

# The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-



## INTRODUCTION

### BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF MARK HADDON

Mark Haddon studied literature at Merton College, Oxford. He worked for a time with people with disabilities, and has also worked as an illustrator. He wrote a number of successful children's books before *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* and has since begun writing for adults. Haddon also teaches creative writing at Oxford University. He is an atheist and a vegetarian.

### HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Christopher is likely on the autism spectrum, though this is never explicitly stated in the book. Autism was not recognized until the twentieth century, and for many years, it was regarded without question as a disorder for which a cure needed to be found. The autism rights movement began in the late 1980s and is still gaining strength, led by autistic people who believe that they need no cure; instead, society needs to change its perspective on autistic people. People on the autism spectrum, they argue, function differently than others, but not in a lesser way. In fact, they have many qualities that allow them to excel in particular areas. *Curious Incident* could certainly be read as expressing support for this point of view. For his part, Mark Haddon claims to know little about autism (and makes it clear that he never specifically diagnoses Christopher), saying that Christopher matters more as a character for his unique perspective on the world than for the fact that he is probably on the autism spectrum.

### RELATED LITERARY WORKS

Christopher makes frequent references to [The Hound of the Baskervilles](#), a Sherlock Holmes story by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Sherlock Holmes, perhaps the most famous fictional detective, was the main character of numerous mystery stories written at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth. In some ways, Christopher uses the story of [The Hound of the Baskervilles](#) as a model for his own, because he likes reading Sherlock Holmes stories and because it also deals with a dog. Christopher also tries to imitate Sherlock Holmes in his attempts to solve the mystery of Wellington's death, looking for clues and red herrings (false clues) and using logic to deduce what happened. Furthermore, the title of Haddon's novel comes from the Sherlock Holmes story "The Adventure of Silver Blaze." In this short story, "the curious incident of the dog in the night-time" is that the dog stayed quiet all through the night when a crime was committed, which Holmes takes as

an indication that the culprit is someone known to the dog. Similarly, in Haddon's novel, the killer of the dog ends up to be someone known to both the dog and to Christopher himself—his father.

### KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time
- **Where Written:** Oxford, England
- **When Published:** 2003
- **Literary Period:** Contemporary fiction, Postmodernism
- **Genre:** Novel
- **Setting:** Swindon, in Wiltshire, England, and London, in the late twentieth century
- **Climax:** Christopher realizing that his mother is alive, and his father admitting he killed Wellington.
- **Antagonist:** Christopher's father, Ed Boone, and society as a whole
- **Point of View:** First person

### EXTRA CREDIT

**Christopher's stage debut.** *Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* has been adapted for the stage and began its run in London's West End in 2013.

**Don't judge a book by its cover.** The novel has been marketed to readers of all ages, and was even published in two versions with different covers—one for children, and one for adults.



## PLOT SUMMARY

The novel opens with the young narrator, Christopher John Francis Boone, discovering his neighbor's **dog** dead in her yard, murdered with a pitchfork. Mrs. Shears, the neighbor who owns the dog, calls the police. When they arrive, they overwhelm Christopher with their questions, and when a policeman touches him roughly, Christopher responds by hitting him. The policeman arrests him and brings him to the station. Christopher makes it clear to his reader that he experiences the world differently than other people, and doesn't understand human interaction very well.

At the police station, Christopher is put in a cell. The police call his father, Ed, who arrives angry at the police, but not at Christopher. An inspector questions Christopher and gives him a caution, which means that he'll receive a punishment if he gets into trouble again. On the drive home, Christopher decides that he's going to figure out who killed the dog,

Wellington. Ed gets angry and tells him not to pursue Wellington's death. Later that night, Christopher finds his father crying in the kitchen.

The next day, Christopher's teacher, Siobhan, has him write a story, so he begins to write the story that becomes the novel. Although his father has told him to stay out of other people's business, Christopher decides to disobey because Ed's instructions are too vague. That evening, he goes to Mrs. Shears's house and asks if she knows who killed Wellington, but she shuts the door in his face. He snoops in her garden shed and sees a pitchfork that looks like the one that killed Wellington.

The following day, Christopher decides to interrogate the other neighbors on his street, even though he doesn't like talking to strangers. The first few people he talks to don't have any information for him and advise him to discontinue his investigation. Finally, he approaches Mrs. Alexander, an older woman with a dog. She engages him in conversation and offers him refreshments, but when she goes inside to get them, Christopher decides she might actually be calling the police, so he leaves. He then reasons that Mr. Shears should be his prime suspect in the murder, because he left his wife, so he probably hated Mrs. Shears and killed Wellington in revenge. When Christopher returns home, Ed is very angry with him for continuing to investigate Wellington's death, and he makes Christopher promise to stop.

In chapters alternating with those that cover the central action, the reader learns more about Christopher. He struggles to understand other people, but he loves math and science and is very good at them, so he plans to take the **Maths A level** exam to qualify for university. Furthermore, he always tells the truth, and he has a photographic memory. He hates brown and yellow, but he enjoys **Sherlock Holmes** stories, and models his own detective work on that of Holmes. His parents used to argue a lot, often about him. His mother, Judy, died two years earlier of an unexpected heart attack. After her death, Mrs. Shears helped his father out a lot around the house.

A few days later, Christopher runs into Mrs. Alexander at the corner store. She engages him in conversation, and he begins to ask questions about Mr. Shears. Eventually, Mrs. Alexander realizes that Christopher has illusions about his mother, and tells him gently that his mother was having an affair with Mr. Shears.

Christopher writes everything down in his book. A few days later, he accidentally leaves the book lying around, and his father reads it. He gets terribly angry with Christopher for continuing to snoop around, and when he grabs Christopher's arm, the two get into a physical fight. Ed ends by throwing the book into the trash. The next day, Ed takes Christopher to the zoo in apology.

After school on the following day, Christopher searches the

yard and the house for the book, in case Ed decided to take it out of the trash. He finally finds it in his father's room, where he also discovers a number of envelopes addressed to him. He takes an envelope just as Ed gets home from work. When he reads it in private, he discovers that the letter is from his mother, but it was postmarked eighteen months after his mother supposedly died. Christopher sees this as another mystery to solve.

A few days later, Christopher returns to Ed's bedroom and finds forty-three more letters addressed to him. He begins to read them. They're full of his mother reminiscing about Christopher's childhood and giving him updates about her life in London. In one, she explains that she left because she felt like she couldn't be a good mother to Christopher, and she was in love with Mr. Shears. After a while, Christopher gets sick and blacks out. When he wakes up, his father comes in and realizes what has happened. Ed cries and apologizes for lying to Christopher, saying that he didn't know how to deal with Judy leaving. He gives Christopher a bath, but Christopher won't speak or eat.

Ed has learned that lying only causes more pain in the long run, so he decides to be brutally honest. He admits that he was the one who killed Wellington, because he was angry with Mrs. Shears for not wanting a relationship with him. Christopher becomes terrified of his father, thinking that if he killed Wellington, he might attack Christopher, too. Christopher waits until late at night, then sneaks outside and hides behind the garden shed. The next morning, Ed looks for him but doesn't find him.

That morning, Christopher seeks help from Mrs. Shears and Mrs. Alexander, but eventually decides that he has to go to London to live with his mother, because he's no longer safe with Ed. He takes Ed's bank card and his own pet rat, Toby, and walks to school to ask Siobhan how to get to the train station. When he sees his father's van in the school parking lot, he instead gets directions from a stranger on the street. He gets lost on the way to the station, but eventually finds it by walking the streets in a spiral.

The train station is very overwhelming for Christopher, but he makes it to a table at a café, where he sits and does mental math to stay calm. A couple hours later, he looks up to find a policeman asking what he's doing there. The policeman helps him get money with Ed's bank card, and directs him to the ticket office. Christopher purchases a ticket and finds his way to the train.

Just before the train leaves, the policeman shows up on board, this time with orders to bring Christopher back to his father. Before he can do so, however, the train begins to move. The policeman arranges for a car to pick them up at the next station. Christopher has to go to the bathroom, and then he hides on a luggage rack, because small spaces make him feel safe from the crowds on the train. The policeman can't find him and leaves

the train.

The train stops in London, and Christopher gets off. He's overwhelmed by the number of signs in the station, but he finds his way to the information desk and asks how to get to his mother's address. He's directed to the London Underground, or the tube. In the tube station, he observes other people to figure out how everything works. He makes it to the platform of the train he needs to take, but when the train actually comes, he's terrified by the noise. He sits on a bench for hours in a panic as the trains continue to roar in and out of the tunnel.

When Christopher's fear lessens, he discovers that Toby has escaped. He sees him by the rails, and climbs down. A train comes just as he catches the rat, and a man on the platform has to pull Christopher to safety.

Finally, Christopher boards a train and gets off at his mother's stop. He buys a street atlas from a shop in the station to find his way to his mother's flat. When he gets there, Judy and Mr. Shears are shocked to see him. Christopher reveals that Ed told him Judy was dead, and that he never received her letters, which greatly distresses her. That night, Ed shows up in pursuit of Christopher. Christopher refuses to talk to him, and Mr. Shears calls a policeman to escort Ed out of the flat.

Life in London is not ideal for Christopher. His mother tries to take him shopping for clothes, but he can't deal with the crowds. There's no yard, and he can't see the **stars**. When he remembers that he's supposed to take his Maths A level the next week, Judy tells him he'll have to wait until the next year. Furthermore, it's clear that Mr. Shears doesn't want him around.

When tensions with Mr. Shears heighten, Judy takes his car and drives Christopher back to Ed's house. Ed is angry with Judy, but allows them to stay in the house temporarily while he lives with a friend. Christopher doesn't eat or sleep, because he's upset about not being able to take his A level. At school the next day, Siobhan and the school principal (Mrs. Gascoyne) decide he should still be able to take the exam, so he takes the first portion that very afternoon. He struggles because he hasn't slept and can't think properly. Over the next two days, he takes the rest of the exam, and feels better about it.

Meanwhile, Ed tries to get Christopher to forgive him, but Christopher is still scared of him. Judy finds a house of her own. Christopher lives with her, but he doesn't like the house. He goes to Ed's house for short periods of time, but still refuses to speak to him. Finally, he allows Ed to talk to him for just five minutes. Ed tells him that they need to make it a joint project to repair their relationship, and as a gesture of goodwill, he gives Christopher a golden retriever puppy. The dog, Sandy, lives at Ed's house, where Christopher takes care of it and begins to interact with his father again.

Christopher receives an A on his exam, and he begins to study for the next A level. He plans to bring Sandy to university and

become a scientist. He feels confident about his future because of all the challenges he has overcome in going to London and solving Wellington's murder.



## CHARACTERS

### MAJOR CHARACTERS

**Christopher John Francis Boone** – Christopher is the fifteen-year-old narrator of the novel, which he is writing for school. Although it's not mentioned in the book, it's likely that Christopher has Asperger's Syndrome, which is a condition on the autism spectrum. As a result, he experiences and deals with the world in a different way than most people. For example, he notices and remembers everything he sees, which makes new places extremely overwhelming. He doesn't like being around people because he has trouble understanding body language and facial expressions, as well as figures of speech. He prefers to be alone in small spaces, and he loves math, logic, and the universe. He excels in math and science, so he plans to take the **Maths A level** exam, go to university, and become a scientist. Over the course of the book, as Christopher faces changes in his life and has to reevaluate his relationships with his parents, he faces a number of situations that he wouldn't have imagined facing at the beginning, and he navigates them with eventual success. As a result, Christopher grows quite a bit over the course of the novel, and at the end he feels much more equipped to face his future adult life than he did at the beginning.

**Ed Boone (Christopher's father)** – Ed, Christopher's father, runs a heating maintenance and boiler repair business. Although Judy thinks of him as being very even-tempered with Christopher, he does kill Wellington out of anger and gets angry with Christopher quite often as Christopher investigates the murder. Ed hopes to start a life with Mrs. Shears after Judy and Mr. Shears run away together, but this does not work out, which makes him bitter. He advocates for Christopher to be able to take the **Maths A level**, and he tries hard to let Christopher live his life in whatever way works for Christopher. For example, he lets Christopher eat what he wants, since Christopher will otherwise stop eating altogether. Ed tries to do his best for Christopher, but he fails him particularly in dealing with Judy's departure. Ed lies to Christopher, telling him that Judy has died, and hiding her letters to him. Ed later heartily regrets this decision, but he has already lost Christopher's hard-earned trust. At the end of the book, he works to regain this trust, and begins to succeed by giving Christopher a **dog**.

**Judy Boone (Christopher's mother)** – Judy is Christopher's mother, who works as a secretary. Christopher believes her dead for two years before finding her letters to him hidden in his father's cupboard. In fact, Judy couldn't handle the stress of

having Christopher as her son, and thought that Ed was taking better care of him, so she left to live in London with Mr. Shears. She feels terribly guilty about this decision, as she expresses in her letters. When Christopher shows up at her London flat, she's shocked to find that he believed her dead and realizes that she needs to take a more active part in her son's life. She brings Christopher back to Swindon and rents a house there.

**Siobhan** – Christopher's main teacher. Siobhan is one of the few people whom Christopher completely trusts. She helps him understand the way other people act, and she seems to understand more than almost anyone how his mind works. She also guides his writing, assigning him a writing task initially and then giving him advice on his book as he goes.

**Mrs. Alexander** – Mrs. Alexander is a kind neighbor of Christopher's. He first meets her when he's asking his neighbors for information about Wellington's death, and she expresses interest in his life and invites him in for tea, showing an easy willingness to see the world from his point of view. Later, Christopher runs into her and her **dog** at the corner store. He's wary of trusting her, but he asks her what she knows about Mr. Shears. Mrs. Alexander realizes that Christopher thinks his mother is dead, and ends up telling him about his mother's affair with Mr. Shears.

**Roger Shears** – Christopher's mother, Judy, fell in love with Roger Shears and ran away to London with him. For a while, Christopher suspects that Mr. Shears killed Wellington due to bad feeling between him and Mrs. Shears. When Christopher arrives at his mother's apartment in London, Mr. Shears doesn't want him to stay, so Judy breaks up with him and she and Christopher return to Swindon.

## MINOR CHARACTERS

**Eileen Shears** – Mrs. Shears owns Wellington, the **dog** that dies at the beginning of the novel. She is often unsympathetic to Christopher, particularly after Wellington's death. She helped Ed out after Judy ran away with Mr. Shears, but she did not respond positively to Ed's desire for a relationship.

**Toby** – Christopher's pet rat. Christopher is very attached to Toby, and feels it necessary to bring Toby with him to London. As Christopher grows up over the course of the book, the reader more often sees him taking particular care for Toby's well-being.

**Mr. Jeavons** – The psychologist at Christopher's school. Mr. Jeavons asks Christopher many questions about his reasons for acting in certain ways, and sometimes makes conclusions about Christopher's rationales that Christopher himself doesn't agree with.

**Mrs. Gascoyne** – The principal of Christopher's school. She initially objects to having Christopher take the **Maths A level**, but gives in once Ed gets angry with her.

**Reverend Peters** – A man of the church who tries to convince Christopher that heaven exists. He also administers Christopher's **A level exam**.

**Rhodri** – Rhodri works for Ed and sometimes spends time with him at Ed and Christopher's house. Rhodri asks Christopher to multiply large numbers and frequently laughs at him, which Christopher doesn't appreciate.

**Mr. Thompson's brother** – One of Christopher's neighbors, whom he asks for information about Wellington's death.

**Mr. Wise** – One of Christopher's neighbors, whom he asks for information about Wellington's death.

**Uncle Terry** – Christopher's uncle, who once saw a ghost in a shop.

**Mrs. Forbes** – A teacher at Christopher's school.

**Joseph Fleming** – A boy at Christopher's school who eats everything he can get his hands on, including his own poop.

**Julie** – Christopher's first teacher.

**Wellington** – Mrs. Shears' **dog**, whose murder sets off the action of the novel.

**Sandy** – A new **puppy** given to Christopher by Ed as a way of trying to rebuild his trust.



## THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.



## GROWING UP

*The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* can be read as a *bildungsroman*, a German term that means a coming-of-age story. In *bildungsromans*, the main character, who is often an adolescent, grows and learns about life over the course of the story, so that they're more adult at the end than they were at the beginning. At the beginning of the book, Christopher is very much still a child, largely due to a lack of knowledge about life and the world. Although he's constantly thinking about math and the universe, his view of his own life is somewhat limited. He believes that his mother has died, and never questions his father's relationship with Mrs. Shears or his mother's relationship with Mr. Shears. Over the course of the story, Christopher's illusions are shattered. He finds out that his father has lied to him on many occasions, his mother is in fact alive, and both of his parents have had relationships with the Shearses. These revelations force Christopher into a more complicated understanding of his own life and the people around him, as he must question the

value of truth and the meaning of love. By the end, he sees that both of his parents are deeply flawed, but is well on his way to having workable relationships with both of them.

Furthermore, Christopher faces numerous fears throughout the story, building his confidence in his own abilities. Because Christopher probably has Asperger's, an autism spectrum condition, he struggles to move through the world in the way that most other people do. He doesn't like loud noises or being in large crowds, and he sometimes hits people when they try to touch him. However, when he finds out that his mother is alive and his father has killed Wellington the **dog**, he decides to travel to London despite having little idea how to get there and knowing that he'll surely encounter situations that will frighten him. In order to successfully reach his mother's apartment, Christopher has to become very resourceful, talking to strangers, figuring out how to travel on the London Underground, and buying a map to find the apartment in London. The trip seems to be almost entirely terrifying for Christopher, and he often remains stuck in one place for a while because he simply can't face his surroundings.

Yet Christopher manages to meet all of the challenges that come his way on this trip, and also writes his whole story down. Additionally, he gets an A on his **Maths A level** exam, which puts him on the path to attending university. Thus, by the end of the book he feels that if he has succeeded in all of these difficult tasks, he can also succeed in life, and go to university and become a scientist as he has always dreamed. Having gained knowledge about the people around him and about how the world works, he feels much more prepared to meet the challenges of adult life than he did at the beginning.



## TRUST

Christopher has trouble understanding other people, so he usually fails to perceive nuances in people's personalities, instead categorizing them in a certain way that dictates how he interacts with them. These categorizations often influence whether or not Christopher feels that he can trust certain people, and his social interactions depend almost entirely on whether or not he trusts the other person.

Whenever Christopher meets someone new, he assumes they're untrustworthy until he can see some proof to the contrary. Even the school environment, where most people take for granted that teachers are essentially good people, does not reassure Christopher—he refuses to interact with new teachers until he has observed them for a few weeks to be sure it's safe for him to trust them. Christopher is very cautious whenever he meets anyone he doesn't know. Mrs. Alexander makes gestures of friendship which Christopher returns very warily, believing that at any moment she might lead him into danger. Christopher's judgments of people are often different from general social attitudes, so the fact that Mrs. Alexander is

an elderly woman makes her no less automatically trustworthy in his eyes.

For Christopher, trust is completely black and white. Either someone is trustworthy or they're not, in which case he thinks they're entirely unpredictable and might hurt him. When Christopher's father admits that he lied about Christopher's mother dying and that he killed Wellington, Christopher decides that he can no longer trust Ed. Because of Christopher's worldview, losing trust in his father means not only that he can't believe what Ed tells him, but that if Ed could kill a dog, he's quite likely to kill Christopher, too.

At first, Christopher seems overcautious about whether or not people can be trusted, such as when he leaves Mrs. Alexander's yard because she's taking too long to bring out the cookies she's promised, and he thinks she might be calling the police on him. However, it becomes evident that in fact, his black-and-white view of trustworthiness has blinded him to the deceptions of those closest to him, whom he trusts most—his parents. Christopher's parents inflict quite a bit of emotional pain on him—his mother leaves him without saying goodbye and his father lies about her death. Thus Christopher's complete mistrust of others is not so much unnecessary as it is misdirected; at the beginning of the book, he trusts his parents just as blindly as he refuses to trust anyone new, and this prevents him from imagining that his parents might be capable of hurting him and from guessing that his mother's story might be different from what he's been told. Christopher does not regard humans as inherently untrustworthy; rather, he thinks he has to figure out which ones are trustworthy and which aren't. However, the betrayals of his parents, whom he long ago classified as trustworthy, demonstrate that no one can be completely trusted. Even generally trustworthy people with good intentions are governed in the end by emotions, which might lead them to act in harmful ways.

