

Free essay on radio as a symbol of salvation

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Thesis

The book *All the Light We Cannot See* by Anthony Doerr is set in mainland Europe, principally France and Germany in the period preceding and during the Second World War. The book's two main characters are Marie-Laure LeBlanc and Werner Pfennig. They are among a number of many other characters in the book including Werner's younger sister Jutta. Marie is French while Werner is German. During the war, they find themselves in opposing sides with Germany having invaded Europe. Many themes and symbols can be derived from the book. There is the symbolism of blindness. Marie is physically blind. Although she cannot use her eyes, she is very observant. She is able to recognize that things are changing and even before the war begins, she can tell that something big is happening (Doerr, 42). Werner on the other hand is able to see, but is figuratively blind. Although a brilliant young man, he is not able to tell that the changes that Hitler is bringing are a preparation for Germany to get into war. There is also the use of numbers. Because Marie cannot see, she uses numbers as a way to get around. For example, she counts steps, doors and stairs to help her in getting around (Doerr, 45). Werner on the other hand is a mathematician and his good understanding of numbers allows him to be accurate in his work. However, the most significant theme in the book is radio. Having been invented at the turn of the century, it proves to be very important during this war. It allows for communication between people and most importantly between troops without the need of sending a messenger team. Essentially, radio is also the means in which the two main characters in the book meet.

Therefore, the appropriate thesis for this study is how the radio acts as a salvation for Marie and Werner at various times.

Response

At the age of eight, Marie goes blind and her father builds a realistic model of her town so that Marie can learn by touch and find her way home. This is also, why numbers play a very important part in her life as they provide direction for her. In Germany at roughly the same time, Werner who lives in Germany in an orphanage with his younger sister, he discovers an old radio set and becomes fascinated by it (Doerr, 29). After repairing the radio and attaching a new antenna, he is able to receive signals from thousands of kilometers away. One French broadcast in particular fascinates him as it is tailored for children and speaks of mechanics and physics, things the things that fascinate him in life. His fascination by the radio and its workings leads him to become an important part of Hitler's youth league and its efforts during the war (Doerr, 55).

During the war, the radio becomes a very important part of people's lives on both fronts. The Germans have banned radios for the people but many people still hold illegal radios in their possession. They become an important tool for communication. Far from that the radio offers hope. The radio becomes a symbol of the people's will against the oppression of the invaders. When the Germans invade France, they take over much of the territory and the French are brought under German rule. However, the proud French still possess radios, which are now illegal. They act as a symbol of defiance and as a symbol of hope (Wikia, 2015).

Ultimately, the radio is the reason why the two main characters in the book

meet. After the Germans invade her hometown, Marie and her father run away to the wall citadel of Saint Malo. While here, Marie's great uncle lives in a tall structure. Werner who is now part of the war effort on the German side is involved in collecting intelligence. As the war continues, he increasingly becomes aware of the cost of his intelligence gathering to innocent human lives. This leads him to travel through the battle zones and his journey finally leads him to Saint Malo where his story and that of Marie converge. At her great uncle's place in Saint Malo, Marie is shown the number of radios that her uncle owns (Doerr, 97).

These radios are able to receive signals from far away cities just like the discarded set Werner had discovered earlier in his life. They are able to provide the people with hope. They show that beyond their physical boundaries, there are other countries that are preparing to fight against the Germans and liberate them. The stories broadcast from other conquered places also provide the people with a sense of togetherness. This shows that they are not the only people affected by the war. Marie's uncle is himself a radio enthusiast and during the war, helps to transmit messages for the allied forces (Doerr, 226). Later, it emerges the enthralling voice Werner and his sister Jutta listened to as children is that of Marie's uncle in Saint Malo with whom she lived with during the war after fleeing Paris.

The radio is therefore an important theme and symbol throughout the text and plays an important role in the telling of the story. Two different lives, living many hundreds of miles apart, speaking different languages and on different sides of the war are brought together by this radio.

Works Cited

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