

Teacher Guide

Grades 7–8

A Wrinkle in Time

Madeleine L'Engle

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A WRINKLE IN TIME

by
Madeleine L'Engle

Teacher Guide

Written by
James H Duncan

Note

The 2007 Square Fish paperback edition of the novel, © 1962 by Crosswicks, Ltd., was used to prepare this guide. The page references may differ in other editions. Novel ISBN: 978-0-312-36755-8

Please note: Please assess the appropriateness of this novel for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading and discussing it with them.

ISBN 978-1-60878-319-9

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Publisher Information

For a complete catalog, contact—

Novel Units, Inc.
P.O. Box 97
Bulverde, TX 78163-0097

Web site: novelunits.com

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Skills and Strategies

Critical Thinking

Creative thinking, inferences,
research, opinions, predictions

Comprehension

Story mapping, compare/contrast,
cause/effect

Literary Elements

Symbolism, dynamic figures,
themes, setting, point of view

Vocabulary

Definitions, application,
synonyms/antonyms

Writing

Essay, poetry, review, journal,
letter, synopsis

Across the Curriculum

Literature—purple prose, sonnets,
L'Engle's other stories; Social
Studies—famous thinkers,
McCarthyism, religion; Art—cover
art, painting, collage; Drama—
plays, films, TV interviews;
Science—elements, scientists,
inherited traits

Supplementary Activities

1. **Descriptive Writing:** Choose four vocabulary words from this section, and use them in a description of either the children’s confrontation with the man with red eyes or their confrontation with IT.
2. **Research:** Research the term “McCarthyism,” and write one paragraph explaining what it is, one paragraph explaining how fear and conformity affected the lives of Americans in the 1950s, and one paragraph about how this might relate to life on Camazotz.
3. **Science:** Meg tries to evade the powers of IT by receiving information from the periodic table of elements. Research one of the elements mentioned on page 155 of the novel, and write a one-page essay about the discovery of that element, where it is found on Earth, and how humans use it.

Absolute Zero: The Foolish and the Weak

Meg slowly wakes up, still tesseracting but cannot yet communicate. She hears Calvin and Mr. Murry rescue her. Mr. Murry’s time on Camazotz and the power of IT. As Meg comes to, they tell her the tesseracter away from IT and left her in a place behind. They are on the planet Ixchel, a strange world inhabited by large, partially furry creatures with tentacles and no facial features, who express their feelings and thoughts through their minds. A female creature who no longer has children of her own cares for Meg. Mrs. Whatsit, Mrs. Who, and Mrs. Which return to discuss Charles Wallace’s rescue, and Mrs. Which becomes angry because the three women can neither save Charles Wallace nor allow Mr. Murry or Calvin to return to Camazotz to save him. Finally, Meg understands that the only way to save Charles Wallace is for her to tesseract to Camazotz alone. Meg arrives on the planet and returns to the building that houses the giant brain. Charles Wallace is there, still controlled by IT. Meg struggles against IT’s power before realizing that the only way to defeat IT is with love. She proclaims her love for her brother, and IT’s power is broken. The group reunites back on Earth, along with Mrs. Murry and the twins. The three women appear briefly to say there is more work to do.

Vocabulary

practicable
contrast
corrosive
fallible
pungent
garment
absurd
league
resent
precise
anxiety

Discussion Questions

1. According to Mr. Murry, why were he, Meg, and Calvin able to hold out against IT? How was IT trying to weaken Mr. Murry’s resolve? (Mr. Murry tells Calvin that IT “completely unused to being resisted” [p. 158]—that its power was now as strong as it should have been because IT was not ready for such resistance. Even so, Mr. Murry says he would not have listened to IT any longer because IT is still very strong. While fighting IT, “nothing seemed important anymore but rest,” and “IT offered [him] a complete rest” [p. 158].)
2. How did Mr. Murry end up on Camazotz? (Mr. Murry says going to Camazotz was a “complete accident” and he had never intended to leave Earth’s solar system. He was heading to Mars, but tesseracting had not been an accurate process.)
3. Why did Charles Wallace fall under IT’s spell so quickly? Why did Mr. Murry leave Charles Wallace behind on Camazotz?

