

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### Background of the Study

“Mystery is a genre of fiction in which a detective, either an amateur or a professional, solves a crime or a series of crime” (Wiehardt). Based on that definition, it is concluded that a novel can be called a mystery novel when its story revolves around a crime that one investigates and that person is not necessarily a professional. Thus, the investigator of the crime might be anyone. I choose to analyze a novel by Mark Haddon and another by Cammie McGovern, which both talk about murder. Besides its genre, another similarity between these two novels is that they involve children who suffer from autism syndrome.

Mark Haddon’s *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time* is undoubtedly considered a breath-taking novel. Appearing as a journal of Christopher, a fifteen-year-old boy with Asperger syndrome who deals with murder mystery, this novel has won no less than twelve prizes and awards, making it the most outstanding work of Haddon’s so far. This novel has interested many children and adults, “People are passionate about its wit, its brilliance and its humane insight into the milder forms

of autism” (Craig). Another thing that makes this novel interesting is the way Christopher delivers his story which turns this novel into an “emotional roller-coaster” (Weich), despite his own incapability in understanding human feelings and emotions.

Mark Haddon is an English author, poet, painter, illustrator, and cartoonist. Since 1987, he has published many children’s books and also novels which have gained him many prestigious awards and prizes. His works have contributed many fresh injections to the literary world, such as his poem collection and children’s books, not to mention his phenomenal novels. It is stated in [contemporarywriters.com](http://contemporarywriters.com) that “Haddon’s achievement is to have created something entirely new” (Holcombe).

A story of a murder investigation involving a boy with autism can also be found in *Eye Contact*, written by Cammie McGovern. This novel amuses the reader with a murder story involving a nine-year-old autistic Adam, who becomes the key witness. The reader will find it thrilling to follow the investigation of the murder and be touched by the family drama in the characters’ lives. It is stated in “Eye Contact Review” that “*Eye Contact* is a beautifully written, page-turning novel that will appeal to both mystery lovers and those who favor family dramas” (McQuay).

The author, Cammie McGovern is an American author who has published three novels since 2002, and all have received numerous positive criticisms and reviews. Her contribution to literature is proven by the many prizes and awards she has won for her short stories which have been published in several magazines. She is even compared to the famous thriller author, Jodi Picoult. It is stated in a review on

her work, “Cammie McGovern is going to give Jodi Picoult a run for her money” (“Eye Contact”).

I choose to analyze the narrative technique of the two novels, because I find it interesting to discuss. Although both are mystery novels, the success of the story does not merely depend on the plot, but also on the narrative technique used. The authors use different narrative techniques in writing their mystery novels. Narrative technique is a way chosen by a writer to tell a story for the purpose of giving the reader certain effects the writer wants them to reach (Eastman 31). There are four elements of narrative technique: point of view, time and tempo, style, and distance (Eastman 31-56). The complete theory of narrative technique will be explained in Chapter Two.

Mark Haddon’s *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time* is worth analyzing since “The hook, the plot - is significantly better than *good*, but it's the irresistible voice of Mark Haddon's young narrator, Christopher Boone, that elevates this literary debut to fantastic heights” (Weich). The narrative technique used in Cammie McGovern’s *Eye Contact* is also worth analyzing since the author not only uses the main character Adam, but also digs into other characters’ thoughts in revealing the mystery. In other words, the reader will find it less difficult to follow the flow of the story and to understand the whole situation through the clues given by Adam and the other characters. In this case, the characters are closely connected to the point of view used by the author.

### **Statement of the Problem**

1. What are the narrative techniques the authors use in *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time* and *Eye Contact*?
2. What are the effects of each narrative technique used on the readers?

### **Purpose of the Study**

Based on the statements of the problem that have been mentioned, the purposes of the study are:

1. to show the narrative technique used in *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time* and *Eye Contact*.
2. to show the effects achieved through the use of each narrative technique.

### **Method of Research**

I use library research for my thesis. First I read *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time* and *Eye Contact* as the primary texts. Second, I also read a couple of books and compile some data from the Internet so as to support my analysis of the narrative technique used in the novels. Finally, I draw some conclusions from my analysis.

### **Organization of the Thesis**

This thesis consists of five chapters, preceded by Acknowledgments, Table of Contents, and Abstract. The first chapter is Introduction, which consists of Background of the Study, Statement of the Problem, Purpose of the Study, Method of

Research, and Organization of the Thesis. The second chapter contains the theory on narrative technique. Then, the third chapter is the analysis of the narrative technique in Mark Haddon's *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time*. The fourth chapter is the analysis of the narrative technique in Cammie McGovern's *Eye Contact*. The fifth chapter is Conclusion, followed by the bibliography and the appendices, which contain the synopsis of the novels and the biography of the authors.