

# Individual Learning Packet

## Teaching Unit

# The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time

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# The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time

## Notes on Teaching

The novel, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, is the story of a murder investigation undertaken by an autistic teen.

Autism is an important element in the story, both as a lens through which the action is seen and as a filter through which it is interpreted. The novel increases the reader's understanding of people with autism, often using humor as a tool.

The story contains many examples of British word usage (listed in italics in the Vocabulary sections), as well as some adult or vulgar language. The subject matter includes marriage and infidelity, physical and mental abuse, animal cruelty, and the challenges of living with someone with special needs.

All references are from the First Vintage Contemporaries edition of *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, copyright May 2004.

# The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time

## Objectives

*By the end of this Unit, the student will be able to:*

1. discuss the characteristics of autism, including how being autistic equips Christopher to solve the mystery.
2. discuss the skills and attributes required to live, work, or interact effectively with Christopher, using Siobhan, Mr. Boone, and Christopher's mother as examples.
3. discuss Christopher's expanding understanding of honesty, including examples of how he learns to deal with the gray areas of relative honesty and partial truth that can be described by the phrase, situational ethics.
4. understand the importance of mathematics in Christopher's life, both during the story as a coping mechanism and in the long term as a potential career.
5. analyze the character of Christopher's father, examining his personal limitations and strengths and assessing his effectiveness as a parent.
6. compare the three policemen in the story by considering their demeanors and comprehension of Christopher's unique needs and evaluating their effectiveness in maintaining public safety.
7. discuss how the emotional and intellectual limitations of Christopher's mother are conveyed and how they affect her ability to deal with Christopher.
8. evaluate the curious incident of the dog in the night-time as an example of coming-of-age fiction.
9. cite and discuss the use of mathematical puzzles and classic problems in the story.
10. give examples of minor characters who add direction or depth to the narrative.
11. identify the main characters who interact with Christopher and summarize their relationships with him.
12. point out examples of humor in the story, and discuss what makes these examples funny.
13. identify the literary devices used in the novel.

# The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time

## Questions for Essay and Discussion

1. Describe the behaviors that are characteristic of autism. Cite examples from the story to support your answer.
2. Define one of the following literary terms, explain how it is used, and discuss the effectiveness of its usage in the story:
  - digression
  - humor
  - irony
3. Do you think Christopher should be allowed to get a driver's license? Why or why not?
4. Did the digressions about mathematical problems help you understand some of the mathematical concepts in the story and how Christopher's mind works.
5. Compare and contrast the coping mechanisms that work for Christopher and the coping mechanisms used by you and your peers.
6. How does Christopher's autism protect him from some highly emotional realities? Cite examples, including his mother's death, his father's hiding of her letters, and the dangers of his trip to London.
7. Evaluate the curious incident of the dog in the night-time, including the readability of the book, the author's grasp of his material, especially his portrayal of an autistic person, and the way the story is structured.
8. Discuss the character of Christopher's mother. Include how the author conveys her intellectual limitations and emotional fragility.
9. Momentum occurs in a story when a decision or an event leads to a series of consequences or other situations. Choose one of the following events, and discuss the effects of it and how those effects build momentum toward the conclusion of the story:
  - Christopher prepares for his A level exam in mathematics.
  - Christopher finds letters from his mother.
  - Christopher decides to go to London.
10. Discuss the use of humor, including black or dark humor, in the story and how it either intensifies a situation or diffuses the emotion of it. Provide examples from the text to support your ideas.

# The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time

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1. What can the reader infer from the very straightforward and factual opening paragraph?

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2. Who are Wellington and Mrs. Shears?

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3. What does the narrator say that tells the reader where this story is going?

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17.

## Vocabulary

lose my rag – lose my temper

1. Why does being arrested make Christopher feel calmer?

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2. How does Christopher's reaction to riding to the police station differ from what you might expect?

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**79.**

1. What is the significance of Christopher's white lie?

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2. Christopher's father says that Mrs. Shears is not a friend anymore. What does that statement suggest?

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3. Instead of just telling him to stop his investigation, Christopher's father makes him promise to stop. Why?

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**198. – 200.**

1. Describe Christopher's dream.

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2. Why do you think the author included this dream in the story?

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