

All the Light We Cannot See Study Guide

All the Light We Cannot See by Anthony Doerr

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Plot Summary

Marie-Laure LeBlanc and her father Daniel live in Paris where he is a locksmith who keeps track of thousands of locks and keys for the National Museum of Natural History. When Marie-Laure loses her sight at the age of six, her father builds her a model of the area they live in, complete with every manhole cover, building, street and lane represented. The intricate model allows Marie-Laure to memorize the area and confidently navigate it without fear. A remarkably talented woodworker, he also creates puzzles for her each year on her birthday that involve up to a dozen or more moves to solve, and she manages to do so in minutes each time to his amazement.

As war nears, the museum curators are forced to pack up the valuable pieces and move them to safety. One such item is a precious stone that is kept safely behind a number of doors, and never shown on display. Called the Sea of Flames, the large blue diamond has a red occlusion at its center, and a storied past. The stone is said to have the power to keep its owner safe while bringing ruin and death to all around them. Each time it has changed hands, its providence has repeated itself. Before moving it, Daniel is asked to create three likenesses of the stone, and then each of the four stones are given to four trusted couriers, neither one knowing whether the one they have is the real one or not in the hopes that it can be moved safely.

Daniel is given one of the stones just before he and Marie-Laure leave Paris for Saint-Malo. With war closing in on them, the trip is a perilous one, and much of it is made on foot. Marie-Laure is afraid to leave her home and the security of the area she knows, but believes that her father will keep her safe, and holds on to his promise that he will never leave her. Great uncle Etienne and Madame Manec welcome them when they arrive and give them shelter and food. Daniel keeps the stone safe and begins to build another model for Marie-Laure, promising her that when it is safe he will take her outside.

Werner Pfennig and his sister Jutta are orphans who live in Children's House in Zollverein, Germany. Werner teaches himself the basics of electronics, inspired by a radio program hosted by a Frenchman. Soon he is building radios of his own, and increasing their range and power instead of just repairing them. When word of his prowess gets out, he is invited to audition to attend the National Political Institutes of Education. He is admitted, but is miserable and longs to return to his sister and the only home he knows. Instead, he is educated and singled out for his electronic ability, asked to create a transceiver that would enable them to locate illegal radio transmissions. When he manages to do so, he is fast tracked into a uniform and sent out to hunt and destroy any they can find.

Marie-Laure's father is arrested and sent to a work camp, but the stone remains hidden in the model of Etienne's house where Marie-Laure eventually discovers it. Another man is searching for the fabled Sea of Flames, and manages to locate three out of the four stones that left the museum. Unfortunately, they were all fakes, but Sergeant Major Reinhold von Rumpel is motivated to find this particular prize. Von Rumpel is dying,



cancer spreading through his body, and he hopes that the stone has the power to keep him alive. Etienne is detained and Marie-Laure is home alone when von Rumpel comes, still hunting his stone. She hides in the attic with the radio and transmitter Etienne built and used to relay messages for the resistance. He spends days in the house hunting while Marie-Laure hides until Werner arrives, having heard her broadcast in Etienne's place, and saves her from von Rumpel redeeming himself just a little as he keeps her identity safe and helps her to escape after learning that it was her uncle who had inspired him as a child with his broadcasts.

Two children on opposite sides of the war find each other in the middle, and remember each other for a lifetime. Doerr brings these children to life in a time when peace seems impossible, and survival unlikely.



Part Zero: 7 August, 1944: Chapters 1-8

Summary

It is August 7th, 1944 and leaflets are dropped over the houses of Saint-Malo warning people to leave their homes and head for open country. American artillery is being dropped to the east and behind them. At midnight, bombers cross the channel but in a tall, slim house on rue Vauborel a blind sixteen year old girl is oblivious to their warnings. Unable to sleep, she opens the window and while the sounds of the planes are louder, there are no other sounds at all. She hears a flapping sound and finds one of the leaflets caught on the shutter. Marie should be hurrying downstairs but instead her fingers continue to walk along the streets of her model, remembering. She finds their home and presses on the door which lifts the house out of the model. The floor is beginning to shake as Marie-Laure twists the chimney and slides the roof panels away to reveal the stone hidden inside. It is shaped like a teardrop, and the size of a pigeon's egg. Etienne is locked inside the gates of Fort National as a cascade of bombs drop onto the city. The planes drop their payloads and leave unharmed as Marie-Laure hides under her bed, taking both the small house and the stone with her.

To the north, Werner Pfennig wakes as an anti-air corporal tells him to get to the cellar. The last of the townspeople are still making their way to bomb shelters, some still convinced this is only a drill. In the Hotel of Bees cellar, Werner slips on his headphones. Staff sergeant Frank Volkheimer joins him downstairs and soon after so does the engineer, Bernd. Werner thinks of home as the Austrians sing, and shell the incoming planes.

Analysis

In war ravaged Saint-Malo, the last stronghold of Germans is papered by leaflets telling them to leave town and head for open country. Not far away, a sixteen year old blind girl, Marie-Laure, finds a leaflet but is unable to read it. Her great-uncle Etienne is caught across town and is unable to tell her to go downstairs.

On one side of town, an eighteen year old German boy heads down to the cellar of the Hotel of Bees to help direct anti-aircraft shelling on the top floor. As the shelling starts, Marie-Laure hides under her bed while in the House of Bees, Werner sits under his headphones as the only light winks out.

Discussion Question 1

Why are leaflets dropped in Paris, and why is this of no help to Marie-Laure?



Discussion Question 2

What reaction to the impending danger surprises Werner, and what does he think about?

Discussion Question 3

What does Marie-Laure search for as the bombs fall, and where does she go?

Vocabulary

gibbous, incendiary, bombardier, perforated, reticulated, reverberate, extirpation



Part One: 1934: Chapters 9-31

Summary

At the age of six, Marie-Laure LeBlanc is freckle faced and tall for her age. Knowing that his daughter is losing her eyesight, her father sends Marie-Leblanc on a tour of the National Museum of Natural History in Paris where he is employed. A month later, Marie is blind. Slowly, he teaches her how to get around their neighborhood. Later, at home, he uses a clock to describe where her food is, and afterward he continues to build the miniature neighborhood for her. On Marie-Laure's ninth birthday, her father gives her a puzzle she solves quickly and a braille copy of *Around The World In Eighty Days*.

For a while, he is busier than usual and she is alone so she begins reading, and when at last she finishes, she returns to the first page and begins again. Her father's schedule returns to normal, and on her eleventh birthday, he gives her a thirteen-step puzzle which she solves in less than five minutes, and another book in braille. This time it is the first half of *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under The Sea*. She begins reading immediately. Marie-Laure rereads the book walking home, and is harassed by two boys who assure her the Germans will do nasty things to her. Someone calls them in, and though she was unharmed, she later has nightmares.

The war draws near, and the museum is packed for transport. Marie-Laure's father is busier than ever as each must be locked. Sandbags appear and on her twelfth birthday. There is no puzzle box, as her father is too busy, but he gives her the second half of *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under The Sea*. In early June, radio stations begin to disappear. Across Paris, people pack their valuables. Her father meets with the museum's director for some time.

Then, promising to explain things to her afterward, they stop at home so that he can pack what he can carry. Concussive thumps can be felt and heard coming closer. They hurry to the train station; however, it soon becomes obvious that even with the tickets purchased by the director they will not be boarding. She sleeps on her father's shoulder. The next day no trains come either, and Marie-Laure's father decides it will be better to walk. They set out along with what seems to be all of Paris. By the time it is getting dark, her heels are bleeding and she is stumbling frequently. Finally, she can go no farther. They leave the road and settle down in a field to sleep. Once he is certain she is asleep, he reaches into his pack and pulls out the *Sea of Flames*. Three decoys also left Paris, no one sure which one was the real one, in the hopes that it could be kept safe. He tells himself that his is not the real one.

Werner grows up in Zollverein, raised at an orphanage called Children's House along with his sister Jutta. When he is eight years old, he finds an old and damaged radio and smuggles it into the house. It takes three weeks of observation before he finally sees what is wrong with it. He fixes the damaged wire and they are soon listening to music. When Werner is ten, two of the oldest boys in Children's House head into forest and



later return as members of the Hitler Youth. Werner reads science magazines, and begins to draw up plans for everything from x-ray goggles to axle springs. A Labor Ministry official visits and reminds him that each and every one of the boys will go to work for the mines when they are fifteen. At night, Werner and Jutta continue to listen to channels from places further and further away.

Children's House entertains a vice minister and his wife who are touring orphanages. Werner sits at the dinner table with a book he had found in a church basement called *Principles of Mechanics*. He is engrossed with it when he realizes that all is quiet. He looks up to find all at the table looking at him, and Hans immediately informs the minister that it is the book on his lap that is the distraction. The vice minister makes it clear once again that the only place Werner will be going to is the mines when he turns fifteen.

Soon, membership in the State Youth goes from voluntary to mandatory. Werner turns fourteen and in one more year he will be gone. It weighs on him. In his nightmares, the mine is his tomb. After curfew one day, a lance corporal comes to the door for Werner. After he repairs Herr Siedler's radio, he is assured that young, bright boys are being sought by institutions such as General Heissmeyer's schools where he would be educated for free. He gives Werner a letter for the recruiting board in Essen, and seventy-five marks. Back at home, Frau Elena saves him a supper of a single boiled potato which he eats although no longer hungry. After everyone is asleep, he takes the shortwave radio outside and crushes it.

Analysis

When Marie-Laure's father realizes that she is losing her sight, he takes her to the National Museum of History where he works as a locksmith for a tour. Their guide takes them through a myriad of rooms, and just as they are finished, the children notice a locked door. The guide reveals that this is but one of thirteen doors which protect people from a stone called the Sea of Flames. The stone was cursed by the Goddess of the Earth who had made the stone so that the keeper would live forever but misfortune would befall all those he or she loved.

Thirty days later, Marie-Laure is blind. At first she is fearful, but her father is a patient man, helping her to dress and taking her to work with him each day. He builds her a model of the entire area they live in, complete with benches, sewer grates, doors and any other landmarks that will help her. Each year, her father makes her wooden puzzle boxes with treats or toys secreted inside. She easily solves them, usually in just minutes, but when he steps away from her for the first time and suggests that she find her own way home, she panics, despite the fact that he promises he'll be right behind her. Week after week, each Tuesday that he is off, he takes her out and each time she fails to find her way back to the house. Each time she manages to get a little closer, until finally one week she takes him all the way back. Despite her lack of sight, she still imagines everything in color.



Paris is alive with rumors concerning the Sea of Flames, rumors circulating that it might be displayed. Marie-Laure asks her father about it, but he lends little credence to the stories that surround it. Rumors begin that the Germans are coming, each one more ludicrous than the next. Marie-Laure is increasingly fearful of having to leave her carefully constructed and remembered neighborhood. Before too long, her fears are a reality as one day without warning, her father leaves a meeting with the director, and then takes her home where they stop only briefly to gather what he can carry. To Marie-Laure's dismay, even her book is left behind. At the train station, many wait with them, but no trains come. Finally, they decide to walk. After a long day on the road, Marie-Laure can go no further. They stop to sleep in a field, and when she is asleep, Marie-Laure's father pulls the Sea of Flames from his pack. He is one of several carrying either the stone or a facsimile out of harm's way. He reassures himself that his is not the real one.

Werner and his sister live in an orphanage called Children's House. Werner finds an old radio as a young boy and teaches himself how to fix it. Afterward, he continues to learn about radios and receivers. Soon he is able to redesign the receiver and from then on, Frau Elena lets the children all listen for an hour each evening. The older boys in the house join the Hitler Youth, and soon all are walking on eggshells around them. They become increasingly critical of children if they show admiration for anything that is foreign. Even Frau Elena hardly ever speaks French when they are around. One night, they hear a Frenchman discussing science. Werner is transported. They continue to listen to the broadcasts, and Werner is increasingly restless. He imagines himself as a man of importance; a man of science. Werner continues to teach himself, repairing items for others and building systems to make life easier for Frau Elena. Sometimes he is paid in coin, sometimes in food and soon he knows where every wireless in the neighborhood is.

Heribert turns fifteen and now lives in a miner's dorm and Hans is the oldest in the house until an argument with Frau Elena has him storming out of the door. The Frenchman's broadcasts stop, and after two months Jutta takes a chance and attempts to write him a letter. Werner wakes to find Jutta on the floor listening to the radio and drawing. She asks why he seems uninterested in the fact that they are dropping bombs on Paris.

A lance corporal comes for Werner and takes him to Herr Siedler's residence. He wants Werner to fix a wireless that two others have already looked at and failed to repair. It is the finest machine he has ever seen, and he soon sees the problem is in one of the resistance wires. He fixes it and the sound of music can be heard. Herr Siedler is so pleased that he calls for cake with whipped cream even though cream is forbidden. He encourages Werner to enjoy them as he tells him that there are places he could go and be educated for free. He gives Werner a letter of introduction, and pays him for fixing the radio. Frau Elena saves him a potato which he eats so as not to disappoint her, and after everyone is asleep, he takes the radio outside and smashes it so that they will no longer fear reprisals for listening to it.



Discussion Question 1

How does Marie-Laure's father help her to overcome her new condition, and what tools does he use to help her cope with her environment?

Discussion Question 2

What is Werner's biggest fear and why?

Discussion Question 3

Where did Werner's interest in electronics begin, and how does it affect his future?

Vocabulary

indestructible, irreparable, inconspicuous, congenital, languid, refectory, infinitesimal, facsimile



Part Two: 8 August, 1944: Chapters 32-36

Summary

The bombs fall and buildings are blown to rubble in Saint-Malo while the city's inhabitants cower and pray in crypts and cellars around the city. The Hotel of Bees lifts into the air, and comes down again in pieces. Werner comes to with a roar in his ears, his headphones gone and the left side of his face wet. The ceiling has fallen, and he is unable to stand. In the darkness he calls out, asking if they are dead. Werner can see light. Volkheimer reveals the extent of the damage with his flashlight. He sees Volkheimer uncover Bernd, but although Bernd is screaming, Werner is unable to hear him. Volkheimer carries Bernd to a chair and closes his mouth gently. Then he swings the light around until he finally finds Werner. Though Werner insists they have to get out, Volkheimer assures him there is no other way.

Marie-Laure clutches the stone from her model in one hand and the little house in the other. She calls for her father, and wonders if her great-uncle could have survived the bombing. She continues to hide, trying to calm herself. Finally, Marie-Laure forces herself to stand. She returns the stone to the house from the model, twisting the chimney back in place and putting it in her pocket. She manages to find her cane and counts paces to the stairwell. She goes down carefully, checking the trip wire her uncle set and finding it intact. She goes into the bathroom and kneels in front of the full bathtub to drink her fill. Then she continues down to the second floor where she takes her great-uncle's woolen coat, but still can't find her shoes. She finds half a loaf of bread and grabs the metal ring to the cellar. Another shell encourages her to take the bread down and close the trap door behind her.

