



Irish Classical Theatre Company • MusicalFare Theatre
Road Less Traveled Productions • Shea's 710 Theatre • Theatre of Youth

THE
**CURIOUS
INCIDENT**
OF THE
DOG
IN THE
NIGHT-TIME
Study Guide

A PLAY BY
SIMON STEPHENS

BASED ON THE NOVEL BY
MARK HADDON

MAR 12 - 29, 2020

SHEA'S
710
Theatre



*Set Model for The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time at 710 Theatre
Set and Lighting Designer Lynne Koscielniak
Studio Assistants Hannah S. Wolland and Steven Zehler*

Welcome

Mark Haddon's novel *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, first published in 2003, quickly became a best seller and a must-read for youth and adults alike. In 2012, Simon Stephens adapted the novel for the stage. It premiered at The Royal National Theatre of London, winning 7 Olivier Awards before transferring to Broadway in 2014. On Broadway, it won multiple awards including the 2015 Tony Award for Best Play.

We're excited to have you join us on our theatrical journey with All for One Productions' presentation of *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*. We hope this study guide will help you and your students as you explore Christopher's world on page and stage and inspire conversation in the classroom and out.

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time is part mystery, part family-drama, part coming of age tale. Ultimately, it's a story about discovery. What starts out as mission to uncover the truth about Wellington the dog becomes a journey to discover the meaning of trust, courage, and family.

This Study Guide contains information and activities for you use before and after seeing the production. You'll find materials on the adaptation of *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* from novel to play as well as context on the world and interests of Christopher Boone.

We'll see you at the theatre!

Shea's Performing Arts Center Department of Arts Engagement and Education

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PREPARING FOR YOUR TRIP

Reservations

When you place your ticket reservations, please be sure to include all students, teachers, and chaperones. Once your reservation is confirmed, your seats will be assigned accordingly. There will be no printed tickets for this production of *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*.

Arrival

By Bus. Schools that are arriving by bus will follow Shea's Performing Arts Center On School Time Arrival and Dismissal Protocol in order to efficiently accommodate all participants.

Buses should be scheduled to arrive at least 30 minutes prior to curtain in order to allow adequate time for drop-off and seating.

Drop-off is on the south side of 710 Theatre on West Tupper Street (corner of Main and Tupper, Buffalo, NY 14202). Buses must use their lights to stop traffic so your students can safely disembark onto the sidewalk.

When your bus arrives, Shea's staff will give the group representative and the bus driver corresponding number cards. These cards are required for dismissal following the performance. Please designate a group representative before your arrival.

Shea's staff will direct your bus to the parking location. Bus drivers are asked to stay with their buses throughout the performance.

By Public Transportation. If you are arriving by NFTA train, get off at the Fountain Plaza stop on Main Street. You can then walk two blocks north on Main Street to the theatre, on the corner of Main and West Tupper.

By Car. Groups traveling in personal vehicles are responsible for their own parking. There are metered spots along Main Street, Pearl Street, Washington, and on surrounding blocks. There are paid parking lots in the vicinity of Shea's. We encourage you to check day rates and restrictions prior to parking.

Seating

When arriving at the theatre, you will enter through the front doors on Main Street. Schools will be checked in upon arrival and ushers will direct you to your seats. Please have one adult lead your group for identification and check in. After checking in, an usher will show you to your seats.

Please have students organized how you would like them to sit prior to entering the theatre. We ask that you seat your full group before rearranging seats or taking groups to the restroom.

Dismissal

At the end of the show, please stay in your seats until your bus number/school is announced. Shea's staff will dismiss each school as soon as their bus arrives and is ready to load. Shea's staff will call buses to return to 710 Theatre according to dismissal procedures. Teachers or group representatives should not contact bus drivers independently, as this could cause traffic jams that would delay the dismissal process.

If you are leaving by public transportation or private car, you may leave directly after the performance.



PREPARING YOURSELF

As an audience member, you play an important role in any live performance that you will see. But what does it mean to play the role of an audience member? Are there rules or expectations? Is it passive or active? Is it the same for any live performance?

A **role** is:

- ☐ A character assigned or assumed
- ☐ A socially expected behavior pattern
- ☐ A part played by an actor or singer

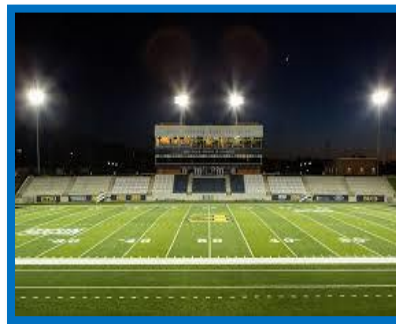
ACTIVITY

- ☐ Write a list of events that you recently attended where you have been part of an audience (play, concert, sporting event, church service, etc.).
- ☐ What was your role (what part did you play) at each event?
- ☐ How are you expected to behave at home, at school, at a party, at the library, at work?
- ☐ How did you behave in live performance event? How did performing the role change your behavior in each event?

An actor rehearses a role for a performance. Do you rehearse as an audience member? What and how do you rehearse? **Rehearse means to repeat or recite for practice or for a performance.** As an audience member we rehearse, or practice, every time we agree to be part of an audience. The role is often set by the space we are in as an audience member, which tells us what kind of event we are going to see and our role in it.

ACTIVITY

Look at each of the following spaces. How would you sit in each space? How would that change or affect how you would behave, or feel comfortable behaving?



In a traditional theatre or auditorium, there are similar elements that create a shared experience.

Seats. Being seated gives you a point of focus. It helps you relax so you can watch, listen, and respond.

Focus. Seats are arranged to create a common focus. You are shown where to look to experience the moment.

Social. Watching a live performance is usually a social experience. You watch or experience with other people. You are part of the event and part of the experience for other people.

ACTIVITY

Sit in a chair and imagine the last time you were at the theatre, in an auditorium, or at a live event. What were the expectations that you experienced?

- ☐ How did you know when to take your seat?
- ☐ How were you expected to behave during the performance?
- ☐ How did you know when it was finished?
- ☐ What were some of the rules or expectations you learned about theater or being in a live performance?

The role of audience and performer is not the same in every culture, every performance, and at every time. The way you see and understand a show is specific to you. It depends on where you come from, what you believe, what you learned, what you like and don't like.

