

TSSMTM
Creating VCE Success

ENGLISH TEXT SUMMARY NOTES
“The Curious Incident Of The Dog
In The Night-time”

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AREA 1:

READING & THE STUDY OF TEXTS: THE CURIOUS INCIDENT OF THE DOG IN THE NIGHT-TIME

Chapter 1 GENRE

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time is a detective story based on Christopher's investigation of the murder of his neighbour's dog, Wellington. Christopher describes his book as a "murder mystery novel" and "a puzzle". His admiration for Sherlock Holmes leads him to consult the detective's words and actions whenever he reaches an impasse. Christopher's murder investigation reveals many secrets about his parents and raises questions about other aspects of his personal life, thus the real puzzle encompasses his place in the world and provides a dramatic story of personal discovery.

The novel has some elements of comedy. Even though Christopher states that "there are no jokes in this book", there is some humour but it is tinged with pathos. Christopher speaks his unfiltered thoughts about people, such as Steve, a boy at school who has severe physical disabilities and "needs help to eat his food and could not even fetch a stick". His complete honesty and lack of comprehension of others' emotions makes Siobhan laugh at times and also provides some comic relief from the intensity of the bleak family circumstances.

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time is a form of realist fiction. Christopher's narration is autobiographical as he reveals his personal beliefs and characteristics. The choice of an idiosyncratic narrator grounds the text in realism. Nonetheless, Christopher is a fictional person and an imperfect human being like everyone else. Furthermore, Haddon offers a fascinating characterization of autism.

Chapter 2

STRUCTURE

The text contains fifty-one chapters, numbered with prime numbers, from 2 to 233, rather than conventional sequential cardinal numbers. This is because the protagonist likes prime numbers. Most chapters are short and they are all presented as entries into Christopher's book. The text is unusual because of the inclusion of maps and diagrams which serve to assist the reader to see the world through Christopher's eyes.

The novel follows a conventional plot pattern: introduction, complications, climax, and conclusion. In Chapters 2 to 53, Christopher introduces his world and his relationships with his father and teacher. Christopher reveals that he is both highly intelligent and socially restricted. The plotline of the murder case is introduced primarily to attract interest. This is a stylistic device which Siobhan suggests to Christopher.

The events of Christopher's murder investigation are the subject of Chapters 59 to 167. In this section of the novel, Christopher discovers much more than he anticipates. When he finds out his mother is not dead and that his father is Wellington's murderer, he decides to search for his mother in London.

Christopher's perception of the world is portrayed on his journey to London from Chapter 173 to 227. This climatic and confronting section portrays Christopher's sensitivity to the world through the ordinary experience of a train ride. Visual aids are used extensively to draw the reader into Christopher's mind.

The novel concludes in the last two chapters, which present the actions of Christopher's parents as they seek to return Christopher to a safe life. Upon returning to Swindon, his mother ends her relationship with Mr Shears and his father makes significant effort to restore his relationship with Christopher. The ending is unresolved and gives the impression that it will take a long time for Christopher's family to re-establish balance in their lives. There is some hope for the future of the protagonist, whose remarkable achievements presented in the novel include an A grade for his A-level Maths exam. The appendix provides a reminder of the importance of structure and logic in Christopher's world view.