Christopher himself intends to be entirely trustworthy, constantly reminding those around him that he always tells the truth. However, as Ed tries to keep him from his investigations, Christopher becomes less trustworthy, even while telling himself that he's doing nothing wrong. He disobeys Ed because Ed's instructions were too vague, and he tells only part of the truth about where he's been when he goes out. Thus, Christopher himself also proves that people can never entirely be trusted.



## TRUTH, LOVE, AND SAFETY

Christopher sees truth as an anchoring principle of the world, and values it almost the way other people might value right over wrong. If someone tells the truth, he can trust them, and if they lie, he fears them. However, Christopher also finds out that the truth can hurt as much as a lie. While he is constantly aware of his physical safety, carrying his **knife** in case someone tries to attack him

and taking comfort in the knowledge that he can hit people hard, Christopher doesn't know how to protect himself emotionally. In fact, he sometimes responds to emotional harm with physical defense, such as when he physically fights his father when Ed confronts him about having learned of his mother's affair. Christopher believes the truth will keep him safe from emotional harm, but he finds that this isn't necessarily the case.

Christopher doesn't understand why anyone would want to believe something that isn't true, such as that fairies exist. He wants to know the truth about everything, which is partly the basis of the plot: Christopher sets out to discover the truth about who killed Wellington. He also insists on telling the truth in his account of events and in his everyday life, often reminding those around him that he never lies. Christopher dedicates himself so thoroughly to truth that he even thinks of it as a white lie to not give every small detail of his desired day when asked, "What do you want to do today?" He eventually finds himself having to stretch the truth and tell white lies in order to do his detective work, particularly when his father forbids him from seeking Wellington's killer. This is one of the ways that Christopher changes over the course of the story, interacting on a more complex level with the world around him.

Because Christopher initially orders his life by truth and falsehood, however, he resists imagining situations other than those that actually exist. He doesn't like for people to wonder how those who are dead might react to current situations, because deceased people can't actually think anything about a world that goes on after their death. By living in the moment like this, Christopher manages to protect himself from distressing thoughts of his dead mother or of how things might have been if she were still around.

Furthermore, Christopher sees telling the truth as a sign of love, especially in his father. However, the truth about his mother ends up hurting him. Ed finds the truth of his wife's desertion too painful to deal with, and thinks that a lie will protect Christopher. Lying about Judy's death protects his father from dealing with his own emotions, but he also might think that a lie is the loving choice in this situation; that it is better for Christopher to think his mother dead than to think that she has abandoned him. Because of Christopher's dedication to truth, though, he can't see that his father might have had good intentions in lying to him, even if it was fundamentally wrong. Even so, he does feel the pain of the truth, which in this situation has betrayed him as much as his parents have, putting him into emotional danger rather than keeping him safe.

Although the truth hurts Christopher, he can't become an adult without facing it. He must accept multiple conflicting truths at once. His father lied and hurt him, but still loves him. As much as Christopher hates lies, they can feel safer, and he himself sometimes must stretch the truth. He is forced to soften his

concrete association not only between truth and safety, but also between truth and love.



## LOGIC VS. EMOTION

Christopher, who is probably on the autism spectrum, struggles in interactions that depend on emotion or personality. Rather than sensing that someone is sad because of the tone of their voice, he often only perceives this emotion when the person starts crying and he can see physical evidence of their sadness.

Christopher best understands situations that he can explain logically rather than emotionally. He tries to be like the detective **Sherlock Holmes**, because Holmes approaches mysteries from a logical perspective and seeks an explainable truth. Furthermore, Holmes doesn't believe in supernatural explanations for odd happenings. Like Holmes, Christopher thinks that all odd happenings can be illuminated through use of logic, and Christopher takes this approach in his investigation of Wellington's death.

Christopher loves math in part because it's logical. He particularly likes prime numbers, and even uses them to number his chapters—a decision that might seem illogical to other people, since chapter five, for example, is actually the third chapter. He thinks that prime numbers are similar to life in that their existence is based on logic, but it's impossible to find rules to define them. While many people might relate to this perspective, it is especially applicable to Christopher's situation, since he struggles to understand the unspoken social rules that most people don't have to think about. Whenever Christopher feels overwhelmed by the world around him, he turns to logic for help to understand it and to reason out his next steps. For him, logic is the path to truth.

Christopher expresses his emotions in a limited way. He rarely narrates what he's feeling in a given situation beyond being happy or being overwhelmed and confused. He expresses most negative emotions by groaning or hitting people. He also struggles to understand when people around him act based on their emotions, rather than based on logic. For example, Ed lies to Christopher about Judy's death because he can't handle his own emotions about the situation, and doesn't want to hurt Christopher by telling him his mother left him. He also kills Wellington out of extreme emotions towards Mrs. Shears. Because these actions are based on emotion, Christopher simply can't understand them, and all he takes from them is that his father can't be trusted.

Despite Christopher's love of and need for logic, he himself sometimes acts in ways that others see as illogical, just as others act in ways that he sees as illogical. For example, Christopher figures out whether he's going to have a good day or a bad day—what emotions he'll experience—by the colors of the cars that he sees on his way to school. This seems illogical,

since car colors have nothing to do with the events of his life. However, he points out that people who work in offices often feel that they'll have a bad day simply because it's raining, even though the rain has no actual effect on their life in an office. Christopher's logical explanations for his actions often make sense even when it seems like they shouldn't, suggesting that personal logic itself may not always be logical, but instead based on each person's subjective point of view and ability to think in new ways.



## PERSPECTIVE AND THE ABSURDITY OF THE WORLD

The actions of people on the autism spectrum often seem difficult to comprehend for people who are not autistic. However, telling the story from Christopher's perspective helps the reader understand his worldview and question the generally accepted rules of society.

Christopher sees society from a somewhat removed perspective. He doesn't instinctively understand why people act in certain ways or why certain things are expected of him. As a result, he notices aspects of everyday life that are somewhat absurd, but that most people accept as perfectly normal without thinking about them. For example, Christopher hates the colors yellow and brown and tries to stay away from them, particularly not eating anything in these colors. He acknowledges that this is somewhat foolish, but he also points out that people decide what they're going to order at a restaurant depending on which foods they generally like, even if they've never eaten any of the dishes on the menu, and avoiding yellow foods isn't much different from avoiding bitter foods.

Christopher also has trouble understanding many figures of speech, such as "I laughed my socks off" or "He was the apple of my eye." People often use phrases like this without thinking about what they're literally saying, but only thinking about what they generally mean. Christopher's confusion about them forces the reader to actually consider the absurdity of some of these phrases, and the distance between what they describe literally and what they're meant to convey.

Finally, Christopher's perspective emphasizes the amount of sensory stimulation that people are constantly receiving. Most people are so used to it that they hardly notice, but Christopher experiences the world differently and can't ignore the excess information that his brain receives. His narration portrays the overstimulation of the modern world and the absurdity of urban life that includes gigantic trains traveling through tunnels and advertisements that sound ridiculous when described in Christopher's logical detail.

Christopher's narration forces the reader to reevaluate what most people consider "normal" and consider that the entire concept of normality is subjective, based on individual

experience rather than indisputable fact.



## SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.



### DOGS

Dogs show up frequently throughout the novel, usually representing Christopher's safety. This symbolism is particularly appropriate because dogs are often meant to protect the people around them. This symbol goes deeper than the symbol of the **knife**, however, representing not only physical, but also emotional safety.

The story begins with Christopher's discovery of the dead dog Wellington. At this point, Christopher has no immediate worries for his safety, and in fact thinks himself responsible for others' safety as he tries to find Wellington's murderer. However, as he continues to investigate Wellington's death, Christopher encounters emotional danger in the form of his mother's letters and his father's confession. After Ed tells Christopher that he killed Wellington, Christopher almost takes on dog-like qualities, barking whenever anyone bumps into him or frightens him. As he flees from his father's physical and emotional violence, Christopher's defense mechanisms become like those of the dog his father killed.

At the end of the novel, Ed gives Christopher another dog, Sandy, as a pet. This gesture helps to repair the relationship between father and son and helps Christopher feel safer around Ed. Ed may have killed a dog at the beginning of the book, but at the end he brings a new one into the story, and this symbolic gift seems to heal many of the wounds that have been inflicted over the course of the novel.

Additionally, Christopher sees dogs as symbols of safety in the context of his relationship with Mrs. Alexander. While always wary of her as a stranger, Christopher is more inclined to trust her because she has a dog, and he believes that people with dogs are generally nice.



### CARS

Cars symbolize the private order that Christopher puts on the world to make it intelligible to him.

Under Christopher's rules of his own creation, the colors of the cars that he sees on his bus ride to school indicate whether he'll have a good day or a bad one, just the way the weather does for many people. Christopher in fact uses the cars as a sort of talisman of good or bad luck—if he sees the wrong color, he won't speak to anyone all day, and if he sees the right color, he'll take more risks because he believes they'll turn out well. He even draws a number of red cars on his mother's get-well card

when he thinks she's in the hospital, hoping that the cars will help her get better. In this way, they become almost like a religion to Christopher, who doesn't believe in God.

Once Christopher reaches his mother's house, he tries to determine what sort of day it will be by watching the cars out the window, but he realizes that this doesn't work because he can watch for as long as he wants and see a number of colors with conflicting meanings. At this point, he has to give up on this set of rules. As his world expands and he grows up, Christopher is forced to lose certain illusions, like his prophesying cars. In doing so, he becomes more fully a part of the world around him.



### MATHS A LEVEL

The Maths A level is an exam that British students take as a step towards qualifying for university study. Throughout the book, the A level represents Christopher's dreams for his future. He wants to go to university and become a scientist, and the A level is the first step for him out of his school and out of Swindon. Because he's the first student from his special needs school to ever take an A level, the test proves to him and the world that he doesn't have to lower his expectations for himself just because he's autistic. He can use his different way of seeing the world to succeed. Some of Christopher's lowest points occur when he is living with his mother in London and in Swindon and he thinks he might not be able to take the A level. In these moments, he sees the entire life he's imagined collapsing around himself. Not only has it ended up that his mother is alive, but if he can't take the test, his imagined future falls to shreds. Once Christopher gets a top grade on the exam, though, he feels confident about his ability to become a scientist, and he has passed another hurdle on his way to becoming an adult.



### SHERLOCK HOLMES

Throughout the book, Sherlock Holmes stands for Christopher's personal values of logic and mental detachment. Christopher admires Holmes because he uses logic to solve mysteries and never gives in to the temptation of supernatural explanations for odd happenings. Christopher tries to copy Holmes's methods as he attempts to solve the mystery of Wellington's death. Furthermore, Holmes represents Christopher's ability to succeed in life. Holmes is an odd character who does not interact with the world in a particularly conventional manner. His internal world and detachment from society allow him to regard the external world in a way that other don't see it, a way that allows him to notice what others don't. Christopher sees in Holmes a validation that his own values are worthwhile, even if other people don't understand how his mind works.



### STARS

Christopher often looks up at the stars, especially in emotionally difficult situations. The stars make him feel small because the universe is so large, and they allow him to imagine that he's out in space and there aren't people all around him, which he finds comforting. The stars represent the fact that everything is much bigger than humankind and the social rules that fail Christopher—he remarks that humans will probably be extinct by the time the universe stops exploding from the Big Bang and all of the stars fall back towards each other. He also rejects the idea of constellations by saying they're entirely arbitrary, thus stripping the stars of the stories that people have laid over them to make them more understandable to human minds. Christopher's mind works in a different way. Furthermore, the stars symbolize his desire to be an astronaut and achieve everything that people have told him he can't do.



### SWISS ARMY KNIFE

Christopher carries his Swiss Army Knife everywhere he goes, often clutching it in his pocket on his journey to London. The knife makes him feel safe, because he knows that if anyone tries to attack him, he can defend himself. Thus, the knife symbolizes Christopher's physical safety, the only kind of safety he's aware of and the safety he constantly pursues. However, no matter how many knives he has, they can't protect him from the psychological and emotional damage that his parents cause him and that he never manages to acknowledge to himself.



### QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Vintage edition of *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* published in 2004.

## Chapter 7 Quotes

☛ This is a murder mystery novel.

Siobhan said that I should write something I would want to read myself. Mostly I read books about science and maths. I do not like proper novels...

But I do like murder mystery novels. So I am writing a murder mystery novel.

In a murder mystery novel someone has to work out who the murderer is and then catch them. It is a puzzle. If it is a good puzzle you can sometimes work out the answer before the end of the book.

Siobhan said that the book should begin with something to grab people's attention. That is why I started with the dog.

**Related Characters:** Christopher John Francis Boone (speaker), Siobhan, Wellington

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 4-5

### Explanation and Analysis

This passage occurs near the beginning of the book, just after Christopher discovers Wellington dead. Christopher is an unusual first person narrator, in that he narrates with frequent explicit references to actually writing the book. He is very open about his writing process and the input that his teacher Siobhan gives him. Thus, the narration is very conscious of itself as existing within the medium of a book. In this passage, he clearly states his intentions in writing—simply to write a book that he would like to read. As the world is generally not very accommodating to people with autism, Christopher's mission to write a book with someone like himself as the audience is actually a rather radical idea.

Throughout the book, Christopher often mentions how much he likes puzzles, and he thinks of difficult social concepts as puzzles as a way to make it easier for him to figure them out. Thus, it makes sense that he is trying to create a puzzle himself. In fact, he more or less invites the reader to try to solve the puzzle even as he tries to solve the mystery himself. Because he struggles to understand people, it's likely that the reader will be able to put the clues together before he does, even though he's the one giving the reader access to the clues.

## Chapter 29 Quotes

☛ The word *metaphor* means carrying something from one place to another... and it is when you describe something by using a word for something that it isn't...

I think it should be called a lie because a pig is not like a day and people do not have skeletons in their cupboards. And when I try and make a picture of the phrase in my head it just confuses me because imagining an apple in someone's eye doesn't have anything to do with liking someone a lot and it makes you forget what the person was talking about.

**Related Characters:** Christopher John Francis Boone (speaker)

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 15

### Explanation and Analysis

After Christopher is taken to the police station, he discusses why he has trouble understanding people. One reason is that he doesn't understand body language, and another is that he doesn't understand metaphors. There are plenty of metaphors that people use daily without thinking about it, and most people interpret the metaphors they hear without any trouble. Christopher, however, thinks of everything very literally. Thus, he can't automatically interpret a metaphor as what it's meant to communicate, but instead thinks of it as an actual image, like an apple sitting in a person's eye. He's entirely correct that a phrase like "He was the apple of her eye" makes no literal sense, and is actually quite absurd when considered in this way. Christopher's perspective on human conventions like this often makes them seem ridiculous, because his autism allows him to regard society from an outside perspective. Although this puts him at a disadvantage in everyday interactions, it also gives him insight into aspects of life that most people are so used to that they can't think about them objectively.

## Chapter 37 Quotes

☛ A lie is when you say something happened which didn't happen. But there is only ever one thing which happened at a particular time and a particular place. And there are an infinite number of things which didn't happen at that time and that place. And if I think about something which didn't happen I start thinking about all the other things which didn't happen.

**Related Characters:** Christopher John Francis Boone (speaker)

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 19

### Explanation and Analysis

Christopher's mother used to say he didn't tell lies because he was a good person, but instead, he admits, it's only because he *can't* tell them, and gives this explanation as to why. Christopher is very attached to facts, always wants to know what to expect from a person or situation, and thinks very logically. He doesn't like imagining anything that didn't happen, and for him, lies go along with this category. Because of the way his mind works, he can't just imagine *one* thing that didn't happen—once he tells that one lie, he begins thinking about all the other possible lies that exist. He needs the truth to keep him attached to reality and to keep him feeling safe.

Over the course of the book, Christopher's hard-and-fast rule about lies becomes a little shakier. He particularly begins to tell only partial truths in order to avoid his father's wrath about his investigations of Wellington's death. However, he is most affected by his father's lie about his mother's death, which completely unmoors him, because a main part of his life for the last two years was in fact imaginary rather than real.

## Chapter 67 Quotes

☝ It takes me a long time to get used to people I do not know. For example, when there is a new member of staff at school I do not talk to them for weeks and weeks. I just watch them until I know that they are safe. Then I ask them questions about themselves, like whether they have pets and what is their favorite color and what do they know about the Apollo space missions and I get them to draw a plan of their house and I ask them what kind of car they drive, so I get to know them...

So talking to the other people in our street was brave. But if you are going to do detective work you have to be brave, so I had no choice.

**Related Characters:** Christopher John Francis Boone (speaker)

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 35

### Explanation and Analysis

Christopher has decided to go talk to his neighbors to see whether they know anything about Wellington's death, but this is a frightening prospect for him due to his distrust of strangers. He initially distrusts everyone, and doesn't begin to trust anyone until he has good reason to think them trustworthy. Though they seem insignificant, all of the questions that Christopher mentions asking new staff members relate directly to his personal rules and interests. He feels strong connections to animals, including dogs and his pet rat; he harbors an intense hatred of anything yellow or brown; he wants to become an astronaut; he likes maps and always wants to know where he is in relation to his physical surroundings; and he believes that the colors of cars that he sees on the way to school make it a good day or a bad one. Essentially, then, Christopher needs to position any new person within his own world before he can feel that he knows them.

In light of these reservations about strangers, going to talk to his neighbors is, as he says, brave of him. It is the first of many times in this book that he will force himself outside his comfort zone—first to solve the mystery of Wellington's death, and then to travel to his mother's house. Talking to strangers begins a long process of growing up throughout the novel.

☝ Mr. Shears used to be married to Mrs. Shears and they lived together until two years ago. Then Mr. Shears left and didn't come back. This was why Mrs. Shears came over and did lots of cooking for us after Mother died, because she didn't have to cook for Mr. Shears anymore and she didn't have to stay at home and be his wife. And also Father said that she needed company and didn't want to be on her own.

And sometimes Mrs. Shears stayed overnight at our house...

**Related Characters:** Christopher John Francis Boone (speaker), Judy Boone (Christopher's mother), Ed Boone (Christopher's father), Eileen Shears, Roger Shears

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 42

### Explanation and Analysis

When Christopher leaves Mrs. Alexander's house, he's thinking about the mystery and realizes that Mr. Shears should be his prime suspect, because Mr. Shears didn't like Mrs. Shears and might have wanted to hurt her. This passage actually provides much of the background needed to solve the mystery, but Christopher approaches it from

the wrong angle. Mr. Shears left around the same time Judy supposedly died, and Mrs. Shears became close to Ed in the aftermath. These are the fundamental clues needed to figure out that Mr. Shears actually left with Judy, Ed hoped to take up with Mrs. Shears, and he became angry when she refused him. Thus, Christopher unwittingly provides the reader with the clues needed to solve the mystery, even though he doesn't realize they're clues. The matter-of-fact way in which Christopher presents these circumstances shows how oblivious he can sometimes be to the nuances in the relationships of the adults around him.

## Chapter 97 Quotes

☛☛ And Mrs. Alexander said, "Your mother, before she died, was very good friends with Mr. Shears."

And I said, "I know."

And she said, "No, Christopher, I'm not sure that you do. I mean that they were very good friends. Very, very good friends."

I thought about this for a while and said, "Do you mean that they were doing sex?"

And Mrs. Alexander said, "Yes, Christopher. That is what I mean."

**Related Characters:** Christopher John Francis Boone, Mrs. Alexander (speaker), Roger Shears, Judy Boone (Christopher's mother)

**Related Themes:**   

**Page Number:** 60

### Explanation and Analysis

When Mrs. Alexander realizes that Christopher believes his mother is dead and doesn't know about her affair, she decides that she has already said too much and has to reveal the truth. This is the moment in which Christopher finds out that his mother was having an affair with Mr. Shears, an essential piece of information that leads to the unraveling of Christopher's life as he knows it. Mrs. Alexander, a kind old lady, doesn't feel she can say what she means outright, instead calling Judy and Mr. Shears "very good friends." Christopher, who usually doesn't understand implied meanings, catches on surprisingly quickly, responding in his usual blunt style. This forces the reader to wonder whether Christopher might have, on some unconscious level, already known this information about his mother.