Analysis

Twelve bombers have already turned and climbed before the debris begins to hit the ground. Malouins pray in cellars and crypts around the city as all around them becomes a firestorm. Even the House of Bees is not spared. Werner is back in Zollverein in his mind. He remembers how a miner had dug a grave for his mules. He hears his sister breathe in, and then he is suddenly back in the House of Bees. The noise continues, but Werner hears nothing. He plucks hot debris from himself, and takes stock. It is getting warm and they are trapped below. He has lost his field light, and the ceiling has collapsed, making it impossible to stand. In the darkness, part of him panics. A light shines and Werner watches as Volkheimer locates Bernd and helps him to sit up. Then his light finds Werner who tells him they need to get out, but Volkheimer tells him that there is no way.



Marie-Laure huddles in a ball under her bed, calling out for her father in a cadence that she can't hear. A massive tree in the center of the city is uprooted, taking granite and heaps of stone and dirt with it. Finally, the noise subsides, and Marie-Laure wonders if her great-uncle survived the attack. She breathes, trying to calm herself. Marie finally calms down enough to realize that she is too high in the house. She finds her cane and secreting the stone inside the little house, she slips it back into her pocket. Then she makes her way downstairs, wisely getting a good long drink from the tub and taking a half loaf of bread down with her as well.

Discussion Question 1

What phenomenon occurs when the spires of flames reach three hundred feet?

Discussion Question 2

What happens to Werner and his companions, and what problems do they now face?

Discussion Question 3

What reality does Marie-Laure accept and, overcoming her fear, what does she do?

Vocabulary

transmute, ramparts, cadence, diminished, suspension, molecules, solicitous



Part Three: June 1940: Chapters 37-50

Summary

Marie-Laure and her father reach Evreux but the man he was supposed to meet and leave the stone with has already fled to London. His house is burned and being looted, so they bed down for the night in a farmer's barn, raiding the vegetable garden for food. The next day a furniture lorry takes them as far as Cancale and then they walk. He describes the scene at Saint-Malo when they finally arrive, hunting for Rue Vauborel. He finally finds his uncle's house and pushes the buzzer several times before they sit against the gate. Madam Manec opens the gate and is astonished to see them. She takes them inside, feeds them and cleans Marie's feet. As her father and Madame Manec talk, Marie-Laure, stuffed and warm, drifts to sleep. When Marie-Laure wakes, she calls out, shuffling slowly to avoid barking her shins. Madame Manec comes up immediately, and helps her bathe. They eat and she thinks about her Uncle, who hasn't left the house in years, wondering what that would be like.

Three whole days pass before Marie-Laure meets her great-uncle Etienne, who finally introduces himself by leaving a trail of shells from her room to his door. He reads to her while her father watches two motorcycles and two trucks filled with Germans drive into town. While Germans who arrive in uniforms that look as new as their boots buy up postcards, dolls, cakes and clothing, Marie-Laure is still confined to the house. Her father insists it is too dangerous for her to go outside.

The days turn into weeks and she spends her time learning the inside of her great-uncle's house. The German's post notices for voluntary firearms surrender. Three hundred weapons are collected. Marie-Laure's father works frantically to finish a model of Saint-Malo while her great uncle keeps her from becoming too bored. He reads her stories, and they pretend to be brave explorers, traveling the world on a flying couch.

Werner is one of a hundred recruits who cram into a dance hall in Essen to begin entrance exams for the National Political Institutes of Education. For eight days, he is put through a rigorous examination of his body and mind. Five days later, he is accepted and the entire neighborhood with the exception of Jutta celebrates his achievement. Werner tries to talk to her every day, but she avoids him. Finally, on the day before he is leaving, she agrees to walk with him. She fears what he will turn into, and questions his choices.

At the school, four hundred boys of all ages are given three uniforms each, and told how to wear them. The rules are explained, and they are assigned sleeping quarters. From then on, each day is a blur of exercises, lessons, and more exercise. Dr. Hauptmann is an instructor of technical sciences and Werner immediately excels in his class. In fact, Dr. Hauptmann is so impressed that he singles Werner out, having him create several experiments that are obviously beyond the other boys in class. Werner is called to the office of technical sciences where Dr. Hauptmann and an upperclassman named Frank



Volkheimer are waiting for him. He is asked if he understands trigonometry, asked to identify a formula and then asked if he can solve it. The more he reveals, the more excited Hauptmann becomes and finally Werner is instructed to work in the laboratory every evening after supper.

Sergeant Major Reinhold von Rumpel is in Vienna when he first reads about the Sea of Flames. He is charged with evaluating and crating treasures the police have confiscated and towards late evening, he finds the stories surrounding the diamond.

Analysis

The home Marie-Laure and her father were trying to reach has been burned and looting is occurring when they arrive. The man they had come to see had left for London the day before. Marie-Laure's feet are sore and her father carries her, suddenly fearful that someone knew what he carries. He sees a dark house and, avoiding it, he goes to the barn and knocks softly before picking the lock and taking her inside. He sees a vegetable garden out back and returns shortly with a shirt filled with vegetables. Then he tries to think as he prattles on with nonsense to Marie to try to tease her out of her catatonia.

The next day he manages to get them to his uncle Etienne's home in Saint-Malo. Though they arrive late, after pushing the buzzer several times, Madame Manec comes out. She is shocked to see them and ushers them in for food and warmth. Marie-Laure eats with abandon, and Madame Manec cleans her sore feet. She is asleep in no time, some part of her still hoping that this is all a bad dream. She sleeps for some time, and when she wakes Madame Manec helps her with bathing. Her father is seeking a telegraph, but none are working. That night before bed, she tries to reassure her father that soon they will be able to go home, and everything will be where they left it. He doesn't answer.

Three days after their arrival, Marie-Laure gets up to find a shell. Another one is close by and, following them, she is led to the fifth floor door beyond which her great uncle Etienne has kept himself since their arrival. When he invites her in, she is surprised by the softness of his voice, the sound of many radios playing together, and the myriad of treasures that live with him on the fifth floor. She spends the day with him while her father watches from the telegraph office as the first group of Germans arrive. In mere moments, an order is given and an aide de camp hurries upstairs to unfurl a crimson flag from the sill.

As the days turn to weeks, Marie-Laure is increasingly bored with her circumstances. She asks repeatedly to go outside, but is refused as her father insists it is still too dangerous. Her great-uncle Etienne distracts her for a time, but then develops a headache that has him retreating to his quarters for an indefinite time again. Firearms are collected in town, but Marie-Laure's father is still insistent that it is too dangerous for her to go outside even with him. Instead, he tries to recreate the town in wood for her again while the sight of his labor makes her wonder exactly how long they will be



expected to stay. Her great-uncle Etienne takes her on wonderful journeys of make believe, flying there on a couch that is able to travel the world and making their trips and destinations come alive for her in smells and noises.

Werner goes to Essen to take the entrance exams for the National Political Institutes of Education. He thinks about Jutta who hasn't spoken to him since he crushed the radio in a clumsy effort to keep her safe. For eight days he is put to the test in every way imaginable, shouting 'Heil Hitler' at the end of it all. Five days after the exams are over, Werner learns he was selected, but Jutta still hasn't spoken more than half a dozen words to him. She refuses to come down for dinner. Frau Elena promises to talk to her, telling Werner to stay with his well-wishers. Finally Jutta goes for a walk with him on his last day. She admits that she is worried about what he'll turn into, and tells him not to lie to her even if he is still lying to himself.

The school is a wonder to Werner. He is astounded by how beautiful it is and how clean and free of dust the air is. He goes through an orientation, just one boy in four hundred. Here, they dress the same, exercise the same, learn the same, and the notions of rank, station or hierarchy simply do not exist. Werner alternates between exhaustion, exhilaration and confusion. His upper bunk mate, Frederick keeps pace with him throughout the day, but his mind and attention are on the birds he sees.

Werner excels when Dr. Hauptmann assigns his class their first assignment – a Morse code circuit. When Werner easily completes this, he is asked what else he could create, and Dr. Hauptmann's attention is rapt as he makes a simple motor, and offers that he could also make a doorbell, an ohmmeter or a Morse beacon with the same items as well. Hauptmann asks him to make them all. Werner's aptitude with electronics takes him to the front of Dr. Hauptmann's class and realizing his potential, Hauptmann calls him into his office. After a few tests to see what Werner's abilities are, he instructs him to spend every day after dinner in the lab. Werner is astounded and returns to his bunk in a daze. Frederick is excited about having heard an eagle owl, although he admits he hadn't actually seen it.

Sergeant Major Reinhold von Rumpel enjoys his newfound status as a result of the war. Where before he was a simple - although talented - gemologist, now he finds himself charged with examining and packaging the treasures that police have confiscated. He has seen valuables that he had not thought he would have held in several lifetimes, and one day in a library in Vienna, he reads about the Sea of Flames. He is determined to find it.

Discussion Question 1

Why is Marie-Laure increasingly restless, and what concerns does her father harbor that keep her in that state?



Discussion Question 2

Explain what Hitler's plans are rumored to be for the Austrian town of Linz and what actions he is taking to that end.

Discussion Question 3

Describe the format used by the Germans to create the next generation of soldiers and explain why or why not they are effective training methods.

Vocabulary

prefecture, concessions, diversion, itinerants, dispassionately, interminable, differential, unadulterated



Part Three: June 1940: Chapters 51-61

Summary

One day, Etienne is reading to Marie-Laure when he stops, convinced that someone has arrived. He heads to the cellar, whispering nursery rhymes with Marie-Laure in tow. Etienne takes her upstairs and shows her the huge radio transmitter he built on the top floor. It took him years to create, so that he could play the gramophone recordings that they had spent so many hours composing.

Claude Levitte lives just three doors down from Etienne LeBlanc. A perfumer by trade, since the war began, he now makes extra income by hauling meat by train to Paris. He is looking out the window when he sees Marie-Laure's father measuring distances and making notes, and realizes that this might be useful too.

Weeks go by. Marie-Laure counts the days, still confined to the house. Madame Manec begins baking early and takes food to those who are in need while Marie-Laure's father continues to work on her model. A new notice is sent out that requires all residents to surrender their radios. It takes four trips with a cart to get them all to the rue de Chartres, and Etienne is nowhere to be seen. Marie-Laure doesn't mention the huge radio that Etienne built upstairs, and it remains. Etienne finally emerges from the room across the hall and Marie-Laure tells him about the radios. He asks about the one upstairs and considers surrendering it, but Marie-Laure tells him it is too late, so instead they push a huge wardrobe in front of the door and pretend it doesn't exist.

A telegram arrives which instructs Marie-Laure's father to return to Paris at the end of the month, and to travel securely. Marie-Laure's father Daniel finally finishes the model of Saint-Malo. He decides that he will take the stone to Paris alone, and buys a single ticket. He also promises Marie-Laure that when he returns, she can go out. She goes over the model with her hands, naming the streets quietly as she goes along. Marie-Laure's father is seized just hours from Paris outside Vitre. He is questioned and then held until four days later when he and other prisoners are loaded into a cattle truck and driven to Germany where they will labor on farms for the duration of the war.

Werner writes letters to his sister, but much of them are redacted. He tells her the story of Reiner Schicker and mentions that the Giant possesses many of his loyalties. He also tells her about Frederick and his fascination with birds. Bastian, the warrant officer and commandant instructs the cadets as to his expectations of them. He begins to thin the group, taking the weakest member out by pitting him against his classmates. Dr. Hauptmann asks Werner if he can improve the power and efficiency of a directional radio transceiver he designed. The doctor wants to be able to calculate the third side of a triangle if two sides are already known.

In the dormitory, Frederick's only interest is in the birds he sees on their migration. Every afternoon, regardless of the weather, the commandant assembles the cadets



outside. This time, Bastian pulls Helmut Rodel out and asks him who is the weakest. Without hesitation, he names Frederick. Bastian gives Frederick a ten-count, but the others catch him before he reaches the commandant. He hands the hose he has around his neck to Rodel and instructs him to do Frederick some good. Finally, when Frederick is down on the ground, the beating ends. Bastian orders Frederick to stand and after a moment, he manages to. Then he joins the others as they jog up the path and into the forest.

Sergeant Major Reinhold von Rumpel wakes early and goes to the Grand Gallery where he is given a tour of the gems and minerals by the mineralogist, Professor Hublin. After the tour is finished, he asks to see the items that are not on display. When the assistant director of the Gallery and mineralogist both balk, he begins to talk about their children, using loosely veiled threats to make his point. Finally, the men relent, calling home to ensure the safety of their children before taking the Sergeant Major downstairs to the storeroom where the small but elegant box is opened. Inside is a blue stone the size of a pigeon's egg.

Analysis

Etienne is reading to Marie-Laure when he is overcome by fear that someone is in the house. He heads to the cellar, frightening Marie-Laure at first, but she follows him down and manages to convince him to take her back upstairs. There, he opens the sixth floor where he shows her the gramophone and recordings that he and his brother had made before his brother died. Afterward, he'd created a massive radio transmitter, hoping to broadcast so far that his brother might hear the broadcasts they'd made even from beyond the grave.

Claude Levitte knows an opportunity when he sees one, so when there are food shortages in Paris, he begins hauling freshly butchered meat to sell at an inflated rate of course. Looking outside, he happens to see Marie-Laure's father measuring off steps and distances, and realizes excitedly that the occupying forces may well be interested in that too.

Marie-Laure is increasingly frustrated with both her continued confinement and with the fact that they have not yet returned to their home in Paris. She can't understand why things can't be resolved, and wonders which side has their heads in the sand.

When the news comes that all radios must be surrendered by the next day at noon, Marie-Laure is shocked. Anyone caught with one afterward would be considered a saboteur. She wonders if her father knows about the radio on the sixth floor and watches the next day as he hauls cart after cart full away, but the one upstairs is not taken. Etienne has not come down, or eaten and the house is silent. When he finally emerges, Marie-Laure is sure that he'll be upset, but Etienne only asks if all were taken. Marie-Laure admits that she hadn't told anyone about his equipment upstairs and they spend until almost dawn hiding it behind a huge wardrobe.



Marie-Laure's father is instructed to return to Paris. Daniel wrestles with the content of the telegraph. He debates whether or not to take Marie-Laure with him, and decides against it. He still doesn't really believe that he is the one carrying the real stone and not a decoy, despite the many tests he has tried with it on his own. Marie-Laure knows he is leaving before he says a word, but he promises it won't be more than ten days. As it turns out, it will be much longer. He is taken into custody just outside of Vitre and questioned about the tools he carries. He explains that he used them to build a model for his daughter but no one is listening. He keeps imagining that any moment now the director of the museum will come and explain that this is all a mistake, but that doesn't happen. They question him more, almost accusing him of trying to wreck the Chateau de Saint-Malo, but he doesn't understand why. Four days later, he and other prisoners are sent by cattle car to Germany.

Werner writes to Jutta, telling her about the Giant and about the trigonometry he is being asked to do. Whenever he writes about the amount of copper wire the school has, what he believes are the plans the Germans have across the channel, or details about ministers and their connections, the passages are redacted with heavy black marker.

Commandant Bastian continues to challenge his cadets. He asks them to select the weakest among them, and then giving the selection a head start, he challenges the others to run him down. The first is Backer and Backer selects Ernst as the weakest link; however with a ten second head start, Ernst reaches Bastian before the other cadets catch him.

