

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time (M. Haddon)

## Questions for discussion (Chapters 2 - 19)

1. What can you notice regarding the style of writing in the novel and how are the chapters ordered?

- THE STYLE - repetitions (the dog, the dog...) simple, easy to understand, from an autistic child's point of view; accurate and objective descriptions of facts, people...
- The chapters are ordered by prime numbers (it starts with no 2).

2. Why does Christopher decide to write a novel, how does it begin and what kind of novel is it?

- because he wanted to write down his thoughts on the murder he encountered.
- it begins with the murder of a dog called Wellington.
- it is a murder-mystery novel

3. How does he approach the problem of »the murder« and who is the murdered character in the novel?

- he gives us the exact descriptions of the murder scene (the fork, the blood) - his suspicions; he searches for logical explanations (e.g. Why hasn't the fork fallen over...)

- Wellington = big, black curly poodle

4. What do you find out about Christopher in the introductory chapters?

- name: Christopher John Francis Boone
- he knows all the countries & capital cities in the world
- he knows prime numbers up to 7,507
- he can distinguish feelings on the basis of facial expressions 😊☹️
- what makes him happy (being alone, reading about Appolo), sad (when he found the dog)
- Siobhan (shuh-van) = his teacher

5. What does Christopher do when he encounters a person with a more complicated facial expression?

- he needed to have feelings written down - then he had this paper with him and he could check.
- problem: people's express. change very quickly (he couldn't follow)
- so now he just asks people what they mean by their expressions or walks away (=easier)

6. How does he explain his love towards dogs?

- he loves them because they are simple to understand, unlike people (not many expressions)
- they are faithful and don't lie; are clever and honest & more interesting than people

7. What does he do when he feels scared/unsafe?

- he puts his hands on his ears and closes his eyes; presses forehead on the ground/grass → this way he feels comfortable (groans)

8. What do we learn about him and his novel in Chapter 7?

- he likes books about science, maths; (they are objective, no metaphors)
- he doesn't like proper novels (complicated language & hidden meanings)
- he observes well
- he likes mysteries, puzzles, guessing
- he can write about things he can relate to (that happened to him)
- he likes policemen because they are predictable → it went badly
- he doesn't know it's rude to call people stupid (stere)

9. How does his first conversation with the policeman go? ☹️ What happens?

10. How does Christopher feel about making jokes?

- he cannot tell jokes because he doesn't understand them - they have hidden meanings and one has to read between the lines

- he explains that this novel won't be funny ☹️

JOKE:

"HIS FACE WAS DRAWN  
BUT THE CURTAINS WERE REAL."

11. How does he react to the policeman arresting him? What is he arrested for?

- being arrested made him feel safe because it was predictable (it made him calm)

- the police arrested him for assault

12. What does Christopher compare prime numbers to? Quote the comparison and comment upon it.

- he compares them to life:

"Prime numbers are like life - they are very logical but you could never work out the rules even if you spent all your time thinking about them."



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### Questions for the discussion: (Chapters 23 – 43)

#### 1. What did Christopher have to do at the police station?

He had to empty his pockets - among other things he had to give up his watch but he refused.  
He had to take the laces out of his shoes.

#### 2. What did he have in his pockets when he was asked to empty them and who is Toby?

1. Swiss Army knife
2. a piece of string
3. a piece of wooden puzzle
4. 3 pellets of rat food (Toby = his rat)
5. some money
6. a red paperclip
7. a key for the front door

#### 3. Why did he refuse to take off his watch?

Because he always needs to know the exact time.

#### 4. Which details did he notice in the police cell?

There were perfect measures - a perfect cube (2 x 2 m); it had a small window with bars; a metal door + long thin hatch for sliding in trays. There was also a padded bench.

#### 5. How does he describe his family?

Father

Mother = dead

Uncle Terry = Father's brother in Sunderland

Grandparents = 3 of them were dead

Grandma Burton is in a home (senile dementia)

she thinks C. is someone on TV.

#### 6. What was he thinking about when he was in the cell?

He was thinking of how he could escape from a prison =>  
he thought of starting a fire on a sunny day.

#### 7. What is »slander« and why did he mention it?

It means "telling lies about somebody" => he mentioned it in connection to Mrs Shears => if she told the police he killed Wellington and if police found out she had been lying.