This is an important moment in Christopher's process of growing up, as he learns an awful truth about his mother, and its repercussions will force him to face an unraveling strand of lies.

## Chapter 107 Quotes

☛☛ I also like [The Hound of the Baskervilles](#) because I like Sherlock Holmes and I think that if I were a proper detective he is the kind of detective I would be. He is very intelligent and he solves the mystery and he says

*The world is full of obvious things which nobody by any chance ever observes.*

But he notices them, like I do. Also it says in the book

*Sherlock Holmes had, in a very remarkable degree, the power of detaching his mind at will.*

And this is like me, too, because if I get really interested in something... I don't notice anything else...

Also Sherlock Holmes doesn't believe in the supernatural, which is God and fairy tales and Hounds of Hell and curses, which are stupid things.

**Related Characters:** Christopher John Francis Boone (speaker)

**Related Themes:**  

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 73-74

### Explanation and Analysis

Christopher provides a summary of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* and devotes this chapter to his love of Sherlock Holmes. Christopher doesn't relate to most novels, and he doesn't relate to most people, but he relates to both Sherlock Holmes stories and to the character himself. Christopher sees himself in Holmes, which is particularly exciting to him because his mind works so differently from those of everyone around him in real life. Holmes, however, thinks like Christopher does, observing everything with intense interest and using logic and facts to put the world in order. Holmes acts as a role model for Christopher, who tries to imitate his methods in order to solve the mystery of Wellington's murder.

## Chapter 109 Quotes

☝☝ But I don't feel sad about it. Because Mother is dead. And because Mr. Shears isn't around any more. So I would be feeling sad about something that isn't real and doesn't exist. And that would be stupid.

**Related Characters:** Christopher John Francis Boone (speaker), Roger Shears, Judy Boone (Christopher's mother), Siobhan

**Related Themes:**   

**Page Number:** 75

### Explanation and Analysis

Christopher tells Siobhan this after she reads his account of Mrs. Alexander's revelation concerning his mother. Siobhan is worried that Christopher might be upset about it, even if he isn't acknowledging his feelings to himself. However, Christopher insists that it would be stupid to feel sad about the situation. He manages to an admirable extent to live in the present moment, as he argues for the irrationality of being upset by saying that since the affair is over and his mother is dead, it's now irrelevant to his life. This attitude also relates to his need for logic and facts. He says the affair "doesn't exist," which is, in theory, true, because he believes it's now nothing more than an intangible memory. As something that's now only thought of, the affair ends up in a similar category as lies, which Christopher avoids thinking about. However, the information about the affair will soon have tangible consequences, and Christopher will be forced to consider it more deeply.

## Chapter 131 Quotes

☝☝ Mrs. Forbes said that hating yellow and brown is just being silly. And Siobhan said that she shouldn't say things like that and everyone has favorite colors. And Siobhan was right. But Mrs. Forbes was a bit right, too. Because it is sort of being silly. But in life you have to take lots of decisions and if you don't take decisions you would never do anything because you would spend all your time choosing between things you could do. So it is good to have a reason why you hate some things and you like others. It is like being in a restaurant... and you look at the menu and you have to choose what you are going to have... so you have favorite foods and you choose these, and you have foods you don't like and you don't choose these, and then it is simple.

**Related Characters:** Christopher John Francis Boone (speaker), Siobhan, Mrs. Forbes

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 85

### Explanation and Analysis

One of Christopher's personal rules in life is to avoid anything yellow or brown, particularly food, because he doesn't like these colors. He acknowledges that this is somewhat arbitrary, and perhaps foolish, but he also thinks it isn't as absurd as Mrs. Forbes thinks. Although it seems strange to most people, he points out that most people have likes and dislikes, and this phenomenon actually helps them move through life in a more efficient way. If people didn't have preferences, they would never be able to make all of the rather insignificant decisions that come their way on a daily basis. Christopher's logic thus manages to make a preference that initially seems strange actually make sense. Although his autism makes him react to many situations in ways that at first seem illogical or unwarranted, he usually has a good reason for acting as he does.

## Chapter 137 Quotes

☝☝ And Father said, "Christopher, do you understand that I love you?"

And I said "Yes," because loving someone is helping them when they get into trouble, and looking after them, and telling them the truth, and Father looks after me when I get into trouble, like coming to the police station, and he looks after me by cooking meals for me, and he always tells the truth, which means that he loves me.

**Related Characters:** Ed Boone (Christopher's father), Christopher John Francis Boone (speaker)

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 87

### Explanation and Analysis

After Ed finds Christopher's book and they get in a physical fight over Christopher's investigations, Ed takes Christopher to the zoo as an apology. The above conversation takes place at the zoo. This book is largely about love, and so Christopher's definition of love is necessary to an understanding of later events. He defines love in terms of actions rather than feelings, which makes sense, since he always struggles to understand emotions, be they his own or other people's. Just because Christopher explains love in this seemingly stilted, action-based way

doesn't necessarily mean that he doesn't feel the emotion of love, but only that he can't describe the feeling.

Crucially, one of Christopher's main criteria for love is telling the truth. He believes Ed loves him because he tells him the truth. Thus, when Christopher finds out later that Ed has in fact lied to him for two years about his mother, this seriously brings into question his father's love for him. Christopher can't understand that Ed might lie to Christopher precisely *because* he loves him.

## Chapter 157 Quotes

☹☹ And I couldn't walk properly for a month, do you remember, and your father had to look after you. And I remember looking at the two of you and seeing you together and thinking how you were really different with him. Much calmer. And you didn't shout at one another. And it made me so sad because it was like you didn't really need me at all.

**Related Characters:** Judy Boone (Christopher's mother) (speaker), Ed Boone (Christopher's father), Christopher John Francis Boone

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 108-109

### Explanation and Analysis

This passage comes from one of Judy's letters to Christopher, in which she reminds him of an incident where they got in an argument and he threw a cutting board, which broke her toes. At this point, she was having an affair with Mr. Shears, but didn't want to leave Ed because that would mean leaving Christopher. This passage, then, explains her justification for finally leaving. Judy wants to believe that leaving was the right choice, not just for herself, but also for Christopher. She felt crippled not only physically, but also in terms of her ability to mother him. She wanted to be an absolutely necessary part of Christopher's life, someone without whom he couldn't thrive, but she decided that she was not fulfilling this role.

This passage provides a view into Judy's inner turmoil and pain over being Christopher's mother. Additionally, however, it raises the question of whether Christopher really does need Judy. Before he finds her letters, he does seem to be living a complete, relatively happy life alone with Ed. However, this life is based upon a lie, and it is the very existence of the lie and Ed's choice to tell it that proves that the family does, in fact, need Judy.

☹☹ Mother had not had a heart attack. Mother had not died. Mother had been alive all the time. And Father had lied about this.

I tried really hard to think if there was any other explanation but I couldn't think of one. And then I couldn't think of anything at all because my brain wasn't working properly.

I felt giddy. It was like the room was swinging from side to side, as if it was at the top of a really tall building and the building was swinging backward and forward in a strong wind (this is a simile, too). But I knew that the room couldn't be swinging backward and forward, so it must have been something which was happening inside my head.

I rolled onto the bed and curled up in a ball.

My stomach hurt.

**Related Characters:** Christopher John Francis Boone (speaker), Ed Boone (Christopher's father), Judy Boone (Christopher's mother)

**Related Themes:**    

**Page Number:** 112-13

### Explanation and Analysis

This is the essential moment in the book at which Christopher, having read a number of the letters that his mother sent to him and his father hid from him, realizes that Ed has lied about Judy's death. This would obviously be an extremely traumatic experience for anyone, but Christopher in particular needs the truth in order to feel safe and secure in his life. Furthermore, he needs to be able to trust people completely in order to feel comfortable around them. His mother being alive is enough of a shock, but on top of that, he has to deal with the fact that Ed, whom he thought he could trust more than anyone because Ed loves him, has deceived him to an enormous degree.

With these basic facts of Christopher's life suddenly uprooted, the shock prevents him from thinking properly, and since logic is another pillar of his existence, he begins to feel completely disoriented. He experiences a physical reaction to the psychological trauma, and begins to feel sick.

## Chapter 163 Quotes

☝☝ And this is why people's brains are like computers. And it's not because they are special but because they have to keep turning off for fractions of a second while the screen changes. And because there is something they can't see people think it has to be special, because people always think there is something special about what they can't see...

Also people think they're not computers because they have feelings and computers don't have feelings. 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 a happy picture they smile and if it is a sad picture they cry.

**Related Characters:** Christopher John Francis Boone (speaker)

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 118-19

**Explanation and Analysis**

This passage comes at the end of a chapter in which Christopher discusses ways in which people's minds are like computers—they are essentially watching a screen of the world around them, subject to the eccentricities of the brain. He argues that people are not as special as they think they are—in fact, they're more or less machines just like computers are. They think they're special because they can't see their brains the way they can see computers, but in fact their sense of superiority comes only from their ignorance of how the brain actually works. Christopher, whose brain works differently than most people's, gains confidence through his understanding that even when people look down on him or he can't understand why they do what they do, they are in fact only machines who don't comprehend their own workings.

Furthermore, Christopher experiences feelings in a different way than most people. Sometimes he doesn't seem to feel what he's expected to feel, and other times he feels far more strongly than one might expect. Imagining feelings in the logical, mechanical way he does helps him bring emotions under his control, so that they become less frighteningly vague and more concrete, able to be changed.

## Chapter 167 Quotes

☝☝ I want you to know that you can trust me. And... OK, maybe I don't tell the truth all the time. God knows, I try, Christopher, God knows I do, but... Life is difficult, you know. It's bloody hard telling the truth all the time. Sometimes it's impossible. And I want you to know that I'm trying, I really am. And perhaps this is not a very good time to say this, and I know you're not going to like it, but... You have to know that I am going to tell you the truth from now on. About everything. Because... if you don't tell the truth now, then later on... later on it hurts even more. So... I killed Wellington, Christopher.

**Related Characters:** Ed Boone (Christopher's father) (speaker), Wellington, Christopher John Francis Boone

**Related Themes:**   

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 120

**Explanation and Analysis**

After Christopher realizes that his father has lied about his mother's death, he becomes ill and won't speak to Ed. Ed tries to help him, but when Christopher doesn't break his silence, Ed promises to tell him the truth in the future. He has realized the damage that his lies have done. Maybe he even knew before that they would eventually cause pain, and yet lying seemed the easiest course to take at that moment. In his remorse, he decides that ending all lies immediately will be the best way to regain Christopher's trust. In this moment, the murderer turns himself in, but Ed was the last person Christopher expected he was hunting down. As the repercussions of Ed's confession unroll, the question becomes whether his choice to tell the entire truth in this moment is a wise one. Christopher is not prepared to so completely lose his trust in his father and caregiver, and it takes a great emotional toll on him. Can lying ever be the kinder choice?

☝☝ I had to get out of the house. Father had murdered Wellington. That meant he could murder me, because I couldn't trust him, even though he had said "Trust me," because he had told a lie about a big thing.

**Related Characters:** Christopher John Francis Boone (speaker), Wellington, Ed Boone (Christopher's father)

**Related Themes:**   

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 122

### Explanation and Analysis

After Christopher reads his mother's letters, Ed finds him and realizes the impact that his lies have had on his son. As a result, he decides he has to be completely honest from now on, so he tells Christopher that he killed Wellington. Rather than taking this as an indication of his father's honesty, however, Christopher's logic tells him that if his father is a murderer, he might murder Christopher next. Ed's confession has completely backfired—he wanted Christopher to be able to trust him, but instead Christopher trusts him less than ever. Ed essentially told Christopher lies and killed Wellington out of a desire to protect Christopher as best he could, even if his own anger and sense of betrayal did play a part. For Christopher, Ed's motivation in these acts makes no difference, if he's even aware of it, which it seems he might not be. Ed's actions speak louder than any emotions, and Christopher no longer feels safe in the presence of someone whom he can't trust to tell the truth.

## Chapter 173 Quotes

☛☛ People say that Orion is called Orion because Orion was a hunter and the constellation looks like a hunter with a club and a bow and arrow...

But this is really silly because it is just stars, and you could join up the dots in any way you wanted, and you could make it look like a lady with an umbrella who is waving, or the coffeemaker which Mrs. Shears has, which is from Italy, with a handle and steam coming out, or like a dinosaur...

And anyway, Orion is not a hunter or a coffeemaker or a dinosaur. It is just Betelgeuse and Bellatrix and Alnilam and Rigel and 17 other stars I don't know the names of. And they are nuclear explosions billions of miles away.

And that is the truth.

**Related Characters:** Christopher John Francis Boone (speaker)

**Related Themes:**   

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 125

### Explanation and Analysis

Christopher makes these remarks about the stars while hiding behind the garden shed after his father confesses that he killed Wellington. Christopher often looks up at the night sky, and it makes him feel both small and situated within the universe. Constellations, as he points out, are stories that humans create with the stars, and do not have any scientific basis. They help humans feel that they have some control over or relationship to these distant celestial bodies. However, as he often does, Christopher dismantles this human construction, pointing out that the constellations are entirely arbitrary and rather absurd. He prefers to regard the stars as what they truly are: chemical reactions that are entirely removed from the workings of humanity.

Coming directly after Christopher finds out that his mother is alive and his father killed Wellington, this passage gestures to the sense of isolation and powerlessness that Christopher is feeling. Furthermore, it acts as a grounding mechanism for him; as he suddenly feels he has to reconstruct the narratives of his own life and past, he strips away the myths that people raise around the stars, reducing them to the hard, simple truth that makes him feel stable.

## Chapter 181 Quotes

☛☛ I see everything.

That is why I don't like new places. If I am in a place I know, like home, or school, or the bus, or the shop, or the street, I have seen almost everything in it beforehand and all I have to do is to look at the things that have changed or moved...

But most people are lazy. They never look at everything. They do what is called *glancing*, which is the same word for bumping off something and carrying on in almost the same direction... And the information in their head is really simple...

**Related Characters:** Christopher John Francis Boone (speaker)

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 140

### Explanation and Analysis

This passage occurs just after Christopher finds the train station in Swindon as he's beginning his journey to his

mother's flat in London. Looking for the station, he becomes overwhelmed by the sights and the sounds and the people, and this passage explains why unfamiliar places are so difficult for him to deal with. Instead of filtering out what's really necessary to notice from what's less significant, his mind takes everything as equally worthy of remembering. This allows him to notice many details that other people don't, but also causes him to be overwhelmed by all of the information coming into his brain, so that he can't focus on what he's doing. This passage not only explains his difficulty navigating the new places he encounters on his journey, but also makes it clear what an ambitious undertaking it is for him to try to travel all the way to London on his own, and makes his success that much more impressive.

## Chapter 193 Quotes

☞☞ Because time is not like space. And when you put something down somewhere, like a protractor or a biscuit, you can have a map in your head to tell you where you have left it, but even if you don't have a map it will still be there because a map is a *representation* of things that actually exist so you can find the protractor or the biscuit again. And a timetable is a map of time, except that if you don't have a timetable time is not there like the landing and the garden and the route to school. Because time is only the relationship between the way different things change, like the earth going round the sun and atoms vibrating and clocks ticking and day and night and waking up and going to sleep...

**Related Characters:** Christopher John Francis Boone (speaker)

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 156-57

### Explanation and Analysis

After Christopher gets on the train to London, he mentions that he made a timetable for his train set, and he had a very detailed timetable for his life at his father's house. This passage explains why Christopher feels such a need for precise schedules. In order to feel safe, he needs to feel grounded and know where he is in relation to everything around him—this is why he makes so many maps and only thinks about the truth, rather than about imagined possibilities. But as he points out here, time is more slippery, because it doesn't exist in any tangible way unless humans measure it with clocks and schedules. Once again, Christopher exhibits his ability to perceive the structures that humans put on the natural world to give it some sort of

understandable order.

## Chapter 223 Quotes

☞☞ And Siobhan says people go on holidays to see new things and relax, but it wouldn't make me relaxed and you can see new things by looking at earth under a microscope or drawing the shape of the solid made when 3 circular rods of equal thickness intersect at right angles. And I think that there are so many things just in one house that it would take years to think about all of them properly. And, also, a thing is interesting because of thinking about it and not because of being new.

**Related Characters:** Christopher John Francis Boone (speaker), Siobhan

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 178

### Explanation and Analysis

Sitting in the London tube station, terrified of the trains moving through the tunnel, Christopher describes an advertisement on the wall for a vacation in Malaysia. Due to the stress of new and strange places, Christopher does not enjoy vacations. Instead, Christopher appreciates the everyday world around him to a depth that few people do. He finds wonder in all the little details of nature and life, and he appreciates the simple fact of having a brain that can pick apart all of these details and find them interesting. Christopher derives much more pleasure from logic and intellectual discovery than from novelty or exoticism.

## Chapter 227 Quotes

☞☞ And then I saw Toby, and he was also in the lower-down bit where the rails were.... So I climbed down off the concrete...

...And then I heard the roaring and I lifted Toby up and grabbed him with both hands and he bit me on my thumb and there was blood coming out and I shouted and Toby tried to jump out of my hands.

And then the roaring got louder and I turned round and I saw the train coming out of the tunnel and I was going to be run over and killed so I tried to climb up onto the concrete but it was high and I was holding Toby in both my hands.

**Related Characters:** Christopher John Francis Boone

(speaker), Toby

**Related Themes:**   

**Page Number:** 182

### Explanation and Analysis

Christopher sits in the London tube station for hours, terrified by the trains, and when his fright begins to dissipate, he realizes that Toby is missing. In this passage, he risks his life to retrieve Toby from the train tracks. Christopher is usually a very logical person, and he usually thinks and plans before he acts. Furthermore, he's been immobilized by his fear of the trains, so it would make sense that he would be extremely careful to avoid them. In this situation, however, Christopher seems for once to be driven by the emotion of his love for Toby, which disrupts his logical mind in his need to get his companion back.

Christopher can be seen as a sort of parent to Toby, and in this situation, he experiences the thanklessness of parenting that has sometimes driven his own parents to act unwisely. Christopher risks his life for Toby, but the rat bites him and tries to escape. Similarly, Ed and Judy have devoted their lives to taking care of Christopher (at least, Judy did before she left), but he's never made it easy for them. Even now, he's escaping from Ed just like Toby tries to escape from him.

●● And then she made a loud wailing noise like an animal on a nature program on television.

And I didn't like her doing this because it was a loud noise, and I said, "Why are you doing that?"

And she didn't say anything for a while, and then she said, "Oh, Christopher, I'm so sorry."

And I said, "It's not your fault."

And then she said, "Bastard. The bastard."

And then, after a while, she said, "Christopher, let me hold your hand. Just for once. Just for me. Will you? I won't hold it hard," and she held out her hand.

And I said, "I don't like people holding my hand."

**Related Characters:** Judy Boone (Christopher's mother), Christopher John Francis Boone (speaker), Ed Boone

(Christopher's father)

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 193-94

### Explanation and Analysis

After Christopher arrives at his mother's flat, she has him take a bath, and she sits in the bathroom with him while Christopher explains that Ed told him she had died. Her response in this passage shows the deep pain that exists in all the relationships in Christopher's family, a pain so awful that it can be expressed in no better way than a wordless wail.

When Christopher likens Judy's wail to that of a wild animal, he gives her emotion a primal quality, connecting it to some deep maternal instinct to protect her son. However, her attempt to soothe her own pain fails, as Christopher refuses to hold her hand. Furthermore, this episode shows the difficulty that Judy has connecting with her son. She needs physical contact to get them both through this awful moment, but physical contact would only make Christopher lash out or feel unsafe.

●● And Mother shouted, "What in God's name did you think you were playing at, saying those things to him?"

And Father shouted, "What was I playing at? You were the one that bloody left."

And Mother shouted, "So you decided to just wipe me out of his life altogether?... I wrote to him every week. Every week."

And Father shouted, "Wrote to him? What the fuck use is writing to him?... I cooked his meals. I cleaned his clothes. I looked after him every weekend. I looked after him when he was ill. I took him to the doctor. I worried myself sick every time he wandered off somewhere at night. I went to school every time he got in a fight. And you? What? You wrote him some fucking letters."

And Mother shouted, "So you thought it was OK to tell him his mother was dead?"

