radio emissions and capture them due to the fact that broadcasting was illegal. Their relationship developed through the war, and was partially controlled by the war. They had to locate certain radio transmissions to locate a network of terrorists, such as Marie-Laure's transmissions. Volkheimer who always makes sure that there is food for Werner. Who brings him eggs, who shares his broth, whose fondness for Werner seems unshakable. (Doerr, 366) This quote shows how the bond between Volkheimer and Werner developed, along with how Volkheimer cared for Werner. They shared food rations and helped each other at work. Volkheimer carried the transceivers and Werner calculated the distances. They shared the rationing of paint sludge, and stood up for each other.

In the pit, Volkheimer and Werner were hopelessly trying to find their way out with grenades and a broken radio. Working together, they eventually blew a wall through which they could escape. The war strengthened this relationship, and they both did everything to help each other survive.

Anthony Doerr interlaced many different concepts in All The Light We Cannot

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See. Themes such as family, the power of science, nationalism, and loyalty all play a role in developing this story. The relationships that were developed due to the war helped them survive. Each person had a different way of surviving, whether it was the literal definition or it was interpreted. Critical relationships such as Marie-Laure with Etienne and Werner with Volkheimer would have not been developed if it hadn't been for the war. These people were willing to do anything to survive, even if they don't agree with it. In this book, Doerr proves that people adapt and build relationships that helped them survive.