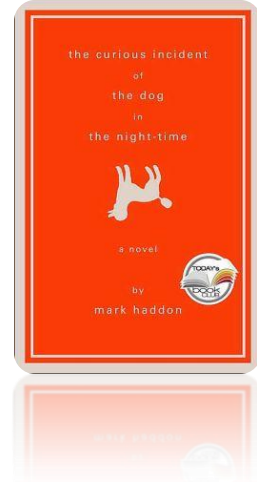


**Title:** The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time  
**Author:** Mark Haddon  
**Grade Level:** 8<sup>th</sup> Grade



### **SUMMARY**

What is a family? Is there a stereotype of a “good” parent? Who has the right to say? This fictional book explores the life of one family, and is told from the son’s point of view. It begins with a rather ordinary incident, the death of a neighbor’s dog, but there is really nothing “ordinary” about the action that follows. Although the setting is England, this story is universal and includes problems and discoveries that families everywhere face.

### **QUESTIONS TO TALK ABOUT WHILE READING**

#### **VOCABULARY**

It’s important to make sure that your child has an understanding of key words in the book. Talking about words while reading is a great way for your child to learn new words.

In this book, you might talk about these words:

- muzzle (pg. 1)
- cardinal numbers (pg. 11)
- prime numbers (pg. 11)
- metaphor (pg. 15)
- simile (pg. 17)
- red herring (pg. 31)
- hypothetical (pg. 139)
- Pythagoras’s theorem (pg. 124)
- schizophrenic (pg. 121)
- curious
- quadratic equation (pg. 163)

#### **KEY IDEAS and THEMES**

In addition to words, it’s important to talk about key ideas and themes and how they develop over the course of the book. Here are some examples to get you started:

1. (Title/ Symbolism)  
The title of this book doesn’t really become clear until the end of the story. What does the dog seem to symbolize? Why is the incident regarding the dog called curious? From the story give some examples that could support the idea that the title is a metaphor? What is it a metaphor for?
2. (Point of view)  
Who tells this story (narrator)? How might this story be told differently if another character had been the narrator? Why do you think Haddon chose Christopher as the narrator?
3. (Conflicts)

All interesting stories have problems to solve. They can be external conflicts-between characters and the environment or internal conflicts- choices that a character has to make within (ex. To steal, love, lie, flee or fight). In this story there are conflicts of both kinds. For example, Christopher is determined to find the dog's killer even though his father tells him not to. Using specific examples from the book, find the conflicts that each character faces. Then decide what kind of conflict they are. Why does his father lie to Christopher?

4. (Characters)

A major character is one that is crucial to the story. The story could not happen the same way without that character. Who are the major characters in this story? Why are they essential? An author has to develop the characters to make them seem real and believable. They have a personality, a physical appearance, thoughts and ideas, actions, ways of relating to others, ways of communicating. Look at page 46. Then look at page 140. Christopher makes lists and discusses himself. How would you describe him to a stranger? Using examples from the story describe the other major characters.

5. (What makes a family)

The idea of what makes a family has really changed over the last few decades. Describe your family. Now think about the one in this book. Describe it. How is it similar and/or different from yours? Give some examples of other families that you know? What events and circumstances help to make a family what it is? Compare your family with Christopher's family.

6. (Reading between the lines)

A lot is left unsaid in this story. We have to infer why the characters do the things they do. Based on what you read, discuss why Christopher's mother left? Why did his father kill the dog? Why did he lie so often to Christopher? What other things did you decide that were not specifically stated in the story, but are based on the actions and thoughts that are stated?

**EXTRA ACTIVITIES:**

1. Christopher is very interested in mysteries. He discusses The Sherlock Holmes story "The Hound of the Baskervilles." Look up this story and read it together as a family. Read some other mysteries written by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.
2. On page 71 Christopher quotes a passage, which he thinks is an "ancient language." It is really Old English. See if you can translate it.
3. Christopher seems to enjoy metaphors and similes. Make a list of some everyday activities, thoughts and objects in your lives. Now create some metaphors or similes from them.
4. Although Haddon never states why Christopher is in a special class, we might assume that he has autism. Perhaps you know someone who is autistic. Do some research together as a family regarding autism. Discuss how you would help someone, including a family member, with this. How could this affect the way a family works?