

A Wrinkle In Time

by Madeleine L'Engle

Classroom Favorites

Teacher's Guide by Laurie Rozakis, Ph.D.

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SYNOPSIS

Chap. 1 Meg Murry's twin brothers, Sandy and Dennys, happily fit into the community, but Meg and Charles Wallace, her youngest brother, are outsiders. Both are brilliant, but Charles Wallace has a reputation for being a moron, while Meg has difficulty in school, where she constantly fights with other children and her teachers. Furthermore, Meg's mother is a beautiful scientist, but Meg feels ugly and hates being different. At the heart of her problems is her father, who has mysteriously disappeared. Her mother assumes that he will return safely and soon, but Meg is not so sure at all.

During a fierce storm, Dr. Murry discovers a strange old woman, oddly dressed in mismatched clothing, has blown into their yard. She calls herself "Mrs. Whatsit," and Charles Wallace knows her. Mrs. Whatsit casually mentions that "There is such a thing as a tesseract." Dr. Murry is badly shaken by Mrs. Whatsit's comment.

Chap. 2 The next day, Dr. Murry explains that a tesseract is a concept, but does not go into detail. After school, Charles Wallace and Meg visit Mrs. Whatsit in the haunted house. They see Calvin O'Keefe, a friend of Meg's from school. As with Charles Wallace, Calvin has special powers. Charles Wallace explains that he and Calvin are fundamentally the same because of their special powers, but Meg has it hard because she is neither one thing nor the other. The three children arrive at the haunted house, but Mrs. Whatsit sends them home because it is "not yet time."

Chap. 3 At dinner, Calvin is charmed by the family's friendliness and love for each other. Meg explains that her father is a brilliant physicist who is on a secret mission. Charles Wallace announces that it's time to find their father. At the haunted house, the kids meet Mrs. Who and Mrs. Which. The three weird beings explain that the children are indeed going off to find and help Mr. Murry.

Chap. 4 Meg, Charles Wallace, Calvin, and the three supernatural beings "tesser" or "wrinkle" into space to find Dr. Murry. They stop on the planet Uriel, where Mrs. Whatsit transforms herself into a creature resembling a centaur and shows them a black cloud circling Earth. Meg understands that her quest involves a battle between good and evil.

Chap. 5 Mrs. Whatsit, Mrs. Who, and Mrs. Which explain how "tesser" time travel works. After narrowly avoiding accidental destruction on a two-dimensional planet, they arrive at a

gray planet in Orion's Belt. In the cave of the Happy Medium, Meg stares into a crystal ball and receives a further vision of the black cloud.

Chap. 6 Meg discovers that Mrs. Whatsit, in the form of a star, gave up her existence to push back the darkness. Meg also shows significant growth and compassion when, following a vision of Calvin's loveless home, she comforts Calvin by holding his hand. The children learn that Dr. Murry is being held on Camazotz, under the forces of the Dark. The three helpers do not accompany Meg, Charles Wallace, and Calvin, but they give the children advice. Meg gets her faults and Mrs. Who's eyeglasses, to be used only in moments of extreme peril. Meg confronts evil directly on Camazotz, a planet of extreme conformity.

Chap. 7 The children locate the building where Meg's father is held, but Charles Wallace falls under the hypnotic spell of the Man with Red Eyes, the spokesperson for the planet's evil ruler, IT. Charles Wallace cannot think for himself and wants Meg and Calvin to assimilate as well. They fight the evil with all their strength.

Chap. 8 Speaking through Charles Wallace, IT tries to get the children to give up their individuality. They continue to resist.

Chap. 9 Meg uses her special glasses and frees her father from a transparent column. They discover that IT is a disembodied brain. Meg uses her greatest fault, her stubbornness, to fight its pull. To save themselves from Charles Wallace's fate, Meg, her father, and Calvin hastily tesser to another planet. Charles Wallace is left behind.

Chap. 10 They arrive on the spring-like planet of Ixchel. Meg is cold and paralyzed, a condition symbolizing emotional and spiritual death.

Chap. 11 The planet is inhabited by strange-looking eyeless beasts. Aunt Beast, one of the creatures, tenderly treats Meg as an infant and nurses her back to physical and spiritual health. Meg is thus symbolically reborn as a person who understands and accepts herself.