Dr. Hauptmann wants to be able to measure the angle of transmissions received by a directional radio he is designing. Werner redesigns most of it, wondering what two points Dr. Hauptmann already knows and what is so important about the third. Werner tries to talk to Frederick about it, but Frederick is in a world of his own. He wanders around with his head in the clouds, and his only interests appear to revolve around the migratory patterns of the birds he sees. Werner helps him as much as he can.

In December it begins to snow, and after the first couple of snowfalls, it stays. Werner has never seen snow so white and clean. Bastian again pulls a cadet out of line and asks him for the weakest member. The cadet identifies Frederick and Werner's stomach clenches. This time, the group of boys catches Frederick, and Bastian uses the opportunity to help him strengthen his character. He gives a cold hose to another cadet and has him use it on Frederick until he is face first in the snow. This time, when the commandant asks Frederick if he is the weakest member, he tells him he is not whereas before the beating he wasn't sure. When the cadet wielding the hose is exhausted, Bastian orders Frederick up to join the others, and he manages to do so.

Sergeant Major Reinhold von Rumpel likes to be early. He finds great pleasure in being awake before the sun comes up, and he arrives at the Grand Gallery an hour before they are expecting him. They show him around and he is astounded by the wealth of gems and minerals left behind. When the tour is done, he gets around to the real reason he'd come. He asks to see what is not displayed. When they balk, he tells them about his one great skill – waiting. He can wait for hours without impatience, and he does. He



waits until they finally see no alternative but to show him what he had come for. They take him to a storeroom where an intricate puzzle box holds a pigeon sized blue stone.

Discussion Question 1

What new regulation do Marie-Laure and Etienne only partially comply with, and what do they do about the things they have not relinquished?

Discussion Question 2

What procedure does Commandant Bastian follow to eliminate the weakest cadets in his group and is this effective? If so in what ways and if not, why not?

Discussion Question 3

What is Sergeant Major Reinhold von Rumpel's greatest strength, and how does he use it to further his own agenda?

Vocabulary

inaudible, temporal, morphology, atavistic, enunciating, virulent, phrenology, ventricles, resilience



Part Four: 8 August 1944: Chapters 62-67

Summary

Sergeant Major von Rumpel climbs up the ladder to where two gunners sit in a turret just half a mile from Saint-Malo. Using binoculars, he watches until the smoke clears and he can see for sure that the house at number 4 rue Vauborel is still intact. He decides he will wait until the smoke clears before going in.

Marie-Laure wakes with the little house still pinned to her chest. She listens, but hears no more sirens and wonders if the rest of the house burned away after she crawled down through the trapdoor. She is famished, and tries to save some of the bread she brought down with her, but is unable to do so. Then she roams the cellar and to her surprise finds two full cans. Shaking them offers no clues as to their contents, but Marie-Laure quietly hopes for a can of the sweet peaches Madame Manec had given her on that first day. Sergeant Major von Rumpel carries water, morphine and his field pistol into the rubble of Saint-Malo, determined to find the diamond that he believes is in the LeBlanc home. He marvels at the degree of danger he is willing to place himself in for the good of the Reich. Finally, Marie-Laure can hold her bladder no longer. She finds a paring knife to open the cans with and then climbs to the third floor to drink from the bathtub once more. She sits on the landing and is about to open the first can when the trip wire behind her rings the bell that signifies that someone has entered the house.

Bernd is in considerable pain as Volkheimer hacks at the rubble on the stairway. Using the flashlight sparingly, he identifies and memorizes an area, and then in the darkness, he works at dragging pieces away. Werner looks at the radio but it is damaged beyond repair. Volkheimer continues to use his light sparingly, giving Bernd a drink and then shutting it off again before Bernd can get a look at his leg. Twice now, Bernd has begged him to use one of the grenades he has to blast their way out, but he explains that to use one in such close quarters, under so much debris would be suicide. He brings Werner a box full of electrical fuses and two bent screwdrivers hoping that he can repair the radio, but Werner has already given up.

Analysis

Sergeant Major von Rumpel can feel the tendrils like branches that spread from his legs up into his abdomen and up into his arms and neck. Like black branches, they grow inside of him and he is sure that it is only a matter of time before it chokes off his heartbeat too. He searches through binoculars and sees that number 4 rue Vauborel is still standing. He'll wait until the smoke is gone before entering.



Marie-Laure wakes in the cellar. The bombing has stopped as have the sirens. She wonders if her great-uncle Etienne is looking for her, and she tries to ignore her overly full bladder by exploring her surroundings. To her surprise and great joy, she discovers two full cans on a shelf and allows herself to dream about what they might contain. She puts one in each pocket and remembers a trip her father had taken her on to see Foucault's pendulum, but all she can remember is that it would never stop.

Sergeant Major von Rumpel walks through Saint-Malo, unnerved by the silence, the curtains blowing in the breeze, and the signs of death he sees. A woman sweeps outside the movie house and tells him that the show starts after eight as he limps past. The tall LeBlanc house remains almost as untouched as he does standing there in the midst of the danger zone.

Marie-LeBlanc overcomes her fear of the unknown when her bladder is close to bursting. She creeps up the ladder and uses the toilet in Madame Manec's room. She remembers what her father taught her about drinking water before eating to help you feel full with less, and goes upstairs to drink her fill from the bathtub again. Then, she is about to open a can, planning how she will only eat one now, when the trip wire rings to tell her someone has come into the house.

Bernd knows there is something wrong with his leg and his chest. Werner watches as Volkheimer tries to clear the stairway, and he thinks about fate and how it led them to be where they are. He wonders if they are together now to make reparations in their lives. Volkheimer never stops trying to get them out. He circles the small space they are in, alternately trying to dig them out, and looking for things they can use. He finds bent screwdrivers and old fuses for the radio, but Werner has already given up. He hears the building groaning and in his mind sees green grass and sunlight. Volkheimer reminds him of his sister, telling Werner to think of her, and hoping that his love for her will help him to fight to live.

Discussion Question 1

How does Marie-Laure's father prove to her beyond all doubt that the earth rotates, and what does she remember most about that visit?

Discussion Question 2

What conditions have caused Werner to give up, and what does Bernd want to do?

Discussion Question 3

What treasure does Marie-Laure find in the cellar, and what is she most hopeful for?

Vocabulary

marauding, peninsular, asphyxiated, innumerable, reparations, sporadically, ministrations



Part Five: January 1941: Chapters 68-80

Summary

During January recess, Frederick invites Werner to come to his home in Berlin with him. Werner is astonished by the apparent wealth of their lives, the things that they have and the fact that an actual elevator takes them upstairs. In February, cadets are called out of their beds at 2 am to where a stake has been driven into the ground in the snow. One bucket of water at a time, they freeze the man to death on the spot. The man is left in the courtyard for a week.

Frederick is chosen as the weakest again and again and beaten each time he is caught. Werner tries to immerse himself in his work, but his stomach is sour. The other cadets torment Frederick at every opportunity. Werner finally completes the equipment Hauptmann wants and together they go outside to test it. Volkheimer takes the transmitter and hides himself in the woods where Werner, using two receivers, triangulates his position and finds him easily. Volkheimer whispers to Werner that it is only numbers.

Day after day Frederick is tormented, while night after night Werner escapes to the laboratory. Early one April morning, Frederick is gone. Werner skips lunch and in the infirmary, finds a bed with blood, and bloody rags in a basin. A nurse shakes her head when he asks when Frederick will be back.

Marie-Laure wakes and for a moment thinks her father is home, but he isn't. When he has been gone twenty days, she gives up, believing he will never return. So far, all they know is that he did not arrive at the museum in Paris. Finally Madame Manec takes Marie-Laure outside, and down to the beach. Finally, a letter arrives for Marie-Laure. Her father tells her he is well and tells her to be good. Madame Manec takes Marie-Laure to the beach each day and after the fifth time, she can find her way without help.

Then Madame Manec takes Marie-Laure on her rounds, delivering food to whoever needs it most. Nine women gather at the house one day, each complaining about the current conditions and restrictions. Madame Manec suggests they do something about it. Two women leave, but the others remain. Together, they plan and execute ways to disrupt or cause discomfort to the occupying force. Another letter arrives for Marie-Laure from her father, once again assuring her that he is fine and well cared for.

After a short time, Sergeant Major von Rumpel concludes the stone he held in the museum was not the Sea of Flames and he begins searching lapidaries to find the one who made the fakes. Finally, his search leads him to a lapidary named Dupont where he learns that three fakes were made. He goes to a doctor who examines him and tells him that he needs a biopsy and should probably call his wife.



Analysis

Frederick takes Werner home to his family's townhouse in Berlin during January recess, eager to show him his prized possession. Hidden in the ceiling of the living room are two Audubon book volumes with gold like slipcovers. Back at school, Frank Volkheimer drags a prisoner to a stake outside and ties him there where everyone is expected to take part in his punishment for trying to escape a work camp. Frederick refuses, pouring three pails of water out on the ground instead and telling Bastian that he is already finished. The prisoner is left there for days. Frederick is regularly tormented by other cadets, and frequently chosen as the weakest and beaten after they catch him. Hauptmann teaches them that they are involved in the greatest project of the Reich. Werner suggests to Frederick that perhaps he should leave the school, and Frederick counters that perhaps Werner should stop being his friend since doing so paints him with the same brush. Early in April, Werner wakes to find Frederick gone. When he still isn't back for breakfast or morning field exercises, Werner begins to hear stories. He skips lunch and goes to the infirmary where his worst fears are confirmed. Frederick has been taken to Leipzig for surgery and will not be returning. He thinks about Jutta and knows that he could never tell her about any of this.

The museum says they are searching for Marie-Laure's father but after twenty days have passed without word from him, she gives up. She stays in bed, barely eating, and stops caring whether or not she can go outside. She is angry with him for being gone, and with everyone else for doing nothing about it. Madame Manec decides it is time to snap Marie-Laure out of the state she is in. Her father has been gone twenty-nine days when she takes Marie-Laure to the beach for the very first time, and opens her eyes to another world entirely. For a brief time, Marie-Laure is neither frightened, nor consumed with grief over the loss of her father. She is amazed, overwhelmed, and entranced by all she hears and feels. When they go home, she has handfuls of treasures to show Etienne. A letter finally comes for Marie-Laure from her father, filled with assurances that he is well, being fed like a king, and telling her how beautiful it is there. Madame Manec forms a club of women who work to undermine the occupying Germans by changing street signs, disrupting communications, misprinting train schedules, and even placing dog excrement on the steps of the local brothel. Another letter arrives from Marie-Laure's father, assuring them that he is now building roads and getting stronger. He talks about trees and tells them that he is allowed one parcel per month. Mostly, he assures her that he is safe.

Sergeant Major von Rumpel realizes that the stone he held in the museum was not the fabled Sea of Flames. For one thing, there were no flaws. He realizes that the real stone is still out there. Researching, he narrows his focus to Dupont's shop and finds the mold used to make the fakes. From there, it is a simple matter to have Dupont furnished with fake food rations, and then have him arrested. He learns four fakes were made.

Von Rumpel imagines himself walking through the future Fuhrermuseum at Linz as he waits for a doctor to examine him. After doing so, the doctor tells him he needs a biopsy. At the moment, all Von Rumpel wants is to find the Sea of Flames.



Discussion Question 1

What treasure does Frederick want to share with Werner, and why would it be a problem if he or his family was caught with this kind of item?

Discussion Question 2

What condition does Marie-Laure suffer from and what does Madame Manec do to combat this state?

Discussion Question 3

How does Sergeant Major von Rumpel arrive at the conclusion that the stone he saw at gallery was not the Sea of Flames and how does he go about his continuing search for the real one?

Vocabulary

indignantly, resplendent, sumptuous, coruscating, countenance, inexorably, ruinous



Part Five: January 1941: Chapters 81-95

Summary

Crazy Harold Bazin takes Marie-Laure and Madame Manec through a maze of alleyways to where at one time city kennel keepers would keep their mastiffs during the day. Madame Manec and Marie-Laure sit in the Hotel-Dieu dining room and wait until a man called Rene joins them and suggests that certain information would be very helpful to a resistance movement. Madame Manec tries to get Etienne to help with the war effort, suggesting that he use his equipment to help, assuring him that a receiver could be found and then reference numbers could be baked right into bread, but he refuses. Marie-Laure and Madame Manec take food to Harold, but he is gone and the librarian has no idea where, but his disappearance makes the other women nervous and they want to take a break until things settle down.

Two French policemen knock at the door and tell them that Marie-Laure's father has been convicted of theft and conspiracy, and is being forced into labor like all other prisoners. Etienne forbids Madame Manec from conducting any of her espionage in the home, or from involving Marie-Laure, so instead she leaves early in the morning and is gone all day. At dinner time, she puts a plate of half cooked boiled potatoes in front of them. In the springtime, Madame Manec catches pneumonia and Etienne serves as her nurse. Marie-Laure's father writes that her parcels arrived, and how happy they made him. For a time, Madame Manec improves, even managing to go out, but she still coughs in a way that worries Marie-Laure. In June, Madame Manec has a relapse, and by later that same afternoon, she succumbs.

With Frederick gone, Werner is isolated and treated with suspicion by the others. Volkheimer is gone and even Dr. Hauptmann is gone more often than not. A company in Berlin is now making their transceiver and some are already coming back from the field for repairs. Jutta writes to Werner, telling him that she and other girls are mending clothes for the war effort and talking about fabric shortages. He asks Dr. Hauptmann to let him pay his own way home, but Hauptmann tells him the truth – his life is no longer his own, and he will only leave the school when his orders to do so come in. In March, Dr. Hauptmann calls Werner into his office to tell him that he has been called to Berlin to continue his work there. Werner writes to Jutta but most of his letter is redacted. Werner is called to the commandant's office and after waiting for some time he is called in and told that his age was incorrectly recorded. He is eighteen years old, not sixteen, and as such will be sent to a special technology division of the Wehrmacht. Werner spends all of his money on train fare to Berlin to visit Frederick. The elevator no longer works and their names are next to number 5 instead of number 2.

Von Rumpel begins treatments for the lymphoid tumors, hoping to reduce their size, but the injections leave him weak and dizzy. His memory is unreliable and he struggles to read the nine paragraphs the librarian has been able to find that reference the Sea of Flames.



Analysis

Harold Bazin introduces Marie-Laure to a special hiding place where the city used to kennel mastiffs but now is partially submerged by the tides and houses all manner of sea creatures. As they go back, he secretly gives her the key to the iron door.

Madame Manec continues to do whatever she can to disrupt the occupying forces, sometimes taking Marie-Laure along, and they jokingly create code names for each other – The Whelk and The Blade. Madame Manec wants Etienne to help her with her efforts to undermine the German, but he is fearful of everyone, including Claude the perfumer who he notices gets more meat, butter and electricity than anyone else does.

When Harold vanishes, the women helping Madame Manec are nervous and want to stop resistance efforts for a while, but Madame Manec is disgusted by their cowardice. Marie-Laure wonders where the Germans take people. When two French policemen come to tell them that Marie-Laure's father has been charged with conspiracy and theft, Etienne allows them to search the house for anything that might help, but after they find three French flags and warn him of the dangers of having them, he burns them in the fireplace and forbids Madame Manec from involving either their home or Marie-Laure in any of her efforts to resist the Germans.

