Text Analysis for Sound Designers – Senior Capstone
The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time

1. Who: The play is about Christopher Boone, a fifteen-year-old boy who investigates the death of Wellington, a neighbor's dog. Through this mystery he uncovers family truths and grows in independence. Major characters include Christopher, Ed, Judy, Siobhan, Mrs. Shears, Roger Shears, Mrs. Alexander, police officers, and ensemble roles. It is Christopher's story. The playwright is Simon Stephens, adapted from the novel by Mark Haddon.

2. What: The dramatic action begins as a mystery and becomes a journey of courage and self-discovery. Themes include truth, trust, family conflict, communication, resilience, independence, fear, empathy, and how society misunderstands difference. Critics often praise the play for theatrical innovation and emotional depth.

3. When: The play is set in contemporary time, roughly late 2000s to early 2010s. It moves through multiple days, mornings, afternoons, nights, and travel periods. Period matters because modern transportation, education systems, and communication are central. The stage adaptation premiered in 2012 and assumes modern theatrical technology.

4. Where: The play is set in England and shifts through homes, schools, neighborhoods, police spaces, stations, trains, and city environments. Frequent location changes make sound and transitions essential.

5. Why: We do this play now because it speaks to empathy, communication barriers, mental health, family relationships, and valuing perspectives different from our own.

6. How: The play blends realism with theatrical abstraction. While events are realistic, the audience experiences Christopher's internal world through movement, projection, rhythm, and sound. A hybrid style of realism and abstraction is strongest.

Questions for Director: Will we keep the original British setting or reset it? How realistic or symbolic should locations be? How intense should sensory overload moments feel? Should sound emphasize realism, psychology, or both?

Sound Use: Preshow: subtle pulses, train ambience, mathematical textures. Intermission: reflective atmospheric music. Postshow: hopeful textures.

Incidental Sound: family tension underscoring, internal stress, concentration pulses. Transitions: train movement, city ambience, tonal sweeps, rhythmic pulses. Spot Effects: barking dog, police radios, doors, footsteps, train brakes, ticket machines. Voice Overs: station announcements, layered crowd voices, internal repetition.

Referencing Script Locations – Act 1 and Act 2

Act 1: Garden opening scene uses near silence, distant wind, neighborhood ambience, faint dog bark, then low atmospheric tone. Police station uses phones, muffled voices, buzzing doors, footsteps, echoing room tone. Home scenes use refrigerator hum, clocks, household movement, silence for tension. School scenes use softer classroom ambience and calm structure. Neighborhood investigation uses footsteps, traffic, birds, lawn equipment, dogs.

Act 2: Swindon Train Station uses announcements, luggage, brakes, crowd murmurs, ticket machines, layered echoes building sensory overload. London Underground uses rumbles, beeps, rushing wind, metallic motion. Judy's flat uses smaller domestic urban ambience. Examination room reduces to near silence, pencil, paper, breath. Final scene uses hopeful underscore and expanding atmosphere.

Overall Design Approach: Two parallel sound worlds: External Reality – homes, streets, stations, schools. Christopher's Inner World – pulses, frequencies, repetition, heightened textures reflecting anxiety, logic, and emotional breakthroughs.