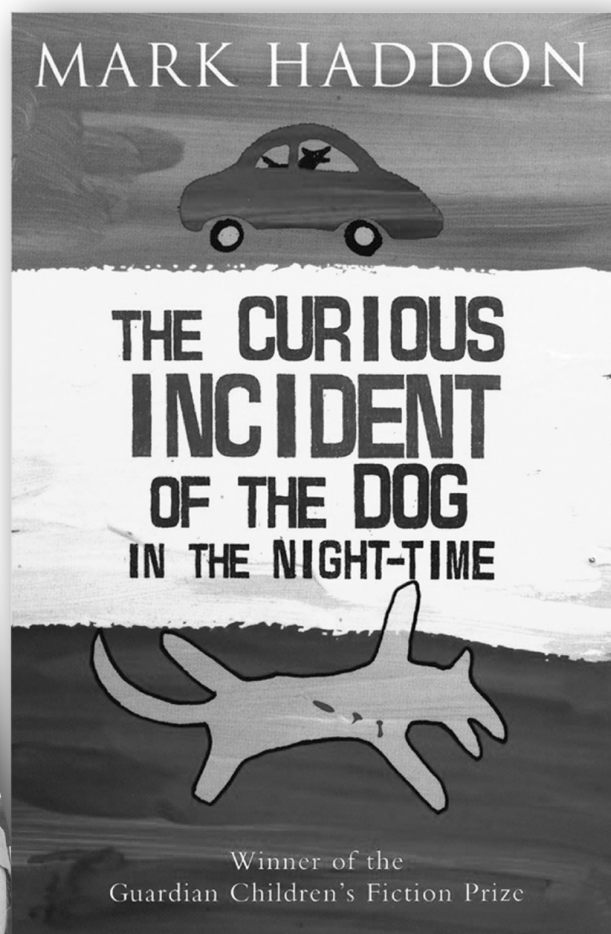


Teachers' Resource Kit – The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time – by Mark Haddon

A fantastically unusual detective story written from the perspective of a 15-year-old autistic boy, who is obsessed with maths, science and Sherlock Holmes but finds it hard to understand other people. When he discovers a dead dog on a neighbour's lawn he decides to solve the mystery; as in all good detective stories, however, the more he unearths, the deeper the mystery gets.



Mark Haddon was born in Northampton in 1962. He has a BA in English from Oxford and a MSc in English Literature from Edinburgh University. Previously an illustrator and cartoonist, now a writer, he has also worked for a number of organisations working with children and adults with mental and physical handicaps. Mark has previously been shortlisted for the Smarties Prize for a book for younger children. With *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, his first novel for older readers, he won The Guardian's Fiction Prize, was shortlisted for the Booktrust Teenage Prize and longlisted for the Man Booker Prize.



Including classroom activities for children, Years 9–13, in the following subjects:

- * Art**
- * Visual language**
- * Reading**
- * Writing**
- * Science**
- * Debate**

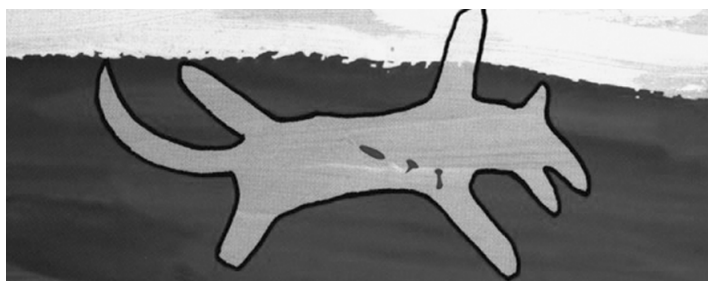


The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time is distributed by Random House New Zealand Ltd,
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Questions

General Questions

1. Why are the chapters numbered in an unusual way in this novel?
2. We are often told that being logical and rational is the most sensible way to approach problems. How does the novel show us that this isn't always the case?
3. What does this novel show us about the nature of truth? Does the novel show us that sometimes it is all right to lie, or tell 'untruths'?
4. What do jokes and lies have in common, according to Christopher?
5. Is kindness sometimes better than the truth?
6. How does the novel help us to think about what is sensible, or what is 'common sense', and what isn't?
7. What does the novel show us about the nature of trust? How does Christopher have his trust in his parents ruined? Do you understand his reactions? (How would you react if you were in Christopher's situation?)
8. It is often believed that people with syndromes like Christopher's are completely different to other people. Yet can you see any personality traits that you have in common with Christopher?
9. What are Christopher's main talents? What are his main flaws?
10. What are his parents' good qualities? What are their flaws?