Chap. 12 Meg is no longer angry that her father could not make everything instantly better. She also appreciates her own individuality, which caused her so much pain on Earth. Armed with her new self-knowledge, she agrees to go alone to Camazotz to rescue Charles Wallace. When she finally confronts IT, the disembodied brain, Meg realizes that she possesses one strength that IT lacks: love. By concentrating on her love, she breaks the spell holding Charles Wallace. Along with Calvin and their father, the siblings tesser back to Earth for a joyful reunion with their mother and twin brothers.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Born November 29, 1918, in New York, NY, Madeleine L'Engle was the only child of much older, creative parents. Speaking of her childhood, L'Engle explains in *The Summer of the Great-Grandmother*: "[My mother] was almost forty when I was born.... Once she and Father had had their long-awaited baby, I became a bone of contention between them. They disagreed completely on how I ought to be brought up. Father wanted a strict English childhood for me, and this is more or less what I got—nanny, governesses, supper on a tray in the nursery, dancing lessons, music lessons, skating lessons, art lessons."

When her father's health declined, L'Engle's parents moved to Switzerland and sent their daughter to boarding schools, where she found herself unpopular because of her shyness and slight limp. "I learned," L'Engle remembers, "to put on protective coloring in order to survive in an atmosphere which was alien, and I learned to concentrate. Because I was never alone... I learned to shut out the sound of the school and listen to the story or poem I was writing when I should have been doing school-work. The result of this early lesson in concentration is that I can write anywhere."

L'Engle used her unpleasant memories of boarding school as the basis for her first novel, written after she graduated from Smith College in 1941. The novel, *The Small Rain*, features Katherine Forrester, a boarding-school student who finds solace in her music and becomes increasingly dedicated to her art.

In 1946, L'Engle married Hugh Franklin, and they had two children, a son and a daughter. She set aside her writing career to raise her children. During the 1950s, L'Engle and her husband renovated an old New England farmhouse and operated a general store in the Connecticut countryside. L'Engle still wrote stories in her spare time, but she was not able to get them published.

As she would later explain in her first autobiographical work, *A Circle of Quiet* (1972): "During the long drag of years before our youngest child went to school, my love for my family and my need to write were in acute conflict. The problem was really that I put two things first. My husband and children came first. So did my writing." On her fortieth birthday, L'Engle renounced writing completely, but soon found that she was unable to stop. She explains, "I had to write. I had no choice in the matter. It was not up to me to say I would stop, because I could not. It didn't matter how small or inadequate my talent [was]. I still had to go on writing." However, her writing began to sell again.

Nonetheless, *A Wrinkle in Time* was rejected by more than 25 publishers in two years before it finally saw print. "Most objections," L'Engle recalls in an interview with *Children's Literature in Education*, "were that it would not be able to find an audience, that it was too difficult for children." The editor who accepted the novel told L'Engle not to be disappointed if it didn't do well and that they were publishing it because they loved it. The public loved the book, too.

According to L'Engle, writing *A Wrinkle in Time* was a mysterious process. "A writer of fantasy, fairy tale, or myth," she explains in *Horn Book*, "must inevitably discover that he is not writing out of his own knowledge or experience, but out of something both deeper and wider. I think that fantasy must possess the author and simply use him. I know that this is true of *A Wrinkle in Time*. I can't possibly tell you how I came to write it. It was simply a book I had to write. I had no choice. And it was only after it was written that I realized what some of it meant."

L'Engle went on to write three more books featuring the characters introduced in *A Wrinkle in Time*, creating the "Time Fantasy" series. In each of these books, she further develops the theme of love as a weapon against darkness.

The spirituality that serves as the foundation of many of L'Engle's books for young readers also appears throughout *Glimpses of Grace: Daily Thoughts and Reflections*, and in her many fictional works for adults. L'Engle's ability to entertain both young people and adults is shown by her continued popularity with readers. During the 1980s, a *Publishers Weekly* survey of the nation's booksellers ranked her in the top six best-selling children's authors; *American Bookseller* ranked L'Engle among the ten most popular children's authors in the country. That popularity has not waned: several of L'Engle's books are now considered classics.

Since 1966, L'Engle has been the librarian and writer-in-residence at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City.

CRITIC'S CORNER

As a writer, Madeleine L'Engle resists easy classification. She has successfully published plays, poems, essays, autobiographies, and novels for both children and adults. She is probably best known for *A Wrinkle in Time*, *A Wind in the Door*, *A Swiftly Tilting Planet*, and *Many Waters*. These novels combine elements of science fiction and fantasy with L'Engle's constant themes of Christian faith, family love, and moral responsibility.

Although the series has been criticized as being too convoluted for young readers, most critics praise the books. Michele Murry, writing in the *New York Times Book Review*, argues that "L'Engle mixes classical theology, contemporary family life, and futuristic science fiction to make a completely convincing tale."

A Wrinkle in Time has been justly celebrated as an outstanding young adult novel, winning the Newbery Medal in 1963, the Lewis Carroll Shelf Award in 1965, and was a runner-up for the Hans Christian Andersen Award in 1964. L'Engle has also been awarded the Adolescent Literature Assembly Award for Outstanding Contribution to Adolescent Literature, National Council of Teachers of English, 1986; ALAN Award, 1986; Kerlan Award, 1990; and the Margaret A. Edwards Award for lifetime achievement in young adult literature, 1998.

