

Freshman Writing – Summer Reading Guide

All the Light we Cannot See by Anthony Doerr

Set during the Nazi occupation of France during WWII, *All the Light We Cannot See* beautifully interweaves the storylines of several characters until their inevitable intersection at the French city of Saint-Malo in 1944. Anthony Doerr reveals his mastery of the English language as he follows the blind daughter of a locksmith, a promising young orphaned boy who is infatuated with radios and physics, and several other fascinating characters as they journey throughout a war-torn Europe. This historical fiction masterpiece is simultaneously illuminating, uplifting, and devastating, and it is nearly impossible to put down. This book forces the reader to consider the nuances of human nature, as well as the ways in which people interact with the world around them.

This book should be read for the story, but close attention should also be paid to Doerr's writing style. While reading, consider the following questions:

Plot/Theme Questions -

1. Why do Marie-Laure and her father leave Paris? Why does her father bring the Sea of Flames with him?
2. Why does Werner smash the radio before leaving for school? What does he do while at military school that feels similar?
3. What role does science/technology play in this book? Is it always good, always bad, sometimes both?
4. What is the relationship between lightness and darkness in this book?
5. What role does communication play in the story? What are some different ways characters communicate?

Character Questions -

NOTE: Authors reveal characterization based on the following elements: (1) Appearance (2) Dialogue (3) Inner thoughts and feelings (4) Actions (5) Relationships with/reactions of others.

1. Which elements of characterization does Doerr make the most frequent use of?
2. Using quotes from the story, describe the following characters using all 5 elements of characterization:
 - a. Marie-Laure Leblanc
 - b. Werner Pfennig
 - c. The Locksmith (Marie-Laure's father)
 - d. Frank Volkheimer
3. Main characters in books tend to be "round" or "dynamic," meaning they change over the course of the story. How do Marie-Laure and Werner change over the course of the story?

Writing Style Questions -

1. How does Doerr make use of *sensory details* in his writing?
2. This story is narrated in the present tense. How does that influence the way you read the story?
3. Doerr jumps back and forth between timelines. Why does he do this?
4. Marie-Laure's models made by her father are powerful symbols in the story. What are a few other important symbols, and what do they represent?
5. What does the title of the book mean?