Cracking the Code

The frequent use of radios in Anthony Doerr’s *All the Light We Cannot See* was more than just an ideal way to connect the stories of Marie-Laure and Werner; Doerr uses the symbol of radios to show the effect communication has on our history. During World War II, radios served as a crucial and defining method of communication on both sides of the war effort. Throughout Doerr’s novel, we see both Werner and Marie-Laure using radios and codebreaking skills to intercept and transmit messages to others. After Madame Manec’s death, Marie-Laure and Etienne agree to continue her job in the resistance by transmitting messages they receive in loaves of bread. Together they work as a team to carry out the effort, “[S]he [Marie-Laure] still feels the exhilaration of leaving the bakery with the warm weight of the loaf in her knapsack. Etienne tears apart the bread…[H]e sets a tiny paper scroll, no bigger than a cowrie shell, in her palm…” (p. 327). Bletchley Park in Great Britain was the large-scale equivalent of Marie-Laure and Etienne. In an interview with Sinclair McKay, the history of perhaps one of the most famous and valuable assets to the Allies is revealed. According to McKay, Bletchley Park is credited with “having shortened the war by two years…[A]part from anything else, without Bletchley’s absolutely crucial intelligence, the D-Day landings in 1944 might not have worked…” (Mason). The sacrifice shown by Marie-Laure and her great-uncle as well as the result of Bletchley Park’s efforts and ability to decipher German communications highlights the delicacy of language.

Mason, Emma. Interview by Sinclair McKay. *60-second guide to Bletchley Park- the WW2 code-breaking centre that spawned the computer age and made the D-Day landings possible*, 18 Apr. 2014, <http://www.historyextra.com/feature/60-second-guide-bletchley-park-ww2-code-breaking-centre-computer-age>. Accessed 18 Nov. 2016.