A play uses words and images to tell a story. These words and images are like signs that are used to tell us what's happening and to convey meaning. Not everyone in an audience will read the signs in the same way. As an audience member, your job is to read the signs and identify what they mean to you. A live performance needs an audience in order to be complete. The actors or performers tell a story, and they need spectators to hear it.

This means as an audience member you are part of the performance. [Your role is to give your attention to the words and the actions, to watch and to listen, and to read the signs and identify what they mean to you.](#) To play your role, there are expectations or a “script” for you to rehearse or practice. These rules may vary from theatre to theatre and from show to show.

Shea's 710 Theatre Expectations

- Take your seat.
- Turn off your cell phone and all electronics.
- Be present by giving your full attention to what's happening on stage.
- Be respectful. This means being mindful of talking, fidgeting, or movement that may be distracting to the actors and the audience (including yourself). Avoid eating or drinking in the theatre.
- Feel free to respond. Laugh, gasp, sigh, shake your head. If the story moves you, let it move you.



The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time In Production

The following pages contain information on the world of *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, the major themes and structure of the work, vocabulary and reference list, and information on how it was adapted from a novel to a stage play.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- How do you adapt a play from a novel?
- What are the differences between experiencing a story through a novel and a play?
- What might audiences take away from seeing Christopher's story told from his perspective?

THE WORLD OF THE PLAY

THE STORY

Christopher Francis Boone is a fifteen-year-old boy with an extraordinary mind who experiences the world around him differently than many people. He loves math and the Milky Way, but doesn't like metaphors or acting, which he thinks is lying. He lives with his dad in [Swindon](#), a working-class town west of London. Christopher's mother, Judy, died of a heart attack two years earlier.

One night he finds his neighbor's dog, Wellington, dead in her yard. A pitchfork is sticking outside of Wellington's side. His neighbor, Mrs. Shears, finds Christopher holding the dog, and thinks he killed it. She calls the police who try to question Christopher, but Christopher shuts down. Thinking he is being uncooperative, the police officer grabs Christopher, who hits the officer. As a result, the police officer takes Christopher to the station where he is picked up by his dad, Ed. Christopher decides he should find out who killed Wellington and sets out to solve the crime against his father's wishes.

Christopher attends a school for students with special needs because he has behavioral problems. He wants to take his [A-level Math](#) exams, but his head mistress says no because it's not normally offered at his school. Meanwhile, Christopher's teacher Siobhan encourages him to write a story about the mysterious of Wellington's murder. To do so, Christopher must overcome his fear of strangers so he can interview his neighbors for information.

One of the neighbors he talks to is Mrs. Alexander. She explains to Christopher that his mother had an affair with Mr. Shears, which is why his father won't let Mr. Shears' name be spoken in their house. Christopher writes about the affair in his journal, which is father reads. Ed and Christopher fight, and Ed takes Christopher's journal. When Christopher goes to look for the book, he finds it in his father's closet with a box of letters addressed to him from his mother. He discovers that his mother is alive and living in London. Christopher learns that his father lied to him about his mother's death. His father also confesses that he killed Wellington because he was angry at Mrs. Shears after she refused to live with him.

His investigation leads him to further discoveries about his own family, including the revelation that his mother, Judy, is alive and living in London. Christopher learns that his father had lied to him about his mother's death and that also he killed Wellington. Christopher reasons that if his father can kill a dog then he could kill him, and so he no longer feels he can trust his father. He decides his only course of action is to run away to live with his mother.



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Christopher sets out on his own to find his mother in London. After a scary trip, he makes his way to his mother's apartment. Judy is glad to see him, but her boyfriend, Mr. Shears, is not happy to have Christopher living with them. The fighting between them increases. Eventually Judy leaves Roger and takes Christopher back to Swindon.

Back in Swindon, Judy and Christopher stay with Ed while she looks for a job and a place to live. Christopher is allowed to take his A level Maths test, which is very important to him. After receiving an A grade, he dreams of going to college. Christopher and his father start to rebuild their relationship, with Christopher slowly starting to trust him again. Christopher is happy because he solved the mystery of Wellington, received an A grade on his test, and found his mother. He feels confident that he can do anything to which sets his mind.

THE KEY PLOT POINTSⁱ

1. Christopher discovers the dead body of Wellington the dog and decides to investigate its death against his father's wishes.
2. Mrs. Alexander, his neighbor, tells Christopher that his mother had an affair with Mr. Shears.
3. Ed, Christopher's father, convinces the school to allow Christopher to take his A-Level Maths exam.
4. Ed finds Christopher's journal, which details his investigation of Wellington's murder. Ed and Christopher fight, and Ed takes Christopher's journal.
5. Christopher finds a box full of letters from his mother, Judy, who he believed was dead. He realizes his father lied to him about his mother's death and kept her letters from him.
6. Ed finds a distressed Christopher and confesses the truth to him. He also admits that he killed Wellington.
7. Christopher decides he can't live with his father anymore and sets out to find his mother in London.
8. Although he's never left Swindon before, Christopher gets on a train to London by himself and eventually finds his mother's apartment where she is now living with Mr. Shears.
9. Christopher conflicts with his Mr. Shears, who doesn't like having Christopher around.
10. Judy decides to leave with Christopher and move back to Swindon.
11. Christopher starts to rebuild his relationship with his dad. After his pet rat dies, Ed gifts him with a puppy.
12. Christopher is allowed to take his Maths A-Level exam. He passes with an A grade.

THE CHARACTERS

Christopher

Christopher John Francis Boone is 15 years old. He knows all the countries of the world and the capital cities and every prime number up to 7507. He has a unique perspective on the world. He notices things in minute detail, finds people and figurative language confusing, doesn't like to be touched by anyone, and relates more easily to animals (especially his pet rat Toby) and objects. Christopher is very good at math and is fascinated by the workings of the universe. He doesn't like strangers, or the colors yellow and brown. His favorite color is red. And he doesn't lie.

Siobhan

Siobhan is Christopher's teacher who suggests that Christopher write a book about his detective work. She helps Christopher to think about how to keep calm and sometimes appears in his memory to assist him through tough situations.

Ed

Christopher's father, Ed, is a single dad, living with Christopher in Swindon, England. He loves his son and champions his math abilities at school. Sometimes, however, Ed can get frustrated with Christopher's behavior, even to the point of lashing out. Ed demands Christopher stop with his investigation of a dead dog named Wellington.

