

## The Curious Incident of the Student Action Project

### Teacher Guide

#### Background information

Mark Haddon's **The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime** is a 2003 mystery novel that is narrated by a character who perceives the world differently than most other people. While the author does not identify the character's specific condition, it has been referred to as Asperger's or high functioning autism in the literary community at large. Regardless of the specific diagnosis, this novel will help students rethink how others see the world. I caution teachers to be aware of and know their students well prior to assigning this as some students may be unable to complete the assignment without difficulty.

#### Activity purpose

This lesson is by no means a comprehensive unit plan or even a guide to the novel, but is rather an Action project to be completed at the conclusion of the novel. The goal of the activity is for students to attempt to incorporate Christopher's views of the world into their day-to-day experiences so that they may better grasp the character and his motivations.

#### Task

Students must follow Christopher's "rules" for an entire day and journal about the experience. Students must also present their findings to the class in a presentation lasting at least 2 minutes and using no notes. A presentation rubric is attached to the handout so students are aware of what they will be graded on. I included my original handout with dates so teachers may see the parameters of the assignment. These will obviously need to be changed.

#### Follow up

This activity can be enhanced when incorporated with other action projects or individual novel assignments. I pair it with work on the **Scarlett Letter**, **Ella Minnow Pea** or **Frankenstein** so students are presented with different character experience action projects.

## Action Project

**Objective:** Haddon’s novel wants us to rethink what we know and how we experience things in our environment. For this project you will follow the guidelines that Christopher (and subsequently his father) use in their day to day lives: Paying attention to colors of cars (and their corresponding consequences), hating yellow and brown in clothing and food, no foods can touch, and confusion with facial expressions and metaphors. **Action must be done in school between 12/14 and 12/18. Actions require outside work as well.**

Action: You are to follow Christopher’s rules for 24 hours and observe its effect on your personality and behavior. Begin your day analyzing its positive or negative attributes based upon the color and frequency of cars you see, avoid yellow and brown food and clothing, and note how facial expressions and body language change or alter your understanding of people. Others are not to know that you are completing this experiment

Creation: You will write 3 journal entries about the experience. One before, one during, one after.

Presentation: You will present the impact of your guidelines upon your day. During your presentation you must avoid the wearing of yellow or brown. You will present your findings to the class answering the questions: How does Haddon’s characterization enhance the text? How did your experiment help you understand the character? You must use at least 2 visuals (the book cannot be one of them) and connect the audience to your experience. Discuss your experiment in detail. **No Notes**

Task	3 points	2 points	1 point
Describe findings	Student provides detailed explanation of how their day was impacted by guidelines. Gives examples to connect audience.	Some details were given so that students have a general understanding of what occurred in the experiment.	Minimal details given so peers are only vaguely aware of what occurred.
Visuals	Presenter gives visuals that fully connect audience to how the guidelines impacted their day.	Visuals are presented but not fully explained so the connection to the experiment is weaker.	Minimal visuals or visuals contain text.
Voice and posture	Audience is able to hear and understand what is said at all times and presenter faces audience.	Overall the audience can understand the speaker, but sound may lapse or eyes contact may not be maintained.	Much of the presentation is hard to hear or understand. Eye contact limited.
Time	At least 2 minutes, but no more than 4 minutes.	Presentation is 30 seconds under or over the allotted time.	Presentation is 1 minute or more under or over the allotted time.