#### 8. Why does he find people confusing? (2 reasons)

1. People do a lot of talking without using any words.  
(= mimicks, raising an eyebrow; too complicated to understand.)

**9. What is Christopher's opinion of his own name?**

Christopher = "carrying Christ"; his mother thought it was a nice name because it meant "kind & helpful" but he would just like his name to mean "him" ("me"), nothing else.

**10. How did Christopher explain that he is aware of his father's love towards him?**

Him and his father make a gesture  $\Rightarrow$  fingers touching  $\Rightarrow$  they do this instead of hugging and it means "that his father loves him".

**11. Why doesn't he tell lies? What did his mother say about him not telling lies?**

His mother said he doesn't tell lies because he's a good person - but he doesn't think so - he just CAN'T TELL LIES because it is too complicated  $\Rightarrow$  only 1 thing can happen at a specific time & place

**12. What colour is the food he doesn't like?**

- all other things didn't happen - if he wants to lie he thinks about all the things that didn't happen. He cannot choose just one  
Brown food and yellow food.

**13. What did Christopher and his father talk about when they were returning from the police station?**

His father told him to stay out of other people's business but Christopher wants to find out who murdered Wellington - his father gets angry

**14. What did Christopher say about his mother's death?**

It happened "two years ago". His father told him that she had to go to a hospital. His father told him this without looking at him.

**15. Why did Christopher like the fact that his father didn't look at him when he told him about »his mother going to hospital«? Why do YOU think his father didn't look at him while saying those things?**

He liked it because he hates when people look at him & can distinguish his feelings & thoughts from his behaviour and he cannot do the same - he feels as if he was in a spy-mirror room when he is observed but he cannot look/watch back. His father not looking at him made him feel comfortable & equal with his co-speaker.

His father didn't look at him, because he was lying... and when people lie they tend to avoid looking people in the eyes so that they... wouldn't





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## Questions for discussion (Chapters 47 – 67)

1. What makes a »Good Day«, »a Quite Good Day« and »a Super Good Day« according to Christopher?

4 red cars in a row  
(he he created not to be sad about Wellington)

3 red cars in a row

5 red cars in a row

2. Do you know the medical term for this kind of behaviour? (Having to see more cars in a row, skipping stairs in the same order every day, starting the stairs always with the right leg etc.)

Obsessive compulsive behaviour.

3. What makes a »Black Day« for Christopher? What does he do on a black day?

4 yellow cars in a row

On a black day he doesn't speak to anyone and sits on his own - reading books & he doesn't eat lunch & takes no risks.

4. What difference does Christopher state between being <sup>clever</sup> logical and observant?

clever = when you use evidence to work out sth new

just watching people

5. How does Christopher feel about changes?

He doesn't like them in general but wouldn't mind a good change - for example if he became an astronaut.

6. How does Christopher deal with his schoolmate Terry when he insults him?

He does not take it as an insult - he rationalizes it ⇒ he says Terry is not very bright and won't have much of a future anyway - he is aware of the fact that it is very difficult - if not impossible - to become an astronaut.

7. What kind of »GET WELL card« did he make for his mother and why did he choose to do it in the way he did?

- a lino-cut ⇒ 9 cars

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• • •  
• • •

⇒ he painted them red to make it a Super Super Good Day for his mother.

8. How did his mother die?

She "died" of a heart-attack. (He suspected it was aneurysm.)

9. Why doesn't Christopher obey when somebody tells him e.g. »Be quiet!« and why doesn't he like the signs?

↳ because he doesn't understand

↓  
It is confusing - they

**10. What is a »Red Herring«?**

It is a clue which makes you come to a wrong conclusion or sth that looks like a clue but it really isn't.

**11. Why didn't Christopher believe reverend Peters about »heaven«?**

Because he said it was "another kind of place altogether" & that it is not in our universe - while Christopher knows scientific facts which speak in favour of the contrary.

**12. Does Christopher believe in life after death (after-life)?**

In a way, yes. He believes that people and animals still exist in the trees, plants => that grow from the earth in which they were buried => of which now they are part. If a person gets cremated - he later exists in the rain & smoke - because

**13. How did Christopher explain his attitude to strangers?** he was in the smoke coming out of the chimney of the crematorium.

He doesn't like them - he doesn't like people he had never seen before - it takes him a long time to get used to people.

