

# Lit Class Tackles Social Justice in Canada

BY: LAUREN SCRATCH

On April 30th, Ms. Kennedy's lit class expanded their minds even further by attending the 2013 Social Justice Forum at the University of Windsor. This conference was full of discussion, centering around the main theme of democratic rights in

the age of austerity.

The students each attended two workshops, previously designated to them, and listened to speakers ranging from professors to leaders of various social justice organizations. These seminars explored an array of topics, encom-

passing issues such as aboriginal, animal, and LGBT rights. The main goal of the day was to establish discussion of these issues among young people, and to ensure that action is being put in place to counter these human rights violations.

As a result of

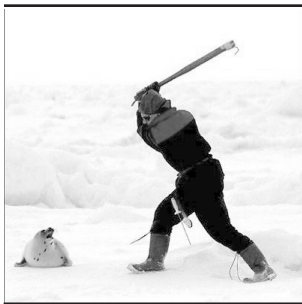
this forum, Ms. Kennedy's lit class has dedicated their final project to examining these issues even further through studying Canadian literature. The students were each provided with a novel that shared the same themes as those explored at the Social

Justice Forum, and were presented with the task to research their topics. Each book gave an accurate example of a social issue, and showed how the character, as well as society, responded to them in particularly Canadian ways. Other class at EDHS will tour

our classroom to gain a sense of the challenges we face in Canada and the steps we can take to change our world.

It is hoped that through these activities, students will gain a better perception of Canada, and acquire an enhanced sense of social awareness.

## Animal Rights in Canada



BY: ERIKA CURTIS & RACHEL DESJARDINS

Since 1892, laws concerning animal welfare have remained largely unchanged. As these laws are not up to date with the standards of today, one can wonder whether or not animals in Canada are receiving proper treatment. Seeing as they do not have a voice to speak for their rights, nor the government's protection, it raises question as to who will defend the otherwise helpless animals in our country.

Under the Animal Cruelty section of the Criminal Code of Canada, it is extremely difficult to prosecute an individual who commits animal cruelty. Oftentimes, those who abuse animals are excused, as long as the abuse is not considered "willful neglect." In order to charge the perpetrator, there must be adequate proof that the abuse inflicted was intentional, or else they cannot be punished, and thus, many individuals never face the consequences of their actions. However, if an individual is prosecuted for disobeying the law, the punishment

is imprisonment for a term lasting no longer than two years, and in more severe cases of cruelty, a fine of five thousand dollars exceeding a maximum fee of ten thousand dollars is charged.

With laws that do not protect our animals, it is easy to imagine the injustices that are occurring throughout Canada. A large issue concerning our pets is the issue of neglect in the form of failing to feed, provide shelter, and meet proper health standards as owners. Additionally, deliberate physical abuse is a problem, at both the hands of a human and through animal fighting, which under current law is not entirely illegal. It is not illegal to train an animal for fighting, nor is it to make money from such activity.

Similarly, our laws do not properly protect farm animals, as it is legal to house them in the poorest living conditions, where not only are they unable to move, they are injected with various growth hormones until they are ready to be slaughtered.

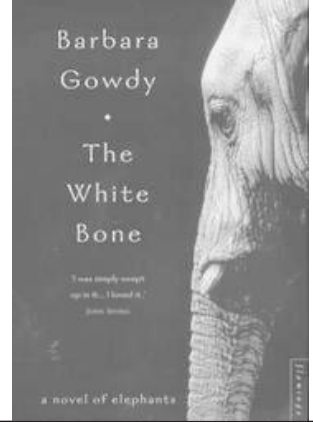
Likewise, animals in the wild are at risk. In Canada, it is not illegal to hunt seals. In fact, our seal hunt is the largest slaughter of marine animals in the world, and considered not only to be a recre-

ational sport, it is governmentally funded through tax dollars.

It is sad to accept that such injustices are taking place in the free, democratic society of Canada where we, as humans, enjoy many rights. If animals in our country are subject to such cruelty, imagine how animals in other, poorer countries are suffering.

In the novel, *The White Bone*, by Canadian author Barbara Gowdy, the viewpoint of a group of African elephants is explored. Through their eyes, one can see the injustice and cruelty that occurs as a result of poaching. If you are passionate about justice for animals, as well as the way that animals interpret the world, *The White Bone* is an excellent read with a unique and interesting plot.

In the end, it is important that as a nation, we defend the rights of our animals. Through petitions and letters written to the government, we can be the voice for the many helpless animals who will suffer without us.



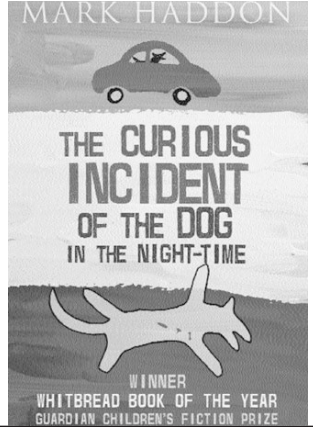
## Mental Health: A Stigma



BY: ZACH LACHANCE, LAUREN SCRATCH, & HANNAH SMITH

1 in 88 children have been diagnosed with autism, as of 2012, costing each family around an extra \$60 000 per year. There is currently no medical detection or cure for this mental condition, that affects a higher percentage of males as opposed to females. Despite this, autism research only receives 5% of total research funding.

Depictions of autism in the media include *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time* by Mark Haddon, the exploration of the inner psyche of a 15 year-old



diagnosed with autism. This story displays an account of the differences in perception for a person with autism, compared to someone without this condition. It goes in depth to show the daily struggles that comes with this debilitating diagnoses, such as the misunderstanding of emotion, or the need for everything to follow a certain order.

Like the protagonist of the novel, Christopher Boone, people with mental disorders such as autism, find it more difficult to function in our society. This leads to a stigma that affects all areas of their lives, and causes a misunderstanding of their motives and following actions.

It's important for people to take the time to know how to interact with people suffering from a mental condition. When interacting with someone that has a mental illness, it's important to remember:

- A mental illness

can be the same as any other chronic illness, such as diabetes, asthma, or certain types of cancer, and are usually treated throughout their entire life.

- People suffering from mental illnesses still desire to live a normal life and they are not as different from those without a condition as one might think.

- It is important to be patient and not force anything on them.

- Listen to what they need and try to provide it for them.

There are many other ways that you can help people suffering from mental illness. To learn more, check out the Canadian Mental Health Association website, talk to your guidance counsellor or ask a friend. There are many resources for those suffering from mental disorders and you should never feel alone. Reach out, and help will be found.