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The Curious Incident of the DOG in the Night-Time



BASED ON THE NOVEL BY
MARK HADDON
ADAPTED BY SIMON STEPHENS

March 24 - April 2, 2023
TPAC'S ANDREW JOHNSON THEATRE
NASHVILLEREP.ORG | 615-782-4040



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BASED ON THE NOVEL BY
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DIRECTED BY
Micah-Shane Brewer



NASHVILLE
REPERTORY
THEATRE

STUDY GUIDE

By Mike Sallee Jr



Director's Notes²

When Mark Haddon wrote *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, he did not set out to write a novel about a boy with a disability. He wrote about a boy who is a “mathematician with some behavioral difficulties.” The play and the novel both refrain from identifying Christopher as a young man with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), although his behavioral patterns imply strong connections to ASD - most likely Asperger’s Syndrome. However, this is not a play about ASD. This is a play about Christopher, and his story is a story about difference, about being an outsider and seeing the world in a revealing and also surprising way.



It’s a play about understanding. And love. And fear.

Ok, I’m going to tell you a secret. It’s a play about ALL OF US.

I imagine each one of us has at least one unique or unusual quirk about our personalities. I sometimes find myself completing my own mental gymnastics when dealing with an issue. I have my own coping mechanisms, and I imagine you do as well. I also know that I’m drawn to stories about people who are misunderstood and have difficulty connecting with others.

The term “spectrum” is used synonymously with ASD. One definition of spectrum is “a range of different positions, opinions, etc. between two extreme points.” I think we’re all on a spectrum of sorts. It’s easy to fall into the habit of labelling what is “normal” and “abnormal,” or what is “accepted behavior” or “unusual behavior.”

However, we can empathize with people more when we learn to see the way they process the world. In this specific case, we directly confront how the character of Christopher experiences his world, and how the characters intimately tied to Christopher are impacted by his experience.

Mark Haddon wrote “labels tell us very little about the person who has been labelled and a lot about the people doing the labelling.” If you want to find out who someone is, just ask them.

It’s also a meditation on the importance (and difficulty) of being honest and truthful. Is it ever kind to lie? Is it ever cruel to tell the truth?

The
Curious
Incident of the
DOG in the
Night-Time

Christopher writes that “a metaphor means carrying something from one place to another.” This show is a metaphor for anyone encountering fears - how we face our fears and push through them anyway.

I hope you’re able to see the world through Christopher’s eyes today, and in turn, I hope the people you’re close to see you and hear you. That’s all we really want in life, isn’t it? To be understood.
I hope you have that.

Micah-Shane Brewer
Director

CAST BREAKDOWN



List of Suspects

Ben Friesen

as Christopher Boone

Nat McIntyre

as Ed Boone

Lauren Berst

as Judy Boone

Sejal Mehta

as Siobhan

Kristine Chandler Kim

Eric D. Pasto-Crosby

List of Suspects

Wesley Paine

Dennis Elkins

JR Robles

Joy Pointe

Steven McCoy

*understudy for
Christopher Boone*

Katie Bruno

*understudy for
Judy Boone/Siobhan*



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The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time takes place in the year 1998 in and around the town of Swindon, England. The fifteen-year-old narrator of the story, Christopher John Francis Boone, discovers the slain body of his neighbor's poodle, Wellington, on the neighbor's front lawn one evening and sets out to uncover the murderer. His investigation is at times aided, and at other times hampered, by the mild form of autism he lives with. After Christopher hits a policeman in a misunderstanding at the scene of the crime, the police take Christopher into custody. They release Christopher with only a stern warning, under the condition that he promises to them and to his father not to look into the murder any further.

The Curious Incident of the DOG in the Night-Time

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SYNOPSIS

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Christopher chronicles his investigation in a book—the book we are reading—as part of a school assignment. Ignoring repeated warnings from his father, Christopher investigates the crime scene and conducts interviews with the residents of his block. He uncovers a more tangled plot than was first apparent when he discovers that his father and the owner of the slain dog, Mrs. Shears, had a romantic affair. He subsequently learns that their affair began in reaction to another relationship, one carried on between Mr. Shears and Christopher's mother, before she disappeared from Christopher's life.