Writing in *A Critical History of Children's Literature*, Ruth Hill Viguers calls *A Wrinkle in Time* a "book that combines devices of fairy tales, overtones of fantasy, the philosophy of great lives, the visions of science, and the warmth of a good family story.... It is an exuberant book, original, vital, exciting. Funny ideas, fearful images, amazing characters, and beautiful concepts sweep through it. And it is full of truth. In the absence of any ambiguities or shades of gray, the book's central conflict is clearly and starkly dramatized so that readers of all ages can understand its themes and its messages."

L'ENGLE'S OTHER WORKS

- An Acceptable Time* (1989)
- And Both Were Young* (1949)
- And It Was Good: Reflections on Beginnings* (1983)
- The Anti-Muffins* (1981).
- Anytime Prayers* (1994)
- The Arm of the Starfish* (1965)
- Camilla Dickinson* (1951) published as *Camilla* (1965)
- Certain Women* (1992)

A Circle of Quiet (1972)
The Crosswicks Journal (1988)
A Cry Like a Bell (1987)
Dance in the Desert (1969)
Dare to Be Creative (1984)
Dragons in the Waters (1976)
Everyday Prayers (1974)
Friends for the Journey: Two Extraordinary Women Celebrate Friendships Made and Sustained through the Seasons of Life (1997) (With Shaw)
Glimpses of Grace: Daily Thoughts and Reflections (1996)
The Glorious Impossible (1990)
A House Like a Lotus (1984)
Ilsa (1946)
Intergalactic P.S. 3 (1970)
The Irrational Season (1977)
Ladder of Angels: Scenes from the Bible Illustrated by the Children of the World (1979)
Lines Scribbled on an Envelope and Other Poems (1969)
A Live Coal in the Sea (1996)
The Love Letters (1966)
Many Waters (1986)
Meet the Austins (1960)
The Moon by Night (1963)
The Other Side of the Sun (1971)
Penguins and Golden Calves: Icons and Idols (1996)
A Ring of Endless Light (1980)
The Rock That Is Higher: Story as Truth (1993)
A Severed Wasp (1982)
The Small Rain: A Novel (1945) published as *Prelude* (1968)
Sold Into Egypt: Joseph's Journey into Human Being (1989)
The Sphinx at Dawn: Two Stories (1982)
Spirit and Light: Essays in Historical Theology (1976) (Editor with William B. Green)
A Stone for a Pillow: Journeys with Jacob (1986)
The Summer of the Great-Grandmother (1974)
A Swiftly Tilting Planet (1978)
Trailing Clouds of Glory: Spiritual Values in Children's Books (1985) (With Avery Brooke)
Troubling a Star (1994)
Two Part Invention (1988)
The Twenty-Four Days before Christmas: An Austin Family Story (1964), (1984)
A Wind in the Door (1973)
A Winter's Love (1957)
Walking on Water: Reflections on Faith and Art (1980)
The Weather of the Heart (1978)
Wintersong: Seasonal Readings (1996) (With Luci Shaw)
A Wrinkle in Time (1962)
The Young Unicorns (1968)

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GENERAL OBJECTIVES

1. To understand the importance of individuality
2. To assess the effects of family on children's happiness
3. To recognize the themes of loyalty and determination
4. To appreciate the power of love
5. To understand the novel's title
6. To explore the ways love can be shown
7. To find examples of bravery and courage
8. To describe the novel's setting
9. To analyze highly unusual, eccentric characters
10. To see the different manifestations of evil

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1. To search for fulfillment and self-knowledge
2. To probe the clash of good and evil
3. To appreciate determination and stubbornness
4. To explore the power of art
5. To contrast conformity and individuality
6. To compare appearance and reality
7. To assess dependence and personal responsibility
8. To understand logic and love
9. To recognize different forms of redemption
10. To engage in a spiritual quest

LITERARY TERMS AND APPLICATIONS

For a better understanding of Madeleine L'Engle's style, present the following terms and applications to the novel:

allusion is a reference to a well-known place, event, person, work of art, or other work of literature. Allusions enrich a story or poem by suggesting powerful and exciting comparisons. Here, L'Engle makes numerous allusions, including a reference to the Cheshire Cat to link *A Wrinkle in Time* to Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*. She continues this allusion in Chapter 6 when she describes a "white-faced" man as "the white rabbit."

author's purpose is the author's goal in writing a selection.

