In a June 2003 interview with NPR's Terry Gross on her program Fresh Air, Haddon said about Christopher:

"If he were diagnosed, he would be diagnosed as having Asperger's syndrome, which is a form of autism. I suppose you'd call it high-function autism in that he can function on, you know, a day-to-day basis, in a kind of rudimentary way. But he has a serious difficulty with life in that he really doesn't empathize with other human beings. He can't read their faces. He can't put himself in their shoes. And he can't understand anything more than the literal meaning of whatever's said to him, although I'm very careful in the book not to actually use the word 'Asperger's' or 'autism.' ... Because I don't want him to be labeled, and because, as with most people who have a disability, I don't think it's necessarily the most important thing about him... And as a good friend of mine said after reading the book, a friend who is himself a mathematician, it's not a novel about a boy who has Asperger's syndrome; it's a novel about a young mathematician who has some strange behavioral problems. And I think that's right."

In 2010, in an interview with The Independent, he was described as "now thoroughly irritated that the word Asperger's appeared on subsequent editions of the novel, because now everyone imagines that he is an expert and he keeps getting phone calls asking him to appear at lectures."

1. Is this a novel about Asperger's or about being different?
2. What sense do you make of the title? Why is it so euphemistic?
3. What is the role of mathematics in the novel? Prime numbers?
4. Christopher experiences the world quantitatively and logically. His teacher Mr. Jeavons tells him that he likes math because it's safe. But
Christopher’s explanation of the Monty Hall problem gives the reader more insight into why he likes math. Does Mr. Jeavons underestimate the complexity of Christopher’s mind and his responses to intellectual stimulation? Does Siobhan understand Christopher better than Mr. Jeavons?

5. "The world is full of obvious things which nobody by chance ever observes" [p. 73] Christopher goes in the garden and describes it in great detail (pp 67-69). Although description in writing is critical, how does Christopher use description? What is there? What is missing?

6. Consider what Christopher says about metaphors and lies and their relationship to novels [pp. 14–20]. Why is lying such an alien concept to him? In his antipathy to lies, Christopher decides not to write a novel, but a book in which "everything I have written . . . is true" [p. 20]. Why do "normal" human beings in the novel, like Christopher's parents, find lies so indispensable? Why is the idea of truth so central to Christopher's narration?

7. Christopher’s parents, with their affairs, their arguments, and their passionate rages, are clearly in the grip of emotions they themselves can't fully understand or control. How, in juxtaposition to Christopher's in comprehension of the passions that drive other people, is his family situation particularly ironic?

8. Mark Haddon has said of *The Curious Incident*, "It's not just a book about disability. Obviously, on some level it is, but on another level . . . it's a book about books, about what you can do with words and what it means to communicate with someone in a book. Here's a character whom if you met him in real life you'd never, ever get inside his head. Yet something magical happens when you write a novel about him. You slip inside his head, and it seems like the most natural thing in the world" [http://www.powells.com/authors/haddon.html]. Is a large part of the achievement of this novel precisely this—that Haddon has created a door into a kind of mind his readers would not have access to in real life?


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