Judy

We first learn about Christopher's mother Judy when he recalls in his book the moment his dad told him that she had died. Christopher remembers his mom on the beach swimming, diving, persuading him to paddle in the waves. Judy found it difficult to cope with Christopher's condition and felt isolated in the home and in her marriage.

Mrs. Alexander

Mrs. Alexander is an older woman living on Christopher's street. She's not a friend of the family. Christopher calls her a stranger, but she seems to know all the neighborhood gossip. She supports Christopher's initial detective work, helping him fill in the gaps about why someone might have wanted to kill Mrs. Shears' dog Wellington.

Mrs. Shears

A next-door neighbor of Christopher's. Mrs. Shears is angry with Christopher when she sees him with her dead dog Wellington, whose discovery starts the play. She's divorced from her husband, Mr. Shears. As the play develops, we discover that Mrs. Shears had at one time been close to Christopher's father.

Mr. Shears (Roger)

Mrs. Shears' ex-husband, who now lives in London. When Christopher starts investigating Wellington's death, Mr. Shears becomes the Prime Suspect.

Mrs. Gascoyne

The Headteacher at Christopher's school, Mrs. Gascoyne is very cautious about her students' education, wanting to make sure they are equally treated. Reluctantly, and with some persuading from his father, Mrs. Gascoyne allows Christopher to sit for an advanced math exam at school.

Policeman

There are several policemen in the play in Swindon and London. Christopher trusts policemen inherently, but his trust is tested he faces the things that he finds difficult: being touched and someone trying to take him home when doesn't want to go.

Reverend Peters

The Reverend tries to explain death and afterlife to Christopher to reassure him. Christopher stumps him with a question about the precise location of heaven.

THE LOCATION

Christopher lives with his father in Swindon, a large town in the county of Wiltshire in South West England about 71 miles west of London. Swindon railway station is on the line from London Paddington to Bristol.



THE WORDS (DEFINITIONS, SLANG, REFERENCES)

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time is set in England.

To help with your British slang, read up on some of the words and phrases used in the play that may be unfamiliar to our ears:

“Lose my rag”: Slang meaning to become very angry.

Milky Way: A large spiral system made of several hundred billion stars, one of which is the Sun. It takes its name from the irregular band of stars and gas clouds that stretches across the sky seen from Earth.

Big Bang: The Big Bang theory represents scientists’ best attempt to reconstruct the story of the universe. It can also refer to the birth of the universe as we know it—the event that started the chain of events that created our world today.

“He was the apple of her eye”: Someone or something that one cherishes above all others.

“They had a skeleton in the cupboard”: To have an embarrassing or unpleasant secret about something that happened in the past.

“We had a real pig of a day”: A day that is utterly terrible.

“Stone dead”: Completely lifeless.

Marks & Spencer: A major British retailer that specializes in selling high quality clothing, home products, and food products.

Football: What Americans call soccer.

Battenberg: A light sponge cake held together with jam. It's covered in marzipan and when cut in cross section, displays a distinctive two-by-two check pattern alternately colored pink and yellow.



Marzipan: A confection consisting primarily of sugar or honey and almond meal.

Biscuits: What we would call a cookie or cracker in the United States.

A-level: Advanced level qualifications (known as A-levels) are subject-based qualifications that can lead to university, further study, training, or work. You can normally study three or more A levels over two years. They're usually assessed by a series of examinations.

Quid: Slang for a British pound, their basic unit of money. Equivalent to approximately 1.29 US dollars.

Airing cupboard: A heated cupboard in which sheets, towels, clothes, etc. are kept warm and dry.

Dustbin: A container for household refuse, especially one kept outside; a garbage can.

Double Bluff: An attempt to deceive someone by telling them exactly what you intend to do when you know that they will assume you're lying.

David Attenborough: English broadcaster, writer, and naturalist noted for his innovative, educational television programs.

Bentalls: A British department store chain.

Sherlock Holmes: A fictional character created by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, first appearing in 1887. He is the prototype for the modern mastermind detective.

Cashpoint card: A cash card/bank card.

Quavers: A British snack food described as "curly potato puffs".

Tube: British slang for subway.



The Masqueraders by Georgette Heyer: A 1928 novel set in Britain in the 18th century that tells the story of a family of adventurers who escape to London and take on new identities to protect themselves.

Bloody Nora: A British oath that can be used as a statement of mild amazement or a curse.

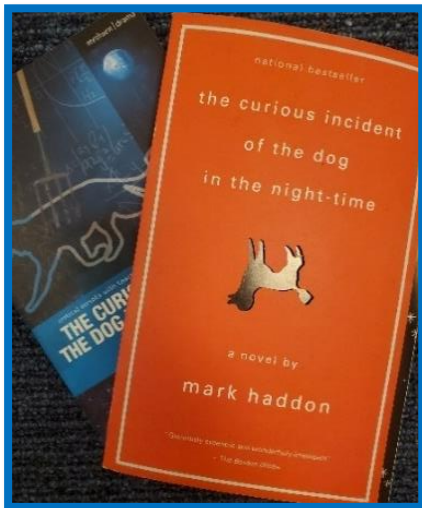
Invigilate: Supervise candidates during an examination.

First Class Honors Degree: The highest honors you can achieve for an undergraduate degree in the United Kingdom.

FROM PAGE TO STAGE:

How a Book Became A Play

THE NOVEL



The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time by Mark Haddon was first published as novel in 2003. The book shares pages of Christopher's journal with the reader, and lets us read his story through drawings, diagrams, and photos. As told from Christopher's point of view, we see the world through his eyes, and get a glimpse into how his extraordinary mind works.

Since its publication, many people approached Mark Haddon about acquiring the rights to adapt his book for the stage. On the adaptation, Haddon said:

"It seemed impossible to me that such a radically first-person novel set entirely in the head of a single character could be translated into a radically third person medium without doing irreparable damage, but we were worn slowly down by the sheer

*volume of requests. Gradually we moved from thinking a stage version was a preposterous idea, to wondering if it might be possible, to being intrigued as to how someone might be able to do it. So, instead of waiting to be asked by the right person, we decided to ask the right person."*ⁱⁱⁱ

THE PLAY

Mark Haddon suggested the project to playwright Simon Stephens. Stephens was hesitant but decided to take on the challenge. He gave himself a month "to put myself in a position where, after four weeks of trying, I could ring him [Haddon] up and say, 'Mark, you know this great, unadaptable novel of yours? Guess what? It's completely unadaptable!' And I think because I had that freedom, I approached it with a sense of play."