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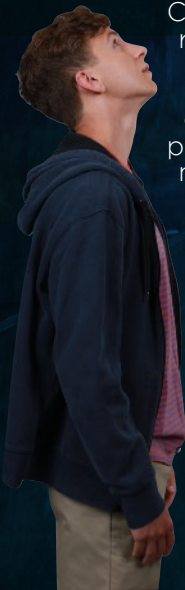
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At school, Christopher prepares for an A-level math exam that will enable him to attend a university, a feat no other child at his school has managed. He also continues to work on his book. Upon returning home one afternoon, Christopher accidentally leaves his book in plain view on the kitchen table. His father reads it, becomes angry, and confiscates it. Later, Christopher searches for the book and uncovers a series of letters, hidden in a shirt box in his father's closet, addressed to him from his supposedly dead mother. The letters chronicle a life that his mother has continued to lead with Mr. Shears in London and contain repeated requests for Christopher to respond. In shock, Christopher passes out in his bedroom surrounded by the evidence of his father's deception. When Father comes home and realizes what has happened, he breaks down in tears. He apologizes for his lies, explaining that he acted out of a desire to protect Christopher from the knowledge of his mother's abandonment of the family. Christopher's father also admits to killing Wellington after an argument with Mrs. Shears, his lover.

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Christopher, now terrified of his father and feeling he can no longer trust him, sneaks out of the house and travels to London to live with his mother. During a harrowing journey, he copes with and overcomes the social fears and limitations of his condition, dodges police, and almost gets hit by a train. His arrival at his mother's flat comes as a total surprise to her, as she had no idea that Christopher's father had been withholding her letters. Christopher settles in for a time at his mother and Mr. Shears's flat, but friction caused by his presence shortly results in his mother's decision to leave Mr. Shears to return to Swindon.

Christopher moves into a new apartment with his mother and begins to receive regular visits from his father. When Christopher's pet rat Toby dies, Christopher's father gives Christopher a puppy. At school, Christopher sits for his A-level math exam and receives an A grade, the best possible score. The novel ends with Christopher planning to take more A-level exams in physics and further math, and then attend a university in another town. He knows that he can do all of this because he solved the mystery of Wellington's murder, was brave enough to find his mother, and wrote the book that we have read.



MEET THE CREATORS

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MARK HADDON (Author)

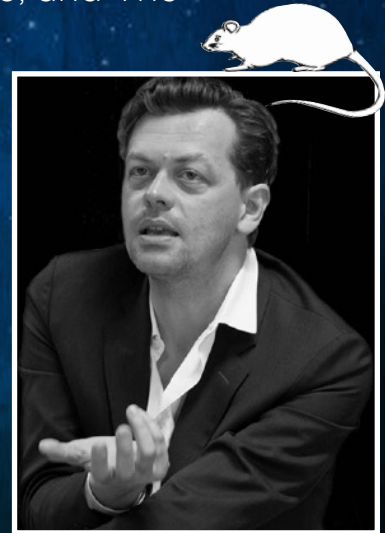
Mark Haddon's *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* was published in 2003. It was the inner of more than 17 literary awards, including prizes in Japan, Holland, and Italy, and was translated into 44 languages. *A Spot of Brother*, published in 2006, was also an international bestseller. His first work for the theatre, *Polar Bears*, was produced by the Danmar Warehouse in 2020. He has written 15 books for children, published his first collection of poetry in 2005 and is an illustrator and award-winning screenwriter. Mark Haddon's latest novels include: *The Red House*,

published in 2012, *The Pier Falls*, published in 2016, and *The Porpoise*, published in 2019.

SIMON STEPHENS (Playwright)

Simon Stephens has written many plays that have been translated into more than 30 languages and produced all over the world. He is a professor of playwriting at Manchester Metropolitan University, an associate playwright at the Royal Court Theatre, the artistic associate at the Lyric Hammersmith in London, and the Steep Associate Playwright at Steep Theatre in Chicago.

