

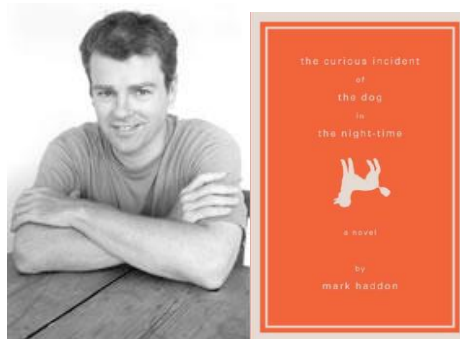
133 &135—British Literature and Composition

Summer Reading Assignment 2010

Welcome to your junior year of English! As you probably know, the English department of St. Xavier high school features a summer reading program. We do this for the following reasons:

- Reading is good; it makes you smarter.
- Summer activities help you maintain the skills and study habits that you obtained during the previous school year. If you do a small amount of reading and writing over the summer, you won't need as much time when you return to "get back into the swing of things."
- Hopefully, reading a new, contemporary novel and doing a small amount of written reflection on it will help you to enjoy reading on your own.

So, for your junior year English class, which focuses on British literature, you will read a very recent novel: *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time* by Mark Haddon (2003). Below, find pictures of the author and the book's cover:



This novel, a *New York Times* bestseller, tells the story of Christopher John Francis Boone, a teenager with autism. It opens with a very strange and troubling incident: Christopher finds his neighbor's dog, Wellington, murdered with a gardening fork. Because he loves animals and has a very logical mind, Christopher decides to solve this murder mystery. Before you start reading, make yourself aware of the following:

- The book is narrated by a British youth; thus, certain differences in language and slang will arise. For example, he abbreviates "mathematics" as "maths" instead of "math." Just get used to these slight differences and you won't have a problem understanding his story.
- The narrator suffers from **autism**, a mental disability that can impair communication and socialization. Here's a couple of quick facts about the ailment (from www.autism-society.org):
 - A disorder of the brain impairing communication and social interaction
 - NOT the same as mental retardation--many people with autistic disorders have above average intelligence
 - Some (but definitely not all) even display "savant tendencies"—the display of extraordinary expertise or skill in a certain field such as math or music
 - Very common: affects 1 in 150 individuals
 - Four times more prevalent in boys than in girls
 - A SPECTRUM of disorders: this means that different degrees and severity of autism are possible; also different varieties
 - Symptoms can include difficulties in communication, obsessive or repetitive behaviors, difficulty in understanding others, self-abuse, etc.—although not all individuals with autism will exhibit all symptoms
 - Causes are still controversial—genetics, background, upbringing are all thought to play a role. Some have even speculated that childhood vaccinations can cause autism, although medical professionals heavily dispute this.

(Over)

So, your summer assignment is this:

- Get a copy of the book and read it carefully and fully.
- Write a two to three page response to the book about one of the following topics:
 - What does Haddon wish to show the reader about individuals with disabilities? In order to answer this question, you might consider the ways that Christopher develops or changes during his story.
 - What can the reader learn about the problems facing modern families, and how does Christopher's story show a way to resolve these conflicts?
 - You can choose another topic of your own if you wish, but make sure that
 - It is original and unique (you will submit this essay to turnitin.com when you get back to school).
 - It goes beyond plot summary—you should discuss the thematic significance of the book beyond a summary of the events.
 - Your essay should feature the following:
 - An introduction that grabs the reader's attention, sets up the book (author and title), and establishes your topic and position.
 - Body paragraphs that feature quotations from the text. You should **choose about four quotations from different portions of the book. You should make sure that your selected quotations help you make your point and exhibit full knowledge of the book, beginning, middle, and end.**
 - A conclusion that brings your essay to a close.
 - Good word choice, varied sentence structure, and grammatical flawlessness.
- You should have finished the book and completed this two to three page essay by the Monday, August 23rd!