In the play, Christopher’s teacher Siobhan acts as narrator, reading portions of Christopher’s journal to guide us through his first-person observations. Actors play multiple roles, acting out the events that Christopher describes in his journal and occasionally speaking his thoughts. This allows us to see and hear the world as Christopher does. At the end of the play, we learn that we have been watching a play written from Christopher’s novel. It is a play within a play.

THE WORKSHOP



Stephens sent his draft to director Marianne Elliott to read. She loved it and passed it on to the Director of The National Theatre in London. Her pitch was: “It’s an adaptation of a book—and that’s a bad idea; and it’s a really well-loved book—and that’s a bad idea; but it’s Simon Stephens and I’d really love to do this.”

Marianne Elliott and Simon Stephens spent a week workshoping the play with a group of actors and Steven Hoggett and Scott Graham, the

choreographers from the physical theatre company [Frantic Assembly](#). About the process, Elliott said:

“We spent a week workshoping. It’s a terrifying word, I don’t know what it means really: it can be anything... We spent a week not worrying whether the show was going to be done; it was unpressured. Every day was different; every day we’d look at different parts of the story and think ‘how could we show’... And we also spent a lot of time working out how you might stage a show like this where two people are talking for five lines, and then we’re immediately into another scene in a completely different location, a completely different timeline, and one actor might now be a completely different character. We can’t change the set, we can’t go off and get changed into different costumes: it has to be ready and available immediately.”

In creating the movement and stage language for the play, Elliott wrote:

“The action has to be incredibly agile: you have to imagine you are in a street one minute and then in school the next. Christopher says that he doesn’t like plays, and he doesn’t like acting, which is a lie! I was very keen—and Simon was too—that the show shouldn’t seem realistic: it’s an illusion, if anything. You have to believe you are in a school, and sometimes swim in Christopher’s imagination. So if Christopher decides that he wants to be an astronaut and he is going to be weightless, then you as an audience have to believe that he is an astronaut and he is weightless. Even if you can see how the illusion is created, there’s no lie to it.”ⁱⁱⁱ

FRANTIC ASSEMBLY

The National Theatre's premiere production worked with the devised theatre company Frantic Assembly on the movement and staging of *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*. Frantic Assembly specializes in using physical theatre to communicate the motivation or hidden emotions of the characters on stage.

Frantic Assembly is a collaborative theatre production company whose work is distinguished by its physical style that combines movement, design, music, and text.

THE FRANTIC METHOD

"The Frantic Method is approaching devising as a series of tasks, each broken down into building blocks. This is designed to establish progress from the simplest discoveries.

Performers are encouraged to take a moment back to its simplest truth and build from there. This places dancers, actors, students, teachers, and all participants on the same starting point.

Using these building blocks, they are empowered to find and create complex works through a process that is safe, fun, and constantly illuminating.

I wanted to develop a language that felt accessible and honest. I wanted to share a process that would take people past their perceived limitations.

Over the years this has helped performers understand how their bodies tell stories and how those bodies are capable of a strength and nuance they may not have recognized before.

The Frantic Method has helped Frantic Assembly become leaders in movement direction within theatre. It is essentially direction through movement and promotes an acute physical awareness that can be implemented in moments of stillness just as it can be in the physically spectacular.

The Frantic Method is at the heart of all our work on stage and in studios across the world, from *The Fatherland*, *Things I Know To Be True*, *Othello*, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* to our work with students of all ages and abilities."

-Scott Graham Artistic Director and Co-Founder^{iv}

DEvised THEATRE

Devised Theatre is "a process in which the whole creative team develops a show collaboratively. From actors to technicians, everyone is involved in the creative process."

ACTIVITY

Over the course of the play, Christopher makes several journeys. The actors in the production worked with members of the theatre company Frantic Assembly to create movements to help illustrate the situations, objects, and people that Christopher meets along the way. Working individually and in groups, create physical movements that interpret your own and Christopher's journey.

- Ask everyone in your group to imagine their own journey home from school. Working one by one, act out a short version of it. Make sure to have a clear start and end point to your journey.
- Once everyone has acted out their journey home, decide on one person's journey to act out together. For Christopher, objects become more significant than people. People are quite confusing to him, whereas inanimate objects are constant and dependable. When creating the journey, there should be no talking and the group should focus on trying to create the objects that it encounters along the way.
- Watch as many of them as you can and reflect on what worked.
- Now try acting out the speech from Simon Stephens' script detailing Christopher arriving home. Focus on the objects mentioned in the speech and make sure that the whole speech is spoken as part of the performance, incorporating anything useful from your first round of improvisation.

"I came home from school one day and no one answered the door, so I went and found the secret key that we keep under a flowerpot outside the kitchen window. I let myself into the house and wiped my feet on the mat. I put my keys on the bowl on the table. I took my coat off and hung by the side of the fridge so it would be ready for school the next day and gave three pellets of rat food to Toby who is my pet rat. I made myself a raspberry milkshake and heated it up in the microwave. Then I went up to my bedroom and turned on my bedroom light and played six games of Tetris and got to level 38 which is my fourth best ever score. An hour later Father came home from work." (p. 12)

Things to consider for performance:

1. Does your group have a clear sense of 'journey', always moving forward, going from one end of the space to the other, etc.?
2. Incorporate all the objects that are mentioned. Have you ignored any? Why? Can you stretch yourselves to attempt the things you don't quite know how to do?
3. Consider the spread and logic of your group's transitions from being one object to another—is it interesting to see the same actor playing the front door, then the fridge, then bedroom door? Do the objects come to Christopher or the other way round? What happens if you switch without having time to plan it?

Exercise adapted from *The National Theatre Learning Background Pack*:

www.curiousonstage.com/learning

FORM, STYLE, AND STRUCTURE

THE FORM

As a play, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* is meant to be seen in performance. Each time a play is staged it is a new version of the play and contributes to how the audience perceives the events and characters on stage.

THE GENRE

Family Drama: It tells the story of Christopher Boone and his family. During the play Christopher must navigate new discoveries about his mother and father that changes his understanding and perception of them and his family.

Crime Mystery: Christopher's journey starts as an investigation into the death of Mrs. Shears' dog. Christopher's sleuthing uncovers new mysteries that he must explore, including the truth about what happened with his mother.

Coming of Age Story: A coming of age story follows the main character as they grow up and learn about themselves and the world. As Christopher navigates both the family drama and his crime mystery, he discovers his own strength and potential.