**14. When does he think he »gets to know people«? Which information does he need about people?**

If he knows things about their pets, the car they drive, when he sees the drawing of their house's plan, their knowledge about Apollo space missions... => then he can relax around them and be in the same room with them because he doesn't need to watch them all the time again/any more.

**15. Which things did he take care of before going to his neighbours »to do some detective work«?**

First he draw the plan of their street and then he checked if he had his Swiss Army knife in his pocket so he would feel safe.

**16. What happened at Mrs Alexander's house?**

She has a dog so C. thinks she must be a good person. She offered him tea (right colour & taste) & biscuits (right colour - no yellow) => when she goes inside to prepare them for C., he gets nervous because she takes so long (6 min) to come back => he thinks she might be calling the police, so he walks away. They were before talking about Wellington's death & C.'s rat Toby.

**17. Who was his »prime suspect« and what was his reasoning?**

Mr Shears - because he didn't like Mrs. Shears and at the same time he knew Wellington.

(more detailed reasoning on page 53/54)

**18. What does he like and dislike about Mrs Shears?**



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## Questions for discussion (Chapters 71 - 79)

1. What confuses Christopher about the term »people with special needs«?

He thinks that the term is not justified because everybody who needs anything has "special needs" - but nobody calls sb who, for example, needs help with sth in the store, "a person with special needs."

2. Why did Mrs. Gascoyne disagree with Christopher's wishes to do A levels?

Because nobody at his school had done A levels before. She said she didn't have the facilities to let him sit A levels. She said Christopher shouldn't be treated differently and could do his A levels later, at 18. He would need a member of staff looking after him in a separate room.

3. What did Christopher say about his ambitions in life in chapter 71?

He wants to do A levels first and then he can go to university. For that he would have to <sup>Maths</sup> <sup>Physics</sup> move to another city & his father would move with him. After getting a degree - he will be able to get a good job and earn a lot of money <sup>and he can pay for his look after him</sup> <sup>get a wife for taking care of him & company</sup>

4. What kind of »behavioural problems« does Christopher have? Have they changed in any way? <sup>he grew up & he can make decisions and do things on his own</sup>

- A: not talking to people for a long time
- B: not eating or drinking - " - " -
- C: not liking being touched
- D: screaming when he's angry or confused
- E: not liking being in really small places with other people
- F: smashing things when he's angry or confused
- G: growling
- H: not liking brown & yellow things & refusing to touch them
- I: refusing to use his toothbrush if anyone else touched it
- J: not eating two "foods" which touch each other
- K: not noticing that people are angry with him
- L: not smiling
- M: saying rude things
- N: doing "stupid things"
- O: hitting other people
- P: Hating France
- Q: Driving Mother's car
- R: Getting cross when sb moves furniture

5. What are the metaphors his father and mother used when he had these behavioural problems? What do they mean?

1. "to knock the living daylight's out of sb" ⇒ to beat sb up very seriously
2. "to drive sb into an early grave" ⇒ to worry sb so much that he "loses years of life" because of the stress you cause him

6. Why did Christopher and his father argue in chapter 79 and how did the fight end?

They argued because Christopher did some detective work again. The fight ended with Christopher promising he wouldn't do any



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Questions for the discussion: (Chapters 83 – 103)

**1. Why would Christopher like to become an astronaut and why does he think he would be good at it?**

- being intelligent
- understanding how machines work
- being on your own in a tiny space (he likes places like this as long as he is alone in them)
- not being homesick / insane
- there are no yellow/brown things there
- talking to strangers but only through a radio link-up - so that's OK 'cos it's not face to face
- he would perhaps be allowed to take Toby with him (he would have to think of a good reason - experiment)

**2. When Christopher thought of finishing the book – why did he say it wasn't a proper book?**

because the book didn't have a proper ending - the murderer was still at large.

**3. What is your opinion regarding the »chat« Christopher had with Mrs Alexander? Was it the same kind of chat you would have with your neighbours? Why (not)?**

- the chat was strange because Christopher is not capable of a normal chat so it even seems he lists random thoughts - not really every-day things you usually chat about with your neighbours.

4. What kind of instructions did his father give him when he made him promise that he wouldn't do any more detective work? Did Christopher keep his promise? How did he reason the fact that he kept it/didn't keep it?

