

Teacher's Rational

School: Arrowhead

Teacher: Frohmader

Title: *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*

Author: Mark Haddon, Oxford University Teacher of Creative Writing

Grade or Course: English 9

Approximate date(s) book will be used: Semester II

The entire class will study this book, but students may choose an alternative.

Ways in which the book is especially appropriate for students in grade 9:

This book is appropriate for grade 9 for two main reasons. The first main reason is because the protagonist in the book is a fifteen-year-old boy experiencing many issues that teens go through today. Because the boy has asperger's syndrome, he views these experiences in a very honest, straightforward, and sincere manner. The reader can truly relate to the main character. The second main reason this book is great for grade 9 is because the novel is extremely interesting. This definitely helps to motivate readers to finish the book as well as spark their interest in other books. The boy in this novel has to deal with relationships with his parents, teachers, classmates, neighbors, and the community just like the ninth graders reading the book. This book will please students interested in math, autism, mystery, family dynamics, and a host of other topics. Furthermore, the main character in this book is right in the middle of his progression from boyhood to manhood. This topic of "coming of age" is ideal and relevant to classroom activities and writing assignments as 9th graders are nearing adulthood.

This book was also the feature of the January 2004 issue of *Literary Cavalcade*. *Literary Cavalcade* is a journal from Scholastic featuring literature and writing activities for college-bound teens.

Way in which the book is especially pertinent to the objectives of this course or unit:

The literary selections read in grade 9 are used for a variety of activities. Therefore, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* was chosen because it provides interesting and complex themes for students to focus on in writing assignments, and it provides a good base for class discussions on topics used throughout English 9. Because the main character has asperger's syndrome, the reader develops a keen sense of empathy for the main character and perhaps other people in the reader's life who has special needs. One of the primary objectives of English 9 is to motivate students for the rest of their English classes at Arrowhead. This book does this because students can easily relate to a narrator their own age dealing with subject in a humorous, real, and sometimes emotion fashion. These subjects also provide wonderful writing material for this unit. Writing is obviously a primary focus for grade 9.

Special problems that might arise in relation to the book and some planned activities that handle these problems:

One problem that might arise in relation to this book is the use of swear words that show up occasionally throughout the book. The best way to handle this problem is to understand and explain the context in which the words are spoken and evaluate the author's purpose for the words and how the characters fit in. Most of the swear words are said when a character is angry at the young boy. Swearing in this book is definitely not used gratuitously. It is used to show anger, anxiety, or confusion. Although the reader may not like the occasional use of swear words in this book, the reader can easily enjoy the novel and not be bombarded with profanity.

Some other appropriate books an individual student might read in place of this book:

Stones from the River by Ursula Hegi

Ficciones by Jorge Luis Borges

Fahrenheit 451 by Ray Bradbury

The Chocolate War by Robert Cormier

Summary of the book:

“Fifteen-year-old Christopher has a photographic memory. He understands maths. He understands science. What he can’t understand are other human beings. When he finds his neighbor’s dog, Wellington, lying dead on a neighbor’s lawn, he decides to track down the killer and write a murder mystery novel about it. In doing so, however, he uncovers other mysteries that threaten to bring his whole world crashing down around him.”

Summary from Kate Kellaway, *The Observer*

Awards/ Reviews for this book:

Winner 2004 – Whitbread Literary Awards

Winner 2004 – Commonwealth Writers Prize for Best First Book

Today Show Book Club #13

“A stark, funny and original first novel ... [with] one of the strangest and most convincing characters in recent fiction.” – *The New York Times Book Review*

“The book gave me that rare, greedy feeling of: this is so good I want to read it all at once but I mustn’t or it will be over too soon. Haddon pulls off something extraordinary ... “ – *The Observer*