THE STRUCTURE

Play Within a Play. *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* is a play within a play because we discover that the audience is watching the play that Christopher has written to be performed in his school. This allows for creativity with the narrative voice, and the ability to play with space and time.

Multiple Narrators. Christopher's story is narrated by several different voices: his own, his teacher Siobhan who is reading the story, and the Ensemble. This helps to give the audience a sense of how chaotic and detailed the world can seem in Christopher's mind. One minute the audience can be hearing about an event from Christopher's perspective, then Siobhan can enter the scene to take over narration. When Christopher looks out of the train window, five voices from the Ensemble tell the audience about details he notices. A person without Christopher's mind might only notice one of those things. It helps the audience understand him better.

DEFINITIONS

FORM is the type of text and genre that the writer chooses to use.

GENRE is a category of artistic, musical, or literary composition characterized by a style, form, or content.

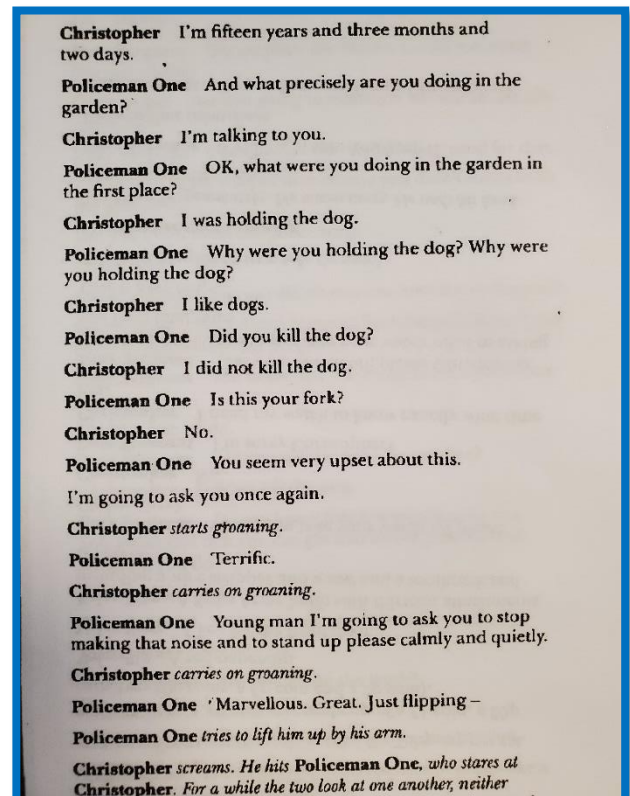
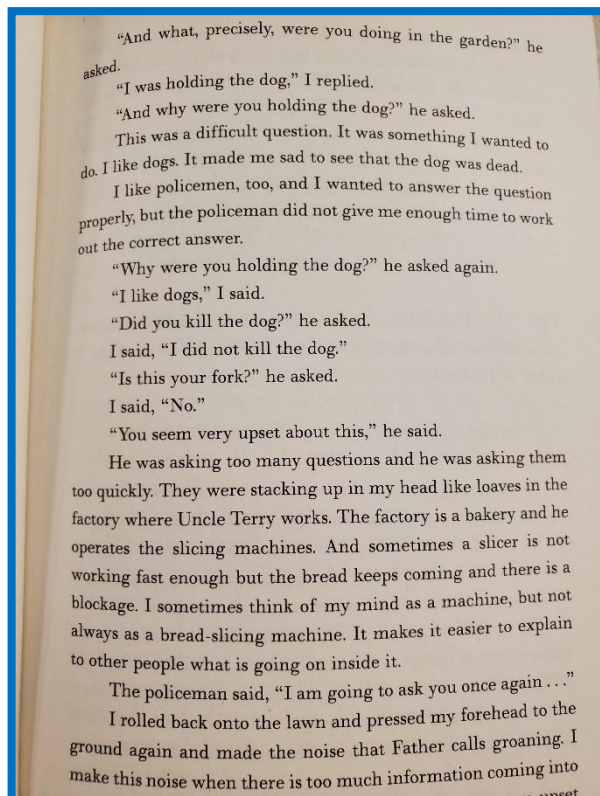
STRUCTURE is how the writer chooses to order the events of the story. A traditional narrative follows a beginning, middle, and end structure.

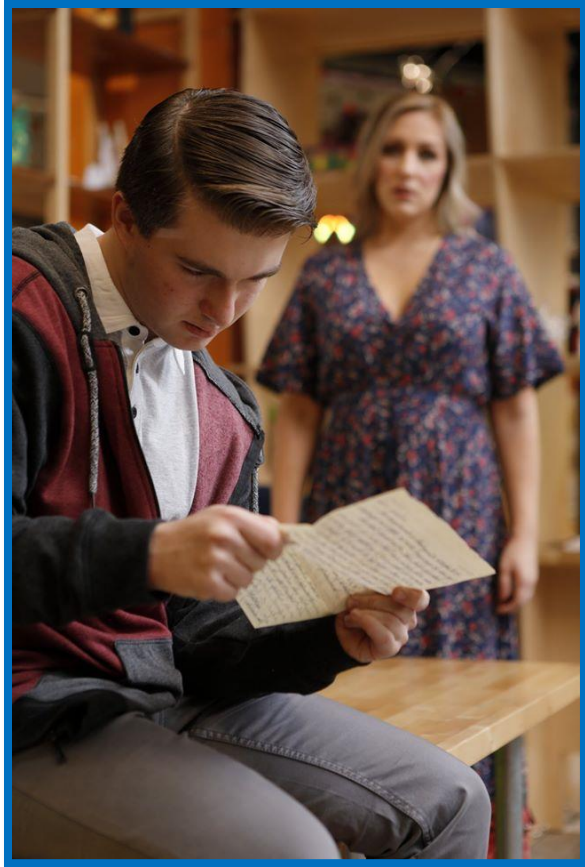
Time and Space. Often in *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, the chronology of events is mixed up. The action leaps from the present to the past regularly, and without warning. The same can be said of space or location. Christopher can go from a train, to outside a house, to outer space, at any point. This makes the events of the play seem fluid and unreal. This again helps the audience get a grasp of what life must be like for Christopher.

