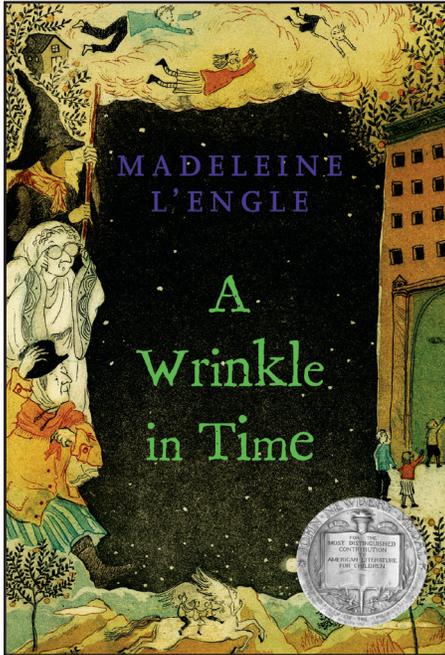


# A Teacher's Guide for A Wrinkle in Time

FOR  
USE WITH  
COMMON CORE  
STATE  
STANDARDS



Ages 10–14  
Anniversary PB: 9781250004673 • \$9.99  
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## ABOUT THE BOOK

It was a dark and stormy night; Meg Murry, her little brother Charles Wallace, and her mother had come down to the kitchen for a midnight snack when they were upset by the arrival of a most disturbing stranger.

“Wild nights are my glory,” the unearthly stranger told them. “I just got caught in a downdraft and blown off course. Let me sit down for a moment, and then I’ll be on my way. Speaking of ways, by the way, there is such a thing as a tesseract.”

A tesseract (in case the reader doesn’t know) is a wrinkle in time. To tell more would rob the reader of the enjoyment of Madeleine L’Engle’s unusual book. *A Wrinkle in Time*, winner of the Newbery Medal in 1963, is the story of the adventures in space and time of Meg, Charles Wallace, and Calvin O’Keefe (athlete, student, and one of the most popular boys in high school). They are in search of Meg’s father, a scientist who disappeared while engaged in secret work for the government on the tesseract problem.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**MADELEINE L’ENGLE** (1918–2007) was the author of more than sixty books. Born in 1918, L’Engle grew up in New York City, Switzerland, South Carolina, and Massachusetts. Her father was a reporter and her mother had studied to be a pianist, and their house was always full of musicians and theater people. L’Engle graduated cum laude from Smith College, then returned to New York to work in the theater. While touring with a play, she wrote her first book, *The Small Rain*, originally published in 1945. She met her future husband, Hugh Franklin, when they both appeared in *The Cherry Orchard*. Once she was married, L’Engle gave up the stage in favor of the typewriter. While raising her three children, she wrote four more novels. Hugh Franklin temporarily retired from the theater, and the family moved to western Connecticut and for ten years ran a general store. Her book *Meet the Austins*, an American Library Association Notable Children’s Book of 1960, was based on this experience. Her science-fantasy classic *A Wrinkle in Time* was awarded the 1963 Newbery Medal. Two companion novels, *A Wind in the Door* and *A Swiftly Tilting Planet* (a Newbery Honor book), complete what has come to be known as the Time Trilogy, a series that continues to grow in popularity with every new generation of readers. Her 1980 book, *A Ring of Endless Light*, won the Newbery Honor. L’Engle passed away in 2007 in Litchfield, Connecticut.



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Common Core anchors listed in this guide correlate to specific grade levels but activities can be adapted to apply to the standards for grades 4–10. To attain specific Common Core grade-level standards for their classrooms and students, teachers are encouraged to adapt the activities listed in this guide to their classes' needs. You know your kids best!

## DISCUSSION AND WRITING

The following questions may be utilized throughout the study of *A Wrinkle in Time* as targeted questions for class discussion and reflection or as reflective writing prompts.

- \* As the novel opens, we learn that Meg is struggling. She is concerned about both herself and the weather: “It’s the weather on top of everything else. On top of me. On top of Meg Murry doing everything wrong.” Why does Meg seem so despondent? In what ways does Meg see herself as a mess? Do you think how she feels is how other teens feel about themselves? Have you ever felt like Meg? If so, in what ways are her feelings similar to yours and how do you cope?
- \* Why does Meg get into a fight when Charles Wallace is called her “dumb baby brother” by a classmate? What does this indicate about her relationship with her siblings? In what ways does Meg’s fight about Charles Wallace foreshadow events to come later in the story?
- \* Meg scolds herself and while she is afraid, she reminds herself that having the attic bedroom “is a privilege, not a punishment.” Do you have a “privilege” that you have to sometimes remind yourself is indeed that? If so, what is it and why might you feel that way about it?
- \* In what ways is Charles Wallace like Meg? How is he different? Why does he seem to know how to probe “his mother’s mind and Meg’s with frightening accuracy”?
- \* What challenges does the Murray family face by living in a community that doesn’t understand them or particularly trust them? Do you believe the people around them are justified in feeling the way they do about them? Why or why not?
- \* How are Mrs. Whatsit, Mrs. Who, and Mrs. Which distinguished from one another? Do you have a favorite? If so, who and why?
- \* In what ways does Camazotz resemble Meg’s neighborhood on Earth? What might make it appealing and a place people would choose? What is it about these similarities that are problematic?
- \* Consider Mrs. Whatsit’s thoughts about Charles Wallace and how his family treats his gifts. “But at least you aren’t trying to squash him down . . . You’re letting him be himself.” What is it about him that she finds so appealing? What does she imply about how other children are raised? In your opinion, what makes Charles Wallace so extraordinary? Do you know anyone like him?



