

## **SUGGESTED CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES, BY DISCIPLINE, FOR THE CURIOUS INCIDENT OF THE DOG IN THE NIGHT-TIME**

You are encouraged to look at the entire list for ideas you could use. For foreign languages, see the suggested activities under English or Spanish.

### **Administration of Justice:**

(pp. 6-8 in the book) Role play Christopher's being interrogated by the policeman. Discuss how someone might not be guilty but seem to be and with a good reason.

(p. 60) Christopher says, "I could still go to the police and tell them because you are allowed to break a promise if someone has committed a crime and you know about it." Are there legal responsibilities to tell, or is it optional?

(p. 99) Research the history and organization of Scotland Yard.

(p. 19) Christopher says, "I do not tell lies. Mother used to say that this was because I am a good person. But it is not because I am a good person. It is because I can't tell lies." Discuss lie detector tests. Can nervousness or anxiety skew the results? What, if anything, can someone do to increase his chances of deception during the test?

Research lie detector tests, their history and how they are used in police work.

(p. 42) Statistic from the book: One is most likely to be murdered by a member of his family on Christmas Day. Can this be substantiated?

(p. 216) Christopher's mother told him that killing a dog was only a little crime. What does California law say about this?

### **Anthropology:**

(p.33) Research death and burial customs in another society, perhaps compare two or more.

### **Art:**

Make two related works of art, one showing an object or situation as it is and the other showing it through Christopher's eyes.

### **Astronomy:**

(pp. 9-10) Discuss Christopher's explanation of the Milky Way and stars and how the world will end. Do you agree or disagree?

(p. 125) Christopher says that you can connect the stars in Orion to look like something different. Try doing this with another constellation.

(p. 126) Try to find the names of the 17 stars that make up Orion. Four are given on page 126 of the book.

(p. 126) Demonstrate a planisphere. When and where did it originate?

**Biology:**

(p. 40) Do you agree with Christopher that rats are clean?

(pp. 9-80) Research ecosystems in sulfur chimneys (underwater volcanoes where gases are ejected from the earth's crust into the water).

(p. 86) Research any of Christopher's favorite animals in the zoo: red-faced black spider monkey, Patagonian sea lion, orangutan. Why do you think he chose these? What animals in the zoo are your favorites?

(p.117) Research saccades (flicks of the eye).

(p. 120) Are all rats nocturnal? What are some other nocturnal animals? What else do they have in common?

(p. 164) Christopher says, "And there is life on earth because of an accident." Comment on this.

**Business:**

How widespread is the use of ATM cards by children who know their parent's PIN number? Would Christopher's father have had any recourse if, for example, Christopher had withdrawn a very large sum of money?

**Chemistry:**

Using the Library's databases, research chemicals (one example is mercury) as possible causes of autism.

**Child Development:**

How should one tell a child that a parent has died? Is it best to allow the child to see the body or not? What would be the consequences if the child found out later that the parent had just gone away?

(p. 75) Christopher says that feeling sad about his mother would be feeling sad about something that isn't real and doesn't exist and that would be stupid. Do you agree or disagree?

(pp. 106-7) Discuss Christopher's mother's reaction to his autism. Is this usual? What would you say to the mother of an autistic child?

Imagine that a child in your care is autistic. How would you help the other children to understand him? What would you say to the parents of the other children?

Does California law say anything about autistic children in child care centers?

**Communication:**

(p. 15) Practice facial expressions without saying any words, and see if the others in class can tell what you mean.

(p. 15) See Siobhan's explanation about breathing through one's nose and how variations can mean different things. Can you do this so that others in class know what you mean?

(p. 100) Do you believe in ghosts? Why or why not?

For an informative speech: what comprises a Swiss Army knife?

(p. 172) Choose something that Christopher has never seen before, such as an escalator, and explain what it is and how it works. Try to be very clear and use simple language so he will understand you.

**CIS:**

(p. 21) Is Minesweeper a real game? Are the times Christopher gives valid?

(p. 116) Research the Turing test (computers having conversations with people).

**Dance:**

Choreograph a dance for two people in which one person is the autistic individual, physically very guarded and tense, and the other is expressing what the autistic person is thinking.

**Dental Hygiene:**

If Christopher doesn't like to be touched, how would he ever receive dental care? Does the American Dental Association have any information about this?

**Economics:**

(p. 143) When Christopher tells a joke, he says that economists are not real scientists? Do you agree or disagree and why?