Play versus Novel

Novel	Play
Written to be read	Written to be performed
People, things, and events can be described as well as presented with dialogue or narration	People, things, and events must be presented through physical movement or dialogue
First or third person narration	Third person narration
Personal or individual experience. Open to your own interpretation and ideas	Shared experience. Set, characters, and story are show through others' interpretations

The picture on the left is a page from the novel of *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, while the picture on the right is a page from a script. **What differences do you see? How is the same event or action expressed differently? What do you notice about the layout of a script (right picture)?**





THE CURIOUS INCIDENT OF THE DOG IN THE NIGHT- TIME In Context

The [In Context](#) section provides you with perspectives, information, and articles about the mind of Christopher Boone, the way we define and label ourselves and others, and inspiration around the creation of the story.

Novelist Mark Haddon describes the book as: “It’s a novel whose central character describes himself as ‘a mathematician with some behavior difficulties’. If anything, it’s a novel about difference, about being an outsider, about seeing the world in a surprising and revealing way.”

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- What are your assumptions about Christopher Boone before and after you read the novel?
- What are your favorite hobbies? What defines who you are and your identity?
- How do labels or language affect how we think about ourselves? About other people? About the world around us?
- What are challenges and goals that you have for yourself?

DIAGNOSING CHRISTOPHER

By Katy Rudd from the Background pack for Simon Stephen's *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* at The National Theatre, London, 2013, p. 13.

In neither the novel nor the play, Christopher Boone is never actually defined as having autism or Asperger's Syndrome.

In an early publication of his novel *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, Mark Haddon allowed the word autism to be printed on the cover, a decision he later regretted because he is uncomfortable with the novel being used as a reference or guide book for people with autism or Asperger's.

He explained that *Curious Incident* is not a book about Asperger's. 'It's a novel whose central character describes himself as "a mathematician with some behavioral difficulties". If anything it's a novel about difference, about being an outsider, about seeing the world in a surprising and revealing way. It's as much a novel about us as it is about Christopher.'

Autism is a spectrum disorder that affects people in multifarious ways. During the research for the play we spoke to various specialists and one said that Christopher displays too many traits to be authentically autistic.

Mark says, 'I know very little about the subject. I did no research for *Curious Incident* other than photographing the interiors of Swindon and Paddington stations, reading Oliver Sacks' essay about Temple Grandin and a handful of newspaper and magazine articles about, or by, people with Asperger's and autism.' He continues, 'I deliberately didn't add to this list. Imagination always trumps research. I thought that if I could make Christopher real to me then he'd be real to readers. I gave him some rules to live by and some character traits and opinions, all of which I borrowed from people I know, none of whom would be labelled as having a disability. Judging by the reaction, it seems to have worked.'

In many ways Christopher is 'high-functioning', his ability to excel in mathematics is savant. His communication skills and grasp of the English language are impressive (indeed his book is a best seller!), yet his behavioral difficulties are indicative of a very low functioning and highly challenging teenager.

Diagnosing Christopher is a pointless exercise. He is an individual, like any other character. It is not possible for an actor to play the whole spectrum of autism or Asperger's. Our job is to present a character who has integrity and depth and who is unique and has individual quirks, flaws and dreams. This is Christopher John Francis Boone.

Watch Your Language When Talking About Autism

By Liz Pellicano, Reader in Developmental Cognitive Science, UCL
Originally published by The Conversation, July 13, 2015

<https://theconversation.com/watch-your-language-when-talking-about-autism-44531>

Words matter. The way we use them to communicate with or about others can have a huge impact on people's lives. This is especially the case when it comes to disability. Handicapped. Retarded. Mad. Activists have campaigned hard to eradicate such terms, which are offensive and perpetuate a negative view of disabled people – one as passive, unable to take control over their own lives.

Responding to this demand, recent government guidelines have encouraged clinicians and teachers to use positive and inclusive language, including the use of language that does not define people by their disability.

“Person-first” language has become what’s called for: that is, calling someone a “person with autism” – describing what a person has, not what a person is. This has become the recommended way to speak with or about disability – in the press, journal articles, hospitals and schools.

It is difficult not to see the good intentions behind this approach. But perhaps it is not really as inclusive as it claims to be.

Many disabled people have argued vehemently against the use of “person-first” language, instead preferring “disability-first” language, such as he or she is an “autistic person”. Nowhere is this issue more hotly debated than the field of autism. Many autistic activists argue that person-first language is dehumanizing, as if they can somehow be separated from their autism, that there is a “typical” person affected by autism, rather than a person whose life is in part defined by being autistic.

These are difficult questions. But it is surely not difficult to argue that truly inclusive language should be defined by the people who are actually autistic. Not by well-meaning outsiders, no matter how powerful. Take a look at the [#actuallyautistic](#) and [#describingautism](#) twitter handles to see some of these debates.

Not Right for Everyone

Recently, together with the National Autistic Society, my colleagues and I asked 3,470 autistic people, parents and their broader support network, about the words they use to describe themselves, their children or the people with whom they work. Did they prefer to use “autistic person”? Or “person with autism”? Or “person who has autism”?

Person-first isn't always best

The results clearly showed that people use many terms when talking about autism. The words “autism” and “on the autism spectrum” were clear favorites among all the groups added together. But there was much disagreement on the use of several words and phrases. Professionals preferred to use “person with autism” while autistic adults and family members preferred on the whole to use “is autistic”. They thought that the term allowed them to describe the centrality of autism to their lives.

One autistic woman said:

In describing someone who's autistic as 'a person with autism/person who has autism/(or worst of all) person who suffers from autism' you imply that autism is separate from a person, and behind their autism is a 'normal' person.

Agree to Disagree

But these preferences were not unanimous, of course. Instead, for autistic people, family members and professionals, the words they used often hinged on what people believed autism to be. Those who felt that autism is one trait of many in a person tended to prefer person-first language. Others, who felt that autism is central to their or their child's identity, opted to use “autistic”. Others still noted the need to use different words depending on whom one is speaking to.



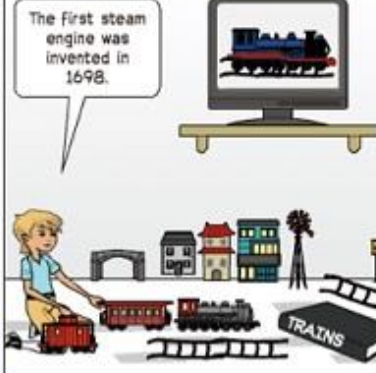
There is no one way of describing autism on which everyone can agree. There never will be. In order to answer who the question of who gets to decide which terms should be used, first, everyone connected to autism needs to come to accept the fact of disagreement and to respond to it with openness, flexibility and tolerance of divergence of opinion. We should always seek to establish how people wish to be described – by asking them directly, if possible – and not impose external views or guidelines upon them.

