

# Boekverslag Engels The curious incident of the dog in the night-time door Mark Haddon



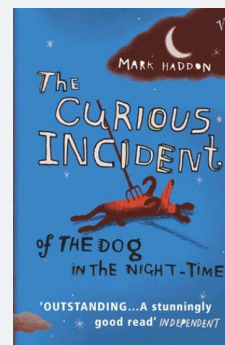
Boekverslag door een scholier

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Auteur	Mark Haddon
Genre	Psychologische roman, Jeugdboek
Eerste uitgave	2003
Vak	Engels

## General Information

*Author, title, publisher, place of publication, printing, copyright, nr. of pages*

Mark Haddon wrote the fantastic book 'The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time'. The title is a quotation from Sherlock Holmes in 'Silver Blaze' by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. It was published first by Jonathan Cape in Great Britain in the year 2003. My version was published in 2004 by Vintage, which is located at 20 Vauxhall Bridge Road in London. The printing was done by Bookmarque Ltd, which is located in Croydon, Surrey. The copyright was placed in 2003 by Mark Haddon. "Mark Haddon has asserted his right under the Copyright Designs and Patents Act 1988 to be identified as the author of this work." - Which I quoted from the book. The book isn't very long, only 272 pages with text. In total the book has about 280 pages. The book doesn't have a subtitle and also has no motto.

## First Impression

### Before and after

#### Before

First I told my friend I had to do a book report. She had read an English book herself which she thought was great. It was 'The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time' by Mark Haddon. She advised me to read it and I decided to trust my friend and read the book. But there was one problem-the library didn't have it. So I asked my father to buy it and then it turned out he had heard about the book and he had planned to buy it but couldn't remember the title anymore. So we bought the book at [www.bol.com](http://www.bol.com) and I read it. I expected it to be a childish book because the cover didn't look very mature and the fact that it was about a boy with Asperger's Syndrome made it very hard to predict what the book would be like because I know nothing about that.

#### After

The book turned out way better than I thought. You really get to look through the eyes of someone who has Asperger's Syndrome and while reading it you learn about their behaviour characteristics. Also the fact that it's written in the first person (meaning that you see everything through the main character's eyes) makes it realistic and more understandable. I felt like I had learned something after reading the

book. I won't judge people with Asperger's Syndrome the same way as I used to do because now I understand them more. I also felt kind of sad because I really liked the book and now it was finished.

## **Contents & Technique**

### *Summary*

Christopher Boone, a fifteen year old boy with Asperger's Syndrome, lives with his father in a town called Swindon. One night he finds the dog of Mrs Shears (a neighbour) dead in her garden and he decides to find out who killed the dog (who was named Wellington). He also decides to write a murder mystery novel about the whole getting the murderer thing (you actually read his book). After an argument with father who took his book Christopher searched for it in ather's closet. In the closet he finds letters which his mother wrote to him. (His mother died from a heart-attack years ago, at least that was what his father told him.) He finds out that is mother is still alive and lives in London. A little while later he also discovers that his father killed Wellington. Now he is afraid of his father and he decides to move to London to live with his mother. So he goes to the train station and off to London. When he arrives his mother is completely shocked and hugs Christopher, but he does not like people touching him (see characters). Mother lives together with Mr Shears and Christopher can stay there but his father tracks him down and comes to take Christopher back to Swindon. However Christopher stays with his mother, but sometimes he goes to stay with father because he bought a dog for him which he named Sandy.

### *Characters*

The main character is Christopher Boone. He is fifteen years old and has Asperger's Syndrome; a form of autism which is a psychiatric disorder. He lives together with his father in a town called Swindon. His main concern is to find out who killed Mrs Shears dog Wellington. His mother died of a heart-attack, at least that was what Christopher's father told him. Later in the story she turns out to still be alive, which is shocking for Christopher because this means his father lied to him. He had a good relationship with his father until he found out that he lied about his mother's death. He also has a very good relation with his teacher Siobhan. He trusts her and she helps him to write this book.

She tries to help him with his problems because he has no friends. He prefers to sit in a corner in the library or talking to Siobhan. 😊 Christopher has some weird characteristics. Because of his psychiatric disorder he developed some strange habits.

He can't tell what somebody means with his/her facial expression which is why he first had a paper with smileys on it like 😊.