Common purposes include to entertain, instruct, persuade, or describe. A selection may have more than one author's purpose, but one purpose is often the most important. L'Engle's primary purpose in *A Wrinkle in Time* is to entertain; her secondary purpose, to show the redemptive power of love.

description is a word picture of what something or someone is like. Description is made up of sensory details that help readers form pictures in their minds. *A Wrinkle in Time* is rich in descriptions such as this one of Calvin O'Keefe: "Tall he certainly was, and skinny. His bony wrists stuck out of the sleeves of his blue sweater; his worn corduroy trousers were three inches too short. He had orange hair that needed cutting and the appropriate freckles to go with it. His eyes were an oddly bright blue."

L'ENGLE'S USE OF SCIENCE FICTION

Science fiction is fantasy writing that tells about make-believe events that include science or technology. Often, science fiction is set in the future, on distant planets, or among alien races. *A Wrinkle in Time* is set on Earth as well as several imaginary planets, including the planet Uriel, where Mrs. Whatsit transforms herself into a creature resembling a centaur and shows the children a black cloud circling Earth. From there, the children visit Camazotz, a planet of extreme conformity. After their horrifying experience on Camazotz, Meg recovers among the aliens. These kind creatures are gray all over and lack eyes. L'Engle uses the genre of science fiction as a backdrop to present her realistic themes of love and individuality.

CROSS-CURRICULAR SOURCES

For additional reading on the themes and topics presented in this novel, consult the following sources.

Fiction

Richard Adams, *Watership Down*
Peter S. Beagle, *The Last Unicorn*
Lewis Carroll, *Alice in Wonderland*
Susan Cooper, *The Dark Is Rising*
Robert Heinlein, *Have Spacesuit, Will Travel*
Norton Juster, *The Phantom Tollbooth*
Annette Curtis Klause, *Alien Secrets*
Ursula K. Le Guin, *A Wizard of Earthsea*
C. S. Lewis, *The Chronicles of Narnia*
Lois Lowry, *The Giver*
Philip Pullman, *The Amber Spyglass* and *The Golden Compass*
J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, and *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*

Louis Sachar, *Holes*

J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*.

T. H. White; *The Once and Future King*

Nonfiction

John Clute, *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy*
Vincent Di Fate, *Infinite Worlds: The Fantastic Visions of Science Fiction*
Frank M. Robinson, *Science Fiction of the 20th Century: An Illustrated History*
Robert Silverberg, *Reflections and Refractions: Thoughts on Science-Fiction, Science, and Other Matters*

Internet

"Albert Einstein: Image and Impact":
<www.aip.org/history/einstein>

"Flying Dreams: Madeleine L'Engle":

<www.mindspring.com/~jlyoung/lengle.htm>

"Madeleine L'Engle: Faith During Adversity":

<www.frugalfun.com:80/l'engle.html>

"Madeleine L'Engle": <www.randomhouse.com/teachers/authors/leng.html>

"NASA for Kids": <www.nasa.gov/kids.html>

"Science Fiction Resource Guide":

<sflovers.rutgers.edu/SFRG/>

"A Wrinkle in Time Web Site": <www.soils.rutgers.edu/~kburnett/jerawrin/wrinkle.html>

Audiocassettes

Camilla

A Ring of Endless Light

The Summer of the Great-Grandmother

Videos/Films

The Adventures of Baron Munchausen

Clamshell

The Dark Crystal

Explorers

The Indian in the Cupboard

Labyrinth

The Neverending Story

The Neverending Story II

Return to Oz

The Rocketeer

Superman - The Movie

The Thief of Bagdad

Time Bandits

THEMES AND MOTIFS

A study of the central issues and situations in Madeleine L'Engle's *A Wrinkle in Time* should include these aspects:

Themes

- bravery
- conformity
- determination
- family love
- fear and terror
- friendship
- individuality
- innocence and experience
- loyalty
- terror

Motifs

- using your faults to advantage
- facing danger head-on
- believing in fantasy and mystery
- supporting your family
- welcoming others into the family
- showing compassion for the less fortunate
- love being able to conquer all
- self-sacrifice
- intelligence and common sense
- the importance of the imagination

MEANING STUDY

Below are words, phrases, sentences, or thought units that have particular meaning in the novel. Explain the meaning of each. Chapter and page numbers indicate the context from which the item is taken.