- \* When Meg asks her mother what she thinks of Calvin, her mother replies, “I’m delighted he’s found his way here.” What do you believe Mrs. Murray means? For Calvin, what does being welcomed into the Wallace home really mean?
- \* If you had the opportunity to time travel, would you? If you could choose the time, what time period would you travel to? The past? The future?
- \* What is the Thing and what is the relevance of the historical figures who have opposed it? Besides those named in the novel, what other historical figures would you expect to be similarly opposed and why?
- \* Throughout the novel, L’Engle introduces a variety of creatures that do not communicate with words. What are the various ways in which the creatures communicate? What message do you believe the author is trying to convey by adding this element to her story?
- \* In your opinion, who is the most courageous character in *A Wrinkle in Time*? Explain your choice.
- \* What is the significance of the lack of sight among the beast-like inhabitants of Ixchel? What does Meg learn from interacting with creatures that have no eyes? Beyond considering the beasts that cannot see yet are not limited in any way, how does L’Engle make the case that “seeing” can be a very limiting thing for humans? Apply this to our daily lives—how can the ability to see hinder us from true awareness?
- \* What is the significance of the gifts that Mrs. Whatsit gives? What is it about the gift she gives Meg that is particularly important?
- \* Meg respects her father and his work. Why do you believe she is initially angry with him? How does this change the more Meg understands her father’s choices and her role in the mission? Meg states, “It has to be me. It can’t be anyone else.” How does she come to accept or “choose” the task at hand? What does this mean about Meg’s understanding of what must be done to save Charles Wallace? Why must Meg go alone to Camazotz? How is her relationship with Charles Wallace important to her ability to free him?
- \* Meg experiences various types of love throughout her adventure. How does her understanding of love develop over the course of the novel?
- \* *A Wrinkle In Time* is often described as a novel about good versus evil. Do you agree? If so, who in the book represents good? Who represents evil? How would you describe the novel?

### Reading Literature Standards

- R.L. 4.1** Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.
- R.L. 4.2** Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text; summarize the text.
- R.L. 4.3** Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character’s thoughts, words, or actions).
- R.L. 5.4** Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative language such as metaphors and similes.



## Speaking and Listening Standards

- S.L. 6.1** Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade-six topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.
- S.L. 6.2** Interpret information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and explain how it contributes to a topic, text, or issue under study.
- S.L. 6.3** Delineate a speaker's argument and specific claims, distinguishing claims that are supported by reasons and evidence from claims that are not.

## EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

\* Throughout *A Wrinkle in Time*, L'Engle questions the human tendency to misjudge and fear what we do not understand. Camazotz is an extreme example of a world that does not allow differences. What can happen when differences are accepted and valued? In societies that value independence, we often see creativity, inventions, great literature and art, and knowledge. At the beginning of the novel, Meg struggles to recognize her own unique gifts, especially those she once considered faults. Write a letter of support to Meg praising her for her choices, as well as offering an example of someone whom you admire for his/her willingness to be different (this person may be someone with whom you have a personal connection or someone from history). Be sure to include specific examples as to why you are inspired by this individual and share any similarities you see between this individual and Meg.

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## Writing Standards

- W. 7.1** Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
- W. 7.2** Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.
- W. 7.3** Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.
- W. 7.4** Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1–3.)



\* Readers see tremendous growth in Meg’s character from the events that transpire in *A Wrinkle in Time*. In a journal entry, write about a single experience that made you stronger and wiser in some way. Perhaps you struggled through a difficult task or helped a friend with a problem. What did this experience teach you? Be sure to offer specific details about the experience.

### Writing Standards

- W. 6.4** Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1–3.)
- W. 7.7** Conduct short research projects to answer a question, drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions for further research and investigation.

\* While *A Wrinkle in Time* is a timeless story, its themes also reflect the historic events of the period when the novel was published. Using library resources and the Internet, research space exploration in the early 1960s and learn more about the competition between the United States and the Soviet Union to explore the solar system. Begin by examining the following:

- What were the biggest accomplishments for the U.S. and the Soviet Union?
- What were the biggest failures during that period?
- How was the competition between these two governments symbolic of the political and philosophical differences of the leadership?
- Why was NASA formed?