From then on, she and Etienne treat each other like strangers. She reminds Etienne that like a frog who is slowly heated in a pot of water, doing nothing as things worsen will only be the death of them. When Madame Manec becomes sick with pneumonia, Etienne forgives all previous transgressions, and lovingly tends to her as a mother would tend to a child. She shivers uncontrollably and after placing quilts over her, he takes the rug from the floor and covers her with that as well.

Marie-Laure's father writes that he received her parcels, but that he was not allowed to keep the soap, or the paper that the soap, his toothbrush and a comb were wrapped in. He tells her that he spends his days making cardboard, and dreaming of the museum. He tells her that if she ever wants to understand how things turned out, she is to look inside the small carving of Etienne's house and that he is sure she will do the right thing.

Madame Manec seems to improve, but Marie-Laure is fearful when she hears her cough and wheeze. She lies down with Marie-Laure in the weeds and they listen to bees, wasps and dragonflies. In June, Madame Manec has a relapse and dies. Etienne calls the doctor, but by that afternoon she is dead, and Etienne is devastated. A man comes with a cart, and takes her body away.

Werner misses home, and all of the reliable familiarity of it, but most of all he misses his sister Jutta; her stubbornness; her loyalty; and her innate ability to recognize the difference between right and wrong, sometimes resenting her for those very qualities as well. Jutta writes to Werner, chastising him for the lack of contact, and includes his childhood notebook containing boyhood inventions and drawings. Homesickness overwhelms him.



In January 1942, Werner asks Dr. Hauptmann to send him home. Dr. Hauptmann is so disappointed that he tells Werner he will receive no more special treatment. Every few days, two officers enter the refectory and all cadets stare down at their food, pretending they aren't there until they find the cadet they are looking for and tell him that his father is dead. Werner's doubts grow, although he continues to go through the motions. Werner is informed that his age was incorrectly recorded and it has been determined that he was at the school under false pretenses. The commandant considers disciplinary action, but Dr. Hauptmann assures him that Werner will be happy to serve, so instead he is simply reassigned to the same branch of the Wehrmacht as he is.

Werner goes to Berlin to see Frederick, and is appalled by the condition he is in. His brain no longer functions; he is unable to feed himself or enjoy birds as he used to. He asks Franny for the Audubon book, but she insists they have never had one.

Von Rumpel begins treatments for lymphoma but they leave him unable to concentrate and he struggles to keep up his search for the Sea of Flames. The keeper of the stone will live forever, he reads, and can hear his father telling him that obstacles are opportunities.

Discussion Question 1

What happens to Frederick, and why is Werner consumed with guilt over the incident?

Discussion Question 2

What are casualty assistance officers, and what is their primary purpose?

Discussion Question 3

What does Werner discover when he goes to visit Frederick?

Vocabulary

obstinacy, imperceptibly, ambiguity, mitigated, lugubrious, transgressions, artifice



Part Six: 8 August 1944: Chapters 96-100

Summary

Marie-Laure hears the bell ring, the front gate triggered first and then she hears the door close. No one calls out so she knows it is not Etienne; when she hears the lurching gait, she knows immediately that it belongs to the German sergeant major. She goes quietly upstairs and hides herself in the secret room behind the closet. Von Rumpel searches each floor, sure that what he seeks will be there, and feeling as though he is at the end of a long journey. Marie-Laure remains at the bottom of the ladder in the closet until she manages to calm herself. She climbs up the seven rungs to the tunnel of the garret. She reaches out with her fingers, careful not to knock anything over, and crawls toward the stone chimney. Shelling begins again in the distance.

Bernd alternately mutters and asks for light. He becomes coherent long enough to tell them about his last visit to his father, and then quietly slips away. Werner searches the space they are in, and finds a variety of tools, and a battery that is still charged. He works on the radio quietly. It takes a while, but Werner is finally able to summon static from the radio and begins to search for frequencies.

Analysis

When the bell sounds outside, Marie-Laure knows someone is there, and terror overwhelms her ability to function at first. Then, hearing her father's voice guiding her, she considers her options. She pads quietly up to the fifth floor, and opens the secret panel in the closet, climbs inside and closes the panel softly behind her. Von Rumpel climbs from one floor to the next, wondering if perhaps he's made a mistake. He feels like he is at the end of a journey, and when he reaches Marie-Laure's room, he feels a familiarity that reminds him of his own daughters. He is sure that what he seeks will be found in the model. Marie-Laure stays where she is at first, and then finally climbs up into the tunnel of the garret. She tries to calm herself, thinking about what she will do if he finds her hiding place and comes up after her. She crawls to the chimney and then sits there, hugging her knees and trying to be as silent as a snail.

Bernd has a brief moment of clarity during which he tells Werner and Volkheimer about his last visit with his father. He dies shortly afterward. Werner, needing the distraction to keep his mind from thinking about Bernd, or perhaps he does it for Jutta. He works quietly, operating mostly on autopilot now. When he is finally able to repair it, he feels just like he did as an eight year old child with his sister on the floor of Children's House.

Discussion Question 1

How is Marie-Laure so certain that the person in the house is not Etienne or a rescuer coming to find her?



Discussion Question 2

What inspires Werner to rebuild the radio after he'd given up and resigned himself to the fact that they were all going to die?

Discussion Question 3

Why is Von Rumpel so convinced that what he is looking for will be found in the LeBlanc household?

Vocabulary

pendulously, indiscernible, fulcrum, simulacrum, oxygenated, pulsates, inaudibly



Part Seven: August 1942: Chapters 101-120

Summary

The corporal who comes for Werner introduces himself as Neumann two, explaining that of the five in their group, there is one other Neumann who bears the distinction of number one - their driver. They ride the train from Schulpforta to a switching station near Lodz, and then wait for a connection. A train comes but doesn't stop, and Werner realizes that the cars are filled with the bodies of prisoners, stacked one on top of the other like cordwood. Thousands of bodies roll by. Finally, they head out by train and at dusk Werner finds himself delivered to his new unit. The electronic gear is located in the back of an Opel Blitz, modified with a wooden shell built into the back and gasoline tanks strapped to one side. Two of his transceivers are inside awaiting his repair. After a time, his name is called and he turns to see Volkheimer who tells him that Partisans are attacking their trains, and it is believed that radios are being used to coordinate the attacks.

Day after day, Werner scours the airwaves. Then he hears Russian and Volkheimer hands out weapons as they drive the short distance to the signal using Werner's directions. He stays in the vehicle while the others go in, and soon he hears shots through the headphones. They set the house ablaze and take the equipment that they can salvage. In January of 1943, Werner finds several illegal transmissions. Each time is the same. Like needles in a haystack, he finds them, and Volkheimer eliminates them. As 1943 ends and 1944 begins, Werner is still finding an average of two illegal transmitters each week. He is surprised at the disorganized and undisciplined insurgents they find, and marvels at their determination. They make their way to Vienna and they drive around the area for five days listening, but hearing nothing. Finally Werner identifies a signal. Neumann Two stumbles on a woman and child hiding, and surprised, shoots them both. Werner returns to the Opel and is sick.

After Madame Manec dies, Etienne remains in his study for four days and then finally emerges, asking the women who came to help Marie-Laure to go home with his thanks. Then he retrieves an electric saw from the cellar and carves an entry into the back of his wardrobe. Marie-Laure falls asleep as he continues to work, waking to 'Clair de Lune' later. He warns her that what they are doing is dangerous, but she knows the routine and swears she is able, promising to go nowhere else. When she returns Etienne opens the bread and finds a paper scroll inside. While they wait for darkness, Etienne strings wires throughout the house connecting them to bells that will ring when disturbed. Marie-Laure tests them to be sure. Then Etienne builds a false back for the wardrobe, putting it on a sliding track. Finally it is dark and she follows him up the ladder. He turns on the microphone, and reads the numbers carefully on three different frequencies and then turns it off again. For several months Etienne broadcasts the numbers baked into the bread Marie-Laure brings home each day. Afterward, instead of going straight back,



she goes to the old kennel, using the key she was given to enter and examine what arrived since the last time. In the summer of 1943, Marie-Laure is given an extra piece of paper with the bread. Madame Ruelle asks if Etienne will read it as well, and from then on there is usually an extra message. Transmissions often take as long as six minutes which is too long, but no one comes. For just minutes each day, Marie-Laure's life is filled with the color and sound of music, and then the world returns to gray. The numbers continue to come, despite increased pressure from German soldiers for able bodied men in town to help build invasion obstacles, dig trenches and unload wagons. For her sixteenth birthday, Etienne replaces the Jules Verne book Marie-Laure had left behind in Paris over three years earlier. She begins it again, reading it to him.

Sergeant Major von Rumpel is called to a warehouse where he works cataloguing sacks of jewels of all kinds. He doesn't have to ask where they came from. The French police arrest a burglar who was caught with a case of gems. One of them gets von Rumpel's immediate attention, but the pear shaped diamond is an exact duplicate to the one he has already found. He finds the third stone north of Paris in a chateau outside of Amiens. As soon as he sets it under a lamp, he knows it is another fake, and now he has found all three. In Paris, von Rumpel searches the apartment that Marie-Laure and her father once lived. He looks at the model, and pulls out the house that he is standing in. Turning it over in his hands, he realizes that it is actually a container and unable to solve the puzzle, he crushes it under his foot. A telegraph informs Berlin that an illegal broadcast is occurring in the area and requesting assistance to find and eliminate them.

Analysis

Corporal Neumann introduces himself as the second of two Neumann's. He rifles through Werner's bag, and then escorts Werner to the village three miles away and then from Schulpforta to a switching station near Lodz. While they wait for the next train, Werner witnesses the horror of a prisoner train that passes, with bodies stacked like cordwood in car after car, too numerous to count. Soldiers sit on the dead. Werner wishes he could go back to Children's House, to hear Frau Elena singing and to see Jutta drawing her imaginary city. He is taken to an Opel Blitz where two transceivers that he and Dr. Hauptmann build await his touch. The familiarity calms him and the next time he is interrupted, he is more than a little surprised to find Volkheimer looking back at him.

Werner is able to fix the transceivers but has no luck in locating Partisan radio broadcasts on the first night. When he hears the first transmission not in German, they are less than two kilometers from the source. While Werner waits outside, Volkheimer and the Nuemanns kill the men inside, along with their dog. Volkheimer tells Werner to take what he can salvage, and Werner can't help but think that his whole life had been leading up to this very moment.

Weeks pass, and Werner continues to root out illegal transmissions. Whenever they pass a group of prisoners, Volkheimer gets out and upgrades his clothing by taking what he wants of theirs. All winter they drive through occupied territory, always searching. As



1944 begins, Werner becomes ill, suffering from chills, diarrhea and feeling more miserable than he ever has. He hasn't written to Jutta in over a year, and her last letter asks why. He continues to find illegal transmitters. In April they are in Vienna and Werner watches a young girl on a swing. When he returns to listening, a new signal leads to an apartment house. While Neumann Two searches for a radio, he is startled by a woman and child hiding, and kills them both. Werner sees that it is the girl he watched on the swings and he returns to the Opel, and vomits between his legs. No radio is found.

After Madame Manec's death, Etienne confines himself to his study for four days. The women who helped Madame Manec before her death now help Marie-Laure with food and company until Etienne finally emerges. Then he sends the women home, and gets to work. He creates an opening in his wardrobe to access the contraband radio in the garret, running cables and when Marie-Laure wakes, she hears music playing. Etienne reminds her of the dangers associated with what they are doing, and makes her go through the routine Madame Manec set up before her death. Marie-Laure is confident and promises to return immediately, so Etienne allows her to go to the bakery for a loaf of bread with a message baked inside. Etienne has no idea what the numbers inside the loaf mean, but after it is dark, he and Marie-Laure climb upstairs to transmit them. To ensure their safety, he also creates an early warning system with bells that are connected to the gate out front and will ring inside if someone enters and makes a sliding entranceway to the garret.

Just doing something helps to keep their spirits up and Etienne notices that since they started broadcasting, his health has improved remarkably. His vision is clear, the nausea is gone and he no longer sees ghosts coming out of the walls. Now, he even adds a minute or two of music after each broadcast, despite the danger. He dances with Marie-Laure, her grace and ability astounding to him. Marie-Laure stops to tend her garden of snails and other sea creatures after going to the bakery. She dreams about being back in Paris with her father. By the summer of 1943, Marie-Laure is getting extra messages and now the broadcast on five different frequencies takes almost six minutes. Surely too long, but no one comes. She asks Etienne to read the letters from her father almost every night, but still doesn't understand why he told her that to understand, she should look inside Etienne's house, inside the house. In the three years since she and her father arrived, Marie-Laure has outgrown her clothing. They continue to broadcast numbers, despite increased risk, but Etienne wonders about the morality of what they are doing. On her sixteenth birthday, Etienne surprises Marie-Laure by replacing the book she'd left behind in Paris. Overjoyed, she throws her arms around him, stunned that he could afford such a luxury, and even more surprised that he'd been able to find it.

Sergeant Major von Rumpel is beginning to feel as though his bones are decreasing in density. His treatments were completed in Stuttgart and for the first time since, he travels to a warehouse where he and four others are charged with cleaning, weighing, and assessing each gem before it is packed for transport. Von Rumpel takes a taxi to the commissariat where he waits for the French police to bring a burglar who was caught in the chalet of a donor with ties to the National History Museum in Paris. The



doctor told him that although the treatments are done, they have to wait to see if their assault on the tumor works. He examines the jewels when they arrive, still hoping to find the diamond that he believes might save his life. Instead, disappointed, he finds yet another copy of the stone he searches for. He finds the third copy of the Sea of Flames in a chateau outside of Amiens and thinks about the puzzle box the first one was contained in. He'd never seen anything like it before, and wonders who could have created it.

Von Rumpel searches the apartment Marie-Laure and her father had in Paris. He finds tools, glue, and then comes across the model, but doesn't understand it all until he finds the books in Braille. His heart rate increases as he realizes the miniature of their house is a receptacle of some kind, but unable to solve the puzzle easily, he simply crushes it under his foot.

A telegram is sent from Saint-Malo to Berlin citing that terrorist broadcasts were being sent and asking for assistance.

Discussion Question 1

What does Werner see on his way to his first official posting in the war and how does he react?

Discussion Question 2

How do Marie-Laure and Etienne deal with Madame Manec's death?

Discussion Question 3

What is Sergeant Major von Rumpel's physical condition, and what does he believe is his only hope?

Vocabulary

permeates, rhapsodizing, exhilaration, taciturn, hubris, internecine, commissariat, insurgents



Part Eight: 9 August 1944: Chapters 121-128

Summary

In Fort National, Saint-Malo, an American howitzer ranged improperly hits the northern parapet and kills nine of the three hundred and eighty Frenchmen being held against their will. Marie-Laure continues to hide in the attic, unsure of how much time is passing since the bells of St. Vincent's have gone silent. She hears the German's voice below, but can't decipher what he is saying. Desperately thirsty, she uses the shelling to cover the sound of opening one of the two cans she has been hoarding. She drinks the salty liquid and eats the beans inside. Marie-Laure hears the German limp downstairs and summons her courage to go down and fill her empty can with water. She finds the bucket in her room drinks her fill and fills the can before turning to go. Her hands discover her book, on the floor where the German had tossed it, and grabs it, and creeps quietly back up into the attic again. She moves carefully over to the antenna, and leans on it until it telescopes up. Below, the German remains unaware of her. She pulls the microphone to her, remembering her promise to read with Uncle Etienne, and hopes that somewhere he is listening as she begins reading aloud.