Literary Questions

1. What does the novel have in common with a detective story?
2. How does the novel differ from a detective novel? How is it different from other novels you've read?
3. Comment on how the writer uses chapter breaks – what effect do they have?
4. Find out a definition of irony in a dictionary and/or a glossary of literary terms. Find five examples of how Mark Haddon uses irony in his novel.

Close Reading Questions

Chapter 7

- Can you offer an interpretation of the passage that Christopher quotes from a 'proper novel'?
- What appeals to Christopher about detective stories? Can you explain why?

Chapter 11

- Comment on the sort of minute detail that Christopher notices. What do you make of this? I.e., what does it tell us about the way he sees the world and his responses to events?
- What effect does the policeman's questions have on Christopher, and why? How does Christopher try to find safety?

Chapter 13

- Why are there no jokes in this book, according to Christopher? Yet why do we often find the novel funny?

Chapter 17

- Why does Christopher feel calmer even though the police officer says he is under arrest?
- Why does Christopher find scientific facts – e.g. about the galaxy – reassuring?

Chapter 19

- How are prime numbers like life, according to Christopher?

Chapter 29

- Why does Christopher find people confusing? Can you understand his confusion?
- Why does Christopher find metaphors confusing?
- Why does Christopher say the word metaphor is itself a metaphor?
- Make a list of ten common metaphors we use in everyday speech.
- Why doesn't Christopher like his name?

Chapter 31

- Why doesn't Christopher find similes as confusing as metaphors?

Chapter 37

- Christopher always tells the truth, but this isn't a matter of a belief in what is right and wrong. Why doesn't he ever lie?

Chapter 47

- How does Christopher explain the link he makes between seeing red cars and having a good day?

Chapter 59

- How does Christopher justify his investigation into how Wellington died, even though his father has told him to stay out of other people's business?
- What character qualities does Christopher have that would make him a good detective?

Chapter 67

- Why doesn't Christopher like chatting?
- How does Christopher work out who his prime suspect is?

Chapter 83

- What makes Christopher think he would make a good astronaut? Do you agree that he would qualify?
- What does Christopher discover about Mr Shears, from Mrs Alexander?

Chapter 101

- How is Mr Jeavons wrong about Christopher's love of maths?

Chapter 107

- Rephrase the quotation from the ancient scroll in *The Hound of the Baskervilles* so that it would be easily understood by a modern reader.
- What qualities does Christopher admire in Sherlock Holmes?

Chapter 139

- Find a dictionary definition and the origins of the phrase Occam's Razor.

Chapter 157

- What insights do Christopher's mother's letters give us into family life with Christopher? How does the picture we've had so far change? What new elements are there, in terms of mood and situation?
- What ways are Christopher and his father actually alike in the way they react to Christopher's mother leaving?

Chapter 163

- Explain how Christopher thinks the human brain is just like a computer.
- Do you agree that human feelings are just like a picture on a computer screen? Explain your answer.

Chapters 191-197

- What are some of the ways Christopher finds to cope with the new and frightening situations he finds himself in?

Chapter 229

- What is shocking or surprising about Christopher's favourite dream? What is understandable about his dream?

Chapter 233

- What makes Christopher decide he has to go back to Swindon?
- Do you agree with Christopher when he says (on page 260) that 'I think it is worst when you don't know whether a good thing or a bad thing is going to happen'?

Questions

Research

- Find out at least five facts each about both Asperger's Syndrome and autism. How do the two differ?

Visual/Artistic Responses

- Imagine you are Christopher, and you want to create a picture of one of the crisis events in the novel. Illustrate the event in the medium of your choice.
- Create a portrait of Christopher based on your understanding of his character.
- Redesign the book cover for a new release of the novel.
- Imagine the novel is to be turned into a stage play or a movie. Design the poster advertising the production.

Creative Writing

- Write about a serious incident in your own life, using a style like Christopher's. Write about it again using your own style.
- Write a letter from Siobhan to a friend of hers, describing her work with Christopher.
- Reread Chapter 113, pp 98–99, where Christopher's mother and Siobhan describe what they imagine when they want to cheer themselves up. Write a poem or a song lyric that describes your own version of such a dream.
- Write a police profile of Christopher.
- Choose a colour, and compose a list like the one Christopher makes of reasons that he doesn't like yellow (Chapter 131, p 105). Use this as the basis for describing the character either of someone you know, or someone you have invented.
- Write a poem or a short story with the title, Occam's Razor.
- Pp 175–176: Read the two lists of things Christopher makes of what most people would notice and what he noticed in a field. Write two such lists of where you are sitting now.

Debate Topics

- Divide into negative and affirmative teams to debate the following topics:

'There is no such thing as normal when it comes to human beings.'

'White lies are as immoral as outright lies.'

'It is always wrong for parents to separate.'

'Children have as much power in a family as the adults do.'

'Violence can be a reasonable response to an unreasonable situation.'

'Variety is the spice of life.'