**Related Characters:** Ed Boone (Christopher's father), Judy Boone (Christopher's mother), Christopher John Francis Boone (speaker)

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 196-97

### Explanation and Analysis

At Judy's flat, Christopher wakes up in the middle of the night to find that Ed has arrived, and he and Judy are arguing. In this passage, the conflict and the heartache that Christopher's parents have endured becomes evident. Both of them have made grave mistakes in their parenting. Judy has expressed her feelings of guilt at leaving in her letters, and Ed has expressed his feelings of guilt at lying in his conversation with Christopher. Thus, although each accuses the other of failing as a parent in this argument and tries to defend their own actions, the reader knows that they both are very conscious of their mistakes. When confronted with their mistakes in this way, however, both Judy and Ed lash out, showing the pain that lies in their relationships with each other, with Christopher, and with themselves.

### Chapter 229 Quotes

☹️ And in the dream nearly everyone on the earth is dead, because they have caught a virus.... And people catch it because of the meaning of something an infected person says and the meaning of what they do with their faces when they say it...

And eventually there is no one left in the world except people who don't look at other people's faces... and these people are all special people like me. And they like being on their own and I hardly ever see them...

And I can go anywhere in the world and I know that no one is going to talk to me or touch me or ask me a question. But if I don't want to go anywhere I don't have to, and I can stay at home and eat broccoli and oranges and licorice laces all the time...

**Related Characters:** Christopher John Francis Boone (speaker)

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 198-99

### Explanation and Analysis

After Ed argues with Judy in her flat and is escorted away by a policeman, Christopher has his favorite recurring dream. This dream imagines a world in which the characteristics that make Christopher struggle in the real world are actually the characteristics that give him an advantage and allow him to survive. This dream world is Christopher's ideal world, where he can act as he naturally

would if he didn't have to try to conform to societal rules that were created by people who aren't like him.

The dream is profoundly peaceful, especially in the wake of his parents' explosive argument. The tragedy of it, however, is that when Christopher wakes up, he'll have to continue living in a world not made for him, and this ideal world will never really exist.

### Chapter 233 Quotes

☹️ ...Father said, "Christopher, look... You have to learn to trust me... And I don't care how long it takes... Because this is important. This is more important than anything else... Let's call it a project....You have to spend more time with me. And I... I have to show you that you can trust me... And, um... I've got you a present. To show you that I really mean what I say. And to say sorry. And because... well, you'll see what I mean."

Then he got out of the armchair and he walked over to the kitchen door and opened it and there was a big cardboard box on the floor... and he took a little sandy-colored dog out.

Then he came back through and gave me the dog...

Then Father said, "Christopher, I would never, ever do anything to hurt you."

**Related Characters:** Ed Boone (Christopher's father), Christopher John Francis Boone (speaker), Sandy

**Related Themes:**   

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 218-19

### Explanation and Analysis

Christopher hasn't been speaking to his father ever since Ed admitted to killing Wellington, and he has remained fearful of him. Finally, Ed insists that Christopher allow him five minutes to talk. Ed's dialogue shows the pain of his son's terror of him, and his sincere need to repair the relationship. Ed acknowledges that he and Christopher both have to work to rebuild Christopher's trust in Ed. In giving Christopher a dog, Ed apologizes for killing Wellington and symbolically reincarnates him. Furthermore, dogs have acted as a marker of Christopher's physical and emotional safety throughout the novel. Thus, Ed's gift shows Christopher that he is safe and can trust Ed to protect that safety.

Additionally, the dog replaces Toby, who has recently died, as Christopher's pet. Since a dog requires a lot more care and has more personality than a rat, the gift of the dog represents Christopher's growth over the course of the story and welcomes him into the next, more mature stage of his life.

●● And then, when I've done that, I am going to go to university in another town... And I can live in a flat with a garden and a proper toilet. And I can take Sandy and my books and my computer.

And then I will get a First Class Honors degree and I will become a scientist.

And I know I can do this because I went to London on my own, and because I solved the mystery of *Who Killed Wellington?* and I found my mother and I was brave and I wrote a book and that means I can do anything.

**Related Characters:** Christopher John Francis Boone (speaker), Sandy, Wellington, Judy Boone (Christopher's mother)

**Related Themes:**  

**Related Symbols:**  

**Page Number:** 220-21

### Explanation and Analysis

Christopher has received an A on his A level exam, and he has begun to study for the next exam. In these closing paragraphs of the novel, he dreams of his future. These ambitions are the same ones he has spoken of since the beginning of the story—but at the beginning, they seemed much more far-fetched and difficult to achieve. When he was consumed by fear of his father and the need to find his mother, his dreams sank to the back of his mind, and he even thought for a while that he wouldn't be able to take his A level, the one concrete gateway to university.

Over the course of the book, Christopher has overcome all of the challenges that came his way, and now he's done well on his A level, too. Now that his life is back on track, his recent experiences add up to show his ability to face whatever comes. He has matured emotionally, and now he feels unstoppable.



## SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

## CHAPTER 2

The story opens in Swindon, England, just after midnight, when Christopher discovers Wellington, his neighbor's **dog**, lying dead on her lawn with a pitchfork stabbed through him. Christopher pets Wellington, wondering who killed him and why.

*This opening positions the novel as a murder mystery, while simultaneously making it clear that the novel won't be conventional, since the murder victim is a dog. The reader's first exposure to Christopher as a character shows him as an almost unnervingly calm and rational person in a crisis.*



## CHAPTER 3

Christopher introduces himself, informing the reader that he knows a lot about geography and prime numbers. Eight years ago, he tells us, he met his teacher Siobhan. She showed him pictures of cartoon faces with various expressions, but he couldn't say which expression fit which emotion. He had Siobhan make a guide of various faces and what they meant, but it didn't work very well when he tried to use it to decode real people's expressions. He eventually tore it up, so now if he doesn't understand someone, he asks for clarification or just leaves the conversation.

*This chapter provides insight into Christopher's character, implying that he has an autism spectrum condition, since he can't interpret people's facial expressions. However, he proves that he's comfortable being who he is, and doesn't hesitate to advocate for himself in interactions with people who don't understand how his brain works. Christopher portrays himself as very smart, with an excellent memory.*



## CHAPTER 5

Christopher takes the pitchfork out of the **dog** and hugs him. He likes dogs because they're easy to understand and they don't tell lies. Mrs. Shears runs out of her house in a panic, cursing and yelling at Christopher to let go of her dog. When he does so, she sees what's happened to Wellington and screams more. Christopher doesn't like people shouting, so he closes his ears with his hands and rolls into a ball on the grass.

*This chapter demonstrates the difference between Christopher's perspective and that of other people. While he stays perfectly calm at first, Mrs. Shears practically goes into hysterics. Christopher becomes much more upset about her screaming than about the dead dog, and responds by attempting to block out all external stimuli. His comment on the virtues of dogs also introduces the importance that he places upon truth.*



## CHAPTER 7

Christopher declares this novel, which he's writing, to be a murder mystery. He doesn't like many novels, because he has trouble understanding them. Even the adults he's asked don't know what certain sentences in novels mean. However, he likes reading murder mysteries because they're like puzzles, so he's writing one with his teacher Siobhan's guidance.

*The reader learns that the novel is not simply in first-person narration, but is actively being written down by the narrator as the story advances. Furthermore, Christopher comments on the practice of writing as he does it. He also points out that many novels are somewhat absurd in their complexity, and makes his love of logic clear.*



Siobhan tells Christopher that this mystery is different than most because a **dog**, rather than a human, is the victim of the murder. Christopher compares his story to [The Hound of the Baskervilles](#), which also involves dogs. Furthermore, he wants to write about real events, and he likes dogs. Some, he points out, are smarter than certain people who attend his special-needs school.

*In wanting to write a true story, Christopher displays a dedication to truth that permeates all aspects of his life. His high aspirations come to light as he compares his story to a Sherlock Holmes story. Additionally, he makes it clear that he holds himself above the other students at his school.*



## CHAPTER 11

Back in Mrs. Shears' yard, the police arrive. Christopher generally likes the police because he knows what they're supposed to do. One of the policemen asks Christopher what he was doing holding his neighbor's dead **dog** in her yard, and whether he killed Wellington. Christopher answers his questions honestly until there begin to be too many, and he can't keep up anymore. Then he rolls into a ball again and groans to block out the rest of the world. When the policeman tries to lift Christopher to his feet, Christopher hits him.

*Here, the reader gains insight into how Christopher interacts with the world. He wants to be able to categorize people's roles so that he knows what to expect from them and what they expect of him. However, even when he thinks he knows what to expect of the police, they still overwhelm him through their inability to anticipate his needs. The police come across as rather incompetent, dealing with Christopher as they would any other suspect rather than making an attempt to interact in a more productive way.*



## CHAPTER 13

Christopher declares that his book will not be funny, because he doesn't understand jokes. He gives an example of a joke: "His face was drawn but the curtains were real." He's learned that it's supposed to be funny because of the multiple meanings of the words, but he finds it uncomfortable to make the words have all of their possible meanings at once, so he avoids jokes.

*Christopher's narration helps his reader understand his limitations and the way he interacts with the world. His close scrutiny of conventions that most people naturally understand makes them seem ridiculous, and makes such jokes seem not particularly funny after all.*



## CHAPTER 17

The policeman tells Christopher he is arresting him, which makes Christopher feel better because it's exactly what policemen are expected to say. Christopher gets into the police car, and as they drive to the station, he looks out the window at the **stars**.

*Instead of panicking at the thought of being arrested, as most people would, Christopher simply feels glad that the police are acting as they're supposed to. This continues to build the reader's understanding of how Christopher's world works.*



Christopher explains that the Milky Way exists because the galaxy is shaped like a disc. Then he thinks about the scientists who discovered that the sky is dark at night despite the billions of **stars** because the universe is expanding from the Big Bang. Eventually, the universe will stop expanding, and all the stars will begin to fall back towards the center of the universe, making the night sky blindingly bright. Except, he points out, humans will probably be extinct by then.

*Furthermore, Christopher isn't worried about being taken to the police station—instead, as he thinks about the universe, the reader begins to perceive his intelligence and his ability to comprehend concepts that baffle many people. Christopher also demonstrates his ability to see the larger picture of humanity, life, and time—a perspective often symbolized in the novel by his fascination with the stars.*



## CHAPTER 19

Christopher explains that his chapters are numbered with prime numbers only, simply because he likes prime numbers. To figure out which numbers are prime, one writes down all positive whole numbers, and then takes away all the numbers that can be divided by anything other than themselves or 1. There's no formula to tell whether very large numbers are prime. Prime numbers are valuable, and even classed as military secrets in the United States. Christopher thinks that prime numbers are similar to life, in that they're logical, but no one can figure out the rules that govern them.

*Christopher demonstrates his love of math, which permeates his life to such an extent that he delineates the events in his books with the mathematical logic of prime numbers rather than by the social convention of successive numbers. Furthermore, the numbers that head every chapter symbolize Christopher's viewpoint: he knows that society acts as it does for certain reasons, but those reasons remain incomprehensible to him, no matter how much he tries to understand them.*



## CHAPTER 23

At the police station, Christopher has to empty his pockets of a number of items, including a **Swiss Army Knife**. The police want to take his watch, but let him keep it when he screams at them. He gives the police his father's phone number, and they put him in a jail cell.

*The fact that Christopher puts up a fight only about his watch shows the extent to which precision governs his life. He often gives the exact time that something happened, and knowing the time helps him feel secure in the workings of the world.*



Christopher rather likes the cell, a perfect two-meter cube. He begins to figure out how he might escape if he were in a story, and decides that on a sunny day, he would use his glasses to focus the light and start a fire. When the police took him out of the cell, he would escape.

*Again, Christopher demonstrates his difference by his calm response to being jailed, something that might cause other people much more concern. His logic takes over as he measures the cell and figures out his imagined escape.*



Christopher wonders whether Mrs. Shears has told the police that he killed Wellington, and if she'll go to prison for telling this lie, which he thinks would be classified as slander.

*Christopher's sense of truth is so inflexible that he truly thinks Mrs. Shears might get in trouble with the law for an understandable misconception about Christopher's role in Wellington's death.*



## CHAPTER 29

Christopher finds people confusing because they use body language that he doesn't naturally understand the way other people do, and because people use many metaphors in speech. A metaphor, he explains, is when a person describes something with a word other than what the thing actually is. This, he thinks, is really a lie, and besides, the metaphors don't make any sense when he imagines them literally.

*Christopher provides further insight into the way his mind works. He interprets everything quite literally, which keeps him from understanding common metaphors. His need for truth leads him to interpret them as lies, simply since they do not make use of literal truth.*



Christopher's own name is a metaphor that means "carrying Christ," because St. Christopher carried Christ across a river. However, this story is also a lie. Christopher's mother liked this story because it was about kindness, but Christopher doesn't want his name to mean anything beyond himself.

*Christopher's desire for truth keeps him from appreciating the value of symbolic stories. Christopher's mother is mentioned here for the first time, only in passing because her absence is so normal to Christopher that he doesn't see the need to explain it yet.*



## CHAPTER 31

At 1:12 a.m., Christopher's father, Ed, arrives at the police station, and Christopher hears him shouting at the policemen. Eventually, a policeman lets Christopher out the cell, and he and his father touch their hands together, their form of a hug that avoids too much physical contact, which Christopher can't stand.

*Ed's violent reaction to Christopher's imprisonment emphasizes the mildness of Christopher's own reaction. The reader also sees Ed's love for Christopher in his willingness to stand up for his son and his relief at seeing Christopher safe.*



The policeman leads them to another room, where he questions Christopher about the events of the night. Christopher initially says that he did mean to hit the policeman earlier, but is given the opportunity to clarify that he didn't mean to hurt him, and knows that he shouldn't hit policemen. Furthermore, he tells the man that he didn't kill Wellington, and that he's always truthful.

*Christopher's dedication to truth gets him into trouble here, as he insists that hitting the policeman was no accident. He doesn't understand the fine distinction between premeditated violence and violence committed in the desperation of the moment. At the same time, his truthfulness helps the policeman trust him when he insists he didn't kill Wellington.*



Christopher receives a caution, which means that he won't be punished now, but if he gets into trouble again, circumstances will be more serious. He's given his possessions back, and he and his father go home.

*This caution will hang over Christopher's head for the rest of the novel. Sometimes he will resist his natural reactions to situations because he remembers the caution and doesn't want to get in trouble.*



## CHAPTER 37

Christopher doesn't tell lies, not because he's a good person, as his mother said, but simply because he can't. He has fond memories of his mother, who smelled good and wore a fleece jacket.

*Christopher implies that his dedication to truth is not his own choice, and so it says nothing about his morality. His mention of his mother makes it clear that she is no longer in his life, though he still does not explain why.*



Christopher can't tell lies because only one thing ever happens in a certain time and place, and there are an infinite number of events that didn't happen then. If Christopher thinks about one thing that didn't happen, he begins to think about all the possible—and often absurd—things that didn't happen. Thinking about these possibilities makes him overwhelmed and frightened. He doesn't like normal novels because they're not about real events, and so everything he's writing is true.

*Christopher's dedication to truth is revealed to be in fact a need for truth. Truth keeps his mind on track and keeps him safe from the overwhelming stimuli of the outside world and potential imaginings within his own brain. The fact that lies and fictions cause him actual mental discomfort provides a greater motivation to tell and seek the truth, both of which he does throughout the novel.*



## CHAPTER 41

In the car on the way home, Christopher apologizes for making his father come to the police station, and tells him he didn't kill Wellington. Ed tells Christopher to stay out of other people's business, but Christopher insists that a murder has occurred, and someone must be punished, even if it was only a **dog** that was killed. Ed gets angry at Christopher's persistence.

At home, Christopher feeds his pet rat, Toby, and plays computer games, only missing his record time by three seconds. He eventually goes downstairs for a drink and finds Ed crying. Christopher assumes he's sad about Wellington's death and decides to let him grieve alone.

*Christopher wants to find the truth of Wellington's death and see justice served. It makes no difference to him that the murder victim was a dog. Ed's anger makes it clear from the beginning that he has a passionate feeling surrounding Wellington's death and Christopher's investigation of it, though it's not yet entirely clear why.*



*Christopher can't be terribly upset about his recent ordeal with the police, if he's able to almost match his record game time. The reader can assume that Ed, however, is upset about something more than Wellington's death, no matter what Christopher might think.*



## CHAPTER 43

Christopher's mother, Judy, died two years before. One day when Christopher came home from school, no one was there. When Ed got home, he asked whether Christopher had seen his mother and then made a number of phone calls. Afterwards, he went out, and when he returned he told Christopher that he wouldn't see his mother for a while because she was in the hospital and couldn't be visited. She had a heart problem.

Christopher wanted to bring his mother food, but Ed said he would buy some and bring it to her when Christopher was at school. Christopher decided to make her a get-well card, and Ed promised to take it to the hospital.

*It finally becomes clear why Christopher discusses his mother in the past tense. All of Christopher's information about his mother's death comes through his father—something that seems normal at first, but becomes questionable later. Additionally, it later becomes clear that Ed made up a heart problem specifically because his wife was having a love affair.*



*Although Christopher seems to have been very nonchalant about his mother suddenly being hospitalized, he expressed his care for her by wanting to give her food and a card.*



## CHAPTER 47

On the bus the day after Wellington's death, Christopher sees four red **cars** in a row. He determines how good or bad his days will be by the colors of the cars he sees, and four red cars indicates a good day. Mr. Jeavons, the school psychologist, has questioned the logic of this method, particularly because Christopher is usually very logical. However, Christopher told him that his method is no different from people feeling happy or sad depending on the weather, even when they work in offices. Having things in a nice order is sometimes more important than logic. Mr. Jeavons called Christopher clever, but Christopher thinks he's simply observant.

*Christopher establishes a number of rules that govern his own personal world, and the significance of car colors is one of these rules. Although most readers probably agree initially with Mr. Jeavons that Christopher seems to act illogically on this point, Christopher forces the reader to see the absurdity of the socially accepted practice of connecting one's feelings to the weather, no matter if a person is inside all the time. In this situation, having rules is more important for Christopher than the rules being logical.*



Christopher told Mr. Jeavons that he wants to become an astronaut, and Mr. Jeavons replied that it's very hard to do so. Christopher knows this, but still wants it. A boy named Terry once told him he would only get a job doing menial labor, but Ed said that Terry was only jealous of Christopher's intelligence. Christopher plans to study math and physics at university, and he knows that Terry won't even go to university.

*Christopher has high aspirations, and he has already faced challenges to them. His interaction with Terry shows that he experiences bullying based on his autism, but also that he does not take other people's taunts to heart. He's confident in his own intelligence and abilities.*



Because the **cars** indicated it's a good day, Christopher plans to investigate Wellington's death. He mentions this intention to Siobhan, who suggests that he write about his experience finding Wellington dead. Thus, Christopher begins writing the account the reader has just read.

*Christopher actually decides what to do depending on what kind of day the car colors indicate it is. Furthermore, the reader realizes that Christopher is not writing with knowledge of the entire story, but instead as he lives the events.*



## CHAPTER 53

Judy died two weeks after she went to the hospital. Ed had said that she seemed to be improving, and Christopher had not gone to see her. He had, however, sent a get-well card he had made with pictures of red **cars**, which indicate a very good day for Christopher.

*Christopher uses the cars here as a sort of talisman, believing they'll give his mother the good luck she needs to get well. He seems very matter-of-fact about her death, and sees nothing odd in the fact that Ed never took him to visit Judy in the hospital.*



Judy died of an unexpected heart attack. Christopher was surprised, because he knows a lot about the types of heart attacks and what causes them, and he didn't think his mother should have had one. He decided it was probably an aneurysm, which happens when a blood vessel breaks.

*Rather than being distraught at his mother's death, Christopher reverts to his logical mind to protect him from the emotions of the tragedy as he analyzes his mother's heart attack.*



After his mother died, Mrs. Shears came over to cook dinner, comforted Ed, and played Scrabble with Christopher, who won.

*Mrs. Shears immediately begins taking on a motherly role in Christopher's home (as he sees it, at least—but the reader might infer that she and Ed are growing romantic).*



## CHAPTER 59

Christopher decides to try to solve the mystery of Wellington's death even though his father has told him not to. He explains that he doesn't always do what other people tell him to, because people give confusingly vague instructions and because people constantly break rules, like driving over the speed limit. Ed told him to "stay out of other people's business," but people's business could mean anything. Siobhan understands this problem, so she always gives him very specific instructions concerning what he should and shouldn't do.