(“Charles Wallace thought he could deliberately go into IT and return” [p. 159], Mr. Murry says. The boy trusted his own strength too much and did not show enough concern for IT’s strength. Meg accuses her

father of leaving Charles Wallace behind on Camazotz, but her father tells her that “the human brain is a very delicate organism” [p. 164], meaning that if he had pulled Charles Wallace away from IT while under IT’s spell, Charles Wallace’s mind might have been destroyed.)

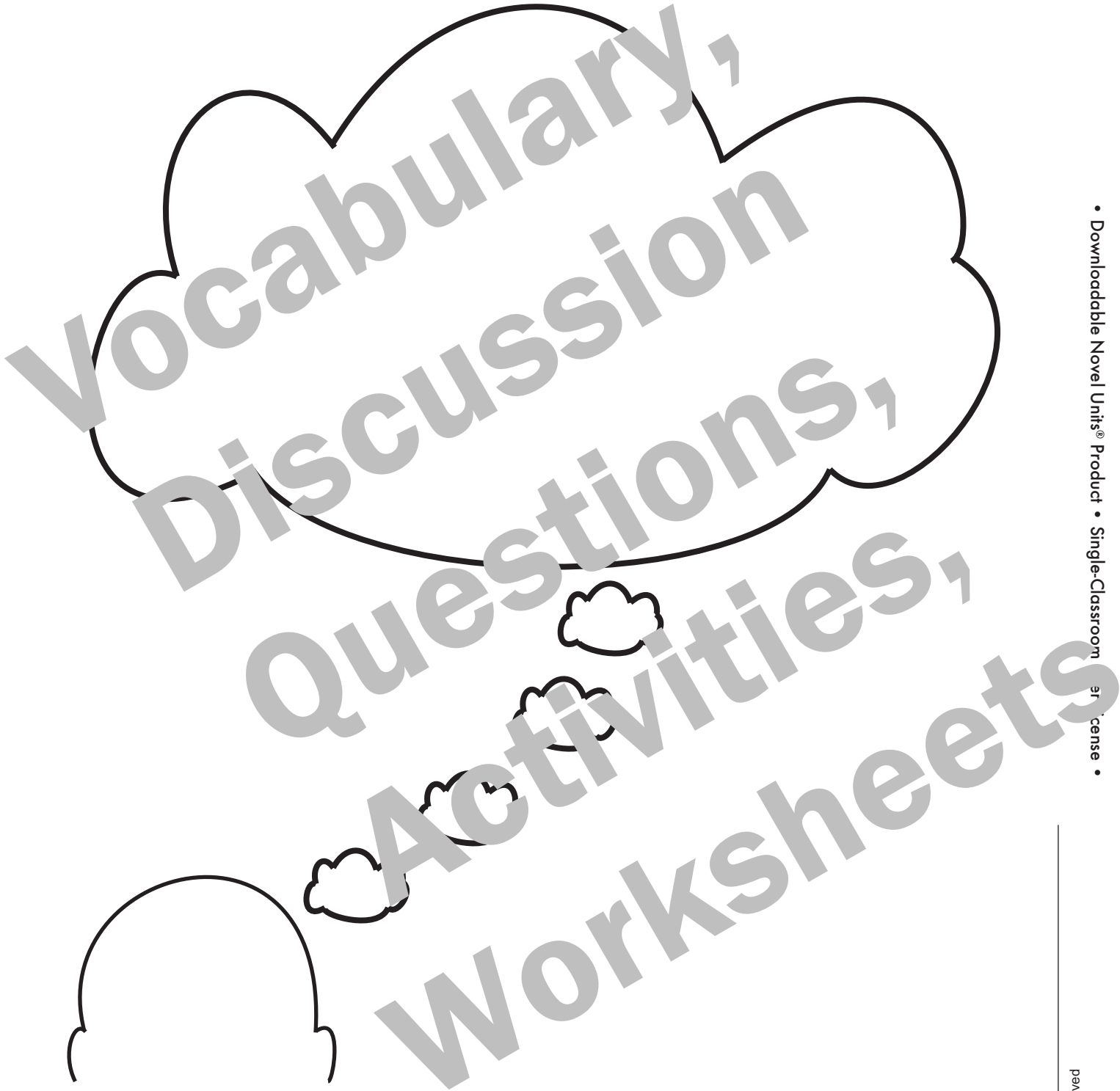
4. Describe the aliens that Mr. Murry, Meg, and Calvin meet. How does Meg initially feel about the aliens? *(The aliens that appear are dull gray and walk upright but have fur like animals. They each have four arms and more than five waving tentacles for fingers, with soft indentations for facial features—no eyes or mouths. When the aliens appear and one asks Mr. Murry, Meg, and Calvin who they are, the voice comes from its tentacles. Meg fears the aliens will eat them. She is disgusted as they draw near, but as they hover over her she feels something “tingling warmth” course through her.)*
5. How do the aliens perceive the world around them, and how does this differ from the way in which humans perceive it? *(The aliens “do not know what things are like” [p. 174] but they cannot see with just one sense [eyesight], like humans. The aliens use many senses to understand something. They say that relying on just one sense “must be a very limiting thing” [p. 174] compared to developing ideas using all the senses, some of which only the aliens seem to have. Being able to emote ideas and speak with their mouths proves this extrasensory ability exists.)*
6. What is the difference between the meal served on Camazotz and the meal served on Ixchel? What do you think each meal represents? *(The meal on Camazotz looked luxurious and delicious but in the end was very bland, almost like sand. The meal on Ixchel looks “dull and colorless and unappealing” [p. 180] but is actually delicious so that Meg feels she will