He hates the colors yellow and brown. In the book he tells some reasons why he dislikes yellow and brown: (p.105/106) "Yellow 😊 1. Custard 2. Bananas (bananas also turn brown) 3. Double Yellow Lines 4. Yellow Fever (which is a disease from tropical America and West Africa which causes a high fever, acute nephritis, jaundice and hemorrhages, and it is caused by a virus transmitted by the bite of a mosquito called *Aedes aegypti*, which used to be called *Stegomyia fasciata*; and nephritis is inflammation of the kidneys) 5. Yellow Flowers (because I get hay fever from flower pollen, which is one of 3 sorts of hay fever, and the others are from grass pollen and fungus pollen, and it makes me feel ill) 6. Sweetcorn (because it comes out in your poo and you don't digest it so you are not really meant to eat it, like grass or leaves. Brown: 1. Dirt 2. Gravy 3. Poo 4. Wood (because people used to make machines and vehicles out of wood, but they don't any more because wood breaks and goes rotten and has worms in sometimes, and now people make machines and vehicles out of metal and plastic which are much better and modern) 5. Melissa Brown (who is a girl at school, who is not actually brown like Anil or Mohammed, it's just her name,

but she tore my big astronaut painting into two pieces and I threw it away even after Mrs Peters sellotaped it together again because it looked broken)" And if food is brown or yellow he puts food colouring through the food to make it red and then he can safely eat it.

He likes to describe things into great details like you can see in the quote above at for instance Yellow, number 4 the Yellow Fever. He also explains what prime numbers are (numbers you can only divide by themselves or 1), metaphors and other quite unimportant things.

The colour of cars can make his day a good or a bad day (quote p.31): "Mr Jeavons, the psychologist at the school, once asked me why four red cars in a row made it a Good Day, and three red cars in a row made it a Quite Good Day, and five red cars in a row made it a Super Good Day, and why four yellow cars in a row made it a Black Day, which is a day when I don't speak to anyone and sit on my own reading books and don't eat my lunch and Take No Risks. He said that I was clearly a very logical person, so he was surprised that I should think like this because it wasn't very logical."

He has a hard time figuring out what metaphors exactly mean because he takes "he was the apple of her eye" in such a way that he makes a picture of it in his head of someone with an apple in her eye.

Also he doesn't like to be touched; he starts screaming and groaning when somebody touches him. Even his parents can't hug him. They have their own way of hugging which is spreading their fingers and putting their hands against each other.

I think there certainly is character development. At the beginning he refuses to talk to strangers but at the end when he goes to London on his own and he asked other people where the train station was. At the beginning: (quote p.45) "I do not like strangers because I do not like people I have never met before. They are hard to understand." While later in the book he talks to a stranger: (quote p.170) "And then I cleaned the sick away from my mouth and I made a decision that I would have to find out how to get to the train station and I would have to do this by asking someone, and it would be a lady because when they talked to us about Stranger Danger at school they say that if a man comes up to you and talks to you and you feel frightened you should call out and find a lady to run to because ladies are safer." Which shows that he still is insecure about talking to strangers but he doesn't refuse to do it and he doesn't run away. Also the relationship between Christopher and his father changes dramatically. When Christopher found out that his mother was still alive and that his father killed Wellington, which meant that his father had lied to him all this time, he thought he wasn't going to be able to trust his father anymore and his father killed a dog, which also meant he was able to kill Christopher. (quote p.234) "And I said, 'I'm going to live with you because Father killed Wellington with a garden fork and I'm frightened of him.'

Some other characters are: Father, Mother and Siobhan. But it's mainly about Christopher himself and his thoughts. Christopher attracts me the most because I really got to know him. Because of him telling his thoughts I now know how a person with Asperger's Syndrome sees life, which is from a really different perspective. They think much more. The character which attracts me the least is Father because he killed a dog for a very stupid reason; Mrs Shears didn't love him so he killed Wellington with a garden fork. He also makes Christopher feel sad and he lies about Mother being dead.

### *Narrative space*

The main events take place in Swindon, the hometown of Christopher and also in London, where his mother lives. The use of narrative space isn't very important because it could have also been in Amersfoort and Utrecht, as long as there was a train station, a certain time to travel and a big city where his mother lives.

### *Time frame*

The story takes a few weeks or so. The exact year in which the story happens isn't in the book but according to the descriptions of the surrounding it seems like it was current times. Christopher also found some letters which his mother wrote eighteen months after she "died of a heart-attack". That, was according to the stamp, was 1998. 😊 The time frame is quite important, but not that it has to be very accurate. I only think that if it was in the past some things would have gone different because of the different ideas they had at that time. Also I do not think it would have taken place in the future, but I can't be sure of that because maybe the world stays about the same. Also, if it had taken place in the future the year on the stamps should have been like 2030 or something like that. The time progression doesn't go very fast but that is because Christopher explains a lot that takes one chapter and it doesn't have to do anything with the rest of the story.

The story has a closed ending. This is because Christopher finds out who killed Wellington and he now lives with his mother. The questions which were asked at the beginning and during the story are answered; he knows who killed Wellington (Father), he knows his mother is still alive and he lives together with her, but sometimes he goes to stay at his Father's house because he has a dog there, called Sandy, for whom Christopher has to take care of. 😊 There are some flashbacks in the story which tell something about the childhood of Christopher. Like for instance: (Christopher gives an example of one of his behaviour problems: Not eating/drinking) "When I was six Mother used to get me to drink strawberry-flavoured slimming meals out of a measuring jug and we would have competitions to see how fast I could drink a quarter of a litre." Which tells something about what happened in the past.

