

WHS Book Rationale

Title: the curious incident of the dog in the night-time

Author: Mark Haddon

- **Intended Audience**

English 12

- **Brief summary and educational significance**

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time is a 2003 novel by British writer Mark Haddon. It won the 2003 Whitbread Book of the Year and the 2004 Commonwealth Writers' Prize for Best First Book. The story is written in the first-person perspective of Christopher John Francis Boone, a 15-year-old boy with Asperger syndrome living in Swindon, Wiltshire. He discovers the dead body of Wellington, the house across the street's dog, speared by a garden fork. He decides to investigate the dog's death, despite his father's orders to stay out of other people's business. However, he is severely limited by his fears and difficulties when interpreting the world around him. Throughout his adventures, Christopher records his experiences in a book: a "murder mystery novel". During his investigation, Christopher meets people whom he has never before encountered including the elderly Mrs. Alexander, who informs Christopher that his mother is alive and had an affair with Mr. Shears. The book closes with Christopher optimistic about his future, having solved the mystery of the murdered dog, gone to London on his own, found his mother, written a book, and earned an A in his A-level maths exam.

- **Purpose of teaching the work and how it will be used**

The book is assigned for summer reading. It is a contemporary novel which introduces students to modern British culture. Christopher is a unique character in contemporary British literature, giving *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* the ability to help teach students about autism and give them insights into those in their community who may suffer from it. Knowledge helps leads to acceptance, therefore reading this book can ultimately help special needs students to be accepted into schools and society. Christopher is gifted in mathematics: this is reflected by his inclusion of several famous puzzles of maths and logic – a cross-content connection. Then novel alternates between the unfolding mystery, the narrator's inner life and Christopher's interest in complex mathematical problems and provides opportunities to discuss character development and perspective.

- **Potential problems: language, disabled character, atheism**

None of the characters in the novel are perfect; in fact, Christopher's parents are definitely flawed; the language is rich with slang, and it does have the occasional profanity—certainly something understandable as well as realistic in some of the extreme situations that arise in the plot. There are some violent moments in the book, but it is also laced with humor and moments of compassionate humanity.

- **Addressing potential problems**

The novel is not free of portions that might offend some, especially if taken out of the context of the entire novel and out of the context of a classroom led by a talented teacher.

However, the class discussion of the novel, allowing students to express their views and to hear those of others, to acknowledge differences in how each student may approach the same types of situations or how they may use different ethical/moral standards—and probably share many of the same standards—is an excellent context with which to open a senior English class as students begin to plan and problem-solve for their own challenging journeys ahead.