

# **Saccades Project**

## **Introduction**

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The first I heard of saccades was this past May, reading Mark Haddon’s novel, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, narrated by Christopher Boone, a fifteen-year-old English boy with Asperger’s Syndrome. It’s a brief description, but at one point, he says, “You don’t notice that you’re blind during saccades because your brain fills in the screen in your head to make it seem like you’re looking out of two little windows in your head. And you don’t notice that words have changed on another part of the page because your mind fills in a picture of things you’re not looking at at that moment.” He’s a fantastic character, Christopher Boone, and he’s got such an incredible voice—so brilliant, yet plainspoken, I learned more about math from him than I ever did in school, but anyhow. What intrigued me about saccades was the relationship between sight and sound, its regressions, and most of all, the narrative possibilities. Of course, the first place I turned, looking for more information, was the Internet, and a few days later, I began writing this story about a fifteen-year-old American girl, living online.

The “Comprehensive Outline,” available here, in a PDF file, is one hundred pages long. The second file, the “Trailer,” is ten pages long, and serves as a provocation: really, it’s only intended to provide something that can be read onscreen in order to give readers a feel for the material, before they download the outline. It’s a trailer, yes, but in text.

Now, in terms of the structure of this outline, there were a few things I wanted to work with. To begin, I wanted a first-person narrative in keeping with the way I write naturally, which is primarily through dialogue and repetition. Second, I wanted an elliptical narrative so that the story would begin and end at the same point in time. Third, I wanted to utilize one of the most distinguishing characteristics of the online reading experience, reverse chronology. That is, when one reads a blog, for example, the most

recent post is at the top of the page, so, when reading down the page, one is actually reading a story in reverse. Since this novel is largely about technology and the Internet, I wanted to incorporate that basic forward-is-backward composition.

Lastly, returning to the definition of saccades, the way I see it, if words are not fixed in a sentence, sentences aren't fixed either, and there's room to play, regardless of chronological order. What's more, additional characters can be written into the story at any time—just because a character doesn't appear in the attached outline, doesn't mean they aren't there. For now, though, the book's main characters are: Thea Denny; her eighteen-year-old boyfriend, Cameron "Cam" Conlon; Renee Denny, Thea's mother; Detective Knox; FBI Special Agent Foley; Melody Knox, Detective Knox's teenage daughter; Heather Knox, Detective Knox's wife and Melody Knox's mother; Karen Conlon, Cam's mother; and Raymond, Renee Denny's boyfriend.

I have a more defined structure in mind for the final book, but for this outline, I just wanted to weave these threads into a simple, loose narrative that can easily adapt to all types of information over the course of the next year. That's the goal, at least, but please see for yourself. Thank you very much.

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