Werner and Volkheimer remain trapped under the Hotel of Bees. He tries over and over to find a signal, but finally realizes that something may be broken that he hasn't found. Volkheimer refuses to use the grenades he has to blow out an exit, telling Werner they would both die if he did. Werner quietly calculates and recalculates the time they have left. They talk quietly about their childhoods, both recalling how life used to be. They have been trapped for four days when Werner hears her voice coming through the repaired transceiver. He listens, rapt as she reads from *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* until she suddenly stops, hissing that he is right below her. Werner tries to tell Volkheimer but he tells Werner there is nothing they can do.

Von Rumpel wakes feeling delirious and wondering if something was wrong with the morphine he took. He examines the model again, sure that the one piece he needs is the one piece that is missing – Etienne's house. He decides to search the house one more time, more methodically.

Analysis

War rages on and occasionally friendly fire kills those they are trying to free. Nine Frenchmen die after a shell from an American howitzer hits Fort National where they are held with almost four hundred others. Marie-Laure continues to hide, losing all concept of the passage of time. She sleeps, and waking, wonders if the German is gone. Her father's voice counsels her not to make noise; to think about something other than her hunger and thirst. Then she hears his voice below. Her father promises she will survive



because of the diamond in her pocket. She manages to open one of the cans and enjoys the beans inside. She hears him limp downstairs, and listening to the rain on the roof, thirst overwhelms her. She slides the panel open, and slips down to her room, drinking her fill before filling her can. For a brief moment she wonders if she should try to exit the house but knowing the dangers both inside and out, she decides against it and returns to the attic.

Marie-Laure remembers her uncle asking her to read to him, and decides that someone might have a radio, perhaps even Etienne. She raises the antenna, cringing when it grinds its way up, but the German doesn't come. Pulling the microphone to her lips, she finds her page. She reads quietly and competently, not knowing if anyone hears. Werner listens, and when he hears her voice, he listens rapt as she reads from Jules Verne. When she stops suddenly and hisses that he is right below her fearfully, Werner can think of nothing beyond saving her. With energy he didn't know he still had, he tries to shake Volkheimer into action, but he tells Werner it is no use. Werner is desperate to save her, to do something.

Werner drags an aerial around the cellar trying to get a signal but without success. Their rations are gone, and canteens are empty. Slowly, Werner loses hope that anyone will ever find them, and again prods Volkheimer to use one of his grenades to move the tons of rubble above. Volkheimer doesn't answer when Werner asks him how long they will wait. After a while, they talk about home, and Volkheimer admits that he was desperate to leave when he was younger. Werner had felt the same way as a young man, but now can't remember why he was so eager to leave.

Von Rumpel is out of sorts when he wakes in Marie-Laure's room. Despite the fact that he hasn't found the Sea of Flames, he is sure that since the house itself is still standing although everything around it has fallen, the stone must be in the home somewhere. He begins another search, methodically beginning from the kitchen and working his way up one room at a time.

Discussion Question 1

What does Marie-Laure's father's voice tell her as she hides in the attic, and what conundrum do his statements cause in her?

Discussion Question 2

What drives Marie-Laure to leave the attic, and what does she return with soon afterward?

Discussion Question 3

What makes von Rumpel continue to search Etienne's home with such diligence?

Vocabulary

perception, apprehend, capillaries, photon, coalesce, enunciated, righteousness



Part Nine: May 1944: Chapters 129-147

Summary

When Werner and his group arrive in Saint-Malo, he makes his way down to the beach, oblivious to the calls made by those behind him, unaware that the beach is mined. A colonel tells them he believes a resistance network is working in the area, describing the transmissions made by Etienne and Marie-Laure. They search the area day and night, but the messages the Colonel described have not been repeated. Werner writes to Jutta, telling her not to worry as his fever is finally gone. One night, he finally hears the end of a broadcast followed by Clair de Lune. He tells the others still nothing but static. The next broadcast is Thursday 2300, and Werner searches for the antenna finally finding it just before the broadcast starts as it rises and unfolds itself. He walks past the house. A day passes before he can get back again and as he approaches the house, Marie-Laure exits. He follows her to the bakery and then watches her emerge again passing him and continuing down the road until the fog swallows her. Neumann One and Neumann Two are sent to repopulate the lines. Volkheimer is sure they will all be called eventually. Werner goes upstairs after eating and nudges a shutter open just far enough to let air in. New orders are posted that forbid even walking the streets without special authority. Werner sees the plane dropping leaflets in French that advise the inhabitants to flee.

Von Rumpel sees a Nuremberg doctor who tells him the tumor in his throat has grown and that he has three or four months left at best. Jean Brignon calls him from France to inform him that Daniel LeBlanc was arrested for conspiracy in January 1941. Next door to Etienne's house, Claude the perfumer informs Von Rumpel that Monsieur LeBlanc was living beside him.

Marie-Laure goes to the bakery for bread as usual, but Madame Ruelle is unusually happy. She tells Marie-Laure to tell Etienne that 'the hour has come' and 'that the mermaids have bleached hair'. Every morning the Americans come closer. In the afternoon, she reads to Etienne. When she leaves the bakery, she heads to Harold Bazin's grotto and wades into the pool to see what treasures the tide has brought. When she emerges, a voice says good morning. Terrified, she asks him what he wants, and he asks her about her father. Overwhelmed with fear, she ducks back into the grotto and locks it. The sergeant major says he has only one question and then he will leave.

Meanwhile, Etienne counts the minutes till her return, and when she doesn't, he panics, thinking the worst with every minute that passes. Finally, he summons his courage and opens the gate, stepping outside for the first time in many months. Outside the grotto gate, Von Rumpel asks her what her father was doing from June when they arrived until January when he was arrested. She crouches against the wall and opens the bread, feeling for the message she knows is there. She chews and swallows the message and tells him that her father built her a model, but left her with nothing but a promise. Then she tells him to keep his word and leave.



Etienne gets to the bakery and Madame Ruelle ushers him outside, reminding him that if the Germans find the message they are all dead. Together they run to the grotto, and find her crouched in the water shivering. Etienne decides it is too dangerous for Marie-Laure to go to the bakery and insists he will go himself and that she must now stay inside. Etienne brings the bread home now, but other than that there is little left to eat. The German's questions roll around in Marie-Laure's mind along with the last message her father sent and she suddenly realizes what he meant. She excuses herself and goes upstairs to confirm the Sea of Flames is hiding in the model of Etienne's house.

Their allies want to know the locations of flak batteries, and to get them, Etienne must wander through town with a notepad and compass. The pressure is on to complete the task before the Germans intern all the men in the city the following day. He reluctantly agrees. Marie-Laure realizes that it is the stone that the German is seeking. She puts it away again when Etienne comes up to tell her he has to go out for an hour, and he promises that when he comes back they will finish the book together. Etienne has already sent the coordinates for the Hotel of Bees air-defense battery, and only needs the bearings of two more. As he nears the bulwark of the ramparts, the German limps to him out of the dark. Marie-Laure wakes to the guns firing and discovers Etienne is still not home. She grabs a chunk of bread and the water is on again, so she fills two buckets she puts in her room, and fills the tub. Later in the day, Claude Levitte triggers the hidden bell inside but despite the lies he tells her, she refuses to open the door. He finally gives up, and she tears off another chunk of bread.

Analysis

Werner sees the young girl's spirit repeatedly afterward and when they reach Saint-Malo, he sees the ocean and without a word simply walks out to it and is fortunate enough to make it to the water's edge and back without setting off land mines. A German colonel asks them to find a resistance network, and describes the broadcasts adding that they are always followed by music for reasons he doesn't understand. They search for days, staying at the Hotel of Bees at night where Werner tries to avoid the specter of the young girl Neumann shot. Werner writes Jutta, telling her about the colors of the sea and his impressions of its size. Werner finally catches the end of a broadcast, and is stunned to recognize the voice he and Jutta used to listen to at night saying the next broadcast is Thursday 2300. The song 'Clare de Lune' follows and he thinks about the consequences of revealing him. When the broadcast is done, he takes off the headphones and reports only static.

By himself, Werner tries to find the source of the broadcasts. He thinks about the fact that he lied, and committed treason, but just thinking about the song is enough to fill him with joyful memories. He finally finds the antenna, and then just walks past with his head down. The next day he returns; imagining how he will introduce himself to the Frenchman, allay his fears and then suddenly the door opens to reveal Marie-Laure instead. He follows her, his heart thudding in his chest as he watches her make her way to the bakery, watching her until she is once again out of his sight. Werner can't stop thinking about her. Werner decides he will hide the next broadcast as well. Werner is



glad that at least he managed to hide her residence, and keep her secret safe. New orders announce that no one is allowed to leave the city, and that night, a plane drops leaflets in French that advise residents to leave for the open country immediately.

Von Rumpel is blindsided when he learns that his life expectancy is at best four months. He attends a dinner afterward, but doesn't eat, counting in his mind the number of sunrises and sunsets he has left. That evening, he learns that the locksmith he was seeking, Daniel LeBlanc, was arrested years ago for conspiracy. Von Rumpel interviews Claude the perfumer, who at first thinks that his information has value, but he underestimates Von Rumpel's patience and finally caves, telling him that Daniel LeBlanc was staying with his useless uncle in number four.

Marie-Laure stops at her private beach in the old kennel after picking up bread from the bakery, and using Harold Bazin's key to get in, she thinks about the war ending, and seeing her father again. She goes to Harold Bazin's little grotto, but this time when she emerges, Von Rumpel is waiting for her. When it seems unlikely that he will let her pass, she squeezes back behind the gate and quickly locks it, trying to make herself small in the back corner. He promises he has only one question.

Etienne waits for her and when she doesn't return when she should, he begins to panic, thinking about everything that could have gone wrong and chastising himself for letting her go at all. He looks out the fifth floor windows, but still there is no sign of her, so heart beating wildly in his chest and head pounding, he summons all of his courage and opens the gate to the outside world.

In the grotto, Marie-Laure crouches and destroys the message by eating it. Von Rumpel keeps asking about her father, what he was doing, and what he left her. Finally, angrily she tells him that he left her with nothing but a stupid model of the town and promises, and left her with a great uncle who feared everything. Then she tells him to go away like he promised her. Something in her anger and exasperation convinces him. She stays there, too fearful to leave until Etienne and Madame Ruelle come looking for her. When they find her, she can't believe that Etienne actually came for her.

The German haunts Marie-Laure's dreams and she is secretly relieved when Etienne tells her she is no longer allowed to go out. She thinks about her father's last message and the truth dawns on her. She goes upstairs and after manipulating the miniature of Etienne's house, the pear-shaped stone falls out. When Madame Ruelle asks Etienne to broadcast the locations of the flak batteries, he tries to avoid the task, but soon realizes he is the only one who can accomplish it. Madame Ruelle pleads with him, citing all of the people he could save and he reluctantly agrees. Marie-Laure looks at the stone and considers showing Etienne, but she fears what he might say when she tells him that she thinks it should be thrown into the ocean.

Just before dawn, Etienne readies himself to go out. Marie-Laure tries to talk him out of it, but he assures her that all she has to do is rest for a while and he will return. Etienne is feeling good about his contribution, glad that he has already managed to send out one of three coordinates. The sun is beginning to rise when the German walks towards



him. When Marie-Laure wakes, Etienne still hasn't returned and his bed is cold. She tries to keep fear from gnawing at her, distracting herself by filling water, and reading. When Claude Levitte triggers her alarm, she calls out, but is too smart to open the door, despite her fear and the lies he tells her. Finally, he gives up and she wonders if he was telling her the truth.

Discussion Question 1

What mistake does Werner make when they first arrive in Saint-Malo that almost gets him killed, and why is he so oblivious of the risks?

Discussion Question 2

What fact does Von Rumpel glean from Claude Levitte, and what tactic does he use to get the information from him?

Discussion Question 3

What happens to Marie-Laure that prompts Etienne to confine her to the house once again and who does the trip for her?

Vocabulary

redolent, cataclysm, conscripted, impervious, declination, benediction, embrasures



Part Ten: 12 August 1944: Chapters 148-165

Summary

Marie-Laure continues to read about the Nautilus on the radio, and Werner listens. He places the headphones over Volkheimer's ears and admits that he began listening to her weeks ago. Now, however, she keeps asking for help, saying he is there and that he will kill her. When she finishes the story, Werner watches as his phantom girl returns. Despite the absolute darkness, he is able to see her clearly as she addresses him, clearly seeing the hole in her forehead. Volkheimer sits with the headphones on while Werner sleeps, and hears the music of Clair de Lune. He wakes Werner, and then constructs a shelter of masonry, pulling Werner behind it before tossing a grenade near the ruined staircase. A hole is made and before long they are both out. Volkheimer goes for food, urging Werner to go his own way as well, knowing he will try to save her. Werner runs to her home.

Etienne is held at Fort National with dozens of others. There are no comforts, blankets, pillows, decent latrine or food. Soon, Marie-Laure is reading the last few pages, occasionally still hearing the German's voice call out in frustration. Marie-Laure has been in the attic for five days, and had no water for a day and a half. She hadn't eaten in two days, but still hasn't opened the last can she has saved. She decides she will begin broadcasting music until he finds her.

Von Rumpel doubts that the Sea of Flames is actually in Etienne's house. As he sits there, he hears a voice call out. A Corporal asks him if the house is clear, and he assures him that he is almost done. Von Rumpel thinks about his daughters, and in his mind can hear one singing until it resolves into music. He hears a voice as well, talking about coal. Following it, he finds the wardrobe and is about to investigate further when bells ring above and below him, startling him. His candle falls and rolls toward the curtains. Below, Werner goes in carefully, searching floor by floor, stopping at Marie-Laure's room to drink from one of the buckets of water. Von Rumpel enters the room behind him, pointing his gun in Werner's direction. When the barrel of his pistol drops momentarily, he takes his chance and lunges.

Marie-Laure hears a scuffle and then a shot. She can tell that the footsteps are lighter now. They can hear each other breathing, and he calls out in French, "Are you there?" He continues to speak to her in his limited French until she opens the wardrobe. Marie-Laure is frightened, but grateful that he saved her from the German soldier. They sit together, talking like old friends and share her last can of food – peaches! She shows him Etienne's transmitter and phonograph, and they talk about Captain Nemo. Werner finds a book of birds and tells her what he sees as they wait for the cease fire at noon. They both doze. When the time comes, he takes her out and she leads him to the grotto one last time. She goes into the gate, takes the wooden house out of her pocket and



places it in the ocean, asking Werner if it is submerged. He assures her it is, and then walks her as closely as he dares towards safety. They say goodbye reluctantly, and reaching for his hand, she presses something in it. He stands and watches her until she is out of sight and opening his hand, sees the small key.

