

Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for

A Wrinkle in Time

by

Madeleine L'Engle

Book Information

Madeleine L'Engle, A Wrinkle in Time
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Interest Level: MG

Meg Murry and her family receive a surprise visit from an unearthly stranger out of another dimension in time.

Award: NCTE Notable Children's Books in the Language Arts; Newbery Medal; SLJ Best Book

Topics: Power Lessons Vocabulary, Grades 4-6; Read Now with Power Up Recommended Lists, Take a Stand: Leadership; Recommended Reading, California Recommended Lit., English, 3-5; Recommended Reading, California Recommended Lit., English, 6-8

Main Characters

Calvin O'Keefe a fourteen year old boy who attends the same school as Meg

Charles Wallace Murry Meg's youngest brother, whom the neighbors think is a moron, but who is quite intelligent

IT the evil entity intent on controlling the universe

Margaret (Meg) Murry a teenage girl who lives with her scientist mother and three younger brothers and who doesn't do well in school and tends to get into trouble often

Mr. Murry father of Meg, Charles Wallace, Dennys, and Sandy, who is a physicist experimenting with the tesseract when IT captures him

Mrs. Murry scientist and mother of Meg, Charles Wallace, Dennys, and Sandy

Mrs. Whatsit, Mrs. Who, and Mrs. Which the three beings who are sent to help the children find their father

Vocabulary

aberration a deviation from the normal
apprehension an anxious feeling of foreboding
belligerent showing a readiness to fight or quarrel
compulsion driving force that compels one to act
exclusive not shared with anyone
propitious boding well, favorable
talisman anything thought to have magical power, bring good luck or keep evil away

Synopsis

This is a fantasy story of how three children, Meg, Charles Wallace, and Calvin are whisked away from earth by Mrs. Whatsit, Mrs. Who, and Mrs. Which in order to save Mr. Murry from the Dark Thing. The three women transport the children through space using a tesseract, which means they wrinkle time. The children are taken to different planets to get a view and an understanding of the Dark Thing that is controlling Mr. Murry. After informing the children about what has happened and arming them with gifts, the women leave the children on the planet of Camazotz, where Mr. Murry is being held captive. The children find Camazotz is a planet much like their own except that its residents act in unison as though they are robots and its homes tend to be alike. Upon gaining a bit of understanding about how Camazotz functions, the children enter the CENTRAL Central Intelligence building where they come up against IT, the force that controls all that happens on the planet.

While attempting to save Charles Wallace, Meg finds her father enclosed in a column. Mr. Murry, Calvin, and Meg eventually escape Camazotz, but Charles Wallace is left behind. They land on a friendly planet where the beasts of the planet nurse Meg back to health. Meg decides she must be the one to return to Camazotz to save Charles Wallace, which she does by giving him her love.

Open-Ended Questions

Use these open-ended questions as the basis for class discussions, student presentations, or extended writing assignments.

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Initial Understanding

Charles Wallace told Meg he thought it would be better if he did not learn to read before he started school because people wouldn't hate him so much if they thought he was a moron. What did he mean by this?

People will usually treat those who are "not quite bright" more kindly than one another because they feel sorry for them. Also, they might be intimidated by or feel jealous of his intelligence.

Literary Analysis

A fantasy is a story in which the impossible is made to seem possible. Find some examples of this in the story.

The vast number of examples of this include the following: the children traveling through time; Mrs. Who transforming herself into a centaur; and IT communicating with the children directly through their brains.

Inferential Comprehension

Until the very last tesser when Meg went back to Camazotz to save Charles Wallace, Meg did not handle tessering very well. Why do you think this was so?

She either did not have her own emotions under control, or she had too much fear and insecurity about herself.

Constructing Meaning

Meg's principal once told her that she must "face facts" about her father. What do you think he believed happened to Mr. Murry?

He ran off with another woman, or he simply abandoned the family.

enjoy fabricating worlds different from Camazotz, populated with other fantastic beings and landscapes.

Understanding Characterization The author uses language to create clear images of characters and settings. As an art project, have the students represent the "inner self" of any character or compare characters in the story with symbols or other imaginative renderings using the media of their choice.

Understanding Characterization One of the main characters, Meg, early in the story describes herself as a delinquent. She feels she does not fit in the world and struggles to accept herself for who she is. Her mother advises her to give herself time and that one day she will find out that she is not so strange and ugly. This is essentially the "ugly duckling" theory of growing up. Discussion groups might analyze what makes people sometimes feel out of place or weird. Students might choose characters from the story to analyze why they acted the way they did. Then they may devise different approaches to handling the problems the characters encountered while on the quest to save Mr. Murry.

Extending Meaning In this story, the Dark Thing tries to create a world in which all citizens' actions and decisions are controlled by IT, and IT attempts to convince Meg, Charles Wallace, and Calvin that they, too, will enjoy being controlled. Have the students brainstorm and create lists of the advantages and disadvantages of allowing someone else to control everything they do and say.

Teachable Skills

Understanding Literary Features *A Wrinkle in Time* is clearly a fantasy. Fantasy is the perfect device for developing unique writing styles. As a creative writing assignment, the students might