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**Handout 35: ‘Before’ and ‘after’ texts for staff training (English and General)**

**Before: Social worker report on Christopher (main character in ‘The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time’) before the Talk-for-Writing approach – no exemplar text used)**

*Christopher is a very intelligent and logical young man. He is also extremely bright. Because of his disability, he finds it hard to communicate or chat. But he is quite clever so he will be able to learn, like he already has.  
 Christopher’s relationship with his father is quite unique. They are very understanding of each other. Father has grown used to Christopher and never gets too angry, unless Christopher steps out of line. However, father has quite a short temper.  
 Christopher’s relationship with his mother is quite different to that of his father’s. Christopher doesn’t really feel any emotion and he talks about her quite a lot. I don’t think he knows what he feels about his mum.  
 I think Christopher should stay at his dad’s but he should be told that his mum isn’t actually dead so that he can visit her and stay with her sometimes. If he stays with her he will get told by her why she left and if he gets shown the letters and given an explanation then I think it will do him some good. However, I think his mother should take some responsibility and maybe get some training on how to care for Christopher.* ***– Year 9 Student A***

**After: Book review on ‘The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time’ after the Talk-for-Writing approach – using an exemplar text to support writing**

*In modern day Britain, the harsh reality of life is often shielded from young people with disabilities. This is mostly the case in this wonderful book. This book acts not only as a pleasurable read but as a sort of campaign. It opens your eyes as to how dismissive and ignorant one can be in everyday situations. A wonderful insight into the human mind, Haddon keeps you flying high right to the end.  
 Haddon’s novel tells of a fifteen-year-old boy named Christopher, who suffers from Asperger’s Syndrome. He lives in the bubble of a well-organised life until he finds the dog of one of his neighbours in their front garden. Christopher’s bubble is instantly popped and his life is thrown into many twists and turns. Shocks for the reader come in their dozens and hit the reader straight on. The ups and downs in Christopher’s life throughout the course of this book play a main role in the plot.  
 Haddon’s choice to have the story narrated by Christopher may not seem an appropriate choice but it is truly effective and engaging. If the story was told from a third person point of view, then the reader wouldn’t be able to develop a sort of understanding of Christopher. His innocence, and knowledge of maths, the outside world and minutiae of everyday life is portrayed in an extremely insightful and personal account.  
 As well as Christopher, characters who are vital to the story are Ed Boone, Christopher’s dad and boiler maintenance worker; Mrs Shears, neighbour of the Boones, whose dog is murdered; and Judy Boone, Christopher’s mum, who comes as a shock to both the reader and Christopher.  
 Haddon has worked with children who suffer from Autism and Asperger’s throughout his life. This experience shows in his writing. Without this experience or inspiration, we wouldn’t have been given such a fine read.  
 The winner of the Whitbread Book of the Year, the Guardian Children’s Fiction Prize and the South Bank Show Book Award, ‘The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time’ is a great achievement. To say that this book is a great page-turner would be an understatement.* ***– Year 9 Student A.***

(Examples courtesy of Andy Breckenridge, English teacher, Blatchington Mill School, Brighton)