To call him an accomplished playwright would hardly sum up Stephens. His plays for theatre include the titles *Bluebird* (1998); *Hérons* (2001); *Port* (2002) which won a Pearson Award for Best New Play in 2001; *One Minute* (2003); *Christmas* (2004); *Country Music* (2004); *On the Shore of the Wide World* (2005) which won an Oliver Award for Best New Play in 2005; *Motortown* (2006); *Pornography* (2007); *Harper Regan* (2008); *Sea Wall* (2008); *Heaven* (2009); *Punk Rock* (2009); *The Trial of Ubu* (2010); *A Thousand Stars Explode in the Sky* (co-written with David Eldridge and Robert Holman; 2010); *Marine Parade* (co-written with Mark Eitzel; 2010); *T5* (2010); *Wastwater* (2011); *Morning* (2012); an adaptation of *A Doll's House* (2012); an adaptation of *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* (2012), which went on to win him a Tony for Best play in 2015; *Blindsided* (2014); and *Birdland* (2014). His reach goes beyond the stage to radio plays and short films. Today, he's still in workshops; continuing to create new innovative ways to tell his stories.



Let's Hear from the Playwright

For this production, Director/Artistic Director Micah-Shane Brewer was able to sit down with playwright Simon Stephens to learn more about what got him started and the two of them took a more in-depth look into the play.

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MSB: What made you want to pursue the life of a playwright? Was there a magical moment that clicked for you that said 'this is what I want to do with my life?'

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SS: Yeah, kind of actually. I always wanted to be a writer in some form or another. Ever since I was a small child; pre-adolescent child. The experience of writing made me feel less alone and more connected to the world...but I never wanted to be a playwright, the writer I wanted to be was a songwriter...it was when I went to York University in England where I studied a history degree. I did some gigs singing some of the songs that I wrote and it became palpably clear to me that I had a terrible singing voice...it was going to this barn on the grounds of York University called the Drama Barn...watching these stories unfold live in front of me, I remember really startling at the age of twenty or twenty-one, 'what if you took this art form, which was present and alive and visceral...and you synthesized it with the kind of stories I was growing up on...what if you took TAXI DRIVER and you were in the same room as Travis Bickle or you took BLUE VELVET and you were in the same room as Frank Booth.'..that bolt of energy has really sustained my writing for the subsequent 32 years.

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MSB: When you're approaching an adaptation such as 'Curious Incident...' how does your approach to playwrighting differ?

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SS: Two things; I write versions of plays that exist as plays in other languages. They're not really translations...I work from literal translations and create a version that isactable. I have made adaptation from novels...'Curious Incident...'was the first of those things. When I make a version, I'm only focussed on the language, but when I make an adaptation like Curious Incident..there are hardly any words invented...most of the words in the play are his (Mark Haddon) what I did was give them dramatic form...It struck me that there are some things that a novelist can do that a dramatist or a playwright can't do. A novelist can deal with thought and idea, memory, and reflection and observation. And a dramatist can only really deal with behavior.

MSB: If you were to adapt Curious incident of the Dog in the Night-Time today, would you do anything differently?

