

AP Literature Summer Reading – World War 2 and the Human Condition

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As global citizens today, how can we learn more about how the human condition is altered under times of extreme strife? How do ordinary people react to times of war? By exploring novels set around the world during WWII, we will consider these essential questions. You will read our main text, *All the Light We Cannot See* first then pair it with a second book of your choice (see list below). By comparing these two novels, this summer reading experience should offer you a larger context in which to view the horrors of war. Consider how these are “talking texts” -- or how these stories are in dialogue with one another. The setting for most of these stories is not necessarily on the battlefield; these stories are set in various places around the world to illustrate how war changes average citizens in extraordinary ways and impacts their otherwise ordinary lives. Please take notes and annotate your readings: your job is to draw some interesting parallels and bring some rich discussions back to the classroom in September. Please purchase copies of the two titles, as you will need them for class. Short Reflection: You will need to craft a three-paragraph email response on your selected readings, sent to me, before the first day of class. Please email me if you have any questions, and enjoy!

BOOK 1 – Main Text (Read First):

All the Light We Cannot See by Anthony Doerr

From Amazon: 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. This is a book you read for the beauty of Doerr’s writing-- “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. [His characters] are powerful examples of the way average people in trying times must decide daily between morality and survival. --Sara Nelson

*** Please annotate carefully, and pay particular attention to Doerr’s use of imagery, symbolism, metaphor, and, his overall beautiful syntax. We will close read and study his language in class in September; you will be able to use this text on the AP Exam in May.*

BOOK 2 –

You don’t have to annotate as much but please find at least 3-4 connections to All the Light...; you may select one of the following titles on this list:

The Piano Teacher by Janice Lee – set in Hong Kong

Fugitive Pieces by Anne Michaels – set in Poland and Greece

Comfort Women by Nora Okja Keller – set in Korea

Snow Falling on Cedars by David Guterson– set in Puget Sound, Washington

Unbroken by Laura Hildebrand – set in South Pacific/Japanese POW camp

Sarah’s Key - set in France

The Nightingale by Kristin Hannah – set in France

The Winter Garden by Kristin Hannah - set in Russia

(Please note: there may be some graphic and/or upsetting scenes that depict the realities of war, so if you can make your own judgement as to what to skip over; however, please also email me for guidance.)