*Christopher again points out the absurdity of what most people see as normal human interactions. People who are not autistic take these interactions and unspoken rules for granted in a way that Christopher cannot. As a result, Christopher makes up his own rules. Siobhan is beginning to emerge as the character who best understands the way that Christopher's mind works.*



That evening, Christopher knocks on Mrs. Shears' door. She tells him she doesn't want to see him, but he replies that he didn't kill Wellington, and he wants to find out who did. When he asks if she knows who killed the **dog**, she doesn't answer, and only closes the door in his face.

Christopher sneaks around to Mrs. Shears' garden shed. It's locked, but through the window he can see a pitchfork that looks like the one that killed Wellington. He wonders if Mrs. Shears killed her own **dog**, but decides that the murderer was probably someone else using her pitchfork. However, the shed is locked, so the killer might have had the key. Mrs. Shears appears and tells Christopher she'll call the police if he doesn't leave immediately. He goes home, contented with his detective work.

## CHAPTER 61

After Judy's death, one of the teachers at school told him his mother was in heaven. However, Christopher doesn't believe in heaven. Reverend Peters, a churchman at school, once told him that heaven wasn't anywhere in the universe, and Christopher replied that the only way to get outside the universe might be to go through a black hole, but heaven can't be through a black hole. He thinks that people only believe in heaven because they don't like death.

In fact, Christopher says, death simply means that a person's body rots and becomes part of the earth. However, Christopher's mother was cremated, so now he imagines the particles of her body floating in the air all over the world.

## CHAPTER 67

The next day, Ed is watching a soccer match on television, so Christopher decides to ask his neighbors whether they know anything about Wellington's death. He doesn't usually talk to strangers. This isn't because he's afraid of them—he can hit hard and always carries his **Swiss Army Knife**—but because he has trouble understanding people he doesn't know. When there are new staff members at school, he observes them for weeks before he'll talk to them, and then finds out everything he can about them.

*At this point, it seems that Mrs. Shears might actually blame Christopher for her dog's death. Later, it will become clear that she has other reasons to be upset, and she in fact probably does know who killed Wellington—as she gives no answer here.*



*Christopher acts like a real detective in a story, snooping around to find the murder weapon. He considers possibilities with a cool mind, not ruling Mrs. Shears out as a killer simply because Wellington was her dog. Furthermore, he again demonstrates his unconcern for other people's emotions; he's not worried when Mrs. Shears threatens to call the police, instead feeling satisfied with himself.*



*Christopher's logical mind makes itself known in this situation. He doesn't hesitate to challenge Reverend Peters on questions of religion, because he can't stand people believing in ideas that he knows logically and factually cannot be true. The simple science of his argument is surprisingly effective, and he perceives a good reason why people might delude themselves about heaven.*



*Christopher has no sentimental ideas about death or about his mother. He faces the hard facts, and yet he still manages to get comfort out of them with his image of his mother's ashes traveling the world.*



*Christopher's determination to solve the mystery of Wellington's death is already beginning to push him out of his comfort zone. His way of managing new staff members reveals the depth of his social difference from most others. Even so, he approaches that situation logically, essentially doing reconnaissance as he carefully observes the habits and personalities of new people around him.*



Christopher feels brave for talking to his neighbors. He makes a map of the street, then knocks on the Thompsons' door and asks the man who answers if he knows who killed Wellington. The man, Mr. Thompson's brother, is impolite and doesn't even know that the **dog** has been killed. He wasn't in town the night of the murder, so Christopher leaves.

Next, Christopher talks to a black woman who's nicer to him, but who didn't see anything suspicious the night of the murder. Christopher asks whether she can think of anyone who doesn't like Mrs. Shears, and she suggests he talk to his father—and tells him to be careful.

Christopher then goes to Mr. Wise's house. Mr. Wise laughs at him, so Christopher leaves. He avoids the house next to his own because the people who live there do drugs and play loud music.

He sees another neighbor, the elderly Mrs. Alexander, working in her yard. He asks her about Wellington's death, and though she doesn't know who the culprit is, she tries to engage him in friendly conversation. Christopher makes an attempt to chat even though he's not very good at it. Mrs. Alexander invites him in for tea, and when he doesn't want to come in, offers to bring out cake and orange squash, a drink. It ends up that the cake has yellow on it, which Christopher doesn't like, so she says she'll bring cookies instead. However, when she's in the house for a while Christopher begins to think she might be calling the police, and he leaves.

Christopher decides that, due to the fact that most murders are committed by someone the victim knows, his prime suspect should be Mr. Shears, since he's the only person Christopher knows of who doesn't like Mrs. Shears. Mr. Shears left his wife two years earlier, which was why Mrs. Shears came to help out after Christopher's mother died. Sometimes Mrs. Shears would stay overnight. Christopher doesn't know why Mr. Shears left, but he figures it must be because one of them had an affair or they argued.

*Christopher's methodical mind leads him to draw out a map of the street that he already knows so well. The reader begins to see how people react to Christopher's social skills—this man has no desire to indulge Christopher, and yet Christopher still manages to get an alibi out of him.*



*This woman is more polite to Christopher, yet in doing so she talks down to him slightly, implying that he can't take care of himself. However, she also raises a valid point with her concern for his safety.*



*Christopher has pretty effective methods of dealing with people who make him uncomfortable—not worried about being polite, he doesn't hesitate to simply walk away from people he doesn't like.*



*Mrs. Alexander is one of the most sympathetic characters so far. From the beginning, she doesn't talk down to Christopher, but instead takes him seriously and expresses an interest in him as a person. Even when she sees some of his quirks, such as his refusal to eat anything yellow, she accepts them as perfectly reasonable and adjusts her own actions to help Christopher's world function as he needs it to. Despite this, Christopher still refuses to trust her, demonstrating his deep suspicion of anyone who has not proven themselves to him.*



*Here, Christopher's logical mind serves him well in deducing possible suspects. At the same time, his difficulty understanding people or reading any implications into their actions prevents him from guessing that there might be anything more to know about Mr. Shears leaving or Mrs. Shears staying overnight at Christopher's house when she lives right next door. The reader, however, might become more suspicious at this point.*



## CHAPTER 71

Christopher thinks that all the other students at his school are stupid, even though he's supposed to say that they have special needs. He doesn't like this rule, because he thinks that everyone has special needs, like wearing glasses. Besides, kids from the other school try to insult him and his classmates by yelling, "Special needs!" at them.

Christopher is going to prove his intelligence by getting a top grade on the **Maths A level** exam, a university qualifying exam. His father had to argue with the principal, Mrs. Gascoyne, to get her to allow Christopher to take it. Christopher plans that he and his father will move somewhere where he can go to university, and then he'll get a job and find someone to look after him.

*Christopher again shows that he thinks himself better than his fellow students. Furthermore, he doesn't subscribe to the societal narrative that some people are "normal" while people like him are "special." Instead, everyone has their oddities, and none are any more remarkable than others.*



*Christopher has ambitious plans for his future. He's very realistic about what he can handle, in that he doesn't imagine living alone and being completely independent. It's clear, however, that he's going outside the realm of what's expected of him as an autistic student, and he faces additional challenges because of others' assumptions about his abilities.*



## CHAPTER 73

Christopher used to think that his parents would get divorced, because they argued so often about his behavioral problems, such as screaming, breaking things, and refusing to touch anything brown or yellow. He has fewer behavioral problems now, but his parents used to yell at each other and at him about the things he would do.

*Here, Christopher reveals that even before his mother died, his life at home was far from ideal. He's very aware of the central role that he played in his parents' conflicts, though he doesn't express guilt about it. He also knows what he has done wrong in the past and can see that he has matured over time.*



## CHAPTER 79

When Christopher returns from questioning his neighbors, he only tells his father that he was "out," which he thinks of as a white lie, because he's not telling the entire truth. However, Mrs. Shears has already called Ed and told him what Christopher was doing.

*This incident marks Christopher's first departure from strict truth-telling. He rationalizes his statement as a partial truth, but is nonetheless stretching his own rules after repeatedly insisting that he always tells the truth. His detective work is changing him.*



Ed is angry with Christopher for continuing to pursue the mystery of Wellington's death. Christopher tells his father his suspicion that Mr. Shears killed the **dog**, and Ed gets even angrier with Christopher for mentioning Mr. Shears. He also says that Mrs. Shears is no longer their friend. Finally, he makes Christopher promise to stop looking for Wellington's killer. Christopher takes promises very seriously, and he agrees.

*Although Christopher does not wonder at his father's anger towards Mr. and Mrs. Shears, the reader can perceive that something more is going on between Ed and his neighbors than Christopher knows. Yet at this moment that verges on revelation, Christopher's detective work seems doomed, as his dedication to truth and trust make a break with his promise seem impossible.*



## CHAPTER 83

Christopher would like to be an astronaut, and he thinks he would be good at it because he understands machines, he likes being in small spaces, and he wouldn't have to talk to many people. Sometimes he looks up at the sky and pretends he's all alone in space. He hopes he might be allowed to bring his rat, Toby, into space too.

*Christopher's large ambitions come to light again, along with his awareness of his differences—but he sees these differences as advantages that make him a prime candidate to be an astronaut. Furthermore, he reveals a deep attachment to his pet rat that makes Toby his sole companion of choice.*



## CHAPTER 89

Back at school, Christopher shows Siobhan what he's written so far and tells her he has to stop his detective work, so the book can't have a real ending. He doesn't like the idea that the murderer is still on the loose. He tells Siobhan about Mr. and Mrs. Shears, and she guesses that Ed might not like Mr. Shears because he hurt Mrs. Shears by leaving. Christopher points out that his father doesn't like Mrs. Shears anymore, either.

*Christopher really does intend to keep his promise to his father, even though it means ruin for the work that he's been enjoying. Siobhan continues to play her role as Christopher's interpreter of the world of emotion that he can't understand. However, her inability to satisfactorily explain Ed's anger confirms the suspicion that there's more to find out.*



Christopher sees four yellow **cars** both of the next two days, so they're "Black Days" and he keeps to himself more than ever. He presses his head into the library wall and groans, which makes him feel safe. On the third day, he keeps his eyes closed on the way to school so he can't see more yellow cars.

*Once again, Christopher demonstrates his investment in the rules that govern his private world. Even so, he's willing to manipulate fortune and his own rules by closing his eyes so that he isn't forced to have another "Black Day." This implies that the luck of the cars is not an objective law, but contingent upon his actually being aware of the cars; thus, he partly makes his own Black Days.*



## CHAPTER 97

A few days later, Christopher sees five red **cars** in a row, so he knows something special is going to happen. When he gets home from school, he goes to the corner store for candy and runs into Mrs. Alexander. He admits that on the other occasion they met, he left her yard because he thought she might call the police, but she tells him she wouldn't have done that.

*Even if Christopher may be unconsciously aware of his mental manipulation of the car rule, it still influences his actions. Perhaps he makes his own luck by going to the store rather than staying home, because he thinks the day will be special. He also exhibits his honesty again, not hesitating to tell Mrs. Alexander that he didn't trust her.*



Christopher makes friends with Mrs. Alexander's **dog** outside the shop, and Mrs. Alexander tries again to chat with him. Christopher is being very careful so that he doesn't disobey his father's instructions to leave the neighbors alone. He tells her about what he likes, and that he's going to take the **Maths A level**. Mrs. Alexander is impressed.

*Mrs. Alexander again proves to be a kind and understanding influence. She respects Christopher's mathematical abilities even while pushing him out of his comfort zone in terms of social interaction. Christopher, for his part, entirely intends to keep his promise to his father.*



Christopher decides that he has to take risks as a detective, and the specific things his father made him promise to avoid don't cover asking questions about Mr. Shears, so he asks Mrs. Alexander what she knows about him. She quickly realizes that he's still trying to find out who killed Wellington, and tells Christopher that he probably shouldn't be asking about such things. Mrs. Alexander thinks that Christopher already knows why his father doesn't like Mr. Shears.

Christopher begins to speculate that Mr. Shears had something to do with his mother's death. Mrs. Alexander seems shocked. She suggests they go for a walk in the park, and although Christopher is nervous about going into the park with a stranger, he faces this fear for the sake of the mystery. Mrs. Alexander makes him promise not to tell his father she's spoken to him, and then she carefully reveals that Christopher's mother had an affair with Mr. Shears, and that's why Ed hates him. Christopher leaves because he's scared of being in the park with Mrs. Alexander.

## CHAPTER 101

Mr. Jeavons, the school psychologist, has said that Christopher likes math because there's always a clear answer, unlike in life. Christopher doesn't agree. He uses "The Monty Hall Problem" to show why.

The Monty Hall Problem is as follows. A woman named Marilyn vos Savant had the highest IQ in the world, and answered difficult math questions in a magazine column. Once, someone sent in a problem dealing with probability. Logic gave Marilyn vos Savant one answer, but most people's intuitions gave them another answer. Thus, many people, including professors and mathematicians, wrote angrily to the magazine, refusing to accept the answer she gave. Christopher explains why she was right, using both an equation and a chart of possible outcomes in the given situation. He likes this problem because it shows that people shouldn't depend so much on intuition, but instead on logic, and that math isn't necessarily straightforward.

## CHAPTER 103

When Christopher gets home from the park, Ed's employee and friend Rhodri is over for a drink. Christopher tells his dad another white lie—that he went to get candy and talked to Mrs. Alexander's **dog**.

*Despite Christopher's good intentions, his curiosity wins out, and his logical mind begins to find loopholes in the promise. He convinces himself he's not breaking it, even though Mrs. Alexander sees right through his veiled questions. Her respect for him leads her to think he has a fuller understanding of his father's emotions than he really does. However, her reaction also implies that there is some common knowledge about his family that Christopher is missing.*



*Christopher again overcomes his social fear to successfully play his detective role. Christopher's reaction to Mrs. Alexander's revelation is unconventional; he doesn't seem upset about his mother's affair, but his anxiety about Mrs. Alexander suddenly becomes too much for him. It's possible that his reaction to his mother's affair simply manifests itself as an inability to continue in this socially frightening situation.*



*Christopher doesn't allow other people, even professionals, to tell him how his mind works. He's confident in his knowledge of both math and himself.*



*This mathematical problem in a way represents the way Christopher moves through the world. Marilyn vos Savant depends entirely on logic to answer the problem, just as Christopher depends entirely on logic in most aspects of his life. However, almost everyone who wrote to Marilyn vos Savant saw the problem differently than she did—just as nearly everyone sees the world differently than Christopher does. Furthermore, Christopher's understanding of the correct answer to the Monty Hall Problem proves his impressive intelligence and suggests the advantages to seeing the world through his logical eyes.*



*Christopher continues to stretch the truth to avoid his father's wrath, this time concealing Mrs. Alexander's very important revelation about his mother's affair.*



Rhodri asks Christopher what 251 times 864 is. Christopher works it out in his head only to find that Rhodri has no idea what the right answer is. Rhodri laughs at him, as he often does. Ed offers to heat up some Indian food for Christopher, who puts red food coloring in it so it won't be yellow.

Christopher goes into the garden and decides to write a description of it, because Siobhan has told him that books should include descriptions of people and places so that readers can imagine them. Christopher thinks the garden looks pretty plain, but the sky has various types of clouds in it that make it look particularly big. He provides a drawing of a large cloud near the horizon, which he thinks looks like an alien spaceship. People have a fixed idea of what an alien spaceship would look like, but Christopher points out that aliens might be entirely different than anyone thinks. He listens to his surroundings and sees if he can smell anything, then goes to feed Toby.

## CHAPTER 107

*The Hound of the Baskervilles* is Christopher's favorite book. This **Sherlock Holmes** novel is about an old British family, the Baskervilles, who are haunted by a giant, murderous **dog**. A friend of the family thinks that the heir might be in danger from the dog, so Holmes sends his assistant, Watson, to investigate, while pretending to stay in London but actually following in secret. Holmes discovers that a recently deceased Baskerville was killed by a distant relative seeking an inheritance, who covered a huge dog in phosphorus to make it appear to be the dog of the legend.

There are parts of the story that Christopher doesn't like. There's an old scroll written in archaic language that he doesn't understand, and sometimes characters are explained in subtle ways that he can't relate to.

Christopher likes the book because it's a detective story, including clues and red herrings, which appear to be clues but only lead the detective or the reader off on the wrong track. Christopher feels like he's similar to **Sherlock Holmes**, because they're both very observant and can concentrate their minds on one thing to the exclusion of the rest of the world around them. In writing his own book, Christopher is trying to fit together apparently random happenings the way Holmes does, without any reference to the supernatural, which Christopher thinks is ridiculous.

*Rhodri regards Christopher as a spectacle more than as a person to be respected, as he only wants to marvel at Christopher's math abilities. Ed doesn't intervene, although he does make it easy for Christopher to eat in a way that works for him.*



*Even though Christopher doesn't like most normal novels, he still tries to include some of their features in his book. However, even his descriptions show how his mind works differently than most people's do. He draws the cloud so that his reader can see its true form rather than having some metaphorical image of it, and even when he does liken the cloud to an alien spaceship, he makes it clear that logically, people can't know what an alien spaceship would look like. He constantly thinks outside the standard response to any idea or situation.*



*Christopher is basing his actions and his book largely on this Sherlock Holmes novel—and indeed, both deal with a dog and a murder. The Baskerville hound's position as a symbol of evil foreshadows that the book's initial image of Wellington impaled with a pitchfork might harbor darker secrets than previously realized. Furthermore, Christopher's secret investigations echo those of Sherlock Holmes, his idol.*



*Even Christopher's favorite book sometimes betrays him in its way of describing the world. But this is something he can change in his own story, making other people see his way instead.*



*Christopher doesn't seem to know anyone in real life with whom he shares a perspective on the world, and Sherlock Holmes gets as close to this as possible. Modeling his own actions on Holmes helps Christopher take advantage of his powers of logic and observation, which sometimes get in his way otherwise. The clues and red herrings make the mystery like a puzzle, which he can use logic to solve. The reader might wonder which details so far in Christopher's book have been clues, and which red herrings.*



## CHAPTER 109

Christopher brings his book to school the next day, and Siobhan reads it. She asks him about Mrs. Alexander's revelation about his mother and Mr. Shears. He assures her that he's not going to tell his father about it, and he's not upset or sad about it because his mother is dead and Mr. Shears is gone, so the situation no longer exists and being sad would be stupid. At lunch he carefully avoids yellow foods, and in the afternoon he paints pictures of aliens.

*Christopher seems to really not mind about his mother's affair, even when Siobhan presses him. His logic essentially says that the affair happened in the past and nothing can be done about it now, so there's no reason to get worked up. His rules, like not eating yellow foods, still hold. Nothing important to him has changed.*



## CHAPTER 113

Christopher's memory works like a video camera, and if someone asks about his mother, he can rewind to various memories of her. He remembers going on vacation to Cornwall with her and watching her sunbathe on the beach. She convinced him to wade in the ocean, but when she jumped in Christopher panicked because he thought she'd be eaten by sharks, and she had to comfort him.

*Even though Christopher seems to be feeling indifferent about his mother's life, that doesn't mean that he didn't love her. These memories show that they had a close relationship and she wanted to expose Christopher to new experiences. For someone who rarely experiences strong emotions, Christopher was certainly very upset when he thought his mother was in danger.*



When Christopher sees someone he doesn't recognize, he searches his memories to see if anything about them indicates that they're someone he knows. Similarly, if someone says a phrase he doesn't understand, he searches his memories to figure out whether he's heard it before; and if he sees someone lying on the ground, he searches his memories to decide whether they're having an epileptic fit.

*Christopher thinks of his mind like a machine. Rather than spontaneously remembering that he's heard or seen something, he envisions his brain searching its data like a computer. This makes him seem more removed from his own memories and also more consciously in control of his thoughts and emotions.*



Unlike Christopher, other people have pictures in their minds of things that haven't actually happened. His mother used to imagine herself living an idyllic in France, and Siobhan imagines herself on vacation on Cape Cod. Sometimes people ask Christopher what his mother would think about certain things, but he thinks this is ridiculous because she's dead and can't think.