During the fifty years since the novel was published, space exploration has remained a national priority, but due to other needs, funding for the program has waned and some believe it’s no longer a necessary or justifiable expense. Taking what you’ve already learned, continue your research to study how the space program is now funded and its current goals and objectives. Examine your collected data to determine if you believe support of the program is still warranted and write a persuasive paper that shares your position. Alternatively, prepare a speech designed to convince others of your view and present it to your classmates.

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\* Many see *A Wrinkle in Time* as a book about the battle between good and evil and the ultimate triumph of love. Every character can be clearly identified with either good or evil. Create a chart that details and divides the novel's characters into these two groups. What do you believe is the greatest benefit of examining good versus evil? How does good ultimately triumph in the novel? Considering the power of goodness, what examples do you see in the world around you? Make a list of good works, such as food and clothing drives, in which people in your school and community are involved. Then share your list with a partner and discuss other ways that people can promote goodness in your school and community, and in the world.

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\* L'Engle's best-known catchphrase was "Tesser Well." This was a nod to the time-travel adventures taken by her beloved characters from *A Wrinkle in Time*. When Meg, Calvin, and Charles Wallace ask how they can go on a mission through time and space, Mrs. Whatsit says, "Now we will tesser." The children learn that "tessering" is a shortcut through time and space that allows them to travel quickly to other planets. Although the journey they take is fantasy, some of L'Engle's story is based on real science and many scientific concepts are introduced. Working with a partner, investigate the following:

- What is a dimension?
- How many are there?
- What is a tesser?
- Who are the most famous scientists to have contributed to theories of dimensions and time travel?

Select either a specific time-travel theory or the work of the scientist who introduced it and further explore his or her work in this area. Share your findings in the digital presentation tool of your choice.



## Reading Literature Standards

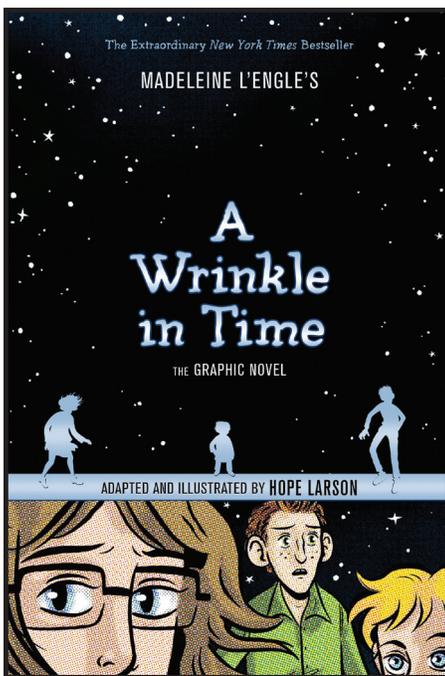
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# A WRINKLE IN TIME: THE GRAPHIC NOVEL

## Adapted and Illustrated by Hope Larson



Ages 10–14

PB: 9781250056948 • \$14.99

HC: 9780374386153 • \$19.99

Read the first chapter of *A Wrinkle in Time* or, alternatively, take turns reading it aloud with your partners. After finishing, write a summary of the chapter, being sure to include information about who the main characters are, what seem to be the problems presented so far, and where the story is set. Next, read the first chapter of *A Wrinkle in Time: The Graphic Novel*, adapted and illustrated by Hope Larson. Create a Venn diagram to analyzing the two works. Is the level of detail similar or different? Do they both address the same issues?

Assistance in defining complex vocabulary is a hallmark of graphic novels due to the blend of text with illustrated support. While reading *A Wrinkle in Time: The Graphic Novel*, create a reading log of new vocabulary that you encounter. For each word added to your log, examine how Larson's illustrations helped bring understanding to the vocabulary word.



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The careful selection and use of color in Larson’s graphic novel is significant; look closely at her choices and consider the following for discussion:

- How does the palette help develop mood and tone?
- In what ways does it help flesh out L’Engle’s description of the characters?
- What can you infer from these choices?
- How does Larson’s work deepen the understanding of L’Engle’s work yet stand on its own?

Consider the other books in L’Engle’s Time Trilogy. Working in groups, select chapters from the other novels and create original chapter adaptations to retell the book your group selected.

Graphic novels can serve as a springboard to many creative writing projects. After reading Larson’s adaptation of *A Wrinkle in Time*, write your own alternative ending or accounts for what happened before or after the story. Fill in an interval of the story that is not depicted or only depicted visually.

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This guide was created by Dr. Rose Brock, a teacher and school librarian in Coppell, Texas. Brock holds a Ph.D. in library science, specializing in children’s and young adult literature.



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