

## **All The Light We Cannot See by Anthony Doerr**

This is a spellbinding tale about a blind French girl and a German boy whose paths cross in the occupied French city of Saint-Malo. It starts with the allies shelling the city to drive out the Germans. We then move backwards and forwards in time to reveal how everything has come together at this point in the story.

Our two main characters are Marie-Laure, a blind French girl, and Werner who is a radio expert in the German army and is trapped in the city when the allies attack. We alternate between the two as their stories unfold.

Marie-Laure and her father are in the city having fled there after the Germans invaded Paris, where her father was the locksmith at the Museum of Natural History. The father has brought with him from the museum a priceless gemstone called the Sea of Flames, with supposed magical properties. But Marie-Laure is unaware of this.

Werner is a German orphan who teaches himself all about radios, which eventually leads to him being drafted into the Hitler Youth to work as part of a team tracking down French Resistance radio operators.

They are brought together by the machinations of a Sgt. Major von Rumpel, an archetypal evil Nazi, who is on the trail of the magical gemstone and will stop at nothing to get his hands on it.

You can't help but feel sympathetic towards both of our main characters. You want them to get together, but when their paths cross it is not in a way that one might have expected. Be warned, this is not your typical WW2 love story.

This is a beautifully written book. It has been widely acclaimed for its descriptive writing and rightly so. This is a story about what war does to ordinary people on both sides of the conflict, and the author lets you inside their heads to feel how they feel.

Our Book Club readers found the switching backwards and forwards in time, and between the parallel stories of our two main characters, something of a challenge. But it adds to the suspense and is worth persevering with.