*Christopher doesn't like imagining his life any different than it is—his mind does not fabricate random possible situations, but only those that are the result of logical, step-by-step thinking. This seems to protect him from the heartbreaking impossible, such as imagining his mother as alive. Ironically, though, it also keeps him from guessing that such wild possibilities could be true.*



## CHAPTER 127

When Christopher gets home from school, his father is still at work. Christopher leaves his book on the kitchen table while he watches a movie about underwater creatures. He likes that science is always making new discoveries, and likes to imagine himself in a submarine.

*Christopher isn't particularly protective of the book, which suggests that he doesn't fully understand the importance of Mrs. Alexander's revelation. His appreciation of scientific discoveries makes sense, because he likes knowing how the world works.*



When Ed gets home, he says hello and goes into the kitchen. A little while later, he comes back to Christopher holding Christopher's book, which he has read. He asks whether Christopher really talked to Mrs. Alexander, and Christopher admits he did. Ed is very angry, and Christopher tries to tell him that he didn't do anything Ed told him not to, but Ed shouts at him for snooping in other people's business. When Christopher continues to make excuses, Ed grabs him by the arm, which he's never done before.

*As much as Christopher has tried to stick to the truth and keep his promise just enough to satisfy his own conscience, Ed makes him face the fact that in practicality, he has broken his promise. Christopher's book, which has seemed like a fun school project so far, now takes on much heavier implications, since it has given away all of Christopher's secrets. He has been consciously writing for an audience, but the one person he didn't anticipate as an audience is his father.*



Christopher hits his father again and again, and his memories black out temporarily. When he becomes aware of himself again, both he and Ed are hurt. Ed goes outside and throws Christopher's book into the trashcan, and then gets a beer.

*Christopher's lapse in consciousness makes it difficult to lay blame in this fight. However, it's clear that Ed is not dealing in a productive way with the fact that Christopher knows about his mother's affair.*



## CHAPTER 131

Christopher hates yellow because of custard, bananas, double yellow lines, yellow fever, yellow flowers (which give him hay fever), and sweet corn (because humans don't actually digest it). He hates brown because of dirt, gravy, poo, wood (because wooden machines used to rot), and Melissa Brown (a classmate who tore one of his paintings in two).

*Christopher doesn't hate yellow and brown for the appearance of the colors themselves. Instead, he seems to hate anything yellow or brown because he hates certain yellow and brown things, which have swayed his opinion of everything in these colors.*



Mrs. Forbes, one of the teachers, told Christopher that it was silly to hate yellow and brown. Siobhan, on the other hand, said that everyone has favorite colors. Christopher thinks they were both a little right, because it's silly to hate colors, but it's good to have something like colors to base your decisions on. He likens it to people choosing what they want from an unfamiliar restaurant menu simply based on the foods they generally like and don't like.

*Christopher exhibits some perspective on his own rules, since he admits that his hatred of yellow and brown is somewhat illogical. At the same time, he proves that there are common practices that are somewhat illogical, and he simply approaches his preferences from a color perspective, rather than from one of taste or name.*



## CHAPTER 137

The next day, Christopher's father apologizes for hitting him and announces they're going to Twycross Zoo. There shouldn't be too many people because it's supposed to rain, which Christopher likes. Christopher has never been to this zoo, so when they arrive, they buy a guidebook. As they walk around, Christopher decides which animals are his favorites: a red-faced black spider monkey who used to live on a ship, the Patagonian sea lions, and an orangutan lying in a hammock it made itself out of pajamas.

*Ed seems to think he can make everything all right with this outing, although he still doesn't address the actual issues surrounding Christopher's mother. At the zoo, Christopher connects with the animals and their stories in a way that he rarely does with people. He seems to feel a similar sympathy with dogs and with Toby, his rat.*



Christopher and Ed eat lunch in the zoo café. Ed reminds Christopher that he loves him, and even when he sometimes gets angry, it's only because he doesn't want to see anything bad happen to Christopher. Christopher doesn't entirely understand this, but he does understand that his father loves him, because he helps him out of trouble, takes care of him, and tells him the truth.

Christopher draws a map of the zoo from memory. He and Ed go look at the giraffes, and then they head home.

*Ed makes a number of decisions throughout the book that are ostensibly to protect Christopher, but end up having negative consequences. It's clear from this scene that Christopher doesn't really understand how both of these things might be true at the same time. Christopher does make it clear that for him, love includes telling the truth.*



*Christopher likes knowing exactly where he is in relation to everything around him, and he's good at visualizing space.*



## CHAPTER 139

As much as Christopher likes **Sherlock Holmes**, he doesn't like Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, who wrote the stories. He believed in the supernatural, which Christopher finds ridiculous. Christopher describes the 1917 case of the Cottingley fairies, in which two girls supposedly captured photographs of fairies. It was later discovered that the fairies were actually pieces of paper that the girls had set up to fool everyone—and they succeeded. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle wrote an article saying he thought the fairies were real. Christopher thinks that the fact that the fairies in the photos look just like how fairies are described in old books proves they're fake. Later, the girls admitted they had faked the photos.

Christopher thinks this story shows that sometimes people are willfully blind to the truth. Furthermore, it proves Occam's razor, a law that claims that people shouldn't assume that more things exist than are necessary. Essentially, everything usually has a simple, realistic explanation.

*Christopher's dislike of the supernatural goes along with his dislike of imagining alternate realities. Essentially, he only likes provable truths. He doesn't like speculating about what might exist—thus, he never speculates that his mother might be alive. In saying that the photographed fairies look too much like how fairies are supposed to look, Christopher echoes a similar assertion he made about alien spaceships. He thinks that even if such myths were true, humans couldn't possibly have imagined them the way they actually exist.*



*Again, Christopher's view as an outsider gives him great perception about general human tendencies. Ironically, the story of his mother that he has yet to learn essentially breaks this law with the complexity that it adds to the mystery of Wellington's death.*



## CHAPTER 149

At school on Monday, Siobhan notices the bruise on Christopher's face, and wants to know if his father hit him. Christopher isn't sure because his memory of the fight is vague; all he remembers is that Ed grabbed him. He doesn't want to talk further about the fight.

*Both Christopher and Siobhan are aware that Ed's behavior could border on being abusive. Christopher seems to be repressing his thoughts about the conflict.*



When Christopher gets home, he looks in the trashcan and the garden waste bin for his book, but doesn't find it. He decides to search the whole house, listening carefully for his father to return from work. He looks everywhere but doesn't find anything, and finally there's only Ed's room left. He's not supposed to mess with anything in there, but he decides he'll put everything back where he found it so Ed won't know. He looks under the bed, in the dressing table, and in the clothes cupboard, where he finds a box with his book in it. Just then, Christopher hears his father's car. He decides to leave the book, since it's safe in the box, and so that Ed won't know he was snooping. For now, he can write in another notebook.

As Christopher hears the door of Ed's van close, he notices a number of envelopes underneath the book, all addressed to him. The i's in his name have been dotted with circles, and the only people he knows who write this way are Siobhan, another teacher, and Christopher's mother. Christopher hears his father coming into the house, so he takes one envelope and replaces the box in the cupboard.

Ed doesn't see Christopher come out of his room, so Christopher goes into his own room and hides the envelope under his mattress before going down to say hello to his father. He tells him about his day, and Ed makes dinner. Afterwards, Christopher goes back up to his room.

Christopher decides he can open the envelope, since it's addressed to him. There's a letter inside from his mother. She writes about getting a job as a secretary and moving to a new flat with someone named Roger. She apologizes for not writing in a long time, and hopes that Christopher won't stay angry with her forever, and that he'll write to her. Reading this, Christopher is confused, because his mother never did these things. Then he notices that the envelope is postmarked eighteen months after his mother's death.

Ed comes into the bedroom, and Christopher says he's reading a letter. Ed tells him about a TV show he might want to watch, and then leaves. Christopher wonders if the letter might be in the wrong envelope, though he doesn't know why his mother would be writing from London. Maybe, he thinks, the letter was meant for another person named Christopher, from that person's mother. He's excited because now he has another mystery to solve, and he decides to wait until he can look at the other letters before jumping to conclusions. He hides the letter again and goes to watch TV.

*Christopher has not been daunted by the fight with his father, and the loss of his hard work on the book is what bothers him most. This loss leads him to betray his father's trust more than ever by snooping through his belongings. The fact that Ed has, in fact, kept the book—which means he retrieved it out of the trash—implies that he sees some value in it, despite how angry it made him. Perhaps he appreciates Christopher's writing project, or perhaps he feels so guilty about Christopher's innocent ignorance that he has to keep the object of his guilt close.*



*These envelopes clearly indicate the existence of more secrets. It immediately seems most logical that, out of the three people who dot their i's with circles, Christopher's mother is most likely to have written to him. Christopher continues to betray his father's trust by taking an envelope—but it seems that Ed might have betrayed his trust first by keeping them from him.*



*While Christopher earlier told white lies to get away with his investigations, he has now moved on to clear deception as he consciously hides his actions from Ed. In a way, this shift marks growth—he is learning to accept life on its own terms, which are often confusing or tricky.*



*It becomes clear from this very first letter that Christopher is missing many parts of his own story. His mother apologizes for her lapse in writing, but Christopher has never received letters from her, and he's certainly not angry with her. Taking the information about his mother's affair along with this letter and its postmark, the reader can probably guess that Christopher's mother is still alive, and living with her lover.*



*Ed's casual conversation contrasts harshly with the astonishing contents of the letter. Christopher is so sure of the essential facts of his life—like his mother's death—that he begins imagining unlikely scenarios to explain the letter. Admittedly, his mother being alive seems just as unlikely, and yet explains the facts most logically, even though Christopher does not even imagine this possibility. Rather than being disturbed, he's happy about this new mystery.*



## CHAPTER 151

Christopher thinks that phenomena that seem supernatural can be explained, but no one knows how to explain them yet. His Uncle Terry once said he saw a ghost in a shoe shop, and the cashier told him it was the ghost of a friar who used to live in the monastery that sat just where the shop was. Sooner or later, though, scientists will find a way to explain people seeing ghosts.

On the other hand, some things that seem mysterious aren't at all. For example, there's a pond with frogs at Christopher's school. The frog population changes year to year, apparently randomly. In fact, however, there's a mathematical formula that shows animal population change. Christopher provides a couple of graphs to show hypothetical population change. This formula proves to him that even when things are too complicated to predict, they're still obeying rules. Furthermore, major events like extinction can happen just because numbers work that way.

## CHAPTER 157

The day after Christopher finds the letter, a classmate named Joseph defecates all over the changing room at school and starts to eat his own feces. He has also eaten plastic animals, which come out in his poop. Christopher refuses to go into the bathroom, so he wets his pants and is allowed to use the staff bathroom for two days.

Four days later, it rains, and Christopher watches it and thinks about water traveling all around the world and connecting different places. The following evening, Ed has to go out on an emergency call for someone whose basement has flooded.

Christopher returns to Ed's bedroom and finds 43 letters addressed to him. In the first letter he opens, his mother writes about getting a new cooker and fridge. She reminisces about a Christmas when Christopher received a train set and played with it constantly, and his parents helped him make a timetable and showed him how train stations work.

*Christopher makes a distinction here between not believing that supernatural phenomena exist and believing that they can be explained in logical ways. He believes his uncle's story about seeing a ghost, but just thinks that there's a scientific explanation for ghosts. Similarly, there has to be a logical explanation for the mysterious letters he's just found.*



*Christopher likes being able to explain the everyday happenings of the world. In the instance of the frog population, he can explain it with math, which is even more satisfactory to him. This example implies that even the unexpected turns in his life must still be obeying some rules of existence, even if he doesn't understand them. Christopher turns to logic in this moment when he probably unconsciously realizes that his life is not as it seemed.*



*This incident demonstrates the wide variation in degrees of disability of the students at Christopher's school. Furthermore, it acts as a representation of Christopher's inner turmoil over the letters, even if he doesn't acknowledge it to himself.*



*As he often does, Christopher thinks of the world, humanity, and the universe on a large scale rather than remaining confined to his own small life. He's content to bide his time in getting back to the letters.*



*The number of letters Christopher finds shows the enormity of Ed's deception. This letter also provides a view into Christopher's childhood, and his practice with this train set and timetable will later help him use the train to get to his mother's house.*



In the second letter, Christopher's mother explains why she left him. She doesn't think she's a very good mother, because she's impatient and gets upset easily, unlike Ed. Once, she took Christopher shopping during the Christmas season, and the stores were so crowded that Christopher got upset and crouched on the floor. When Judy tried to move him, he broke merchandise and then lay on the floor screaming. They had to walk home because Christopher wouldn't get on the bus. That night, Ed was kind to Christopher, but Judy got in an argument with Ed because she was so frustrated with Christopher.

Arguments like this were frequent, and eventually Judy began spending more time with Roger Shears, their neighbor, because she felt like she could talk to him. Mr. and Mrs. Shears weren't in love anymore, and soon Mr. Shears and Christopher's mother fell in love. Mr. Shears wanted Judy to leave Ed, but she couldn't leave Christopher.

One evening, Judy and Christopher got into an argument because Christopher had refused to eat for days. Both of them began to throw things, and a cutting board broke Judy's toes. When she got home from the hospital, she and Ed got into another big argument, because Ed blamed her for not being able to keep her temper in check around Christopher. While Judy's toes were healing, she saw Ed taking care of Christopher and decided he did a much better job than she did, and Christopher didn't actually need her.

When Mr. Shears asked Judy to come with him to a new job in London, she decided it would be best for everyone if she went. She meant to explain everything to Christopher then, but Ed forbade her from talking to him. She didn't want to hurt Christopher, and now she wonders if he still wants to be an astronaut, and if he's still doing math.

In the third letter, Judy says that she's been writing to Christopher every week. She's gotten a job as a secretary at a company that appraises houses. She likes the office, but she's not very good at the math that she has to do. Besides, one of her bosses always wants her to work faster, and the other is somewhat creepy. She recently went on a walk to a park and wished that she could bring Christopher there. She has also sent him a puzzle, and wants to know whether he's solved it yet.

*This letter confirms the betrayal of both Christopher's parents—Judy for leaving him, and Ed for concealing that she left. At the same time, her story about taking Christopher shopping allows the reader to see Christopher from her point of view, and to realize the challenges of being his mother and the potentially counterproductive ways she dealt with these challenges. It also shows the "behavioral problems" Christopher mentioned earlier, and how much better he has become at conforming to social standards.*



*Judy's affair seemingly proceeded directly out of her frustration with Christopher and the tension it caused in her marriage. However, Christopher also acted as the only brake on the affair, as she didn't want to leave him behind.*



*Again, this scene shows the degree to which Christopher's behavior has improved over the years. It reveals tensions in both Judy and Ed, as Judy apparently used to be the angry parent, but Ed has recently gotten into a similarly physical fight with Christopher over the book. Judy obviously dealt with conflicting maternal feelings, as she resisted leaving in order to take care of her son, but then decided she was an inadequate mother anyway.*



*Judy may have truly believed she was doing the right thing by leaving, but this would undoubtedly be difficult for either Christopher or Ed to understand, and it's hard to know whether deep down, she was just finding excuses to escape from a situation in which she felt inadequate.*



*Although she did leave Christopher, Judy tried to make up for it by writing him letters and sending him gifts. She seems to have felt guilty about leaving, as she assures Christopher she's thinking about him often and points out how many letters she's sent. However, she was undoubtedly making a new life for herself that doesn't include her son.*



In the fourth letter, Judy writes about going to the dentist to get two teeth pulled. When Christopher got a tooth pulled, they had to put him to sleep so that he'd let the dentist touch him, but Judy only got a local anesthetic. It hurt later.

*Again, this letter provides a parent's perspective on raising Christopher. Furthermore, the two teeth Judy has pulled can represent Christopher and his father, whom she has pulled from her life. She is experiencing an enduring pain from her desertion, just like the pain of having her teeth pulled.*



Christopher suddenly has to stop reading the letters, because he feels sick. He's realized that his mother didn't die, and his father lied to him. He feels dizzy and curls up. When he becomes aware of his surroundings again, it's gotten dark out, and he's thrown up all over the bed. His father is calling his name, and every time he says it, Christopher sees the word written out in his mother's handwriting.

*Christopher hasn't reacted to Mrs. Alexander's revelation about his mother's affair or to the initial discovery of the letters, but now the entire awful truth is hitting him. As Ed calls his name and Christopher sees Judy's handwriting, he understands how their joint actions have betrayed him.*



Ed comes into the room, sees the letters, and realizes what has happened. He touches Christopher, and it doesn't hurt the way it usually does. Ed apologizes and begins to cry, saying that he lied for Christopher's own good. He says he didn't know what to do when Judy left, and the situation got out of control. He runs a bath, takes Christopher's clothes off, and leads him to the bath, and Christopher doesn't protest.

*Christopher's world as he knew it has disintegrated, and it takes with it some of Christopher's own rules. He seems to have almost lost his identity as he allows his father to touch him, since at every other moment touch has been unthinkable. Ed, a sturdy presence up until now, becomes vulnerable in his exposure.*



## CHAPTER 163

When Christopher first started school, his teacher was named Julie. Julie asked him what he thought was in a tube of Smarties, and Christopher said there were Smarties. When she uncapped the tube, there was actually a pencil inside. She asked what his mother would think was in the capped tube, and Christopher said she'd think there was a pencil. He gave this answer because he didn't understand that other people had independent minds. Julie thought he would always struggle with this, but he doesn't anymore, because he approached it like it was a puzzle.

*This anecdote shows that it doesn't come naturally to Christopher to be able to imagine how other people see the world or what they're thinking. This makes it especially difficult for him to understand how his parents could have rationalized their actions and thought they were making the best possible choices. However, Christopher has already showed himself able to come to understand that other people have independent minds, so he might be able to understand his current situation eventually, too.*



The mind is a complicated machine, like a computer. In fact, people are essentially always looking at screens in their minds. Christopher saw an experiment on TV in which pieces of a screen of type changed very quickly when participants' eyes flicked to another part of the screen. In these tiny moments, people don't see anything, but they don't realize this because their brains fill in the mental screen. Thus, they don't see the type changing.

*Christopher's mind works differently than other people's, and yet he understands how the mind works better than most. If he can think of everyone's minds as computers, it helps him understand people. Their mysterious actions aren't so different from supernatural occurrences—both seem unexplainable, but he believes there is a scientific basis for them.*



People differ from animals because they can see images in their minds of things that they're not actually looking at. Animals, on the other hand, are only aware of what they're currently seeing. People think they have a little person inside their heads watching the screen in their minds, but this little person is really just another object on the screen. There are always different parts of the brain to think about what the other ones are imagining.

Thus, people's brains are like computers because they go blank for tiny moments while the screen changes. People also think they're different from computers because they have feelings, but feelings are really just different images in a person's mind of events that could have happened or might in the future, and people have reactions depending on how much they like the image.

## CHAPTER 167

After Ed gives Christopher a bath, he tries to get Christopher some food, but Christopher won't speak. Ed goes to do the laundry and Christopher does mental math to calm himself down. When Ed comes back and Christopher still isn't speaking, Ed sits on the bed and tells him that he doesn't tell the truth all the time, but he's trying, and he's going to tell the truth in the future. He's learned that lying causes more hurt in the long run.

In order to keep this promise, Ed admits that he was the one who killed Wellington. Christopher wonders if he's joking, but Ed goes on to explain. Mrs. Shears helped out a lot after Judy left, and Ed thought they might move in together. Then he and Mrs. Shears argued, and he got the impression that she cared more about Wellington than about him and Christopher. She kicked him out of her house, and Wellington was in the garden. He was very angry, and he imagined Wellington might attack him, so he killed the **dog**.

Christopher becomes frightened. Ed tries to touch his hand in their way that symbolizes hugging, but Christopher pushes him off the bed. Ed decides to let Christopher settle for the night, and goes downstairs. Christopher realizes he has to leave the house, because if his father killed Wellington, he might kill Christopher. He decides he can no longer trust Ed.

Christopher waits a couple of hours and then sneaks downstairs with his **Swiss Army Knife**. He finds Ed asleep in the living room. He brings Toby and some food and goes into the garden, where he hides behind the shed. He eats a snack and wonders what to do.