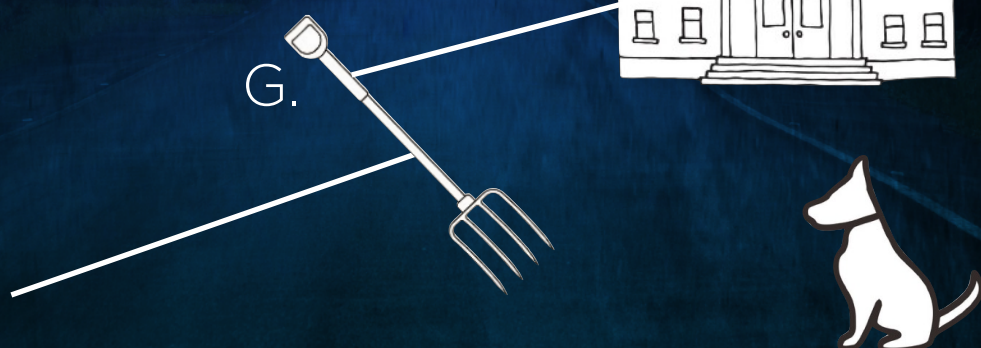
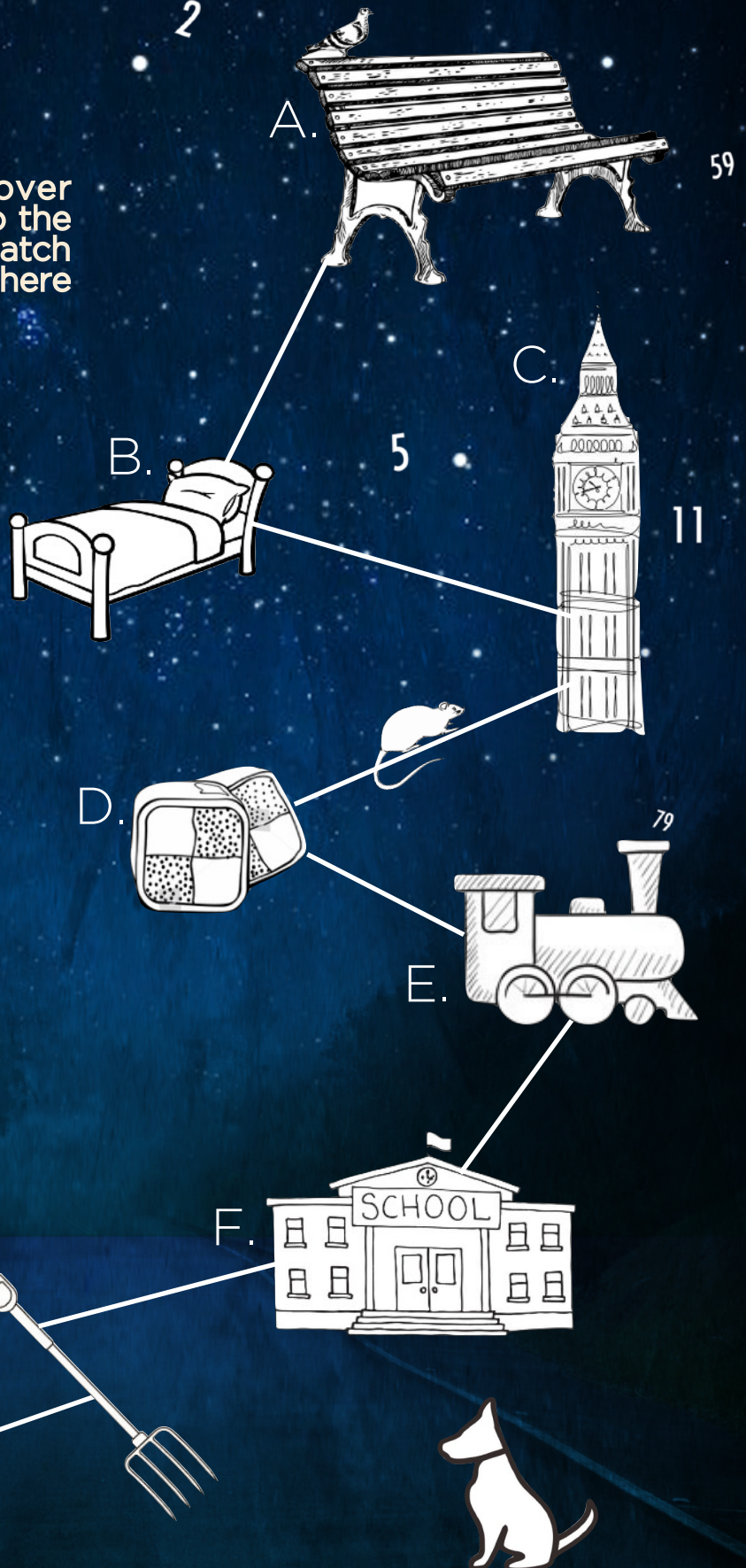
SS: I wrote it in 2009, it was produced in 2012. I was really proud when we revived it with the National Theatre last year (2022)...we needed to double the whole cast and we had to cast three Christopher's and all three Christopher's were neurodivergent actor's. I was really proud of that. In the original production, that wasn't the case. I wish, in the original production, we were more alert to the issues of representation of neurodiversity and more alert to the representation of gender and gender identity as well.