Perhaps even more importantly, we need to create the conditions for debate and conversation between all of the people who are touched by autism and work in the field. It is, after all, only when we listen to each other that we discover what individual words are taken to mean and why they often matter so much.

VOCABULARY AND TERMS

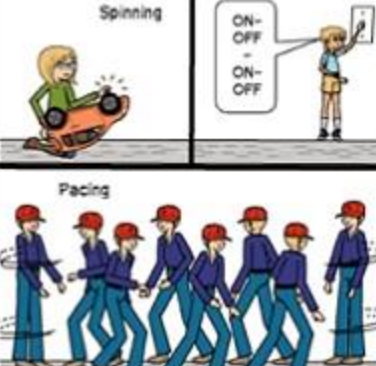


Autism Vocabulary 01

by Lisa G Smith

echolalia	scripting	perseverate
		
<p>The repeating of sounds, words or phrases is called echolalia. People who echo may not be able to communicate effectively or express their own thoughts but they parrot back things they have heard. If they are asked a question they might repeat the question and not answer the question.</p>	<p>Scripting is similar to echolalia. Many people with autism repeat scenes from movies or dialogue from books. This is called scripting.</p>	<p>To perseverate is to become stuck on something and be unable to mentally shift gears. People with autism often perseverate on one subject and alienate their peers by doing so.</p>




Autism Vocabulary 03

by Lisa G Smith

stim	transition	meltdown
		
<p>The word "stim" is short for the self-stimulatory behaviors or the stereotypic behaviors that are associated with autism. The spinning of objects, vocal echoes or any other repetitive behavior that people with autism become focused on are called stims.</p>	<p>A transition is simply a change from one environment or activity to another. Transitions can be hard for a person with autism. It sometimes helps if warnings are given before a transition.</p>	<p>Meltdowns are often mistaken as temper tantrums. A meltdown is not about anger but can happen because of confusion or overstimulation. Meltdowns can be loud or they may be very quiet. A person may strike out or may withdraw.</p>

Autism vocabulary 04

by Lisa G Smith

elopement	bolt or wander	visual schedule
		
<p>To elope is to leave without permission or without letting others know where you are going. Elopement is of great concern in the autism community.</p>	<p>To bolt or wander is similar to elopement. A person who bolts or wanders has often seen something they want to get closer to and they do not focus on any of the dangers involved. They might cross traffic or get close to deep water.</p>	<p>A visual schedule tells a person what to expect next and in what order. People with autism often benefit by knowing what is next as it may be harder for them to transition from one activity to another easily.</p>

Reposted from Quirks and Chaos: <http://quirks-and-chaos.blogspot.com/2016/01/autism-increased-my-vocabulary.html>

DETECTIVE WORK: HOLMES AND BOONE

Sherlock Holmes first appeared in the 1887 short novel “A Study in Scarlet” and immediately became one of the most beloved characters in popular culture. Christopher Boone often refers to the famous detective throughout the book, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*. Explaining the plot devices in his favorite Sherlock Holmes book, *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, serves as a way for Christopher to explain the progress of his own detective work.

Sherlock Holmes is an extraordinary detective because of his particular character traits that allow him to see investigations, and the world, in a unique way. He is particularly known for his uncanny ability to gather evidence based on his honed skills of observation and deductive reasoning. As he notes: “When you have excluded the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth.”

Average Joe	Sherlock Holmes
Look at the evidence there is	Looks at what is and notices what's absent
Goes by physical evidence	Uses imagination and intuition
Jumps to conclusions	Refuses to be satisfied with partial explanation
Ignores what doesn't fit into "normal" framework	Must make sense of every detail, no matter how small

Christopher admires Holmes because he uses logic to solve mysteries and he tries to copy Holmes's methods as he attempts to solve the mystery of Wellington's death. In the novel and play, Sherlock Holmes is a symbol for Christopher's personal values of logic and mental detachment.

The title of the novel (and play) *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* comes from the short story about Sherlock Holmes, "The Adventure Silver Blaze":

"Is there any point in which you would wish to draw my attention?"

"To the curious incident of the dog in the nighttime."

"The dog did nothing in the nighttime."

"That, was the curious incident," remarked Sherlock Holmes.

In "The Adventure of Silver Blaze", Sherlock Holmes and his partner Dr. Watson travel by train to investigate the apparent theft of the racehorse Silver Blaze and the murder of his trainer, John Straker. Although the police quickly identify a suspect, Fitzroy Simpson, Holmes notices several facts that don't line up. He tracks down the missing horse, and then turns his attention to Straker's murder.

The puzzle pieces to be put together are: Straker was killed by a blow to the skull; Simpson's cravat was in his hand; a small cataract knife was found at the scene; the guard on duty was drugged with opium; Straker's pockets had a candle and a milliner's bill; there is a curious incident with a dog; and a problem with the sheep kept in the stable who have suddenly become lame.

Through observation, exploration, and deductive reasoning, Holmes puts together the full picture: Straker had a mistress and in order to satisfy her expensive tastes he tried to rig the race against his own horse by intentionally hurting Silver Blaze. The "curious incident of the dog in the night-time" is easily explained: the dog made no noise because there was no danger from a stranger. Holmes explains: "I had grasped the significance of the silence of the dog, for one true inference invariably suggests others...Obviously the midnight visitor was someone whom the dog knew well." It was Straker who removed Silver Blaze from his stall and led him out into the moor in order to use the cataract knife on him, inflicting a wound that would render him temporarily lame but still be undetectable on examination. Instead, Straker was killed when the horse panicked and kicked the trainer in the head. The lame sheep had been used by Straker for practice.

The deceptively simple exchange between Sherlock Holmes and Watson about the "curious incident of the dog in the nighttime" proved to be the key to the case of the missing horse. Despite all the evidence to the contrary, it was the "absence of evidence" that had the most meaning. When the racehorse was stolen, why didn't the dog bark?

How Christopher and Sherlock Are Alike?

- Very literal
- Take everything seriously and cannot comprehend sarcasm or metaphor
- They like to work in patterns
- They struggle in social situations
- Tend to avoid interacting with people as they find it difficult to read people's emotions

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- What other shared traits do you see between Christopher and Sherlock?
- What might the title of the play mean? Think about the specific words and how they work together.
- Why might the author have chosen this reference for his book?
- What does it mean to think fully and carefully about an issue?
- How do you see this idea of active observation, asking questions, and choice reflected in *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*?