*Christopher's book in a way exemplifies his claim that parts of the brain are always aware of what the others are doing. He writes the events of his life, but the interspersed chapters of his thoughts are like another part of his brain, reflecting almost unconsciously on the events around him. His theory means that there's always a part of the brain left over to look objectively on the emotions of the rest.*



*Christopher is experiencing a lot of feelings about what the letters have revealed. Since he's not particularly comfortable with emotions, it helps him to think about them as the operations of a machine, a series of images rather than vague, unexplainable presences that make him act in ways he can't control.*



*In a situation in which nothing seems to make sense, Christopher's mental math brings him back to a logical place. Ed begins to face big questions about whether lies can ever be the best choice. He thought that lying about Judy would protect Christopher, but now he sees how much damage that lie has done to his son.*



*Ed immediately tells a truth to show that Christopher can trust him to be honest now. Ed also exposes a vulnerable side of himself with the story about Mrs. Shears, showing that he sought love and support and was rejected. At the same time, he exposes himself as having a temper and desperation strong enough to make him kill a dog, even though he told Judy off for these same qualities.*



*In trying to be more trustworthy, Ed has instead made Christopher lose all trust in him. Christopher doesn't understand that the lies Ed has told were mostly his attempt to protect Christopher. Instead, logic tells him his father is a murderer—motivation doesn't matter.*



*Christopher seriously believes himself to be in immediate danger, as proven by him clutching his knife. He shows his love of Toby in bringing him, too, out of the danger of his father's presence.*



## CHAPTER 173

From where he's hiding, Christopher can see the constellation Orion. Supposedly Orion looks like a hunter with his weapons, but Christopher points out that the **stars** could be joined up to make any figure someone wanted. Constellations are completely subjective, based on people's imaginations. The real truth is that Orion is just a bunch of stars, which are just nuclear explosions.

*Christopher again exhibits his ability to think outside of conventional constructions. Constellations are stories that people imagine; when he strips them down to the scientific truth, they're only chemical reactions. However, it's impossible for him to strip his own life down to a scientific truth, even though he'd probably like to, because people are simply not logical.*



## CHAPTER 179

Before Christopher falls asleep, he watches the sky. This is something he does frequently, often with tools that allow him to see a map of the sky, so that he can tell which **stars** he's looking at. When he does this he feels small, because the universe is so large.

*Christopher's problems pale beside the enormity of the universe. He also exhibits his love of knowing where he is in relation to everything else, even in relation to the stars. In contrast, he currently doesn't know where he is in relation to the people around him.*



Christopher doesn't sleep well, and when he wakes up the sun is rising. After a couple more hours, Ed comes into the garden calling Christopher's name. Christopher hides under a sack and holds his **knife**. He gets very frightened when his father comes near, but he remains hidden and eventually his father leaves in his van.

*Again, Christopher demonstrates his very real fear of his father. Undoubtedly, Ed is worried about Christopher's safety, but Christopher thinks that Ed is looking for him in order to harm him.*



Christopher decides to go and live with Mrs. Shears. He'll tell her that his father killed Wellington, and she'll understand his problem. He walks to her house, but she doesn't answer the door. Then he sees the neighbors who do drugs walking down the street, so he hides behind Mrs. Shears' trashcan.

*Christopher unrealistically simplifies Mrs. Shears' emotions, thinking that the truth will give them a common enemy in Ed, and then she'll do anything for him. He also doesn't realize that she probably knew all along that Ed killed Wellington, and her anger at Christopher stemmed from this.*



Christopher rules out all of the people he knows but can't go to live with, and finally realizes that he could go to live with his mother, because he knows her address. However, he doesn't know how to travel on his own to London. All of his options frighten him, but he makes a mental map of the choices and realizes he can't do anything except go live with his mother. He'll go on a train, because he knows how to use trains from the train set he got for Christmas one year.

*Christopher faces a real crisis in his life. He believes he absolutely cannot stay with his father, but the only other viable option is to find his mother, which he thinks he must do on his own. This, however, involves facing a frightening unknown and moving purposely into actions that terrify him.*



Sitting in the passageway next to Mrs. Shears' house, Christopher sees a rusty metal lid on the ground that reminds him of the surface of a planet. He realizes that he can't be an astronaut, because he would be too far away from home, and he already doesn't like the idea of going a hundred miles away. His head hurts from this realization, but he tries to be like **Sherlock Holmes** and focus only on the problem at hand.

Christopher makes a plan. He goes to Mrs. Alexander's house and asks her to take care of Toby for him because he's going to London. Mrs. Alexander asks why he's going there, and Christopher explains that he's going to live with his mother because his father lied to him about her death and about Wellington's. Mrs. Alexander tries to get him to come inside and rethink his plan, and when she mentions calling his father, Christopher runs away, back to his house.

Christopher smashes a window to get into his locked house. He gathers food and clothing. He sees his father's phone and wallet on the counter, and thinks for a terrifying moment that he's in the house, but then realizes that Ed left them behind. He takes Ed's bank card. He puts Toby in his jacket pocket and begins walking to school so that he can ask Siobhan how to get to the train station.

Christopher is frightened both of getting farther away from his home and of being near where his father lives, so his fear stays constant as he walks to school. He wants to rest at school, but he sees that his father's van is parked outside and throws up again. He wants to curl up on the ground, but instead he takes deep breaths and does mental math to calm himself.

Christopher decides he has to ask a stranger how to get to the train station. He holds his **knife** in his pocket for safety, and asks a mother on the sidewalk where he can buy a map. She asks where he's trying to go and points him to the train station, which they can see in the distance. At the same time, she tries to keep her son from putting things in his mouth. She tells Christopher to follow a passing bus to get to the station, so he runs after it as long as he can.

Christopher loses the bus and finds himself in a street with shops. He can't think because of all the people around, so he covers his ears and groans quietly. Everything going on around him keeps him from making a mental map like he usually would, so he decides to make a methodical spiral through the town until he finds the station. He makes right turns until he gets back to a street he's already seen, and then makes a left. Using this strategy, he finally finds the station and goes inside.

*At this moment of crisis, Christopher further realizes that his dreams are unrealistic. Not only is this disappointing, but it also makes his future even less certain than it already was. Christopher feels his world further crumbling around him and thinks of his model of logic and calm, Sherlock Holmes.*



*The fact that Christopher unhesitatingly tells Mrs. Alexander his plan shows that he doesn't realize he's doing something rash that other people will try to prevent. He believes that any good person will see that he has no choice because he must escape his father. Mrs. Alexander, who has been very understanding of Christopher in the past, blunders in failing to perceive the deep fear he feels.*



*As Christopher's trust in his father declines, his own trustworthiness declines accordingly, and now he's stealing from Ed. This can be read as his moral code becoming more nuanced—whereas before he would have simply said that stealing is wrong, he now seems to think that it's warranted in the face of Ed's own crimes.*



*Even as Christopher experiences fear, he manages to see it in a mathematical way rather than being consumed by it. When he has a physical reaction to the fear he feels at the sight of Ed's van, he takes rational steps to calm down. Under pressure, he begins to act more maturely because he knows he must.*



*Christopher faces his fear of strangers in order to advance on his journey. No longer a mystery novel, the book has almost shifted to a heroic quest in which Christopher must overcome various obstacles. The mother's attempts to keep her son in order resonate with Judy's recounted attempts to make Christopher act in a more socially acceptable way when he was younger.*



*Christopher is forced into a situation that overwhelms him because of his extremely aware senses. However, he takes steps to minimize the effect on himself, and he uses a logical, geometric technique to find the station. Someone else might have asked for directions again, but Christopher knows what works best for him.*



## CHAPTER 181

Christopher explains that he sees all the little details around him, which is why he doesn't like being in new places, because he has to take in everything there is to see. Most people only glance at their surroundings and think about other things while they're glancing. Christopher recalls standing in a field on the way to France for a vacation, and he can still remember all the tiny details of the field, such as a squashed can with a snail on it.

Christopher draws the exact patterns of a cow he saw in the field, which reminds him he knows a joke about a cow. The joke involves an economist, a logician, and a mathematician who draw different conclusions from seeing a brown cow in Scotland, and it proves that mathematicians think most clearly and don't assume anything they don't know for sure.

When Christopher goes somewhere new, his brain gets overloaded by everything he has to see. It's even worse when there are many people around and they try to interact with him, because he has to anticipate what they might do. In these situations, Christopher covers his ears and groans so that he can remember what he's supposed to be doing. However, his power of observation also makes him good at chess, math, and logic.

## CHAPTER 191

Christopher realizes that the real train station has a different layout than the one in his train set. He's frightened by all the people and by a tunnel, but he blocks out the noise and decides that he needs to walk through the tunnel to find somewhere to sit down. He concentrates on a sign at the other end and makes it through the tunnel. He ends up in the lobby of the station, sees signs all around him, and finds a chair to sit in. He feeds Toby and holds onto his **knife** while groaning.

To clear his head, Christopher does a math problem called Conway's Soldiers. The problem involves a chess board that extends infinitely, with the lower part of the squares colored and the upper portion blank. The colored squares move by jumping over other colored squares, and the hopped squares disappear. In his mind, Christopher tries to get the colored squares as far as possible into the blank section of the board, but he knows that it's impossible to get the colored squares more than four squares into the blank section.

*This hypersensitivity to detail helps explain Christopher's extreme reactions to crowds and new places. Furthermore, this chapter forces the reader to appreciate what Christopher is going through as he takes on this journey with so many elements in it that are new to him. It also makes Christopher's narration that much more credible, since he really does remember any detail he writes down.*



*Christopher already lives like the exemplary mathematician of the joke. Even if he makes hypotheses about what could have happened to Wellington or to his mother, he never takes anything as truth before he has proof to support it.*



*Once again, Christopher's description of how he experiences the world makes it that much more impressive for him to take on a journey to London. He doesn't see his hypersensitivity only as a difficulty, however. He also is aware that it gives him an advantage in certain areas that he values.*



*Although Christopher felt relatively prepared for the train station because of the toy train set he used to have, his childhood fails him as the station looks different. Even so, he begins to find ways to navigate this unknown world, and even in his fear, he remembers to feed Toby, showing again how much he cares about this animal who is dependent on him for life.*



*Christopher has an impressive ability to focus. Even while being bombarded by sensory experiences in the train station, he manages to block everything out for the sake of an elaborate mental math problem. Even though he knows there are limitations to this problem, he still tries to find some way around them, just as he finds ways around his social limitations.*



Christopher finally looks up to find a policeman talking to him. The man says that Christopher has been sitting in this café for two and a half hours. Christopher explains why he's at the train station, and tells the policeman that he has a bank card. When the policeman forces him to admit that the card belongs to his father, Christopher is afraid that the policeman will arrest him, but instead he shows Christopher where the ATM is and helps him take out money for a ticket. The policeman is skeptical about Christopher's ability to get where he's going, but he shows him the way to the ticket office.

A man with dreadlocks is buying tickets and is impolite to Christopher when Christopher interrupts. When the man leaves, Christopher pretends he's playing a computer game to keep himself from being scared, and he manages to buy a ticket, though he doesn't even know the difference between one-way and round-trip tickets. The man selling tickets gives him directions to his train. He imagines a red line across the floor, leading him where he has to go, and he follows the line, barking like a **dog** when people bump into him. He makes it to the train, watches a man open the electronic doors by pressing a button, and gets on the train himself.

## CHAPTER 193

Christopher likes timetables because he likes knowing what will happen when. He provides his timetable for a normal day at his father's house, which has every activity mapped out to the minute. He makes other timetables for the weekends, and he doesn't like going on vacation because people don't use timetables then. For Christopher, a timetable is like a map of time, except on a map of objects the objects are still there even if the map isn't; whereas time seems to disappear if he doesn't have a map of it. Time changes depending on how other things change—for example, it works differently if you're traveling at the speed of light. Because nothing travels faster than light, humans can't know about many things that happen in the universe. Christopher sees time as a puzzle, and timetables keep him from getting lost in it.

## CHAPTER 197

The train Christopher gets on is crowded. It reminds him of a time when his mother gave two other children a ride home from school, and the car was so crowded that Christopher tried to get out while it was moving and had to get stitches in his head.

*This is Christopher's second run-in with the law. Although the policeman is kinder in this situation than in the first, his earlier experience has made Christopher more wary this time, particularly since he isn't actually on the right side of the law anymore. However, the policeman proves friendly and helpful, and gets Christopher moving on his journey again.*



*Christopher continues to find little games to play with himself to keep himself from becoming too frightened to continue on. His ignorance about how to buy train tickets shows just how little he knows about how to take a trip in England, making his fear even more understandable. This is the first of a number of times that he barks when someone touches him, and it seems that he unconsciously does so in sympathy with Wellington. In escaping from Wellington's murderer, Christopher feels a particular affinity with the dog.*



*Christopher has a very visual sense of time, starting with the fact that he thinks of a timetable as a map. Most people don't think about time in this much detail, but Christopher's view of it makes time seem particularly slippery. As a result, he feels the need to pin it down by making a timetable so that he knows that time will continue to exist in the measured way that he wants it to. Essentially, he asserts that time is subjective, not only because of human perspective but also because of scientific principles. This attitude also explains his need to constantly wear a watch.*



*This memory shows the lengths that Christopher will go to in order to get out of a crowded space. It could be a cause of concern since he's getting on a crowded train, but it also proves that his tolerance for crowded spaces has improved.*



Suddenly the policeman shows up on the train, because Ed has come to the station looking for Christopher. Christopher tries to run away because he doesn't want the policeman to take him back to his father, but the policeman stops him. Christopher reveals that the police should arrest Ed for killing Wellington. Just as the policeman tries to grab Christopher again, the train begins to move. The policeman radios a colleague to meet him at the next station and makes Christopher sit down next to him.

Christopher looks out the window of the train. At first there are too many objects for him to handle, but then he realizes it feels like the train is flying. He thinks about all the miles of train track all over the world, and what they all pass by, and how many people have their own complete lives. He feels overwhelmed, closes his eyes, and groans.

When Christopher opens his eyes, the policeman is reading a newspaper. Christopher solves quadratic equations in his head. He needs to urinate, but he doesn't realize there's a bathroom on the train, so he leaks on his pants. The policeman notices and shows him the way to the bathroom. Christopher doesn't want to use the toilet because there's poop on it, but he forces himself to anyway.

When Christopher leaves the bathroom, he climbs onto a luggage shelf and closes himself in with a suitcase so that he'll feel safe. When the train slows down, the policeman comes looking for him in the bathroom and discovers that he's gone. Christopher watches but stays quiet. The policeman leaves. When the train stops, a woman sees Christopher and tells him the policeman is looking for him, but Christopher doesn't reply. Finally, the train starts again.

## CHAPTER 199

Christopher says that people believe in God because they want some way to explain how everything on earth came to exist. Christopher, however, thinks it's only luck that there's life on earth, and not on other planets. For life to come into existence, there has to be replication (making copies through reproduction), mutation (small changes in the copies), and heritability (the changes being passed on to offspring). People don't believe that the complex components of life can come about by chance, but they in fact come about through evolution. Furthermore, religious people think that humans are superior to other animals, but humans will eventually evolve into something better, or else will go extinct.

*Christopher's shaky relationship with the police takes a turn for the worse here. His fear of his father has not abated, however, as proven when he asks the policeman to arrest Ed. The policeman ends up looking rather foolish as he gets caught on the train, in a moment of physical comedy for the narrative.*



*As Christopher often does, he takes his present situation on the train and thinks about how he's connected to the rest of the world, giving him a sense of the entirety of humanity. Though he often enjoys this feeling, it now overwhelms him on top of everything else that he has to worry about.*



*Christopher continues to use math to keep himself calm. His assumption that there wouldn't be a bathroom on the train shows how inexperienced a traveler he is. However, he overcomes another obstacle by using the dirty bathroom, since earlier he refused to use his school bathroom when a student got it filthy, even though it had been cleaned.*



*Christopher doesn't consider what people will think of his hiding on the luggage rack, and he doesn't even mean to hide from the policeman. He only seeks a feeling of safety, which he knows he'll find in this enclosed space. Nonetheless, this unconventional decision ends up throwing the policeman off his trail.*



*Christopher again exhibits his dislike of anything supernatural or mythic. He pins down the very existence of life, one of the most seemingly mysterious phenomena, with scientific principles. Though other people often see themselves as different or better than Christopher, they all came about through science. Christopher seems to find some satisfaction in the fact that in the long run, humans who think they're great probably aren't so great. He also expresses his affinity for animals again by defending them against humans' superior attitude.*



## CHAPTER 211

As the train makes more stops, Christopher begins to worry that he's going to stay on too long and miss London, but he doesn't want to leave his hiding place and run into the policeman. He watches people going into the bathroom, and sometimes people see him on the luggage rack and make rude comments. Finally, the train stops and doesn't start moving again, so Christopher gets down from the shelf. His bag is gone. He sees another policeman in the next carriage, so he gets off the train to avoid him.

Christopher finds himself in a huge, loud train station. He's overwhelmed at first, but he imagines a red line leading away from the train and follows it. He reaches a gate where a man tells him that a policeman is looking for him. When the man goes to find the policeman, Christopher walks away and leans against the wall of a shop. He looks at all the signs around him, but there are so many that they get all mixed up in his mind until he can't read them. He counts to fifty and holds onto his **knife** for safety.

Christopher makes his hand into a tube and looks through it so that he can only see one sign at a time. This allows him to find the sign for the information desk. A man comes up to him and says Christopher looks lost, but he retreats when Christopher takes out his **knife**. Christopher goes to the information desk and asks whether he's in London. The woman confirms that he is, and when he gives her the address of his mother's flat, the woman tells him which tube station is closest. She's astonished when Christopher doesn't know what the tube is, but she directs him to the entrance.

Christopher pretends all the people around him are cows and walks to the escalators holding onto his **knife** and Toby in his pockets. He's never seen escalators before, so he goes down the stairs instead. In the tube station, he sits in a passport photo booth and watches people through the curtain. By observing, he figures out how to buy a ticket and go through the ticket gates. He buys a ticket to Willesden Green at a machine, puts it through the ticket slot, and goes through the gates. He likes the gates because they remind him of a science fiction film.

Christopher sees a sign showing all the stops on the Bakerloo Line, including Willesden Junction, where he's supposed to go. He walks down the tunnel where the sign directs him, and then he has no choice but to go down an escalator. People are all around him, and he wants to hit them but he doesn't, because he knows he'll get in trouble with the police.

*Although Christopher did not get in the luggage rack with the intention of hiding from the policeman, he decides to take advantage of this effect. However, for someone who always likes to be aware of his physical surroundings, he has become notably disoriented by traveling on the train. The other passengers' comments serve as a reminder of how people treat others doing anything out of the ordinary.*



*Christopher continues to effectively use strategies such as imagining a line to deal with his fear of large, busy places. The man at the gate highly underestimates Christopher, apparently believing that his complacency means he'll go calmly with the police. Although Christopher's fear is mainly due to sensory overstimulation, he clutches his knife, which can only help with physical threats. Still, it seems to comfort him.*



*Here, Christopher creates another way to deal with the overwhelming amount of information that the modern world bombards everyone with daily. His fear of strangers and inability to judge their intentions makes him threaten a man who probably would have helped him kindly. Instead, he seeks help from the person he knows is specifically delegated to give it—the information desk attendant—because he can categorize her as such in his mind.*



*In this strange and frightening environment, Christopher clings to his knife, a symbol of safety, and his rat, for whom he feels a sense of responsibility. Christopher moves through the station seeing everything with a sense of newness and wonder, even if this newness frightens him, too. His powers of observation serve him well as he patiently figures out how to get through the ticket gates, another obstacle to overcome.*



*On this journey, Christopher is immediately asked to face fears he has only just discovered. While he avoided the escalator before, he now has to take one, but among so many new experiences, he hardly even seems to mind. Furthermore, he has learned to control his urge to lash out at people who are too close to him.*



Christopher ends up in another, smaller station in a tunnel. He reads the advertisements on the walls and sits down on a bench. The station becomes crowded, and he starts groaning and feels sick. Suddenly there's a loud roaring and a wind, and he closes his eyes, thinking something terrible is happening. The noise quiets, and Christopher sees everyone getting on the train that has arrived. The train leaves, but Christopher is terrified and wants to be home. Then he remembers that he can't go home because his father lied to him. The trains come again and again, and Christopher sits on the bench feeling horribly sick.