Listen to the [REP Chats](#) podcast for the Full Interview

Activity: Where's Christopher?

Christopher Boone travels all over Swindon, going from one location to the next encountering various things. Match the term with image to find out where he was or what he found.

- 29 GARDEN FORK 1. ___
- PYTHAGOREAN THEOREM 2. ___
- SWINDON TRAIN STATION 3. ___
- HOME 4. ___
- 67 LONDON 5. ___
- PARK 6. ___
- BATTENBERG CAKE 7. ___



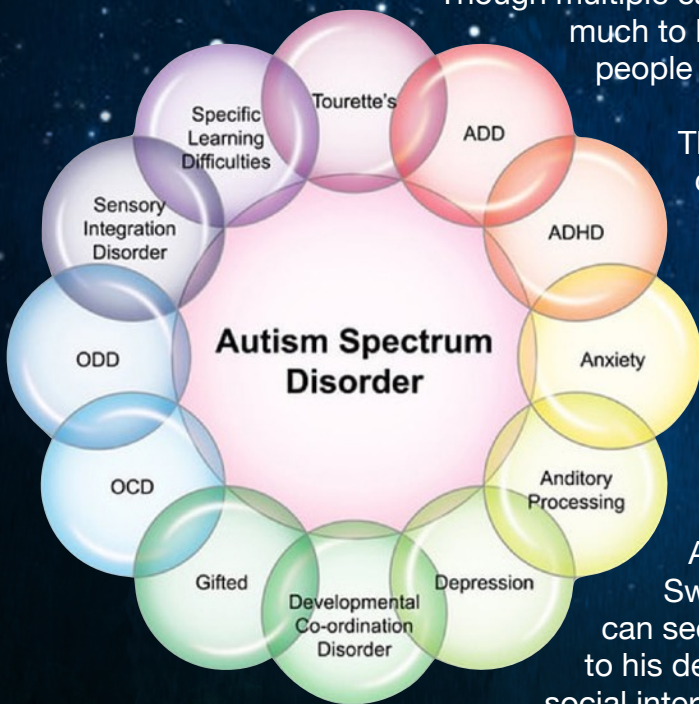
ASD or Autism Spectrum Disorder



CHRISTOPHER: "I'm the first person at my school to take an A-level from my school because it's a special school."

Throughout the play and book, we experience the qualities of Christopher that both Haddon and Stephens have used to display his place on what is referred to as the 'spectrum.' Autism Spectrum Disorder or ASD according to the CDC is a developmental disability caused by differences in the brain; some that have ASD have known differences displayed in a genetic condition, as others remain unknown.

Though multiple causes for ASD are believed to exist, we still have much to learn about the causes and how they impact people like Christopher.



The spectrum contains a wide variety of named conditions that people have been diagnosed with, as others who have yet to receive diagnosis could also be living with; ADD, ADHD, OCD, depression, anxiety, gifted, etc. The science behind studying these is not to find a cure or eliminate them, but to rather learn more about the impact this has on the individuals and how we can better understand and support their journey.

As Christopher navigates through the streets of Swindon unfolding one mystery after the other, we can see his condition be both a challenge and an ally to his detecting. People with ASD may have issues with social interaction and communication, and restricted or repetitive behaviors or interests. Bill Gates, who is undiagnosed but perceived to be on the spectrum, doesn't make eye contact when speaking to other people and rocks when sitting 'still'. People with ASD may also have different ways of learning, moving or paying attention. Christopher's obsession with prime number's in the story, can also be seen as an obsessive interest thought to be a condition of people on the spectrum.