**English:**

(p. 8) "His face was drawn, but the curtains were real." Consult the OED, Oxford English Dictionary (you can now do this online!), and find some common words with more than three meanings. See if you can construct what Christopher calls a "joke" like the example above.

(p. 15) How would you explain to Christopher that a metaphor is not a lie? What do you think of Christopher's reasoning that a metaphor is a lie but a simile is not? Why would a bad simile be a lie?

(p. 31) Can you find an example of a red herring in a book? (Hint: try a mystery)

Words to look up in the Oxford English Dictionary (don't forget that you can do this online – ask a librarian): *invigilator, tucker, hoovering, tip* (104).

(p. 52) Siobhan tells Christopher that there are some very good books which are very short, like Heart of Darkness. How many pages is Heart of Darkness? Can you think of other short books that you have enjoyed? Should the College Book Committee consider the length of a book in deciding on the four finalists?

(p. 53) Four yellow cars in a row meant a Black Day to Christopher. Do you have any superstitions like this? What are they?

Give examples of rhetorical questions.

Write a short paper on Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Where did he get the inspiration for Sherlock Holmes? Compare Doyle and Holmes.

Was there really a Spiritualist Society? Is it still in existence?

(p. 88) Do a Google search about the Cottingley fairies. Find examples of reliable and unreliable web sites.

(p. 72) Discuss the difference between red herrings and clues and give examples of each from mystery stories.

Compare Sherlock Holmes with Christopher.

(p. 74) Christopher says, “Also Sherlock Homes doesn't believe in the supernatural, which is God and fairy tales and Hounds of Hell and curses, which are stupid things.” Do you think that the author meant to say that just curses are stupid or all of those things? Why or why not?

(p. 69) What do you think aliens might look like? Find different examples in literature. View (for extra credit) *E.T.* and *Starman*, which were released between 1982 and 1984 and which portray aliens differently; write a short paper comparing the two films.

(p. 69) Christopher's favorite book is Hound of the Baskervilles. What is yours? Has Hound of the Baskervilles withstood the test of time?

(p. 100) Do you believe in ghosts? Why or why not?

(p. 158) Christopher says, “. . . time is a mystery and not even a thing and no one has ever solved the puzzle of what time is, exactly.” Do you think time travel is possible?

(p. 198) Christopher describes his favorite dream. What do you think it means? What is your favorite dream; do you know what it means?

Re-read the part about Christopher's going to London. The author manages very well to convey Christopher's sense of panic. How does he do this?

Do you think that Christopher will go to a university? If so, write a short paper telling about a typical day for him there. If you think he will not go to a university, write about a typical day when he is 19. What would he be doing?

**Fire Science:**

If you had to remove an autistic person from a burning building, how would you handle it? (Assume that, like Christopher, the person couldn't stand to be touched.)

Are there any regulations (should there be?) requiring identification on buildings of the presence of persons who would require extraordinary measures to remove them in a fire?

**Geography:**

Find Swindon, Willesden and London on a map. Trace Christopher's journey.

(p. 68) Describe different types of clouds.

(p. 139) Try Christopher's spiral to find someplace near.

(p. 166) See the map of the United Kingdom. It is on its side, so notice that Swindon, from where Christopher came to London, is west of the city. Do a Google search for *London Underground*. See if you can tell which station the train came into and then trace Christopher's journey in the subway (tube) to get to his mother's home.

**Health:**

Using the Library's EBSCOhost Alt(ernative) Health database, research unusual treatments for autism.

**History:**

(p. 40) Research the role of rats in the spread of bubonic plague.

Research the history of Scotland Yard.

**Journalism:**

Write a story for the local newspaper about Christopher's running away.

**Math:**

What is a prime number? Why is 1 not a prime number?

(pp. 62-63) Review Christopher's Monty Hall problem. Do you agree with his conclusion? Can you restate this using another example?

(p. 12) Do you agree with Christopher that prime numbers are like life?

Christopher's book was 25 cm x 35 cm x 1 cm. How many inches is that? Show how big that is.

(p. 101) See the graph about population density. Can you explain it in another way to someone who does not understand math well?

**Music:**

(p. 178) "And you can put different amounts of water in different glasses and they make different notes because they have what is called different *resonance frequencies*, and you can play a tune like **Three Blind Mice**." Try this to see how it works.

**Nursing:**

(p. 26) What does *spastic* mean? Is this term still used?

