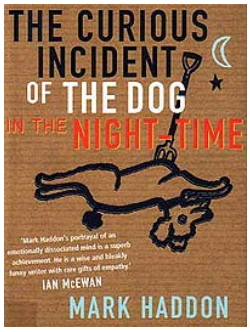
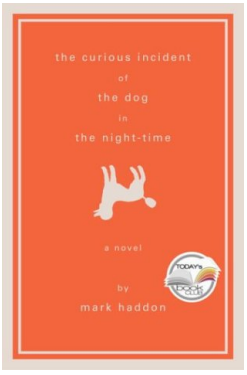
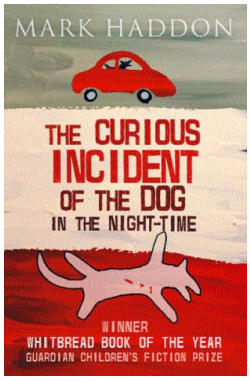
News flash







The 2003 Whitbread Book of the Year Award 2003 was won by Mark Haddon with his novel *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* (Jonathan Cape, 2002, ISBN 0224063782; a pocket edition by Red Fox, is expected in April). The announcement was made on 27 January in London. It is published in both an adult and a childrens version and heas won numerous childrens and teenage fiction awards. It is the sixth novel to win the Book of the Year Award since 1985.

Why mention this in this Newsletter? Well, it is the story of a fifteen years old boy that suffers from Asperger's Syndrome (social and emotional disfunction characterised by mild autistic behaviour), who has a fascination for mathematics. The book is written from the viewpoint of the boy following some strange but ardent rules. He tries to solve the mystery of who has murdered his neighbour's dog.

There are a lot of mathematical gimmics and puzzles too: chapters are numbered according to prime numbers, population dynamics for animals (with graphs), Conway's game of life (or a variant: Conway's Soldiers) and the Monty Hall problem of the three doors, etc. Nothing really mathematically challenging (some solutions are discussed in an appendix) but still an illustration of "mathematics are everywhere".

While the author brings a superb sketch of what kind of world an autistic boy is living in, unfortunately, it somehow also reinforces the stereotype that mathematics is part of that world and that mathematically gifted people are also social inadequate.

Paul Levrie