Later that evening, Madame Ruelle finds her and they share confiscated chocolate, holding hands. In the morning, Etienne is freed and he holds Marie-Laure in his arms. He tells her that they'll go to Paris. Werner is captured just one mile south of Saint-Malo. He is fed, but is unable to keep anything down. On September first, Werner is unable to get up. He is driven to a place where for a week he is given fluids and medication. In his hand, his fingers work the mechanism of the little house, opening and closing the panels. He puts it back in his bag, and lies there as his life plays out in front of his eyes. An American soldier watches from a distance as a young boy leaves the sick tent and head to the trees. He calls out stop and halt, but the boy continues until his foot finds a landmine and he disappears.

Analysis

Werner continues to listen to Marie-Laure's broadcasts until she starts adding that someone is in the house and he will kill her if he finds her. Werner can't believe that he saved her only to allow her to be killed by someone else. When Marie-Laure finishes the story, the silence is absolute. Werner sees the young Viennese girl float down from the ceiling. She sits on the rubble and recites for him the crimes of her existence, counting them off on her fingers. Volkheimer has resigned himself to their coming death, and sits under the headphones for no reason other than Werner placed them there. When Clare de Lune plays, he feels a glimmer of hope. He decides that blowing their way free is survivable and sets it up. It works and soon they are both free. Volkheimer tells Werner to go ahead while he searches for food. Werner runs for number 4 rue Vauborel, finally feeling the sense of purpose his instructors had claimed he was lacking.

Etienne begs to be let go, explaining that his niece is alone and blind but his jailers ignore him. He thinks about his childhood and the time he spent with Marie-Laure. Marie-Laure continues to read, coming to the conclusion that she will decide what to do with the Sea of Flames when she is done reading. She wonders if her story is bringing comfort to her great-uncle or anyone else listening. After days in the attic, Marie-Laure decides it is time to make a stand. She starts a record, turns up the volume and then sits swinging her legs with a knife in her hand thinking come and get me, the stone still safe in the house in her pocket.

Von Rumpel is ready to give up. Not only does he wonder if the Sea of Flames ever left Paris, but now he is beginning to wonder if it ever existed to begin with. He hears a Corporal clearing houses call out and he speaks with him long enough to learn that they are giving up the city. Von Rumpel drifts in and out, thinking about his daughters, their visions so intense that he can even hear them. He also hears a voice in French, talking about coal. He is about to uncover its source when twin bells chime, causing him to jerk backwards. He drops his lit candle and below him the door opens.



Werner enters, and goes up floor by floor until a bucket of water stops him. He drinks until a voice causes him to turn. Von Rumpel is pale and infirm looking, but when he smiles at Werner, Werner assumes they are comrades and that they are both seeking the same thing. Von Rumpel thinks so too, but tells Werner that only one of them can have it. He points his weapon at Werner, but a noise distracts him just long enough for Werner to lunge.

Marie-Laure can tell that the person coming is not the German she has been hiding from. Werner approaches the panel. All around them the world wakes and begins the day, but for Werner and Marie-Laure, there is only this moment. "Are you there?" he calls out softly in French. Werner talks to her, using his limited French, and finally she slides the wardrobe door open, and he helps her out. He asks about the science broadcasts he and Jutta used to listen to, and she tells him that it was her grandfather. They open the last can together, and the air is filled with the smell of peaches. They share it like friends and sit talking and waiting for the cease fire. Werner tries to remember everything about her, wishing they could just hide out in that house for the rest of their lives. When the time comes to go, neither one wants to leave the other. She goes one last time to the grotto, and places the wooden house with the stone inside into the water, asking Werner to be sure it is covered. They leave and he walks her as close to a checkpoint as he dares. She asks Werner how she will find him, and he tells her he doesn't know. She presses something into his hand and walks away. It takes everything he has to watch her leave, and when she is out of sight, he sees the small iron key in his hand. Madame Ruelle finds her and stays with her until the evening when Etienne and the other men are finally freed. He holds Marie-Laure close, telling her that they will go to Paris and she can show him the sights.

Werner is captured soon after leaving Saint-Malo. He asks about Marie-Laure, but can find no one who can tell him if she made it out. They feed him, but he becomes ill, unable to keep anything down. When he is no longer able to walk, he is taken to a sick tent where the dead and dying lie. His hand manipulates the catches on the small house, marveling still at its construction as he thinks about Marie-Laure, Jutta, Volkheimer, Frederick and incidents from his past. An American watches as Werner totters out of the sick tent, and in a delirium of fever, walks to the edge of the clearing and steps on a landmine, disappearing.

Discussion Question 1

What things does the phantom girl Werner sees over and over again tick off on her fingers as she sits amongst the rubble with him and Volkheimer?

Discussion Question 2

What conflict does Werner deal with where Marie-Laure is concerned and how does he resolve it, if at all?



Discussion Question 3

What happens to the Sea of Flames after Werner and Marie-Laure leave Etienne's house and what motivates the characters who handle it?

Vocabulary

asphyxiated, apocalyptic, inveigled, maelstrom, coalesces, embrasures, maniacal, vindictive



Part Eleven: 1945: Chapters 166-167

Summary

Frau Elena and four girls including Jutta Pfennig, who is now fifteen, are moved to Berlin from Essen to work in a factory for machine parts. They work ten hour days, with only one day off in seven disassembling and stacking usable metal to be hauled away. Food is scarce, death is everywhere and rumors fly. Most of the metals salvaged sit waiting on railways unused. By the fall they are back in Zollverein and it is there that two letters arrive announcing Werner's death in two different locations. Atrocities occur and Frau Elena and the girls are not unaffected. The Russians find them, use them, and leave after the youngest fires two shots into the ceiling.

Etienne takes Marie-Laure back to the same apartment in Paris that she and her father shared. Together, they search papers, listen to broadcasts, and wait for trains in the hopes that her father will be found and will return. He calls everyone he can think of that might help; and writes letters to even more. Marie-Laure sleeps little, starting at phantom shells. Dr. Geffard often waits and sits with them at the Gare d'Austerlitz, a reminder of how things used to be. Etienne takes her to the museum where the director assures her that they continue to search for her father as well. They promise to continue helping with housing and education, but the stone is not mentioned. Spring and summer pass with no sign of her father. In the fall Marie-Laure makes the decision to go to school.

Analysis

Frau Elena lives with Jutta Pfennig and three other girls above an abandoned printing press in Berlin. They burn misprinted dictionaries stacked in crates to keep warm and eating is a balance between factory canteen lunches and ration lines at night. One girl, Claudia, stops talking as a result of deprivation and the constant horrors of death. Communication stops and Jutta thinks about Werner. She learns of his death in the fall at Zollverein. She dreams about him sometimes. Life continues to surprise. Claudia finds a box of pastries one day and brings it home to share with the rest. The sugar leaves them giddy.

The Russians find them too, however, and Frau Elena counsels them to stay calm, promising to let them take her first so they'll be gentler with the others. The officer sits outside while his young charges take their turns with the girls. Only Hannah screams. Years later, Jutta will remember the names spoken by the officer as he took his turn last, and wonders if they are names of the men he'd lost.

Etienne and Marie-Laure return to Paris, renting the same flat she and her father lived in. They search for him using every method they can think of, and wait as countless trains come in, but he does not return. Marie-Laure is assured by the museum that they



are doing all they can as well, but no one asks her about the Sea of Flames. Spring brings Berlin's surrender and those who return are so malnourished that Marie-Laure feels as though every mouthful she eats is a betrayal. To her it seems that those who do return have been in a time warp that aged them rapidly. Etienne tries to prepare her that they might never know what happened to her father. The summer passes and one day Marie-Laure announces that she'd like to go to school.

Discussion Question 1

What actions are some mothers taking to keep their daughters safe, and what do you think motivated the Russians to behave in the manner that they did?

Discussion Question 2

What advice does Frau Elena give to Jutta and the other girls when the Russians come, and what sacrifice does she make on their behalf?

Discussion Question 3

By what methods do Etienne and Marie-Laure search for Daniel LeBlanc, and what observations does Marie-Laure make regarding those who return from the war?

Vocabulary

vengeance, comprehension, endearments, incessantly, repatriation, spontaneously



Part Twelve: 1974: Chapters 168-177 and Part Thirteen: 2014: Chapter 178

Summary

Frank Volkheimer is fifty one years old and lives in a third floor walk-up in Pforzheim, Germany. To sustain himself, he repairs and installs TV antennas. He gets a package from the VSO in Berlin and inside are photographs of objects that he is being asked to identify if he can. He doesn't recognize the canvas soldier's bag, or the little house, but he knows the notebook instantly as belonging to Werner. His bag had been collected at a U.S. Army p.o.w. processing camp in Bernay, France in 1944.

Jutta marries Albert Wette and together they have a son named Max who is now six. She teaches algebra and he is an accountant. Her life is organized and comfortable until she gets a knock on the door and a large man asks her if her maiden name was Pfennig. He follows her in, accepting Albert's invitation to dinner and they sit at the table and talk. He tells them that they were together at school, and then afterward in the field in Russia, Ukraine, Poland, Austria, and then France where he last saw him in Saint-Malo. After Volkheimer leaves, Jutta puts Max to bed and Albert retires to his trains. That night, Jutta looks through Werner's things, and once Max is done with school, she takes him and goes to Saint-Malo. On the second day, she finds the house, and beside her Max excitedly tells her that the house opens.

As a doctoral student, Marie-Laure travels to Bimini and Bora Bora and has collected snails on three different continents. Etienne and Marie-Laure travel while they can, going to Sardinia and even to Scotland where they road on the top of a London airport bus. Etienne died at the age of eighty-two in the bathtub, leaving her a considerable inheritance. They never learned the truth of what happened to her father beyond that he'd been a prisoner in 1942 in a labor camp called Breitenau. A camp doctor in Kassel, Germany kept records of a Daniel LeBlanc who in 1943 contracted influenza, but there was nothing learned beyond that.

Marie-Laure still lives in the same apartment she grew up in and has only had two intimate relationships – one was with a visiting scientist, and the second was with John, a Canadian she met in graduate school. Hélène is the product of that relationship and is now nineteen and an aspiring violinist. One July evening, a woman arrives, wanting to discuss a model house with her. Jutta gives Marie-Laure the little house, and Marie-Laure reveals that her grandfather's was the voice Jutta and Werner listened to as a child. Marie-Laure promises to send her the last remaining vinyl album of those science broadcasts for Max. Back at the hotel, Max folds paper airplanes while Jutta calls her husband. Marie-Laure sits for some time, wondering why he went back for the house. She wonders if he found the stone. Finally, she opens the house and inside is the iron key.



From two hundred miles deep, one crystal mingles with the others, five atoms equidistant from each other. Ions pass before it finally finds itself in the hands of man, cut and polished and then, no larger than a chestnut, it is covered in barnacles and cloaked in algae. Snails crawl over it, and it stirs.

Frederick lives outside West Berlin, still cared for by his mother. An envelope arrives for Frederick but his mind is gone. His mother opens it, and shows him the bird photos inside. Later, on the deck, an owl lands and looks at Werner.

In 2014, Michel takes his grandmother Marie-Laure through the maze. His twelfth birthday is coming, and they talk about her twelfth. He plays a video game beside her, and she thinks about electromagnetic waves that travel in and out of his handheld game machine just as so many more much cross the air in text conversations; cell phone calls; television shows and wonders if souls flew through the air the same way, audible if only we knew how to listen. Michel walks her home again, promising to see her the following week.

Analysis

Frank Volkheimer lives in Pforzheim after the war, repairing and installing TV antennas for a living. He lives alone, works alone, and often feels loneliness like a second skin. His mind rehashes the faces of the men he killed in the war, and he feels as though he's killed them again and again. He gets a package from Veterans Services Office in Berlin, asking him if he can identify any of the objects that were a bag labeled as having come from a man in his unit. Frank immediately recognizes the notebook and knows the bag belonged to Werner. They are hoping to deliver these items to next of kin. Frank thinks about Werner, what he could have been.

Jutta marries and has a young son named Max by the time Volkheimer arrives on her doorstep with the bag belonging to Werner in one hand. He confirms her identity and she invites him in. He explains who he is, telling her that he and Werner had spent most of the war together. He tells Jutta that the last time he saw Werner was in Saint-Malo in France where he thinks that Werner might have fallen in love. While Jutta absorbs what he's said, Frank goes out to the patio with Max and helps him with his airplanes. Albert tells Jutta he loves her.

Volkheimer leaves and Jutta sits alone with Werner's duffel bag. She opens newspaper to find a small model house and sets it aside. An envelope contains the notebook she sent him so many years ago, and she pages through it, memories flooding back. An envelope near the back is labelled 'For Frederick' in Werner's hand. Albert says goodnight, and still she sits thinking. When her grades are in and Max is done with school, Jutta decides to take Max with her to Saint-Malo. She sees the ocean and remembers how Werner described it to her. On the second morning she approaches a man in the museum and asks her if he knows anything about the house. He looks at it, and locking up, walks her to a life sized version of the house she is holding. He offers to give her the address of the woman who lived there.



Marie-Laure earns her doctorate and manages a Museum of Natural History laboratory which contributes significantly to the study of mollusks. She doesn't collect in the way that Dr. Geffard did, but instead gets pleasure from simply being around the living creatures, no matter where they are. Together, she and Etienne manage to trace Daniel LeBlanc as far as a sub camp in Kassel where a doctor documented that a Daniel LeBlanc contracted influenza in 1943. Throughout her life, Marie-Laure has had only two serious romances. One lasted only briefly, and the other is a Canadian named John who is father to their daughter H el ene who is now nineteen and self-possessed. She lives with her mother, but her father joins them both for lunch each Friday. Marie-Laure still can't smell boiled turnip without her stomach churning, or wear shoes that are too large, but she still counts storm drains. If asked, she would probably admit that for portions of each day, she is happy. When a woman with white hair stops in to see her about a model house, she is thrown. Jutta introduces herself and Max, and they talk briefly about Werner. Jutta gives her back the house. Long after Jutta leaves, she finally opens the house, not really sure what she will find inside, if anything. An old iron key drops out into her hand. The Sea of Flames is once more part of the sea, covered in barnacles, draped with algae.

Frederick lives with his mother, oblivious of most of what occurs around him, although his mother still holds out hope. He sits and draws spiral after spiral, or sits and stares outside. When Werner's letter comes for him, she puts it on the table in front of him, for a moment entertaining the notion that it will be the thing that snaps him out of this. It isn't however. Later she opens it, and finds the photos of birds he sent. She puts them in front of him, but can't say if he sees them. Later an owl visits and for a moment, she wonders if her son sees it.

Marie-Laure lives long enough to get to know her grandson Michel, and to see the century turn. Michel walks with her through the hedge maze in the gardens, and on to the gazebo at the top. Michel is excited that his twelfth birthday is imminent, and he reminds Marie-Laure that his mother had promised him a moped. He sits, pressing against her, playing a computer game with his friend Jacques until his character dies. She sits there thinking about how Etienne used to describe the electromagnetic waves to her, and imagines them, amazed to consider that now there are perhaps a million times more than existed in his day. It isn't hard for her to imagine that souls could travel the same way, and that Etienne, Madame Manec, her father and Werner might be part of the sky now, like terns or starlings in great flocks. Michel walks her to her building, and leaves, promising to see her the following week.

Discussion Question 1

How did the war affect Frank Volkheimer, and what purpose does he find and why?