1. He reached up, pulled an apple off a gnarled limb, and handed it to Meg, then picked one for himself. (Chap. 3, p. 49)
(Before they begin their wild adventures through space and time, Calvin and Meg walk through Meg's backyard across the twins' vegetable garden and into the orchard. The area represents the Garden of Eden, as the children are in a state of prelapsarian innocence. As soon as they begin their journey, their childhood will symbolically end as they experience the true evil in the universe.)
2. "You don't know how lucky you are to be loved." (Chap. 3, p. 40)
(Abused and neglected by his alcoholic mother, Calvin feels reborn by the love in the Murry household. His speech foreshadows Meg's need to be reborn through love. It also foreshadows her success in using love to save Charles Wallace from the evil IT.)
3. "We tesser. Or you might say, we wrinkle." (Chap. 4, p. 62)
(Here, the title is explained, as a "wrinkle" in time is a way for people to speed through time and space. Mr. Murry, like the witches, can compress space and time and travel great distances in seconds — or less.)
4. "On Camazotz we are all happy because we are all alike. Differences create problems. You know that, don't you dear sister?" (Chap. 8, p. 140)
(Charles Wallace is full of intellectual arrogance. He believes that he can deliberately go into IT's mind and return unharmed. After he fails, Charles Wallace has glazed eyes that symbolize his lack of spiritual insight. His actions suggest that mindless conformity destroys the ability to love and that intelligence alone is not enough to secure individuality.)
5. Mrs. Whatsit had said: "Meg, I give you your faults." (Chap. 9, p. 159)
(Although Meg confronts IT alone, her three helpers give her words of encouragement that suggest that Meg needs the virtues of faith, hope, and charity. Because Meg must puzzle out the meaning of their words, these gifts test and develop her maturity.)
6. "We were sent here for something. And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose." (Chap. 10, p. 172)
(In an interview in the National Catholic Reporter, L'Engle commented that A Wrinkle in Time "was written in the terms of a modern world in which children know about brainwashing and the corruption of evil. It's good, solid science, but also it's good, solid theology. [It's] my rebuttal to the German theologians [who] attack God with their intellect on the assumption that the finite can comprehend the infinite, and I don't think that's possible.")
7. Good helps us, the stars help us, perhaps what you would call light helps us, love helps us. (Chap. 11, p. 186)
(Aunt Beast states the novel's theme: the power of love to overcome evil. Aunt Beast has demonstrated this theme as she tenderly nurses Meg back to health after her encounter with Evil.)
8. "We hold these truths to be self-evident!" (Chap. 9, p. 160)
(As she tries to withstand IT's mindless conformity, Meg draws on famous documents of freedom. Meg realizes that

freedom comes only through individuality, never through conformity.)

9. She looked toward her father and her confused anger was gone and she felt only love and pride. (Chap. 12, p. 195)
(Meg begins the novel consumed by self-hatred, but she grows into a character who loves both herself and others.)
10. And that was where IT made IT's fatal mistake, for as Meg said automatically, "Mrs. Whatsit loves me; that's what she told me, that she loves me," suddenly she knew. She knew! Love. (Chap. 12, p. 207)
(Meg realizes that she has love, the quality IT lacks. She also realizes that love is strong enough to free her brother. In asserting her individuality and her spiritual insight, Meg becomes the archetypal nurturing female hero. Without resorting to violence, she had freed her father; now she delivers her brother, bringing him back to life through her love.)

COMPREHENSION STUDY

Answer the following questions in your own words. There is not always a right answer. Your judgment is important and you should be ready to defend your answers by referring to passages in the book.

Questions 1-5 (Literal Level)

1. When and where does the story take place? Why is the setting significant to the plot?
(The story takes place on earth, in space, and on imaginary planets. The setting is important because it is a major clue that the novel is science fiction/fantasy writing that tells about make-believe events that include science or technology.)
2. Who are Meg's first three nonhuman helpers and what do they show her?
(They are Mrs. Whatsit, Mrs. Who, and Mrs. Which. They appear to her as eccentric old ladies, stereotypical witches. However, they perform the roles of spiritual guides, or of guardian angels and messengers of God. Like helper figures in fairy tales, these ladies bestow useful gifts and then withdraw so that the heroine can accomplish the final task alone. They offer insight and the voice of wisdom.)
3. Why does Calvin like being at the Murrays' home so much?
(Calvin's mother, an alcoholic, is overburdened by her large family and responsibilities. She does not notice if Calvin is home or not. As a result, Calvin revels in the warmth and love of the Murry household.)
4. What is IT?
(A quivering, pulsating, disembodied brain, IT is the cruel and merciless ruler of Camazotz. Appropriately, IT resides in a skull-like domed building and uses the building's powerful rhythms to make people abandon the rhythm of their own thoughts. IT rules a nightmare version of the world of conformity that Meg had desired on Earth.)
5. How does Meg change as the novel progresses?
(At first, Meg is excessively dependent on others. By the end of the novel, however, she thinks for herself and acts independently to rescue her brother from the clutches of IT. Meg becomes mature and self-reliant, which allows her to appreciate her individuality. She also gains emotional and spiritual strength.)