- He gave him very exact instructions, because he knows C. can't read between the lines - so he had to specify everything that counted as "detective work".
- C. knew that his father would be angry so in a way he broke the promise ~ however - taking the instructions literally - he did not break it → his father did not mention that he mustn't speak to people about Mr Shears or going for a walk, for example.

5. Why did Mrs Alexander's »poo-picking« make Christopher feel wierd?

- Because there was a brown poo inside of a red bag → 2 colours - 1 of which he hates, the other one he likes.

6. What did Mrs Alexander reveal to Christopher when they went to the park? Do you find her decision to tell Christopher the secret reasonable? Why (not)? What would you have done if you had been in her shoes?

- She revealed to him, that his <sup>mother</sup> father had an affair with Mr. Shears and that this was probably the reason why his father hated him.
- Your opinion... (?)

7. What did Mr Jeavons tell Christopher about Maths and life? How does Christopher prove his words wrong? What is »The Monty Hall Problem«?

"Maths isn't like life - there are no straightforward answers to life's problems."

He proves him wrong with the example of "Monty Hall Problem" - probability Maths problem which many people solved wrongly (Monty always wins)

8. What is »the third degree«? Try to find out where the expression comes from. Who gave Christopher the third degree and why?

It means asking someone numerous questions - usually because you are suspicious they have done sth wrong.

His father gave him the third degree when he came home - asking him where he was, what he was doing etc.

⇒ it comes from the Exam for the Master Mason degree of Freemasonry (the third-most difficult degree - oral exam - lots of questions, long-lasting)

large, old secret society for men - they communicate in codes, secret language they help each other

9. How is his description of the garden different from the one of the sky? Why do you think there's a difference?

↓  
more plain  
↓  
because he should write about it...  
(doesn't like it)

↓  
very detailed - because he is very interested in the sky, stars, etc.  
↳ involves "feelings" (passion)



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## Questions for discussion (Chapters 107 - 149)

1. What is his favourite book?

The Hound of the Baskervilles.

2. Why does he like Sherlock Holmes so much and how are Christopher and him similar?

- he notices little details as well
- he detaches his mind like he does
- Holmes also doesn't believe in the supernatural (= "stupid")
- 2 interesting facts (p. 93) the way of dressing (original)  
"Elementary, my dear Watson" - he only says that in films, never in original stories

3. Why isn't Christopher sad when he finds out about the affair between his mother and Mr Shears?

Because his mother was "dead" and Mr Shears isn't around anymore - it isn't real anymore - doesn't exist - it would be "stupid" to be sad about such a fact - it's not there anymore.

4. How does Christopher's mind work? (»Fast Forward, Search, Pause etc. buttons«)

He has a very good memory - he can go backwards and "pause" the moment in his mind and remember every detail from that moment perfectly. He has to find pictures of sth in his mind by "using" the "search button."

5. What did his father do when he found out that Christopher »broke the promise«?

He got really cross and took his book - threw it away and later hid it into a box in his room.

6. What was the consequence of his hiding the book?

The consequence was that C. went looking for it and while doing so he discovered worse secrets.

7. Is Christopher's phobia of yellow and brown food irrational? Why (not)?

It's irrational as every phobia - but not completely - C. gives a few reasons for each & it seems rational in his mind

8. What does »I love you« mean for Christopher?

"Loving someone is helping them when they get into trouble, and looking after them, and telling them the truth."

9. What is a bluff? What is a double bluff?

When you pretend not to know sth or not to be doing sth when you really do

↳ + being very clever

- for example hiding sth somewhere you know it's too obvious for a person to even go there - cos it's too easy

(bluffing the bluff = double bluff) ☺

10. What did Christopher do when he found the letters? What was his first reaction after reading one of them?

He didn't understand it - he saw it as a mystery that had to be worked out - he was excited. He hid the letter. He went downstairs and watched TV.

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## Questions for discussion (Chapters 151 - 167)

1. How many letters did Christopher's mother send to Christopher? What conclusions can you draw from that?

43. - It explains that she cared a lot for him & she perhaps regretted her decision.

2. What was the content of her letters?

- she explained her actions
- describing her new life
- bringing up memories
- asking about his life

3. Is there anything else you notice in her letters?

- She makes many spelling mistakes.