Discussion Question 2

What fragments of Etienne remain with Marie-Laure, and how does she interpret his explanations?

Discussion Question 3

What is the life cycle of the Sea of Flames and how did it affect the various people who owned it in its lifetime?

Vocabulary

parabolas, meticulously, monotonous, unintelligible, deficient, incomprehensibly, dimorphism



Characters

Marie-Laure LeBlanc

When Marie-Laure is sixteen years old, she lives with her father at Number 4 rue Vauborel. She kneels over a table that contains a miniature replica of the entire area which he built for her, remembering every road, staircase, house and rampart. Her fingers trace around the model, acting as the eyes she no longer has.

Marie-Laure is a tall girl with freckles who lost her sight rapidly at the age of six. One of the last things she sees is the Natural Museum of History in Paris. When Marie-Laure and her father are forced to leave Paris because of the war, they head to her great uncle Etienne's home in Saint-Malo. They hope to wait out the worst of the war and return. Meanwhile, Marie-Laure is terrified of every new thing, but does her best to be brave for her father. When he leaves on a trip that he doesn't really want to take but has to, he is arrested and sent to a work camp. Marie-Laure sinks into a deep depression when he doesn't return, staying in her room, eating only small amounts and only seldomly. Finally, Madame Manec takes her outside. It is Marie-Laure's first time out since their arrival and when Madame Manec takes her to the ocean, Marie-Laure is overwhelmed by the sound, the smells, and the myriad of creatures at the shoreline. After that, they go to the beach frequently, and Marie-Laure begins doing rounds with Madame Manec as well, delivering food and supplies to those in need. One of those is Harold Bazin who is so taken with Marie-Laure that he gives her an old iron key to what used to be an old kennel under the stone walls. Now the water enters and small sea creatures make their home in this safe grotto, and it becomes her favorite place. She spends as much time as she can, collecting snails and other sea creatures that share the grotto.

As the war heats up, Marie-Laure is drawn into the resistance movement. Madame Manec and a group of like minded women do what they can to help those in need, and disrupt the enemy in any way they can. Marie-Laure helps Madame Manec and they give each other code names. Marie-Laure calls herself the Whelk. Madame Manec dies after a bout of pneumonia, and Marie-Laure is left with only uncle Etienne. At first, they both grieve her passing, but then they decide to continue what she started in her honor. Marie-Laure already knows the protocols established and offers to pick up messages baked into loaves of bread from the bakery for Etienne to broadcast at night with the transceiver he is not supposed to have. Marie-Laure has a close call with a German soldier after one such pick up, and she manages to get to the grotto and lock herself in before eating the message in the bread. The German is looking for a diamond called the Sea of Flames that Marie-Laure's father secreted out of Paris for the Museum. When Etienne finally finds Marie-Laure, he is angry with himself for ever letting her run this errand and swears that despite his agoraphobia, he will do the rest himself. It is only a short time afterwards that Etienne is asked for specific coordinates of the German batteries. When he is out mapping the coordinates to send, he is arrested and Marie-



Laure is alone. She finds the Sea of Flames secreted in the small model of Etienne's house.

The same German soldier who confronted her earlier comes to Etienne's house, searching for the stone that he hopes will heal him, but a young German soldier named Werner saves Marie-Laure from him after he hears her broadcasting fearfully. She shows him the grotto, and leaves the Sea of Flames in the little house in the water there. He helps her get to a checkpoint where she can get help and she presses the key into his palm. She is eventually reunited with Etienne. Together, they return to the same apartment in Paris that she grew up in, and spend their time and energy searching for her father, but he never returns. Marie-Laure returns to school, and later works at the Museum like her father did. She has a daughter named Hélène who later gives birth to a grandson named Max. She never forgets Werner, and what he did for her. His sister Jutta shows up one day with the little house in her hand, and when Marie-Laure opens it, the little iron key falls out into her hand.

Werner Pfennig

Werner grew up in a place called Zollverein, a coalmining complex on the outside of Essen, Germany. He and Jutta, his younger sister, are raised at Children's House which is an orphanage on Viktoriastrasse in Zollverein, Germany. He was busy as a child, always asking questions, including the world's greatest questions that are nearly impossible to answer. Some days, Werner takes Jutta in a wagon he created for her from old parts. They hunt for berries or other food cast offs, like peels or green, in garbage cans. Before they return, he shows his sister the shaft down which their father died. Werner is small for his age of seven and has a sweet and high voice. His ears stick out and his hair is as white as snow. His eyes are sky blue. Werner is incredibly intelligent, able to absorb much of what he reads and hears; he can coax food from those who have little themselves, and loves his younger sister.

Werner has a brilliant and logical mind; as a child, he teaches himself the basics of electronics, fixing a radio that they can listen to. He and his sister Jutta find a French broadcast about science, and sit rapt as the voice opens their minds. Werner soon has a reputation for his electronics ability, asked by neighbors and friends to help with repairs. He soon comes to the attention of a man named Herr Rudolph Siedler after fixing his radio, and is invited to write an entrance exam to the National Political Institute of Education. He is accepted, and soon gains notoriety there as well when he is singled out for a special assignment after classes. His challenge is to create a transceiver that will help to locate illegal radio broadcasts. To everyone's surprise, he manages to do so. His commandant calls him in and changes his age on his application, making him two years older so that he can put what he has created into practice. At the age of sixteen, Werner becomes a private and spends his time in a truck with three other men hunting other broadcasters. When he finds them, his compatriots kill them and then he is sent in to salvage any worthwhile equipment.



At the age of eighteen Werner is in Saint Malo, still looking for illegal broadcasters. He inadvertently hears Marie-Laure broadcasting and this time he hides it from his fellow soldiers, listening to the rebroadcast of the same shows he and Jutta listened to as children. It is like a sign. He waits for her to broadcast again. The Hotel of Bees is hit, and collapses on top of Werner and two of his fellow German soldiers. One dies, but Volkheimer and Werner are stuck for days before finally finding a way out. While there, they listen as Marie-Laure broadcasts music, and then her fear when a German soldier enters the house, sure he is there to kill her. By then, Werner has confessed his omission, but Volkheimer now has a new appreciation for life, and once free, he encourages Werner to save her if he can. He does, killing the soldier and helping Marie-Laure to safety. Before she leaves him, she takes him to the grotto where she leaves the little copy of Etienne's house with the Sea of Flames safely inside. She gives the key to Werner when she says goodbye. He is caught soon afterward, not far from Saint-Malo. He becomes sick, and in a disoriented state, he leaves the sick tent and walks into a land mine, ending his life. His things are kept until after the war at which time the authorities do their best to return them to relatives. His belongings are reduced to a bag, a small wooden house and the notebook he wrote his ideas in.

Reinhold von Rumpel

Reinhold is a Sergeant Major who is forty one years of age and has a pale complexion. His lips are red and moist, and he has two daughters which he has been away from for nine months. The oldest named Veronika is a girl of resolve and dedication which she shares in her letters to him. His wife suffers his absences in silence. Reinhold's specialty is diamonds. He is able to polish and facet any stone given him, and able to spot a fake often with little more than a glance. In Munich, he studied crystallography and in Antwerp he later apprenticed as a polisher. Before the war, he was a gemologist but now his job has expanded to include taking possession of treasures that police have confiscated, and then assess, pack and label each into crates that are then loaded into a train car where they wait to be summoned by the high command.

He enjoys his job immensely, handling and packing treasures that are breathtaking. In his travels, he comes across literature that describes the Sea of Flames, and becomes obsessed with finding the elusive diamond. He manages to locate all three of the fakes that were created to hide the gem and its travels, but the real stone eludes him.

He sees a doctor who informs him that he has cancer and that even with treatments, the prognosis is grim. He becomes fixated on finding the Sea of Flames so that (legend has it) it will heal him. He traces the stone to Daniel LeBlanc, and then traces his journey to Etienne's home in Saint-Malo. By the time he gets there, however, the shelling has gone on for days and most buildings have been destroyed. Etienne's home is still standing, and he takes that as proof that the stone exists, but before he can actually get his hands on it, Werner comes to Marie-Laure's aid and kills Reinhold before Reinhold kills him.



Etienne LeBlanc

Marie-Laure's great-uncle, Etienne is an agoraphobic. He never leaves his home in Saint-Malo where he lives with Madame Manec. When war reaches France, Etienne welcomes Daniel and Marie-Laure LeBlanc into his home to stay with them until it is safe to return. Daniel tells Marie-Laure that her great uncle is seventy-six percent crazy. Etienne was with his brother when his brother died in the war and it was said that he 'got a bit of gas in the head'. After he returned home, he saw things that weren't there, was plagued by dead men who walked out of walls, and hasn't left the house in twenty years. Sometimes he stays in his room for days at a time, and other times he is able to come down.

Madame Manec

Madame Manec is an efficient and brisk woman. At seventy six years of age, she is still able to generate the joy and excitement of a young girl, as she not only looks after Daniel LeBlanc's daughter, but also heads the Old Ladies' Resistance Club which does whatever it can to disrupt or cause discomfort to their enemy. She cooks and bakes with more than just competence, able to turn even the most simple ingredients into a feast.

Madame Manec has worked in Etienne's home since Etienne was just a child.

Frederick

Frederick is from Berlin and his father is an ambassador's assistant. Frederick has a fascination with birds of all kinds, using field glasses to record the number and kind of birds he has sighted. When he attends the National Political Institute of Education, he is assigned the bunk directly above Werner and they become fast friends. Werner quickly learns that Frederick operates on a different level. He wears pants that are too big at the waist and the hems are coming undone. His eyes are intense, although vague and he seems interested in little other than birds. Frederick is generally so preoccupied with birds that it falls to Werner to wash his mess tin, share his homework, and even polish his shoes.

After a short time, a student is selected to choose the weakest link in their group. The second time it happens, Frederick is selected. While he manages to run the distance to the commandant before the rest catch up with him the first time, the second time he is not so fortunate and the student who selected him as the weakest is given a rubber hose with which to beat him bloody. Finally, it stops and the commandant asks Frederick if he is the weakest one, and this time he says no.

Frederick takes Werner home to Berlin over January recess to meet his mother and to show Werner his prized possession - an Audubon book of birds. Frederick dons glasses, surprising Werner and tells him how he memorized the eye exams; and had his binoculars made with his particular prescription. Frederick knew at an early age that his



life was not his own. They return to school. A prisoner is brought to the school one day and secured to a stake in the snow. The students were told to each douse the prisoner with a bucket of cold water, but when Frederick's turn comes, he flatly refuses. That night, while Werner works in the lab, the rest of the students beat Frederick almost to death. When he is finally able to go home, Frederick is not able to do anything on his own. He is confined to a wheelchair, cannot feed or dress himself, and requires help for the rest of his life. His mother holds out hope that there is more beneath the surface, but it seems unlikely.

Daniel LeBlanc

Daniel is Marie-Laure's father. He is a dedicated man who dotes on his daughter, doing all he can to minimize the difficulties she experienced when as a young girl she became blind. He constructed a miniature of the area of town they lived in so that she could learn it well enough to get around on her own. Daniel is a locksmith at the Natural Museum of History, keeping track of hundreds of locks and their keys. When war is imminent and at their doorstep, Daniel is entrusted to transport a gem known as the 'Sea of Flames' to take to Saint-Malo for safekeeping. He takes his daughter there and remains with her long enough to create another miniature of the area for her. Then, he takes a trip to a museum during which he is arrested and sent to a labor camp. He writes to Marie-Laure frequently to tell her he is fine and will see her soon, but that day never comes. As much as anyone can figure out later, Daniel succumbed to influenza.

Jutta Pfennig

Jutta is Werner's sister. They are together in Zollverein's Children's House in Germany. She and her brother like to draw, and she would sneak out of her room at night to lie on her stomach with him on his cot and draw. She is the gifted of the two of them, despite being two years younger than her brother Werner. Jutta spends the war years making socks for soldiers while her brother is gone. Frau Elena does all she can to keep her charges safe, but the Russians find them and Jutta and the others are raped.

When the war ends, Jutta marries a man named Albert Wette, settles down, and together they have a son named Max. When he is six, and Jutta is thirty seven years old, a man comes to the door to give her Werner's belongings. He tells her that he was Werner's commanding officer and tells her a bit about Werner and that he believes Werner fell in love while he was in Saint-Malo. She tracks Marie-Laure down, and returns the small house that was in Werner's belongings.

Frank Volkheimer

Frank is a staff sergeant and his massive size makes him duck beneath beams as he comes downstairs to the cellar. As a boy of seventeen, he went to the National Political Institute of Education where his size earns him the nickname 'Giant'. By the time he is barely twenty, he already looks twice that age.



Frank works with Werner Pfennig throughout the war, riding around in a vehicle with the sole purpose of locating and eliminating any illegal broadcasts. When the Hotel of Bees is hit by shelling, burying him and his men, Frank gives up, believing that they are going to die. He is almost catatonic until Werner puts the headphones over his ears while he takes a break to sleep, and Frank hears Clare de Lune played. With renewed hope, he manages to blast a way out, and he and Werner make it to safety.

Frank survives the war, and works installing and repairing television antennas. He lives alone, and has little enthusiasm for life, often seeing the men he killed during the war. When he is contacted regarding the ownership of some possessions that were unclaimed, he recognizes them as belonging to Werner, and returns them to Jutta personally.

Frau Elena

Elena is from Alsace where she was a Protestant nun. Though lackadaisical where supervision of her charges is concerned, she has a weakness for sherry, and often falls asleep still standing up. She is very fond of the charges in her care, and some nights even tells them stories about her childhood, letting them stay up late.

Elena is dedicated to the children she looks after, and continues to do so throughout the war, despite the dangers. When she and the girls are found by the Russians, she counsels them ensuring that despite being raped, they would survive the event. They do, largely because she offers herself up to them first, taking some of their most aggressive behavior before they get to her girls.



Symbols and Symbolism

D-Day

The name given to the day that the war officially began.

Sea of Flames

What the guide at the Museum of Natural History told Marie-Laure and the rest of his tour group was behind a locked door, and twelve others beyond it. The guide tells them that hundreds of years earlier, a prince had found a blue stone from a dry riverbed and on his way back to his palace, was attacked and killed – stabbed in the heart. They took everything but the stone, still clutched in his hand. After ten days of unconsciousness, he suddenly wakes - the stone still in his hand. The sultan's jewelers tell him that the stone is the largest diamond they'd ever seen. The stone is carefully cut and called the Sea of Flames and placed in the prince's crown. A priest tells him the stone is cursed, as was whoever kept it though they would live forever, but if it were thrown back the curse would be lifted. The stone is one hundred and thirty-three carats.

State Youth

As members of this group, youth join together and fashion spears, carry slingshots and rehearse the mechanics of ambush. When membership becomes mandatory, all boys learn parade maneuvers, adhere to rigorous fitness standards and learn that all life revolves around the glory of sacrifice for country and competition. They are taught to be faithful, to fight bravely and if they die, to do so laughing.

Roneo Machine

A machine that helps to make pamphlets.

Opel Blitz

A three ton truck, capable of cross country travel; it is the vehicle used by Werner and his team to identify and eliminate contraband radios in the region.

Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg

The name given to the men who are searching the continent for paintings, hidden libraries, or prayer scrolls.



National Political Institutes of Education

The entrance exams for this institute are held in Essen which is located about eighteen miles to the south of Zollverein. One hundred recruits cram into a dance hall all hoping to enter one of the most elite schools in the world. Exams take eight days in total and only the best are selected. The school is like a castle with several stone buildings with rust colored roofs tile located below hills that shelter them. A small river twists around the athletics fields and the air is clean and free of dust.

Old Ladies' Resistance Club

A group of women led by Madame Manec who do what little they can to disrupt the efforts of the German invaders in Saint-Malo.

One Ordinary Loaf

The code name for the loaf of bread that Marie-Laure was supposed to ask for at the bakery and then would get a loaf of day old bread with a message baked inside for her great-uncle to transmit.

Twenty Thousand Leagues Under The Sea

This is one of two books in braille that Marie-Laure is given by her father. She is forced to leave it behind in Paris when they flee, but her great-uncle Etienne replaces it for her and she reads it aloud to him until he is arrested and then reads the rest over the radio to anyone who would listen.



Settings

Saint-Malo

Considered the last stronghold of the Germans, it is a city surrounded by water on four sides. The link to France is little more than a spit of sand, a causeway, a bridge.

Hotel of Bees (L'hotel des Abeilles)

Located on the rue de la Crosse, the formerly cheerful hotel has twenty one guest rooms, breathtaking views and a huge fireplace in the lobby. It was once the home of a rich privateer who turned from raiding to studying bees outside Saint-Malo. The lintels above the door contain crests with bumblebees and the fountain in the courtyard is shaped like a hive. Huge frescoes in the upper rooms sport bees the size of children and above a tub, a single queen nine feet long graces the ceiling.

National

The name of the island fortress off of Saint-Malo where three hundred and eighty Frenchmen are being held prisoner.

Zollverein

A four thousand acre complex located outside Essen, Germany, it is an area of steel, anthracite, smokestacks and locomotives.

National Museum of Natural History

The museum at which Marie-Laure's father works in the key room, doling out keys for all of the locks in the museum each day, and collecting them again at the end.

Children's House

Located on Viktoriastrasse, Children's House is an orphanage where Werner and his younger sister Jutta are raised. Children's House is a two story, clinker-brick building filled with crying and coughing children and newborns.

Viktoriastrasse

The street on which the Children's House orphanage is situated.



Pit Nine

The place from which Werner's father disappeared.

Evreux

The name of the town that the museum's director gives to Marie-Laure's father along with the name of a man who will help them. When they arrive, they find that restaurants are either filled to capacity or boarded up; there is no service of mail and recent newspapers are nowhere to be found.

Hotel-Dieu

The hotel in Saint-Malo where lamps are lit all night despite blackout regulations, and German officers are seen to come and go at all hours, pulling up pants and tucking in shirts as they go.

Schulpforta

The name of the school that Werner and Frederick attend.

Altaussee

An Austrian village in which all the treasures being confiscated by the Germans is being stored in a salt mine.

Breitenau

The prison in which the French police believe that Marie-Laure's father is being held.

Pforzheim

The city in Germany where Frank Volkheimer lives at the age of fifty one.



Themes and Motifs

Ordinary Fear vs Agoraphobia

Ordinary fear is something that we all face in life at one time or another. Some may suffer from a fear that is learned or copied from a parent or caregiver throughout childhood such as a fear of rodents or spiders, a fear of strangers or closed in spaces. Other people may suffer from a fear of the unknown, or fear of dying, and still others fear failure. The simple truth is that life is full of things to fear: loud noises, surprise encounters and even something as simple as a black cat crossing certain people's path can cause unreasonable fear. These are all manageable fears however. They are fears that can be overcome and, with patience, eliminated. Some fears, however, are not so easily assuaged.

Agoraphobia is one such fear. This is the fear of outdoors. It is a fear that is as overwhelming as it is all encompassing. It prevents the sufferer from leaving their own home, and in some cases, even their own room. Just the thought of doing so alone can bring on sweating, shaking, visual impairments and even an immobility that attacks the limbs as the sufferer gets close to leaving. Those affected by agoraphobia are unable to shop for themselves, attend school, go to work, or attend a concert. Often the only social contacts sufferers have are with family, spouses or children, that is of course providing that the sufferer is fortunate enough to have that much of a personal network in place. Agoraphobia can attack a person at any age, and last for as long as a lifetime or as short as an episode. Psychiatry and counseling can help, but the road to recovery is a long and difficult one.

The Overall Cost of the War Machine

Often described as the war machine, this term encompasses the drive, cost and fallout of the mechanics of war on a country and its' people. When war began in Germany, many sacrifices were made. Young men from all walks of life were pulled from their homes and told it was their privilege to serve their country. They were taken as children, trained at an early age. Boys became Hitler's Youth, carrying slingshots and fashion spears, and rehearsing ambushes. They gravitate together, calling out Heil Hitler, and brag about the kind of training with rifles they are being groomed for. By the time they reach adulthood, they are fully fledged soldiers, ready to do anything for the cause, including turning in their friends and neighbors for not becoming fully invested in Hitler's plan. The war machine ground through the country's food and resources, leaving people with little or nothing to feed themselves and their families.

Women and girls were not exempt either. They were collected and taken to factories where they made socks in the thousands of pairs for the soldiers, told they were doing their part. When socks were no longer required, they were sent to abandoned factories to salvage metals and load them on rail cars to be taken and reused elsewhere. They



worked hard, and long for little or nothing beyond the privilege of waking up to do it all again. The brightest of the children are screened and then taken for special schooling like Werner whose electronics ability kept him from the fighting of the front, but had him signing the death warrants of every amateur radio operator he found with the equipment he developed. The war machine costs any country much more than money. It takes lives, futures, hopes, dreams, childhoods, food, and so much more.

Sea of Flames

Throughout history, there have been many items that have been said to have carried the power to heal, or destroy; bring good or evil; riches or poverty. This story deals with a pear shaped diamond called the Sea of Flames - a stone fashioned by gods for gods, if the story is to be believed. The stone was first found by a prince in Borneo. He found the blue stone in a dry riverbed, and picked it up because he found it pleasing to his eye. On the way back to his palace, the prince is attacked and one man stabs the prince in the heart. They take his rings, and even his horse, but the stone was clutched in his hand, and they didn't find that. He manages, somehow, to crawl home where after ten days of unconsciousness, he suddenly wakes still clutching the stone. He should never have survived such a wound, they tell him, and the nurses insist the stone has healing powers. The sultan's jewelers spend eighty days cutting and polishing the stone which when finished is brilliant blue in color and has a center that is as red as flames. The prince had it fit into his crown and some were sure that as long as he kept the stone, he could not be killed. Instead, all around him suffered. One of his brothers drowned; one died from snakebite; his father dies from some disease, and a great army amasses against him. A priest has a dream about the stone, and tries to tell the Prince that it was a gift that the Goddess of the Earth created for the God of Sea. Taking it would keep the owner alive, but bring misery to all those he loved. However, if the stone was returned to the sea, the curse would be lifted. The prince considered the issue for three days before deciding to keep the stone. To keep the priest from telling anyone else, he had the mans' tongue removed. Invaders came and the prince was never seen again.

The stone surfaces again in history when it is shown to a diamond trader. He sent a casting of the stone and its description to a duke in Lorraine who wanted it desperately, and had it set into his walking stick. The duchess soon died from throat disease and two favorite servants broke their necks in a fall from the roof. Their only son died while out riding, and he finally asked the king to lock it deep in a special vault. It was not to be opened for two hundred years.

The story of the stone continues as Daniel LeBlanc takes the stone to Saint-Malo to keep it from the invading Germans. He leaves it with his daughter, to keep her safe, but Madame Manec dies from pneumonia; a German soldier is killed trying to retrieve it, and finally Marie-Laure puts the stone back into the sea - something none before her had had the strength to do.



Styles

Point of View

The novel titled 'All the Light We Cannot See' by Anthony Doerr is a fictional account told from a third-person omniscient point of view. Each of the major characters in this story have segments that are told from a point of view which is both personal and all-knowing beginning with Marie Laure LeBlanc who is a young blind girl that lives with her father in Paris. The segments in this story alternate from her point of view to that of Werner Pfennig who is a young German boy from Zollverein to Daniel LeBlanc who is Marie-Laure's father to Etienne who is Marie-Laure's great-uncle to Reinhold von Rumpel who is an appraiser for the Germans. The thoughts of each of the major characters in this story are known to the reader although never from 'I, me, my or mine' are not used.

This is becoming a more popular form of writing as authors like Doerr use the multiple viewpoints to add needed and valuable background information; add subplots or even just effectively change locations or time periods throughout the story. Since Doerr wrote this story about several locations and wanted the reader to be aware of the thoughts and rationales of both sides of the conflict, this was an effective choice of point of view. While some intimacy can be lost using this style and confusion gained in its place, a good writer can use this method to reveal the story from multiple viewpoints, disclosing information and layering information from the characters' pasts while managing to maintain consistency throughout.

This form of writing is well suited to telling such a complicated story involving so many characters of importance to the tale.

Language and Meaning

The novel by Anthony Doerr called 'All the Light We Cannot See' is told in regular and up-to-date English, but is a story about war torn France and Germany in the first half of the 1940's. The tale is told from multiple perspectives in both countries and Doerr uses German phrases and descriptions to add to the authenticity of the events. Several of the characters mutter in German such as von Rumpel who asks 'Das Hauschen fehlt, wo bist du Hauschen?' which translates to 'the little house is missing, where are you little house?' and other German expressions or descriptions including 'pflicht' or duty; Rauchkase or stinky cheese; 'kinderleicht' or child's play; 'ordnung muss sein' or order must be and more.

The references from the French side are fewer but still exist such as the name the French use in Saint-Malo to describe the Germans - Boches and the location descriptions which all begin with 'rue' meaning street/road or phrases such as 'atelier de reparation' meaning chamber in which to make reparations. Doerr also makes proper

use of the French accent marks which often indicate the correct pronunciation of the letter that they modify. By ensuring the correct use of these accents, Doerr lends an authenticity to his novel that would otherwise be lacking.

Structure

'All the Light We Cannot See' by Anthony Doerr is a novel of five hundred and forty one pages which is divided into fourteen parts, the first of which is titled 'Part Zero'. Each of these parts represents a particular time period and place, and is then further divided into multiple chapters. In total, there are one hundred and seventy eight chapters which have an average of three pages each although some contain as little as one page or as many as seven pages.

These multiple chapters are all titled to describe the main event or character the segment is concerned with. For example, Part Zero: 7 August 1944 is further divided by eight chapters which include subjects such as 'leaflets' in which the leaflets dropped to warn residents to flee is described; or Saint-Malo which is dedicated to the town by the same name and describes the events as they were during that period of time; or 'cellar' which tells of the corsair's cellar beneath the Hotel of Bees.

The author uses the fourteen initial parts of this story to differentiate between time periods, often going back and forth in time to clarify a characters' motivation or outcome. The time period covered ranges from 1934 all the way up to 2014 or current day. As such, Doerr manages to follow the entire lifespan of his ultimate main character, Marie-Laure LeBlanc.



Quotes

They'll say you're too little, Werner, that you're from nowhere, that you shouldn't dream big.

-- Frau Elena (Chapter 10 paragraph 11)

Importance: Frau Elena tells Werner when she tells him that no matter what he dreams, she believes in him and encourages him by telling him that she knows he'll do something great, thereby giving him the courage to reach beyond his immediate grasp and dream big.

Now, you're going to take us home.

-- Daniel LeBlanc (Chapter 13 paragraph 7)

Importance: This quote shows the dedication by Daniel to ensure that his daughter can still function within the boundaries of their lives by building her a replica of her neighborhood and allowing her to learn how to use it to get around.

Don't you want to understand what's happening?

-- Jutta Pfennig (Chapter 28 paragraph 5)

Importance: Werner learns early to compartmentalize his feelings where the war is concerned. He really doesn't want to know what is going on, and doesn't want to think about what his mathematical calculations will be responsible for. He tries to separate the science from the reality so that he can continue.

But your great-uncle, when he came home, he was not the same as when he left.

-- Madame Manec (Chapter 42 paragraph 16)

Importance: The fact that Etienne came home a different man than he was when he left for the war is a common occurrence in every war. Wars are filled with such horrors, and soldiers are asked to commit atrocities in the name of winning. The truth is that war has no winners. There is lasting damage done on both sides to soldiers and their families as well.

What a foul beast, a centaur, an Untermensch.

-- Bastian (Chapter 70 paragraph 4)

Importance: Bastian tells the students that the man he has brought before them escaped from a work camp and tried to steal milk from a farmhouse. He tells the boys this story so that they will be able to view the man as an enemy and will have the courage to be abusive and inhumane as a group if not singly.

I had ridden trains all goddamn day to see him. But I left, just like that.

-- Walter Bernd (Chapter 3 paragraph 97)



Importance: Walter tells the story of his last visit with his father before his death as he is sitting in the basement of the Hotel of Bees anticipating his own demise. It is the single regret that surfaces in a lifetime of choices and encounters, and he obviously carries his regrets that things went the way that they did as it is the last thing he thinks about before dying himself.

It says, Monsieur Droguet wants his daughter in Saint-Coulomb to know that he is recovering well.

-- Etienne (Chapter 111 paragraph 3)

Importance: This is the first additional message that Madame Ruelle asks Etienne to add to his broadcast. It is the only way that loved ones can share messages with family and friends, letting them know that they are all right despite war and mail stoppages. It was just one more small way that Madame Ruelle and her group gave hope to others around them while war rages on.

Tell your uncle that the hour has come. That the mermaids have bleached hair.

-- Madame Ruelle (Chapter 131 paragraph 5)

Importance: Madame Ruelle tells Marie-Laure that the time of their occupation is almost over in Saint-Malo. Within one week, their rescuers will come.

Nothing! Just a dumb model of this town and a broken promise.

-- Marie-Laure (Chapter 139 paragraph 6)

Importance: Marie-Laure doesn't realize how angry she is with her father for leaving her until her feelings reveal themselves when Von Rumpel has her cornered in the grotto. Her feelings are so genuine that Von Rumpel believes her and leaves.

They said it was a network of terrorists, but it was just an old man and a girl.

-- Werner (Chapter 148 paragraph 6)

Importance: It is ironic that Werner should choose to keep the broadcasts from the LeBlanc house a secret from his fellow officers, believing that they are harmless while it was these very broadcasts that managed to give away the location of the Hotel of Bees and bring it down around them.

Stay calm and they won't shoot. I'll make sure to go first.

-- Frau Elena (Chapter 166 paragraph 24)

Importance: Frau Elena coaches her girls to be calm, and not panic. She offers herself to the Russians first so that they will go easier on her girls, having expended their fury on her. She likely saves their lives with her sage advice and generous behavior.

I wanted you to have the little house.

-- Jutta Wette (Chapter 173 paragraph 27)



Importance: Jutta returns the small replica of Etienne's house to Marie-Laure, believing that it will mean more to her, and Jutta is correct. After she leaves, Marie-Laure carefully opens the house that she'd left in the grotto and finds not the Sea of Flames, which she expected, but the iron key instead.