Metaphor and Meaning

"The word metaphor means carrying something from one place to another and it is when you describe something by using a word for something that it isn't. this means the word metaphor is a metaphor."
Siobhan

A metaphor is a figure of speech that directly compares one thing to another for rhetorical effect. The most common metaphors use the structure "X is Y".

One of the most famous examples of metaphor in English comes from William Shakespeare:

"All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players."

Shakespeare is comparing the world to a stage by saying one is the other (the world is a stage). He is not saying that the world is a literal stage, but by comparing the two he invites us to think about the similarities between the two.

Metaphors are used to make a direct comparison between two different things in order to give a quality to the first thing. They paint a picture. Sometimes the fastest way to convey meaning is through images, showing a listener, reader, or audience through a recognizable image rather than describing in words. This relies on the assumption that all parties know and understand the multiple meaning associated with an image or phrase. For example, in English we may say "it's raining cats and dogs", which we understand to mean it's raining very heavily. If translated to another language, the literal words would not have the same meaning.

Four Types of Metaphor

1. **Standard.** A standard metaphor is one that compares two unlike things using the basic construction of X is Y.
2. **Implied.** An implied metaphor is a type of metaphor that compares two things that are not alike without mentioning one of the things. For example: “A woman barked a warning at her child.” The implied metaphor compares the woman to a dog, without mentioning the dog.
3. **Visual.** A visual metaphor compares one thing to a visual image that suggests an association. Visual metaphors are commonly used in advertising. For example: a car manufacturer showing their latest sports car next to an image of a panther. The metaphor is used to suggest the car is as slick, fast, and cool as the wild animal.
4. **Extended.** An extended metaphor is a version of a metaphor that extends over the course of multiple lines, paragraphs or stanzas of poetry.

Dramatic Metaphor

The use of metaphor in drama is a device a playwright uses to draw comparison between two seemingly dissimilar things.

This is different than a symbol, which often involves an object that is substituted for something else. For example, a rose (an object) on stage substituting for love (feeling). The literal meaning of the object is that it is a flower, but the symbolic meaning of the object is larger and depends on the characters, plot, dialogue, setting, and context of the drama.

In dramatic metaphor, a play title, event, line of dialogue, image or setting is compared to something else in order to enhance its meaning. For example, in Arthur Miller’s play *The Crucible*, the subject matter of the play, which is the Salem witch trials is a metaphor for the world the playwright was living in at the time, the witch hunt for Communists in the 1950s.

ACTIVITY

Object metaphor is a strategy that invites students to make meaning by describing an object that represents an aspect of their identity or of a character.

1. Assemble a large assortment of random objects (mirror, spoon, candle, book, etc.).
2. Invite students to respond to a prompt. For example:
 1. How does the object connect to a character from the story?
 2. How does the object represent the tone or mood of the story?
3. First ask the student to describe the object and then explain how it connects to your prompt.
4. The activity can be repeated with multiple prompts. Remind students that the same object can and should be used by different people.

Reflect

5. What part was easy? What part was difficult? Why?
6. What were some of the common ideas represented in the metaphors that were created?
7. How might the objects or images be used when creating a stage picture?

ACTIVITY

Explore the list of metaphors below. Use one of the metaphors as a title of a story you'll write using the meaning of the metaphor as your theme.

A House of Cards

Actions Speaking Louder Than Words

Apple of Her Eye

Skeleton in the Cupboard

Time is Money

Turn Over a New Leaf

Music to My Ears

Off the Hook

Pulling Your Leg

Icing on the Cake

Life Is a Roller Coaster

We Had a Pig of a Day

Select one of the metaphors that appeals to you _____

What does the metaphor mean?

Use your writing skills to create a story that uses the metaphor above as the main idea. Use the original metaphor as the title and create an original story that illustrates the meaning of the metaphor you selected. What will your story be about?

After you've outlined the story, start writing. Share your work with others in the class. Read the story to them without saying the title and see if they can guess the metaphor that was the basis for your story. Listen to your classmate's story as well. Share your stories with the class.

CCSS utilized (Grades 9-12, Writing: 3, 4, 5, 9, 10; Speaking and Listening: 1,4)

RESOURCES

PRINT

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time by Mark Haddon
The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time: The play by Simon Stevens
The Reason I Jump by Naoki Higashida
Zero Degrees of Empathy: A New Theory of Human Cruelty by Simon Baron-Cohen
Look Me in the Eye: My Life with Asperger's by John Elder Robison

WEB

OFFICIAL BROADWAY SITE: <http://www.curiousonbroadway.com/>
NATIONAL THEATRE SITE: <http://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/>
THEATRE DEVELOPMENT FUND AUTISM THEATRE INITIATIVE
<https://www.tdf.org/nyc/40/Autism-Theatre-Initiative>
UNIFIED THEATER
<http://www.unifiedtheater.org/>

Unified Theater dissolves typical barriers between youth through transformative, school based performing arts programming. At Unified Theater, young people with and without disabilities, of all backgrounds, come together as equals to put on a production. The production is entirely organized, written, and directed by the students themselves.

VIDEO

"Today's Man" • Director: Lizzie Gottlieb <http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/todaysman/>
"A Mother's Courage: Talking Back to Autism" • Director: Friðrik Þór Friðriksson
"Only Human" Make Me Normal • Director: Jonathon Smith

AUTISM ASSOCIATIONS & FOUNDATIONS

www.friendsofasi.org
www.parentnetworkwny.org
www.nationalautismresources.com
www.nationalautismassociation.org
www.autism.com
www.autismweb.com
www.ahany.org
www.autismhwy.com
www.autism-society.org
www.yai.org

ⁱ "The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time (play)." *BBC Bitesize*, 18 December 2019, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/topics/zpqyg82>.

ⁱⁱ Haddon, Mark. "Mark Haddon on The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time—Guardian book club." 18 December 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2013/apr/13/mark-haddon-curious-incident-book-club>.

ⁱⁱⁱ "Interview: Marianne Elliott, director." *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time Background pack*, edited by Jane Bell, The Royal National Theater Board, 2004, pp.18-19.

^{iv} Graham, Scott. "The Frantic Method." *Frantic Assembly*, 30 December 2019, <https://www.franticassembly.co.uk/the-frantic-method>.