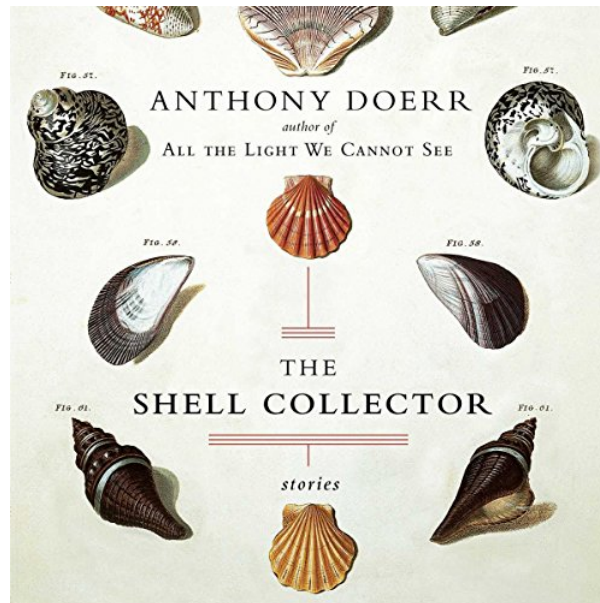
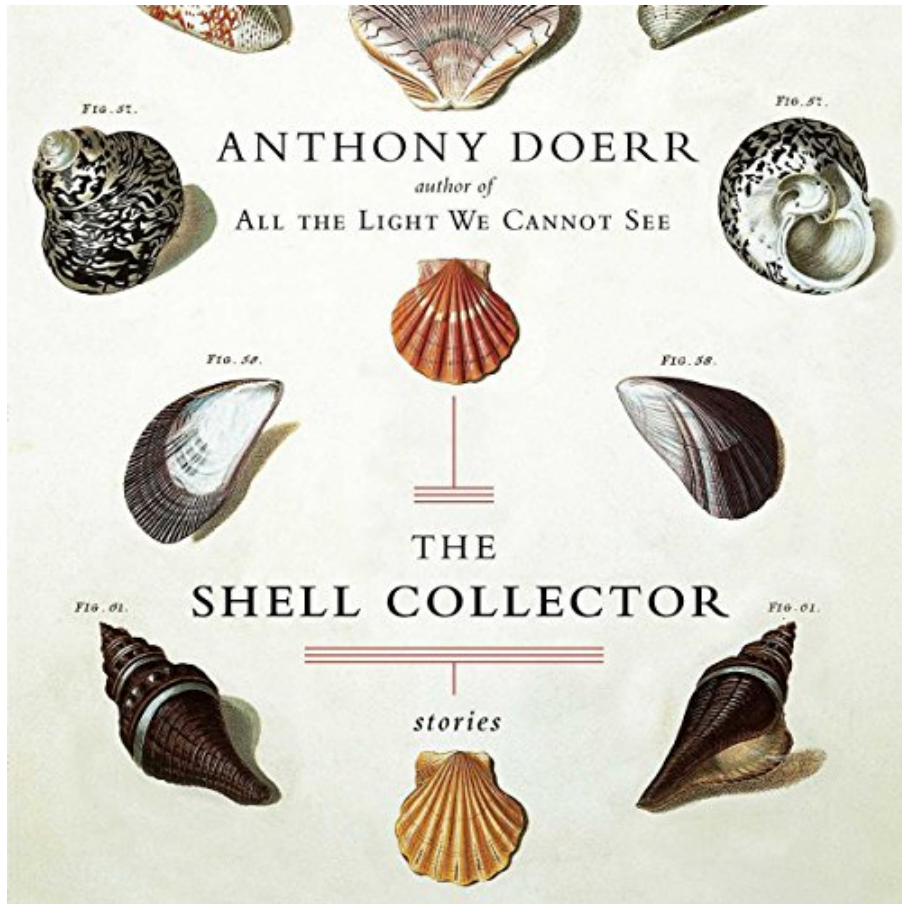


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The exquisitely crafted stories in Anthony Doerr's acclaimed debut collection take listeners from the African coast to the pine forests of Montana to the damp moors of Lapland, charting a vast physical and emotional landscape. Doerr explores the human condition in all its varieties - metamorphosis, grief, fractured relationships, and slowly mending hearts - and conjures nature in both its beautiful abundance and crushing power. Some of his characters contend with tremendous hardship; some discover unique gifts; all are united by their ultimate deference to the mysteries of the universe outside themselves.

