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The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time (2004) by Mark Haddon. New York: Vintage Contemporaries

Review by Stephe McCumbee University of North Carolina, Charlotte

In his unique book, novelist Mark Haddon has created a fictional case study of a twice exceptional student. The story's narrator and central character is 15 year-old Christopher John Francis Boone, a student classified as both gifted and autistic. In this story, Haddon grants the reader an inner portal to Christopher's thoughts, fears, inadequacies and sheer genius. It is through his portrayal of Christopher that the reader experiences the emotional state of a gifted child struggling with autism.

If you are an avid reader of the Sherlock Holmes mysteries, you will find *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* a most interesting book. Christopher is a very intelligent child somewhat reminiscent of a modern day Albert Einstein. From the first page, the book captivates readers with the mystery surrounding Mrs. Shear's dog, Wellington. On one of his frequent midnight strolls, Christopher stumbles upon Wellington who has been stabbed to death with a garden fork. As he checks to see if Wellington is alive, Mrs. Shears sees Christopher holding her dog. Mrs. Shears believes Christopher to be the killer and has the police arrest him. Once Christopher is released from jail he begins his search for the killer in order to clear his name.

As the plot progresses, the reader begins envisioning Christopher as an extraordinary adolescent. He is determined to solve the mystery in contradiction to his father's warnings of his continued exploration. Christopher goes to extreme lengths to pursue the killer, including running away from home, moving to London and stealing his father's wallet. This type of obsessive behavior is typical of gifted adolescents with giftedness often being accompanied by Obsessive Compulsive Disorder.

This book is a "great read" and also relevant to parents and educators of gifted students. Gifted students are unique in their preference for solving complex problems in a similar vein to Christopher's. It is the hopes of many that such literature will fall into the hands of other gifted students, allowing them to see that they are not alone in their perceptions of life. Reading realistic fiction can be therapeutic to the gifted population. This is because oftentimes, gifted students are grouped heterogeneously throughout the school day. This type of grouping separates them from students of similar mental abilities. Reading this genre allows gifted students to find companionship with characters that share their passion for learning. Understanding that other children think and feel the way they do will help gifted children meet their maximum potential. It is important for their teachers and parents to provide access to literature that will enable them to build a positive self-concept.

If you want to find out who murdered Wellington and how the mystery unfolds, you simply need to take that midnight stroll through the pages of *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*. You'll be glad you did!

From *Heroes of Giftedness* (2009). Manassas, VA: Gifted Education Press:

Judith Jamison – Artistic Director and Choreographer, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater

Michael Walters Center for the Study of the Humanities in the Schools

Jamison was born in Philadelphia in 1943 and grew up in a racially mixed working class neighborhood. She was an energetic baby, always wearing her parents out. Her curiosity was exhibited at a young age by her constant questions – “Why? Why? Why?” Ms. Jamison had loving and cultured parents who were interested in her educational progress and talent development. Both parents liked classical music, art and the theater. They encouraged their children in these areas by taking them to concerts and performances. In addition, Philadelphia had many cultural centers that encouraged her development as a dancer beginning at six years.

While attending public school she received dance instruction at the Judimar School of Dance under the tutelage of the director, Marion Cuyjet. While she was studying dance as a young girl, she met the dancer, Pearl Primus, who integrated concepts from African dance into the American modern dance movement. At age 15, Ms. Jamison enrolled at Fiske University in Nashville, Tennessee but did not graduate because she had a far more intense and broader approach to dancing. After she left Fiske she returned to Philadelphia and became a member of the Philadelphia Dance Academy. While at this academy, she took a special class with a guest teacher, Agnes de

Mille, who was one of the leading choreographers in the United States. Even though Ms. Jamison had an unsuccessful audition in 1965 for a role in a Harry Belafonte television show, she attracted Alvin Ailey's attention.

Ailey was emerging as a foremost choreographer. He gave Ms. Jamison the opportunity to become the signature performer for his dance creations which combined her physical strengths and the expression of a wide range of emotions. In 1980 she left Ailey's dance company to appear on Broadway with Gregory Hines in *Sophisticated Ladies*, a tribute to Duke Ellington's musical genius. Also, during this period she performed with Mikhail Baryshnikov and Ailey's dance company in another musical tribute to Duke Ellington – *Pas de Duke*.

After Alvin Ailey's premature death in 1989, she became the director of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. During this period of time, she also helped create a Bachelor of Fine Arts program at Fordham University. Her autobiography, *Dancing Spirit* (1993), is an expression of courage and heroism as a gifted performer and creator. Judith Jamison's career clearly shows the influence of family and mentors on gifted individuals – Pearl Primus, Agnes de Mille, Alvin Ailey, Gregory Hines and Mikhail Baryshnikov.

Autobiography:

Jamison, Judith (1993). **Dancing Spirit**. New York: Doubleday.

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater- http://www.alvinailey.org/page.php?p=art_d&v=56

Free to Dance – Biographies- <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/freetodance/biographies/jamison.html>

Wikipedia- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judith_Jamison

“My father's hands, rough from work, were gentle when he taught me how to play the piano. His long, tapered fingers, callused from wood and metal carpentry, brought an exquisite touch to Rachmaninoff, one of his favorite composers. I would arch my hands over the keyboard as he placed my fingers on the notes, the piano lamp lighting us softly.

“My father taught me work and beauty, the lessons of his hands. Deep within, I've always felt that complement of opposites: body and soul, solitude and companionship, and in the dance studio, contraction and release, rise and fall.” From **Dancing Spirit** (1993) by Judith Jamison, p. 1.

“As a teenager I was so impressed with Leonard Bernstein's Young People's Concerts. I thought he was the most extraordinary conductor because of his style. His entire body *danced* so that the music moved the way he wanted it to move. I appreciated his lushness and I'd rather hear that than another conductor's abrupt coolness.

“If I turned the music off, and just watched him, he was dancing. When I turned the music back on, what he was doing with his body was being translated into the music. If you look at a dancer in silence, his or her body will be the music. If you turn the music on, that body will be an extension of what you're hearing. I was very impressed that Leonard Bernstein made music accessible.” From **Dancing Spirit** (1993) by Judith Jamison, pp. 40-41.

