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Wisdom from a Lost Friend to a New Friend

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Murphy, Veronica, "Wisdom from a Lost Friend to a New Friend" (2013). *Common Reading Essay Contest Winners*. 6.

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Veronica Murphy

Wisdom from a Lost Friend to a New Friend

Dear Christopher,

Hello, my friend. My name is Veronica Murphy. I read your murder mystery, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*. I found your need for exact details, truthful answers, and facts and formulas to solve life's big questions, such as loss, to be very relatable. I also struggle with accepting unanswerable questions and unsolvable problems. You stated that life was difficult to figure out because, like prime numbers, it has the potential to be "very logical but you could never work out the rules, even if you spent all your time thinking about them" (12). Just as you pointed out in your novel, it can be difficult for you to interpret people because they are always changing. Even though you may feel so, you are not alone in your struggle to figure life out. I wanted to write this letter to you because I, too, tried to map out exactly why I have been led along the path life has taken me on. We both needed definitive facts to explain tragedies.

From the start, you had difficulty relaying your emotions when you found Wellington dead in Mrs. Shears's front lawn. You never mentioned how you felt about finding the dead dog. Instead, you recalled that the policewoman had, "a little hole in her tights on her left ankle and a red scratch in the middle of the hole" and the police officer with, "a big orange leaf stuck to the bottom of his shoe" (6). Then you set off as a detective to solve the mystery of why someone would harm an innocent animal. Also, when you learned the truth about your mother, you set off to find answers because it was unsettling to have no exact reason as to why these horrible things happened. I had the same reaction last winter.

My friend Allie lost her battle with cancer this past December. At first, I thought I had heard the news in a foreign language. I could not process what was said to me. I remember being in a daze through all the chaos, walking from classroom to classroom trying to uncover the truth. Something must have gone wrong, because she was a strong fighter. She went to treatments; she kept up with school and lived her life to the fullest, so why did she die? I could make no sense of it. Because she was in and out of treatment so often, she had not been to school in a year. Not seeing her in the hallways left an eerie absence. Only a factual answer could fill it.

My friends were just as devastated by this tragedy. They walked around like shells of themselves, smiling behind hollow, saddened eyes. Like you, I had difficulty reading them while they wore those masks that shielded their emotions. And I was no different. I did not let others see the pain I felt. In vain, we all pretended we were "fine" and tried to have everything go back to "normal." We were kidding ourselves, because in reality there is no set "normalcy" to life. No fact that I discovered could help me feel better. I found that everyone copes with major tragedies like death in unique ways, which makes each person's state of "normalcy" completely different. People can create a state of normalcy to comfort them because it is the only defense they have.

Nothing about the situation was normal, and no matter how much I denied it, our lives were forever changed. Like you, Christopher, I had to learn that there was no formula, theorem or equation to solve the missing variables of this mystery. All I could do was accept that science and facts were limited in helping me understand life; faith helped me accept what I could not comprehend. This was right in front

of me all along, but I had refused to see it because I did not want to be powerless against what I could not control. This is why I found your story so intriguing – we are not so different after all.

We might have different ideas about life, why things die, and where they go afterwards, but I learned from this major loss that people, being curious creatures, want to feel that they have a grasp on life through concrete answers. We both searched for answers we could not find. Some things cannot be explained – like Wellington’s murder, your parents’ relationship, and Allie’s death. The only way to feel “normal” is to accept that some things, like the night sky, are a mystery to wonder at and believe there is another side.

Sincerely,

Veronica Murphy