Please note that the symptoms and conditions of those diagnosed and undiagnosed with ASD are not limited to this spectrum. These symptoms and conditions can exist in people outside of the spectrum. Learn more here: [Autism Spectrum Disorder, CDC](https://www.cdc.gov/autism/)



Activity: ASD, Understanding, and Responding

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In this activity, access and discuss the responses given to Christopher from the POLICEMAN. Discuss amongst your peers what went wrong in this response and how the response could have been better.

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Discussion Prompt:

Upon discovering Wellington dead in the Garden, Christopher is distraught kneeling beside his canine companion. Mrs. Shears, the dog's owner, says to Christopher to move away. In response, Christopher puts his hands over his ears. He closes his eyes. He rolls forward. He presses his forehead onto the ground. He starts groaning.

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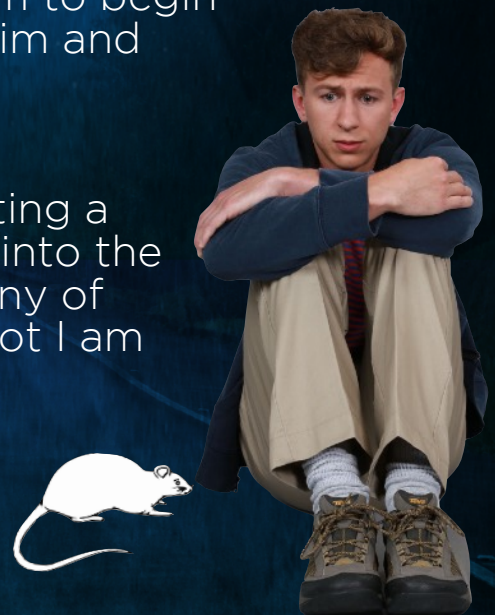
Vocal stimming, also known as auditory stimming, is self-stimulatory behavior. According to World Humanitarian Movement, this is used as a way for autistic individuals to regulate sensory and alleviate anxiety.

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The groaning stopped and began again when the POLICEMAN got frustrated with Christopher after questioning him about the dog causing him to begin groaning again, to the point of grabbing him and Christopher hitting him in response.

ACT ONE SCENE 1:

POLICEMAN: "I'm arresting you for assaulting a police officer. I strongly advise you to get into the back of the police car because if you try any of that monkey business again you stupid idiot I am going to seriously lose my shit. Is that understood?"



Activity: Proof the Work

Follow along with Christopher as he solves the answer on his 'maths A-level'. Proof the work, follow his process and see if you reach the same conclusion.

MATHS APPENDIX:

"Show that a triangle with sides that can be written in the form $n^2 + 1$, $n^2 - 1$, and $2n$ (where n is bigger than 1) is right-angled."

If the triangle is right-angled, one of its angles will be 90 degrees and will therefore follow Pythagoras' theorem.

$$a^2 + b^2 = c^2$$

If you draw squares outside the 3 sides of the right-angled triangle, then add up the area of the 2 smaller squares, this will be equal to the area of the larger square. This is only true if the triangle is right-angled.

The A-level math question is an algebraic formula for making right-angled triangles.

$n^2 + 1$ is the biggest number in this equation, which makes it the hypotenuse, which is the longest side of the triangle.

To find the area of a square you must multiply the length by the width.

So ... the area of this square is

$$2n \times 2n$$

Which equals $4n^2$

The area of this square is

$$(n^2 - 1) \times (n^2 - 1)$$

Which equals

$$n^4 - 2n^2 + 1$$

Now, if we add these two squares together ... This equals

$$n^4 + 2n^2 + 1$$

NOW ... We need to find the area of the square on the hypotenuse which is

$$(n^2 + 1) \times (n^2 + 1)$$

Which equals

$$n^4 + 2n^2 + 1$$

Which is the SAME TERM!!!!!!!!!!

So the area of the two small squares adds up to the area of the larger square. So all my squares fit together to satisfy Pythagoras' theorem. So the triangle is — RIGHT ANGLED!

