The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time by Mark Haddon: Analysed Textual Examples

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| Visual representation      | diagrams of faces<br>“took it out when [he] didn’t understand what someone was saying.” | - When Christopher is not able to understand the meaning of most of these diagrams, it reveals to the reader the arbitrary nature of the way that we communicate with our faces  
- We find this moment funny because a diagram could never accurately represent the intricacies of facial expression.                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Humour                     | “should be called a lie because a pig is not like a day and people do not have skeletons in their cupboards.” | - Once again Haddon has used humour, but the reason we find this funny is because Christopher’s deconstruction of metaphors is so logically sound.  
- Christopher’s argument is convincing to the audience, making them rethink the value of metaphors and revealing the absurdity of using them.                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Humour                     | “Alexander was doing what is called chatting where people say things to each other which aren’t questions and answers and aren’t connected.” | - From Christopher’s unique perspective, chatting seems pointless, and the way that he defamiliarises it allows us to enter into his mindset, and conceive of chatting as absurd.  
- Christopher’s comment also elucidates the value he places on connections between questions and answers, demonstrating the importance of meaningful conversation to him.                                                                                                            |
Haddon uses Christopher’s voice throughout The Curious Incident in order to reveal to the audience the absurdity of how we communicate, and the value of seeing the world differently. Christopher struggles to understand non-verbal communication, which Haddon visually represents through diagrams of faces. When Christopher is not able to understand the meaning of most of these diagrams, it reveals to the reader the arbitrary nature of the way that we communicate with our faces. Haddon uses humour when Christopher says that he kept a piece of paper with the diagrams of faces in his pocket and “took it out when [he] didn’t understand what someone was saying.” We find this moment funny because a diagram could never accurately represent the intricacies of facial expression. The humour is therefore able to illuminate to us the deep complexities of how we communicate, revealing how difficult this communication would be to understand for those to whom it does not come naturally. Not only does Christopher show us the absurdly complex way that we communicate non-verbally, but he also illuminates the confusing nature of figurative verbal language. Christopher argues that a metaphor “should not be called a lie because a pig is not like a day and people do not have skeletons in their cupboards.” Once again Haddon has used humour, but the reason we find this funny is because Christopher’s deconstruction of metaphors is so logically sound. Christopher’s argument is convincing to the audience, making them rethink the value of metaphors and revealing the absurdity of using them. In similar ways throughout the novel, Haddon defamiliarizes common events, making us reconsider how they are structured and how complex even incidental exchanges can be. Christopher tells us, “Alexander was doing what is called chatting where people say things to each other which aren’t questions and answers and aren’t connected.” From
Christopher's unique perspective, chatting seems pointless, and the way that he defamiliarises it allows us to enter into his mindset, and conceive of chatting as absurd. Christopher’s comment also elucidates the value he places on connections between questions and answers, demonstrating the importance of meaningful conversation to him. Thus, it is clear how Christopher not only demonstrates that the way we use language is absurd, but also illuminates the value of seeing the world through his unique perspective.
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