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## Marie – Laure's Mask in *All the Light We Cannot See* by Antony Doerr

P. Ani Divine Daisy<sup>a</sup>  
B. Gayathri Devi<sup>a</sup>  
A. Napoleon Joseph<sup>b\*</sup>

### ABSTRACT

All the Light We Cannot See is a novel by Antony Doerr, that speaks about the existence of a blind French girl called Marie- Laure Leblanc and a young German orphan, Werner during World War II. The novel's central theme is the metaphorical "light we cannot see". For Marie-Laure, this refers to the power of imagination and resilience in the face of darkness. Her blindness becomes metaphor for the broader human experience, navigating the unknown with courage and hope. So, the author Doerr uses the novel's title metaphorically encapsulates the unseen beauty, courage and kindness that continue even in the darkest moments.

**Keywords:** Blindness, courage, kindness and resilience.

**Marie-Laure LeBlanc**, the protagonist in Anthony Doerr's novel "All the Light We Cannot See," grapples with a unique face of darkness as she faces the challenges of blindness in a world engulfed by war. The metaphorical and literal shadows cast upon her life create a complex portrait of resilience and strength.

Blind since the age of six, Marie-Laure's world is shrouded in perpetual darkness. The absence of visual stimuli forces her to rely on her other senses, creating a heightened awareness of the

sounds, scents, and textures that surround her. In this sensory-rich existence, she develops a unique perception of the world, forming a mental map of her surroundings that transcends the limitations of sight. Her resilience lies in her ability to navigate this darkness with a profound understanding of the intricacies of life.

The broader context of World War II intensifies the darkness in Marie-Laure's life. The war brings about physical dangers and uncertainties that further challenge her resilience. As the conflict unfolds,

<sup>a</sup>Research Scholar, PG & Research Department of English.

St. Joseph 's College of Arts and Science (Autonomous), Cuddalore, 607001, Tamilnadu, India

<sup>b</sup>PG & Research Department of English, St. Joseph 's College of Arts and Science

(Autonomous), Cuddalore, 607001, Tamilnadu, India

E-mail: anibbydoll@gmail.com

she and her father flee Paris, facing the upheavals of displacement and the constant threat of danger. The darkness of war casts its long shadow over her, disrupting the stability she once knew. Yet, amidst the chaos, she finds pockets of light—small moments of connection, love, and kindness that punctuate the gloom.

Marie-Laure's face of darkness also emerges in the form of societal prejudices and misconceptions about blindness. The prevailing attitudes of the time perpetuate stereotypes and limit opportunities for those with visual impairments. Despite this, she defies expectations, demonstrating that her perceived disability does not define her capabilities. Her resilience lies in challenging societal norms, showcasing the strength within her that transcends physical limitations.

The novel juxtaposes Marie-Laure's narrative with that of Werner Pfennig, a German orphan recruited into the military. Werner's story highlights the moral complexities of war and the choices individuals make in the face of darkness. Marie-Laure's darkness intersects with Werner's moral dilemma, adding layers of complexity to the novel's exploration of human nature.

Throughout the narrative, Marie-Laure's face of darkness transforms into a symbol of hope and inner strength. Her ability to find beauty in the midst of turmoil, to create a world of light within her own mind, becomes a powerful metaphor for resilience. The novel suggests that darkness is not just the absence of light but an opportunity to discover inner strength and illuminate the path ahead.

### **Problems faced by Marie – Laure**

Marie-Laure LeBlanc encounters a myriad of challenges in "All the Light We Cannot See" by Anthony Doerr, each contributing to the complexity of her character and the narrative.

#### **Blindness**

The most apparent challenge is Marie-Laure's blindness, which she has faced since the age of six. Navigating the world without sight presents daily

obstacles, and she must rely on her other senses to interpret her surroundings. This physical limitation shapes her perception of the world, making her acutely aware of sounds, smells, and textures.

#### **War and Displacement**

The novel is set against the backdrop of World War II, forcing Marie-Laure and her father to flee Paris as the Nazis advance. The constant threat of danger and displacement adds a layer of adversity to her life. The challenges of being a war refugee heighten the uncertainty and difficulty of her circumstances.

#### **Loss of Father**

Marie-Laure's father, who plays a crucial role in her life, disappears during the war. His absence leaves her orphaned and alone, amplifying the emotional and practical challenges she faces. The uncertainty of his fate creates a void that she grapples with throughout the narrative.

#### **Societal Prejudices**

Being blind in a society with limited understanding and empathy for disabilities poses additional challenges. Marie-Laure encounters societal prejudices and misconceptions about her abilities. The prevailing attitudes of the time restrict opportunities and create barriers for her, making her resilience and determination all the more remarkable.

#### **Isolation and Loneliness**

The combination of blindness, war, and societal prejudices contributes to Marie-Laure's sense of isolation. She often feels alone in her experiences, and the challenges she faces amplify her feelings of loneliness. This emotional struggle becomes a significant aspect of her character development.

#### **Struggle for Independence:**

Despite her blindness, Marie-Laure strives for independence. The journey to self-reliance is fraught with challenges as she attempts to navigate the world without constant assistance. This struggle for autonomy becomes a central theme in her character arc, highlighting her strength and determination.

### ***Moral Dilemmas***

The novel explores moral complexities through various characters, including Marie-Laure. The wartime setting forces her to confront difficult choices and ethical dilemmas. These decisions contribute to her internal struggles, adding a layer of complexity to her character as she grapples with the consequences of her actions.

In facing these challenges, Marie-Laure emerges as a resilient and multifaceted character. Her journey becomes a testament to the human spirit's ability to endure, adapt, and find moments of light even in the darkest circumstances. The interplay of personal, societal, and historical challenges enriches the narrative, making Marie-Laure's character a compelling and relatable focal point in the novel.

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