*This fear of the tube trains disables Christopher more than anything else on his trip. In fact, with the sensations that Christopher describes, he almost seems like the most rational one on the platform—it seems everyone else should be as terrified as he is. But of course, everyone else understands what's happening and is used to it. Christopher again has a physical reaction to his fear, and finds that he has nowhere safe to turn.*



## CHAPTER 223

Christopher describes the advertisement that's on the wall of the train station, because Siobhan told him to include descriptions in his book. The ad is for a vacation in Malaysia, and it has a photo of two orangutans in trees. Christopher doesn't like going on vacation because he doesn't think it's relaxing, and he prefers to see new things by more closely examining what's already around him. For example, lots of people have thin drinking glasses in their houses, but they don't even know they can make music by rubbing them with a wet finger. Christopher provides the text of the advertisement and draws the orangutans.

*Even in the midst of his terror, Christopher still notices everything around him well enough to reproduce it exactly. His detailed and logical description of the ad, with the text removed from the picture and without the flashy tricks of advertising, makes it seem ridiculous. Christopher takes in the everyday world like it's an exotic location. He believes there's so much to appreciate and think about just in one's own house that no one should ever have to go on vacation for entertainment.*



## CHAPTER 227

Sitting in the station, Christopher keeps his eyes closed. He hears the trains like a rhythm, and he imagines that they're only in his mind even though he doesn't usually like imagining things. Eventually, fewer trains come, and there are fewer people around. Christopher opens his eyes and realizes he's been sitting there for five hours.

*Christopher has to find entirely new ways to deal with these new situations, and in this case, he discovers that imagining, which usually makes him uncomfortable, actually helps him feel safer. This is an other way in which his world is crumbling and building itself anew.*



Christopher notices that Toby is missing and begins to worry he might get run over by a train. Looking around, he sees that there are digital signs showing which trains are coming when. He likes that there's an order to the trains. He's not so scared when the next train comes, because the sign warns him that it's approaching.

*Christopher feels responsible for Toby, and caring for another creature helps pull him out of his fear for himself. He discovers that even these terrifying trains have a logic to them, and he can fit them into his world of rules.*



Christopher gets up to look for Toby. He sees some mice down by the rails, and then catches sight of Toby there as well. He climbs down to the rails and tries to catch the rat, but Toby runs away. When Christopher goes after him, a man tells him to get off the rails and tries to grab his shoulder. Finally, Christopher catches Toby, but now a train is coming. Toby bites Christopher, and Christopher sees the train coming out of the tunnel. He tries to climb up to the platform, but he's holding onto Toby. Suddenly the man on the platform pulls him out of danger. The man is angry at Christopher and misses his train. A woman with a guitar case tries to make sure Christopher is all right, and he screams when she touches him. Because she's a stranger, he refuses her help by telling her he has a **knife**, so she leaves.

Another train comes and the man and the woman both get on. Christopher decides to get on a train, but he doesn't like being in such a small place with other people, so he reads all of the signs around the train and examines the patterns on the walls and the seats. When they come into another station, he realizes that it says what it's called on the walls. He times how long it takes to get between all of the stations.

Christopher gets off the train at Willesden Junction. Everyone leaves the platform except a drunk man and a man in a small shop. He has to find out how to get to his mother's address, so he asks the man in the shop. The man offers him a street atlas, but Christopher doesn't realize at first that he has to buy it. The man is unfriendly and sarcastic, but eventually Christopher buys the atlas.

Christopher sits against the wall and figures out how the atlas works. He finds his mother's road and decides on a route to get there. Then he leaves the station and walks to his mother's flat. On the way, he sees men dressed as Vikings, and he urinates in an alleyway.

No one answers when Christopher rings his mother's doorbell, so he sits down to wait. It starts to rain. Eventually he hears his mother arguing with a man, and when they appear he realizes it's Mr. Shears. Christopher greets his mother and in her shocked delight at seeing him, she hugs him. He pushes her because he doesn't like being touched, and he falls over. Toby escapes again, but Christopher catches him. Mr. Shears and Judy are worried that Ed must be nearby, but Christopher tells them that he came alone on the train because Ed killed Wellington.

*Christopher becomes entirely invested in retrieving Toby, the one creature he feels he must take care of. His parents, who are responsible for his own well-being, have partly neglected their duty, and he has refused to accept the care of his father. Instead of being cared for, he becomes the one doing the caring, which is another step in his journey to adulthood. Christopher puts himself into danger for Toby, acting foolishly because he's not used to train stations. Ironically, this is probably the only real danger that Christopher is in on his whole trip, and yet he acts rather nonchalantly about it, perhaps because he's worried about Toby rather than about himself.*



*Whereas Christopher has been completely overwhelmed by sensory stimulation before this, he now has adjusted enough to use his attention to detail to distract himself from his fear of the people around him. His timetable maps out how the train works and situates him in time.*



*Christopher is becoming much more comfortable approaching strangers, even when the shopkeeper's job does not mark him out as someone who should help Christopher. Despite the man's unwillingness to help, Christopher sticks to his goal and gets what he needs.*



*Christopher is good at using maps, so the last obstacle on his journey isn't too hard. Though the men he sees are dressed as Vikings, their costumes are superficial, while he is the true, if unsung, hero of this quest.*



*Christopher has risen to the challenges that faced him on his journey, but that doesn't mean that he's not still fundamentally Christopher—he still won't let people touch him if he doesn't have to. In trying to hug him, Judy shows her clumsiness at mothering Christopher. She lives outside his world of personal rules and forgets them easily. Christopher continues to take care of Toby.*



The three of them go into the flat. Christopher explores and makes a mental map to help him feel safe. Judy has Christopher take a bath, and they feed Toby. When Toby poops under the sink, Christopher cleans up after him. Judy sits in the bathroom and asks Christopher why he never wrote back to her, so Christopher reveals that Ed told him she was dead and never gave him the letters. She's very distressed and wants to hold Christopher's hand, but he won't let her.

Once Christopher is dressed, he hears a strange voice arguing at the door. It's a policeman, and Christopher agrees to talk to him only because Judy says she won't let him take Christopher away. The policeman asks Christopher basic questions about his parents and his intent in coming to London. Christopher tells him that he wants to stay with his mother, and Judy says he can stay, so the police officer leaves.

Christopher has dinner and goes to sleep. In the middle of the night, he wakes to hear his father shouting at his mother and Mr. Shears. Judy and Ed argue about Ed lying to Christopher. Ed says that writing letters was nothing compared to everything he did every day for Christopher. Ed and Judy come into Christopher's room, and Christopher is holding his **knife**. Ed apologizes for everything he's done and tries to initiate the handshake that is their way of hugging, but Christopher refuses to touch him. Ed begins to cry. The policeman shows up again because Mr. Shears called him, and he escorts Ed out of the flat.

## CHAPTER 229

As Christopher sleeps, he has one of his favorite dreams, which he has often. In the dream, almost everyone on Earth has died from a virus spread through understanding people's expressions paired with something they say. In some versions of the dream, infected people die from sitting around doing nothing. In others, the virus makes them die in more violent ways that get rid of their bodies at the same time. Eventually, the only people left are those like Christopher who don't understand people's expressions.

In the dream, Christopher can go anywhere he wants, do whatever he wants, and not have to deal with other people. The whole world is quiet, and he can go into other people's houses and take whatever he wants from stores. He climbs across roofs and drives someone's car to the beach. He stands in the water and uses a ruler on the horizon to show that the Earth is round. Then he goes home, makes himself red food, watches a movie, plays computer games, and goes to bed.

*As Judy takes care of Christopher, Christopher takes care of Toby, thinking of the rat's well-being almost above his own, as a parent would. Judy continues to try to connect with her son in ways that simply don't work for him, like physical touch. She seeks comfort for herself, but it's counterproductive for Christopher. It's certainly traumatic for her, however, to find that her son thought she was dead.*



*Throughout his journey Christopher has been pursued by policemen, but now that they have finally found him, his mother protects him from them and the police officer proves to have only Christopher's well-being in mind. The police officer legitimizes Christopher staying with his mother against Ed's wishes.*



*Ed and Judy pick up right where they left off, arguing about Christopher. Both have made mistakes in their parenting, and they throw these mistakes in each other's faces to soothe their own guilt. Christopher apparently does not find complete safety in his mother's presence, since he still feels it necessary to threaten Ed with the knife. Perhaps stepping out from his parents' care is another sign that he's growing up. Ed is broken by his son's complete mistrust and refusal to engage with him.*



*This dream shows Christopher's ideal world, which he escapes to in sleep after a very traumatic journey. In the real world, people like Christopher are often at a disadvantage, but in his dream world, they are favored with a special immunity to the disease, which would theoretically make other people want to be like him, something he has probably never experienced—his presumed "disability" becomes a gift.*



*Christopher would be completely happy being alone. He finds so much to interest him in small, normal things, such as visually seeing that the Earth is round, that he would never need human company or the trappings of civilization to live a full life. Even though he's proved by his journey that he can make his way through the world, that doesn't mean he wants to.*



## CHAPTER 233

The morning after Christopher arrives at his mother's flat, he has breakfast with her and Mr. Shears. Mr. Shears talks about Christopher as though he can't hear, saying that it's not going to work for him to stay there long-term. Judy, on the other hand, says that Christopher can stay as long as he wants, and she takes leave from work.

Judy and Christopher go to a department store to get him new clothes, but there are too many people, so Christopher lies on the floor and screams. Judy takes him home in a taxi, then goes back out to get what he needs.

When Judy comes home, Christopher tells her that he has to return to Swindon to take his **Maths A level**. Judy is impressed he's going to take the test, but she isn't sure whether he'll be able to go back for it.

That night, Christopher looks for the **stars**, but there are too many clouds and too much light pollution. He can't sleep, so he goes outside and walks down the road. When he hears people coming, he hides behind a car. He stays there even when the people are gone, and he imagines a pattern of crosses in his head. Eventually his mother runs shouting down the road, and when she finds him, she makes him promise not to go out on his own again.

Christopher spends the next day in the flat. The day after that, Judy gets fired from her job. Christopher reminds her that he has to take his **A level**, but Judy is trying to deal with both Ed and Roger's anger, and tells Christopher that he'll take the exam later. Christopher is very worried about not being able to take it.

The next day, Christopher tries to tell what kind of day it will be by watching the **cars** outside the window, but it doesn't work because he's not on the bus, so he can see as many cars as he wants if he waits long enough.

*Mr. Shears exhibits complete disrespect for Christopher, hardly acknowledging him as a person and clearly not wanting him to mess up the life Mr. Shears has made with Judy. Judy, however, has always had good intentions and wants to make amends for her earlier lapses in parenting.*



*This scene recalls almost exactly a scene Judy wrote about in her letter, one of the situations that made her feel like an inadequate mother. This time, however, she doesn't let it visibly discourage her, although Christopher seems to be reverting to a younger self.*



*Christopher's desire to take the test means he feels able to think about the future again, but it's still uncertain if he can even take the test he's looked forward to for so long as his first step to adulthood.*



*If he can't see the stars, Christopher can't position himself in the universe the way he usually does. His world is off-kilter, and he's obviously not comfortable in his new home. Meanwhile, Judy finds herself having to face the stresses of parenting that Ed has dealt with since she left.*



*Christopher has completely thrown off Judy's life with Roger, and she doesn't understand the importance of the exam to him. Now that he feels safe, Christopher seems to have forgotten the urgency with which he left Swindon, and in his need for everything to go as he expects it to, he only wants to go back to keep the appointment for the exam.*



*Christopher's rules no longer work, symbolizing the further collapse of the world as he knows it. The cars acted as a sort of fortune-telling device, so the fact that they have failed means he is entirely unsure of his future.*



That afternoon, Christopher's mother takes him to Hampstead Heath, a park. She tells him that she's called the school principal to cancel the **A level**. Christopher screams until a man comes to make sure everything is all right.

*To prove the unpredictable nature of Christopher's future, he no longer even has the A level to look forward to. The exam has been a fixture of his future for the entire book. Furthermore, it seems like another betrayal of trust for Judy to cancel the exam that meant so much to him.*



The day after, Judy has Mr. Shears get Christopher some books about science and math, but they're all too simplistic for Christopher. He hasn't been eating, so Judy makes a game out of drinking a shake. When Judy and Mr. Shears argue, Christopher listens to loud static on a radio to block it out. The next night, Mr. Shears comes into Christopher's room drunk and gets angry with him for being selfish. Judy makes Mr. Shears leave the room.

*Christopher's identity is structured around his logical mind and his mathematical abilities, but Judy and Mr. Shears can't effectively relate to this part of him. The flat isn't particularly safe or supportive for him, with Mr. Shears around. Christopher again seems to revert to childhood by refusing to eat, another issue that Judy wrote about in her letters.*



The morning after this, Judy packs two suitcases, and she and Christopher take Mr. Shears' car and drive to Swindon, because Judy thinks someone was going to get hurt if they stayed in the flat. On the way to Swindon, they get stuck in a traffic jam, and Christopher tries to create a mathematical formula to govern traffic jams.

*Judy finally makes the right decision for both herself and Christopher by leaving Mr. Shears and retracing her path to Swindon, effectively retrenching herself in Christopher's life. Meanwhile Christopher tries to put his life back into a controllable order through math.*



When they get to the house in Swindon, no one is home. Christopher plays computer games, and his time is far worse than his best time. In the evening, Ed returns home. He and Judy have a shouting match while Christopher bangs on drums to drown it out. Eventually Judy comes up and says that Ed has gone to stay with his friend Rhodri. Christopher finds Toby's cage and puts him back inside. Then he asks Judy if he can still do his **Maths A level**, but she says that it's already been cancelled. Christopher is so upset that he doesn't eat or sleep.

*Christopher's poor computer game time shows his serious inner turmoil, particularly since he played quite successfully after coming home from jail at the beginning of the book. He replaces Toby in his home just as Christopher himself has been brought home. However, his world is still upside-down. His mother has taken his father's place, and he still can't take his exam. Judy doesn't seem to understand quite how important it is to him.*



The next day, Judy and Christopher are about to get in the car to go to school when Mrs. Shears emerges to insult Judy. They drive away quickly. At school, Judy explains to Siobhan that Christopher is upset about the exam. Christopher draws a picture of a bus. After lunch, Siobhan tells Christopher that she's spoken to Mrs. Gascoyne, and he might still be able to take the exam. Christopher is very tired and can't think too well, but he decides he wants to take the exam anyway.

*Tensions are high in all quarters, and Judy is essentially getting no support, but only anger. Siobhan, who always seems to understand Christopher better than almost anyone, manages to right his world by making the exam possible after all. Even though he feels he's at a disadvantage, Christopher nonetheless needs to go through with this to continue into the future of his imagining.*



Reverend Peters comes that same afternoon to proctor the exam. When Christopher first looks at the questions, he can't figure out any of them. He wants to hit or stab Reverend Peters, but he can't because then Reverend Peters wouldn't proctor the exam. Instead, Christopher takes deep breaths and cubes numbers to calm himself. He finishes the exam.

That evening, Ed comes back to the house. Christopher is frightened, so he lies out in the yard and looks at the **stars**. Ed comes outside, watches Christopher, and punches the fence.

The next day, Siobhan helps Christopher relax before he takes the next part of his exam. That night, Mr. Shears comes to the house, throws Judy's belongings onto the sidewalk, and takes his car. As Mrs. Shears watches, Judy throws a box of cereal at the retreating car.

The following day, Christopher takes the last part of his exam. He wants to write how he solved his favorite question, but Siobhan tells him it isn't very interesting for his readers. He feels better because he's finished the exam, but he's worried because it's possible the examination board won't accept it, since the exam was temporarily cancelled.

That evening, Ed comes to the house to ask Christopher how the exam went. Judy pleads with him to answer Ed's questions, so Christopher tells him he's not sure how well he did because he was tired. Ed tells Christopher he's very proud of him.

The next week, Ed tells Judy she has to leave the flat, but she doesn't have the money to do so. Christopher wants to know if the police will arrest Ed for killing Wellington, but Judy says they only will if Mrs. Shears presses charges. Finally, Judy gets a job and begins taking anti-depressants. She and Christopher move to a new house, but Christopher doesn't like it because it smells strange.

Christopher is worried about his exam results. He doesn't know what the future holds. Siobhan tells him to try not to think about the future. Judy buys him a puzzle for which he has to figure out how to detach two halves of a cylinder from each other. He also helps her paint her room, and he ends up having to cut paint out of his hair.

*It is ironic that Reverend Peters, who stands for everything Christopher thinks illogical, proctors an exam based on logic and method. The self-control that Christopher had to learn on his journey becomes useful here, as he keeps his temper and uses strategies to focus.*



*Christopher is still afraid of his father, but at least he's back where he can see the stars and position himself in the world. Ed still feels angry and frustrated about the situation.*



*The life Judy made for herself apart from Christopher and Ed comes to an end with this complete break from Mr. Shears. Furthermore, Mrs. Shears sees that her ex-husband has failed both her and Judy.*



*Christopher enjoys math so much that he wants to share his love of it with anyone who might read his book, and he can hardly imagine that other people don't love it as much as he does. But even though he's gone through the stress of the exam, it still might have all been for nothing.*



*Ed understands better than Judy how important the exam is to Christopher. The fact that Christopher finally speaks to his father indicates the beginning of a reconciliation.*



*Even if Christopher's fear of Ed is beginning to lessen, he still thinks that Ed deserves punishment, demonstrating the equal value he places on human and animal lives. Christopher's life changes again, and neither he nor his mother are very happy.*



*Christopher always likes to know what to expect from any situation, but the uncertainty of his exam results, plus the changes in his home life, make it particularly difficult to know what to expect of his future in general. Judy manages to connect with Christopher's logical side through the puzzle.*



Christopher has to go to his father's house after school, before his mother finishes work. He pushes his bed against the door so that Ed can't get in, and he doesn't answer when Ed tries to talk to him. Sometimes Ed sits outside the door for a long time. Toby dies of old age, and Christopher has to bury him in a pot because his mother doesn't have a yard. He also solves the puzzle.

One day, when Judy comes to pick Christopher up at Ed's house, Ed asks to talk to Christopher. Christopher doesn't want him to, but Ed sets a timer for five minutes and starts talking. He tells Christopher how much it hurts to have him in the house but refusing to talk or trust his father. Ed says it'll be their project for Christopher to spend time with him, and for him to prove himself trustworthy. He reveals that he's gotten Christopher a present, and brings in a golden retriever puppy. The **dog** will stay with Ed, and Christopher can come take him for walks.

The next week, lightning hits a tree near Ed's house, and men cut it up and take it away. Christopher finds out he got an A on his **Maths A level**, and he's very happy. He names the **dog** Sandy and takes him for walks. When Judy gets sick, Christopher spends three days at Ed's house, but he doesn't mind because Sandy is there to protect him. He even plants a vegetable garden with Ed.

Christopher buys a book to study for the next **A level** test in math, and he plans to take A level Physics after that. Then he'll go to university and bring Sandy, and he'll become a scientist. He's sure he can do all this because he went to London all alone, he solved the mystery of Wellington's death, he found his mother, and he wrote a book.

*Christopher slowly moves forward in reconciling with his father. Even if he still distrusts him, at least he'll consent to be in the same house with him. Ed obviously struggles with this. Toby's death marks the end of an era of Christopher's life, and Christopher makes sure to take care of his friend even in death.*



*Ed finally decides that they can't go on with Christopher fearing him. He acknowledges that they both have to work to improve their relationship, rightfully implicating himself in the unpleasantness as well as Christopher. By giving Christopher a dog, Ed symbolically atones for his killing of Wellington. As dogs represent physical and emotional safety throughout the book, the gift also shows Ed's desire to make his house a safe space for Christopher, rather than a frightening one.*



*Christopher's life continues to change as even the landscape of his neighborhood changes. With his good test result, he has achieved a major goal, and his future seems more sure again. Furthermore, his relationship with Ed is improving, thanks in part to the safety that the dog provides.*



*At the end of the book, Christopher looks toward his future with excitement and pride. He feels confident that he can achieve his dreams because he has overcome so many seemingly impossible obstacles. He has grown up, and this ending is a triumphant one.*





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