### *Point of view*

The whole story is through the eyes of Christopher. He writes a book, and the story that is told comes from his book. From the beginning to the end it's like a double story. You read the book he wrote. He also says I, my, me: "After Father had given me a bath and cleaned the sick off me and dried me off with a towel, he took me to my bedroom and put some clean clothes on me."

The point of view is very reliable because he puts in thoughts and feelings which makes it more understandable why he does things. Certainly some things he does because he has Asperger's Syndrome. This makes it much clearer even though the reader can sometimes be manipulated because when Christopher doesn't like someone he can say bad things which influence the way we think about those people. Like for instance his father; he is very frightened of him when he figured out he killed Wellington and he also makes the reader think that Father now is a horrible, dangerous person.

### *Style*

The book isn't hard to read. The vocabulary is quite easy and if there is a difficult word it was explained by Christopher because he likes everything to be very clear. I found the structure sometimes confusing because then he is, for example at school, and then there is one whole chapter about something in between which has nothing to do with what's happening.

Like for instance, at the beginning he finds Wellington dead and then there is a chapter about the fact he wants to write a murder mystery novel and then the next chapter starts with the police officers who came to the crime scene. But it's also a good characteristic of the book because this makes it differ from other books. Also the numbers of the chapters are all prime numbers, so chapter 1 doesn't exist it's chapter: 2, 3, 5, 7, 11, 13, 17, 19, 23, 29, 31, 37, 41, 43, 47, 53, 59, 61, 67 and so on. 😊 Metaphors and similes are used, but more similes because Christopher thinks that metaphors are confusing. (About a policeman) "It looked as

if there were two very small mice in his nostrils". Dialogues are used, but not too much so it doesn't look like you're reading a telephone conversation, which takes a few hours because that would be horrible. Something which I find is really good about the way of writing is that it's really convincing. You can feel along with Christopher and you can understand why he does some strange things because of his Asperger's Syndrome. And the last point I want to comment on is the way certain things are explained. A number is written next to something difficult and then at the bottom of the page, it's explained. (Example) "A. Not talking to people for a long time." -and at the bottom of the page- "Once I didn't talk to anyone for five weeks."

### *Theme*

The main theme of the story could be 'the view through the eyes of a boy with Asperger's Syndrome' or 'writing a murder detective novel', but I think the first one is better. That's because many choices and things Christopher does are mostly based on his characteristics. And his characteristics are highly influenced by his psychiatric illness.

There are no real quotations to support the theme; it's just the way he sees things different than 'normal' people. He thinks much more about simple things: "For example, people often say 'Be quiet,' but they don't tell you how long to be quiet for. Or you see a sign which says KEEP OFF THE GRASS but it should say KEEP OFF THE GRASS AROUND THIS SIGN or KEEP OFF ALL THE GRASS IN THIS PARK because there is lots of grass you are allowed to walk on."

The author treats the theme very well. I find it incredible how well he can write about having Asperger's Syndrome. It seems like he has it himself although he hasn't.

All the details like the thoughts, feelings and behaviour problems seem very realistic. The main theme isn't really connected to the title, but the other option about the murder detective novel is because it's about the murdered dog, which was killed in the night-time.

I can't compare the book to another book or film with the same theme because I've never read a book or seen a film about Asperger's Syndrome before. And I doubt if anyone can write just as realistic as Mark Haddon did.

### **Literary history**

Mark Haddon was born on September 26, 1962 in Northampton. He went to school at Uppingham School and Merton College where he studied English. He mostly writes novels and poems and even books for children. But his best known book is "The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time", which won the Whitbread book of the year prize.

Some things about Mark Haddon: he's a vegetarian, an atheist, lives in Oxford and is married to Dr. Sos Eltis.

He has worked with people who have Asperger's Syndrome, which is the reason why he knows so much about how they act and what kind of behaviour disorders they can have.

This book isn't typical for his oeuvre. It was first written for adults but the publishers decided to also make a version for younger people. Also this is his first novel about Asperger's syndrome.

### **Reading Experience**

#### *My view on the book*

I really liked reading the book and I felt sad when I finished it because I really loved the story. The way Christopher sees life makes you think about how difficult their life could be. I liked almost the whole story; it's just fantastic, everything is so detailed. The only part I didn't really enjoy were some of the pieces in

between in which he explained things, (those chapters) some of them were too complicated like the one on a mathematical formula or something (I still don't understand it). I would certainly read more books from this author. I think he is amazing and he has a lot of knowledge about people and especially the behaviour of people which I find very interesting. I would advise it to anyone who likes to read a good book which will certainly change your way of thinking. It's just a stunningly good read and I'm also really impressed by the talent of the author to explain certain behaviour. It's a good book for adults and for teenagers. I could choose, this would be a book that everyone in the English speaking world must read!