Questions 6-8 (Interpretative Level)

6. What does Charles Wallace represent?
(Whereas Meg represents the power of the heart, Charles Wallace, her five-year-old brother, represents the limitations of intellect.)
7. What lessons does Meg learn from her father?
(By admitting that he is fallible, Mr. Murry helps Meg recognize that parents cannot solve every problem. Next, by using phrases from the Bible that speak of being sent for a purpose, he indicates that true heroism sometimes requires setting aside individual goals.)
8. Who is Aunt Beast? What does Aunt Beast represent?
(Aunt Beast, the fourth helper, inhabits the planet Ixchel. She is a tall, gray creature with four arms that have waving tentacles on their ends. Her face has indentations instead of eyes. Aunt Beast quotes 2 Corinthians 4:18, explaining that creatures on Ixchel concentrate on unseen things because these are eternal. Aunt Beast thus indicates that Meg should ignore trivial things such as her appearance and instead concentrate on spiritual values.)

Questions 9 and 10 (Critical Level)

9. What does Meg's coldness on Ixchel symbolize?
(When she arrives on Ixchel, Meg is like a frozen stone statue, a condition symbolizing emotional coldness. After she is emotionally and spiritually reborn through Aunt Beast's love, she accepts herself as a loving individual.)
10. What do eyeglasses represent in the novel?
(References to seeing and glasses symbolize Meg's need to replace superficial vision with genuine insight into herself and others.)

Questions 11-13 (Creative Level)

11. Working with a small group of classmates, discuss some ways that you might have coped with Meg's situation had you been in her place.
12. Explain how Mrs. Whatsit, Mrs. Which, and Mrs. Who poke fun at the conventions of witches and the supernatural.

ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

Art and Music

1. Construct a diorama showing the Murrys' house. Include the yard and lab as well.
2. Draw the haunted house that Mrs. Who, Mrs. Whatsit, and Mrs. Witch inhabit before they begin their journey.
3. Select two key scenes in the novel, such as the scene where Meg is reunited with her father. Then select background music to enhance the scene's mood. Share your choice with the class and explain its significance.

History and Social Studies

1. Create a map showing the places where the Murrys have lived during their marriage.
2. Meg's father worked at Cape Canaveral. Create a display tracing the history of America's space program.
3. List five historical figures whom you believe represent the finest in human achievement, focusing on individuality, liberty, and human rights.
4. Write Meg's report on the imports and exports of Nicaragua.
5. Debate whether America should place more emphasis on the space program.
6. Create a newscast in which government officials welcome

Dr. Murry back to Earth and watch him share his discovery of new planets and evil forces.

Mathematics

Meg explains to Calvin that every ordinary fraction can be converted into another decimal fraction. In a speech, demonstrate this mathematical property to the class.

Language Arts

1. *A Wrinkle in Time* is the first in a "Time Fantasy" series of novels L'Engle wrote featuring the same characters. Read one of the other books in the series. Then compare and contrast it to *A Wrinkle in Time*, showing how they are the same and different.
2. Trace at least three Biblical allusions (references) in *A Wrinkle in Time*.
3. Explain how each of the planets Meg visits during her quest marks a stage in her personal development.
4. *A Wrinkle in Time* won the 1963 Newbery Medal. List at least ten other novels that have won this prestigious award. Then read one of the novels and review it.
5. Writing as Calvin, create several journal entries to describe your feelings about what has happened to you and the Murrys.
6. Recast one chapter in the novel from another character's point of view, such as Calvin's, Charles Wallace's, or Mrs. Murry's.

Science and Health

1. Both of Meg's parents have earned a Ph.D. Explain what "Ph.D." means and find out the requirements for earning a Ph.D. in biology, chemistry, or physics.
2. Using string, explain in your own words what a "tesseract" is and how it works.
3. Charles Wallace and Calvin believe they are something new and different because their genes have mutated or changed. Create a web page or poster showing the chromosomes in the human body.
4. Chart the planets and stars visible in your region in summer, spring, winter, and fall.
5. Most of the human characters in this novel have superior IQs. Find out what the term "IQ" means and how it is measured. Then make chart showing the range of human IQs.
6. Explain Einstein's theory that $E=mc^2$, which Meg cites in Chapter 3.

STUDENT INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES

1. Select at least five quotes that Mrs. Who shares with the children. Find the source of each quote and explain its meaning in your own words. Then find a famous quote that captures the novel's theme. Share your quote with the class and defend your choice.
2. Using scenes from the novel, create a mural that shows its main themes.
3. Analyze Madeleine L'Engle's writing style in this novel, focusing on word choice, sentence structure, figures of speech, and description.
4. In Chapter 4, Mrs. Who quotes the three witches in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*: "When shall we three meet again,/ In thunder, lightning, or in rain." Find the complete scene in *Macbeth* and work with a small group of students to perform it for the class.