(p. 27) Discuss differences between aneurysm and embolism. Why would one administer aspirin for an embolism?

(p. 78) Discuss Christopher's suggested care for someone having an epileptic seizure. Is this the correct thing to do?

(p. 84) Discuss yellow fever, its causes and treatment. Is it still seen today?

(p. 85) Is Dettol available in the U.S.? If not, what could be prescribed instead?

(p. 124) Christopher thinks he needs to eat even if not hungry so he won't get cold. Does food have an effect on hypothermia?

**Paralegal:**

(p. 60) "I could still go to the police and tell them because you are allowed to break a promise if someone has committed a crime and you know about it." Are there legal responsibilities to tell, or is it optional?

(p. 216) Christopher's mother told him that killing a dog was only a little crime. What does California law say about this?

**Personal Development:**

(p. 43) Christopher says that everyone has learning difficulties (learning to speak French) and special needs (artificial sweetener). Do you agree? Does this line of thinking diminish disabilities?

(p. 50) Look up *astronaut* in the Occupational Outlook Handbook. What does it take to be a good astronaut? Would you be a good candidate?

(p. 130-1) Think of a problem you have and the possible solutions. Make a picture like Christopher did on pages 130-131. Evaluate each possible solution and come up with an answer to your problem.

**Philosophy:**

(p. 61) Christopher says that in life there are no straightforward answers at the end. Is everything relative? Are there any unassailable truths?

(p. 90) “. . .sometimes people want to be stupid and they do not want to know the truth.” Can you think of some examples, either yourself or your family or some famous person?

**Psychology:**

(p. 19) “I do not tell lies. Mother used to say that this was because I am a good person. But it is not because I am a good person. It is because I can’t tell lies.” Let’s assume that you must take a lie detector test, and there is something about which you intend to lie. Is there anything you can do to increase your chances of deception?

(p. 21) When Christopher is sad, he wants to be left alone. Is this normal? What can be done for sadness? (for example, exercise)

(p. 23) What are the psychological consequences of telling a child his mother has died but without giving closure? What if he finds out later that this was a lie?

Compare Christopher’s behavioral problems to the classic definition of autism.

(p. 48) Do you agree with Christopher’s rationale about little white lies? When do you think a white lie is acceptable? Role play telling someone a white lie and the truth.

(p. 79) What do you imagine when you are depressed or sad?

(p. 74) Christopher says that curses are stupid things. Are they?

(p. 75) Christopher says that feeling sad about his mother would be feeling sad about something that isn’t real and doesn’t exist and that would be stupid. Do you agree or disagree?

(p. 76) Christopher says that his memory has a smelltrack which is like a soundtrack. What smells do you remember from childhood? What emotions do those memories evoke?

(pp. 106-7) Discuss Christopher's mother's reaction to his autism. Is this usual? How would you counsel a mother of an autistic child?

(p. 119) Christopher says “. . . But 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 is happy picture, they smile and if it is a sad picture they cry.” Do you agree or disagree and why?

**Sociology:**

Choose another culture, either historical or current, and research how they treated individuals who were “different”, physically, mentally, etc.

Research how the Americans with Disabilities Act has affected society.

**Spanish** (most of these can be either written or orally presented):

(p. 35) Role play, in Spanish, Christopher's getting to know a new staff member at school. See his questions.

(p. 86) Christopher's favorite animals in the zoo are the red-faced black spider monkey, Patagonian sea lion, and orangutan. What animals in the zoo are your favorites? Tell the class or write a short paper.

(p. 100) Do you believe in ghosts? Why or why not?

(p. 172) Choose something that Christopher has never seen before, such as the escalator, and explain what it is and how it works. Try to be very clear and use simple language so he will understand you.

(p. 53) Four yellow cars in a row meant a Black Day to Christopher. Do you have any superstitions like this? What are they?

(p. 198) Christopher describes his favorite dream. What do you think it means? What is your favorite dream; do you know what it means?

(p. 50) Look up astronaut in the Occupational Outlook Handbook. What does it take to be a good astronaut? Would you be a good candidate?

**Telemedia:**

Make a list of Sherlock Holmes films throughout history. Research how the character of Holmes has changed through time.

**Travel & Tourism:**

(p. 166) See the map of the United Kingdom. It is on its side, so notice that Swindon, from where Christopher came to London, is west of the city. Do a Google search for *London Underground*. See if you can tell which station the train came into and then trace Christopher's journey in the subway (tube) to get to his mother's home.