(pacient = patient,  
secretery = secretary,  
argumants = arguments)

4. What was Christopher's reaction after reading the rest of the letters?

He was in shock, sick, not reacting to touches, groaning.

5. What are »feelings« according to Christopher? Do you agree with him?

"Feelings are just having a picture on the screen in your head of what is going to happen tomorrow or next year, or what might have happened instead of what did happen, and if it's a happy picture they smile and if it's a sad picture they cry."

6. What was Christopher's biggest concern about his father not telling him the truth regarding his mother and about killing Wellington?

His father lied to him so he "didn't love him". If he killed Wellington, he "could just as well kill him too".

7. How did Christopher find out who killed Wellington?



**8. Why did his father kill Wellington?**

He had an argument with Mrs Shears - they broke up

**9. What did Christopher do after finding out the whole truth?**

He was frightened and decided to go live somewhere else - hiding from his father & running away.

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## Questions for discussion (Chapters 173 - 233)

1. Why did Christopher decide to go live away from his father?

Because he thought he was in danger.

2. Was living with his mother his first choice? If not, what was?

No, it was living with Mrs Shears but she was not at home at that moment, so he decided to go elsewhere.

3. Why was going to live with his mother a scary idea for Christopher?

Because he was afraid of the unknown places, of strangers, of the noise ... and his mother lived in London which was not so close to Swindon and which meant he would have to make the journey to get there by train.

4. How did he get to London? Did his journey to London run smoothly?

He went on a train. No, his journey did not go smoothly - he didn't know where anything was (the train station, the cash point ...), he didn't have a map, a policeman was looking for him and found him and wanted to take him back to his father's. The noise was also the problem and people trying to touch him (help him) → Toby got lost (a train almost ran him over) ...

5. Why did the idea of not being able to become an astronaut cross his mind? How did it make him feel? (when he was "on the run")

The lid of an old metal pan was leaning against the wall near Mrs Shears's house and it looked like the surface of a planet → and he thought he could be an astronaut because he would be so far away from home <sup>only</sup> thinking about this made him hurt. The thought made him feel sad.

6. How did Christopher manage to escape the policeman on the train?

He had to go to the toilet - the policeman lets him. When he comes out of the toilet he hides on the shelf with luggage - the policeman doesn't find him.

7. How did he calm himself down when the situation at the train station became too difficult for him to cope with?

He solves mathematical problems and in London he closes his eyes and listens to the trains coming & going (it was like music) → and that calmed him down.

8. How did Christopher go about in London?

He found an information desk, bought a map, went on the Tube (bought the ticket at the machine); he spends 5 hours sitting on a bench; his mother was not

9. What happened after he meets his mother? <sup>there when he arrived, so he hid and waited by the dustbins.</sup>

He had a bath, the police comes and lets him stay at his mother's because it was his own decision. Then his father comes and he and his mother/wife have a fight. Christopher stays with his mother, although his father wants him to return to Swindon with him.

**10. What happened to Toby on his way to London and afterwards?**

Toby gets lost twice - once at a train station which nearly kills Christopher. Toby dies at the end of the story (2 years & 7 months old). Instead Christopher gets a golden retriever - Saindy (it was a gift from his father.)

**11. Describe briefly Christopher's favourite dream.**

Christopher's favourite dream is about a virus which is spread when people look at each other - at the end only "special people" like Christopher survive. (People die of doing nothing - this is what this virus brings.)

**12. Is Mr Shears happy with the new living arrangements? What happens?**

No. He doesn't like C. living with them - he complains & one day he confronts C. → he comes to his room drunk and yells at him. Mrs Boone & him split up. (C's mother packs her things and they leave.)

**13. Why did Christopher have to go back to Swindon? How did the family proceed with the arrangements of this trip?**

He has to go back to Swindon to take his A level. His mother doesn't want to take him, so C. gets mad - his father moves out - and C. and his mother move in - he does his A level - when his mother gets the job, they move out to a small room with no toilet.

**14. How does the book end? What happens to the main characters?**

- Father: tries to talk to C., but he ignores him. He gives C. a puppy
- Christopher: he gets an A grade for his exam, he gets a puppy & feels safer, \* he plans to do A level further maths the following year & A level physics and then go to a university & become a scientist.
- Mother: she has a job now, she lives together with C. in that small room.

**15. What were Christopher's plans for the following year?**

\* →

THE END 😊