- Sales Rank: #36867 in Audible
- Published on: 2012-12-19
- Format: Unabridged
- Original language: English
- Running time: 462 minutes

Most helpful customer reviews

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A moving debut

By A Customer

I'll keep it short and sweet. Three things make this book stand out from other short story collections:

- a) It is written incredibly well. The stories flow effortlessly, are written with excellent imagery and figurative language, and invoke everything from heartache to nausea.
- b) It is one of those books that you could read one time for enjoyment... or you could read it three times and dig up all the many meanings.
- c) This is not your Nora Roberts soap opera. Anybody can use sex and violence to make a book captivating, but it takes a master to weave a beautiful story from something more simple. Without becoming boring, Doerr masters this.

Read it, love it, and tell your friends to do the same.

69 of 71 people found the following review helpful.

The Role of Mystery in Fiction

By M. JEFFREY MCMAHON

If you were to tell me that *The Shell Collector* features mostly stories about people who find majesty, wonder, awe, and rejuvenation through the Mystery of Nature, I would roll my eyes and dismiss the story collection as a precious sentimental meditation on the natural world worthy of a Hallmark Card. However, the aforementioned themes are rendered with expertise, vigor, and indeed pure poetic prose so that even a cynic like myself was able to surrender to Doerr's magical stories. Here are some highlights:

1. *The Shell Collector*: A scientist who collects shells lives like a hermit in a isolated coastal land in Kenya where he discovers an elixir, derived from a sea snail, which forces him to contemplate the manner in which civilization usurps all of nature's wonders for its commercial purposes.

2. *The Hunter's Wife*: A man takes his wife into the barren wilderness where she eventually leaves him to pursue a career as a celebrity New Age figure.

3. *The Caretaker*: An African refugee who has seen unspeakable evil during civil war and has been coerced into doing something that violates his conscience moves to an ocean house in Oregon where he learns, through the help of a young woman, to find his redemption.

4. *Mkondo*: A white fossil hunter goes to Tanzania where he becomes obsessed with a young African woman whom he marries and takes back to Ohio. There the woman languishes in despair until she finds her vocation in photography, which brings her closer to nature.

Over and over again, Doerr pits the vulgarity and soul-sapping forces of civilization with the pure spiritual powers of nature as his characters attempt to straddle both worlds.

For a thematic companion to Doerr's stories, you might want to look into the 1971 film masterpiece, set in Australia, called *The Walkabout*, which wonderfully is now available on DVD.

65 of 68 people found the following review helpful.

A new, fresh highly focused voice in American literature

By Grady Harp

Anthony Doerr is an amazing talent. His chronological age (28) does not match his literary acumen, for here is a new writer who knows his craft so well that he is destined to be one of the more important authors of his generation ... and beyond.

In *THE SHELL COLLECTOR* Doerr has assembled short stories that are wide ranging in locale and in content. How he is able to convey with such clarity the terrain and atmosphere of Liberia, Finland, Bavaria, Ohio etc may be credited to his own travels, but I think it is more a credit to his gifts of creating backdrops for his dramas. The young man is so in tune with nature that in a few words he is able to describe the advent of spring, the caustic stillness of winter, the miracles of ocean life and seeds becoming plants as well as the domain of butterflies. His characters are driven in a synchronicity with natural forces to the extent that at times we are left to ponder whether the human with a name is more the main character than the land wherein he dwells.

Another aspect of the excitement these stories generate lies in the incredible tales themselves. There are no usual rehashes of familiar prototypes: each story is a cosmos rarely explored. Combine the magic of his limitless imagination with the glory of his writing skills and see if you don't agree that this is a Major New Voice in American literature. One waits for an extended novel without any concomitant fear that he will be able to produce it. Bravo!

See all 209 customer reviews...

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