5. Explain what the butterflies in Chapter 4 symbolize.

ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT

1. Make a character list and explain the strengths and flaws of each individual.
2. Imagine that you could give Meg, Charles Wallace, and Calvin a talisman, as the three witches do. List your gifts and explain their use and significance.
3. Rhythm becomes a symbol of conformity in this novel. Explain how rhythm can be a useful, desirable trait. For example, you may wish to demonstrate how you can use rhythm to help you remember difficult concepts in math and science.
4. Explain who the Man with Red Eyes is and what he represents in the novel.

ANSWER KEY

VOCABULARY TEST

- | | | | |
|------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. Q | 6. O | 11. M | 16. K |
| 2. J | 7. N | 12. A | 17. D |
| 3. H | 8. R | 13. P | 18. F |
| 4. T | 9. S | 14. G | 19. C |
| 5. I | 10. B | 15. E | 20. L |

COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Matching (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. I | 6. E |
| 2. F | 7. G |
| 3. H | 8. C |
| 4. A | 9. B |
| 5. D | 10. J |

Part II: True/False (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. T | 6. T |
| 2. T | 7. T |
| 3. F | 8. F |
| 4. F | 9. T |
| 5. F | 10. T |

Part III: Motivation (20 points)

1. she refuses to take the "happy medium" and make an effort to get along with others
2. they welcome him with love, in stark contrast to his own loveless family
3. help the children rescue their father from the evil of IT
4. they can understand the nature of the evil they will have to fight
5. of his pride and arrogance
6. they will be harshly punished if they do not conform
7. she expected him to save the day
8. she wants them to learn that they have the form of their lives but the content is completely in their hands
9. because she has matured enough to realize that she must take at last partial responsibility for her own life
10. tells Meg that Mrs. Whatsit hates her

Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Answers will vary.

COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Sentence Completion (20 points)

- | | |
|------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Charles Wallace | 6. eyeglasses |
| 2. beautiful scientist | 7. disembodied brain |
| 3. tessera | 8. bounce the ball |
| 4. haunted house | 9. crystal column |
| 5. centaur | 10. alone |

Part II: Matching (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. G | 6. C |
| 2. J | 7. I |
| 3. A | 8. H |
| 4. D | 9. B |
| 5. F | 10. E |

Part III: Identification (20 points)

1. Mrs. Who, Mrs. Whatsit, Mrs. Which represent celestial helpers, supernatural beings who guide Meg, Calvin, and Charles Wallace to save Dr. Murry from the clutches of pure evil.
2. According to the novel's theme, love is the greatest force in the universe. It is capable of defeating anything, even the evil of IT.
3. Eyeglasses symbolize the motif of blindness and vision. Before she comes to realize the power of love and self-sacrifice, Meg is "blind." After, she is able to "see" and become a mature person.
4. IT personifies evil, especially the evil of mindless conformity.
5. Aunt Beast symbolizes loving kindness as she tenderly nurses Meg back to health.

Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Answers will vary.

VOCABULARY TEST

Match each word on the left with its synonym on the right. Write the letter of your answer in the space provided.

- | | |
|------------------------------|------------------|
| _____ 1. emptiness | A. inexcusable |
| _____ 2. moan | B. sagely |
| _____ 3. hostile | C. corporeal |
| _____ 4. manner of walking | D. prodigious |
| _____ 5. official | E. tractable |
| _____ 6. understood meanings | F. tenacity |
| _____ 7. berate | G. defer |
| _____ 8. barring | H. antagonistic |
| _____ 9. to beg | I. authoritative |
| _____ 10. wisely | J. wail |
| _____ 11. distrustfully | K. snugly |
| _____ 12. unforgivable | L. bliss |
| _____ 13. raging | M. warily |
| _____ 14. put off | N. chide |
| _____ 15. docile | O. connotations |
| _____ 16. tightly | P. frenzied |
| _____ 17. immense | Q. void |
| _____ 18. perseverance | R. exclusive |
| _____ 19. of the body | S. wheedle |
| _____ 20. ecstasy | T. gait |

COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Matching (20 points)

Complete each of the following descriptions with a name from the list that follows. Place the letter of your answer in the blank provided at left.

- | | | |
|--------------|---------------------|------------------------------|
| A. Meg | E. Fortinbras | H. The Man with the Red Eyes |
| B. Dennys | F. the Happy Medium | I. IT |
| C. Calvin | G. Mrs. Which | J. Charles Wallace |
| D. Dr. Murry | | |

- ___ 1. a disembodied brain, the personification of evil
- ___ 2. the character who shows the children visions of their family on her crystal ball
- ___ 3. the creature who hypnotizes Charles Wallace
- ___ 4. the character who comes to realize that evil can be defeated through the power of love
- ___ 5. the character who cooks stew in her laboratory
- ___ 6. the Murrays' large dog
- ___ 7. the being who has trouble fully assuming human form
- ___ 8. the tall, redheaded athlete who accompanies Meg and Charles Wallace to save Mr. Murray
- ___ 9. Meg's athletic and easygoing brother, half a set of twins
- ___ 10. the sweet little boy who falls under ITs power

Part II: True/False (20 points)

Mark the following statements either **T** for true or **F** if any part is false.

- ___ 1. Since Charles Wallace seldom speaks when anyone is around, most people think he is below average in intelligence and has never learned to talk.
- ___ 2. Mrs. Whatsit dresses in layers and layers of garish clothing.
- ___ 3. Only Calvin has the ability to tesser through space and time.
- ___ 4. Meg's father left the family because he and Mrs. Murry had not been getting along well.
- ___ 5. Meg has her father's eyeglasses to use in moments of extreme peril.
- ___ 6. On Camazotz, conformity is stressed over all else.
- ___ 7. Meg discovers that Mrs. Whatsit, in the form of a star, gave up her existence to push back the evil Darkness.
- ___ 8. The kind eyeless creatures on Camazotz nurse Meg back to health after a bad tesser.
- ___ 9. Aunt Beast treats Meg with great love and kindness.
- ___ 10. Meg rescues her brother Charles Wallace from evil.

Part III: Motivation (20 points)

Complete each sentence below with a reason or explanation.

1. Meg has trouble in school because
2. Calvin enjoys being with the Murry family because
3. Mrs. Who, Mrs. Whatsit, and Mrs. Which moved into the haunted house to
4. The three women take the children to see the Dark Thing so
5. Charles Wallace faces the greatest danger on Camazotz because
6. Everyone on Camazotz is terrified because
7. While staying with Aunt Beast, Meg is angry at her father because
8. Mrs. Whatsit compares their lives to a sonnet to show that
9. At the end of the book, Meg apologizes to her father because
10. IT makes a fatal mistake when

Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. In her autobiography, *A Circle of Quiet*, Madeleine L'Engle says that children have a "passionate need for the dimension of transcendence, mysticism, and way-outness." Explain how *A Wrinkle in Time* fulfills these needs.
2. Which characters in *A Wrinkle in Time* do you find most admirable? Why?
3. Explain the motifs of vision and blindness in the novel.
4. Summarize what you learned about the power of love from the novel.

COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Sentence Completion (20 points)

Circle the correct word or phrase to complete each of the following statements.

1. (Sandy, Charles Wallace) has a reputation for being a moron because he rarely speaks.
2. Mrs. Murry is a (beautiful scientist, talented translator).
3. While sitting in the Murrys' kitchen, Mrs. Whatsit says that there is such a thing as a (tesseract, polygon).
4. Mrs. Whatsit and her two friends are staying in (a haunted house, the Murry home).
5. On the planet Uriel, Mrs. Whatsit transforms herself into a (flower, centaur).
6. Mrs. Who gives her (crystal ball, eyeglasses) to Meg to fight the Black Thing.
7. IT is a (gray beast, disembodied brain).
8. The little boy on Camazotz is punished because he could not correctly (deliver the newspaper, bounce the ball).
9. Meg's father is imprisoned in a (dark cave, crystal column).
10. Meg returns to save Charles Wallace (with her father, alone).

Part II: Matching (20 points)

Match the following descriptions with the names of characters from the list below. Place the letter of each response in the blanks provided at left.

- | | | |
|-----------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| A. Meg | E. Mr. Jenkins | H. Aunt Beast |
| B. Dennys | F. the Happy Medium | I. IT |
| C. Calvin | G. Mrs. Who | J. Charles Wallace |
| D. Mrs. Whatsit | | |

- _____ 1. quotes famous sayings from many philosophers
- _____ 2. makes the mistake of kicking the Man with Red Eyes
- _____ 3. the novel's heroine, a spunky girl who saves her brother from IT
- _____ 4. dresses like a bag lady in layers of mismatched clothing
- _____ 5. can see events in her crystal ball
- _____ 6. an 11th grade basketball star with bright blue eyes and orange hair
- _____ 7. wants everyone to conform
- _____ 8. tenderly nurses Meg back to health
- _____ 9. Meg's brother, half a set of twins
- _____ 10. Meg's principal, who questions whether Mr. Murry will ever return

Part III: Identification (20 points)

Explain why each is important in the story.

1. Mrs. Who, Mrs. Whatsit, Mrs. Which
2. love
3. eyeglasses
4. IT
5. Aunt Beast

Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Describe the novel's theme or main idea.
2. *A Wrinkle in Time* has become a classic of young adult fiction. Explain its continuing appeal.
3. Describe how Meg changes as she experiences the events described in the novel.
4. Trace the novel's plot. Include the rising action, climax, and resolution.



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