never get her fill again. This represents the two ways of living. The organized rule of IT on Camazotz may appear to be safe, clean, happy living, but it is really unsatisfying. The other way of living, not under the rule of IT, where individuality, creativity, and goodness may seem to have its faults, is in the end very fulfilling.)*
7. What does Meg decide about Mrs Whatsit, Mrs Who, and Mrs Which when they appear on Ixchel, and how do the three women react? What is her plan to return to Camazotz, and why? *(Meg tells the three women that her father left Charles Wallace behind on Camazotz, and Mrs Whatsit speaks in a cold voice, “what do you expect us to do” [p. 185]? When Meg begs them to help rescue her brother, they treat her very nicely and insist there is nothing they can do on Camazotz. Getting involved directly “is not our way” [p. 185], Mrs Whatsit says. But Mr. Murry and Calvin insist they will return to Camazotz to save Charles Wallace, but the three women forbid them to go. Then Meg realizes “...I had to be one...I’m the one who’s closest to him” [p. 187].)*
8. What gifts do the three women offer Meg as she goes to save Charles Wallace? *(Mrs Whatsit offers Meg her love. Mrs Who offers Meg a quote about how the things considered weak, foolish, or despised will be the things that will overpower the strong. Mrs Which tells her that she has something IT does not have, and this thing is her own wisdom.)*
9. How does Meg defeat IT and save Charles Wallace? *(When Charles Wallace says that Mrs Whatsit hates her, Meg realizes that the only thing she has that IT does not have and can never understand is love. She focuses on her true love for her brother, and this emotion seems to break IT’s spell, freeing Charles Wallace.)*

Supplementary Activities

1. Poetry: Write a sonnet about a topic of your choice using synonyms for four vocabulary words from this section.
2. Prediction: Write one to three paragraphs telling what you think Mrs Whatsit, Mrs Who, and Mrs Which have to rush off to do at the end of the novel.

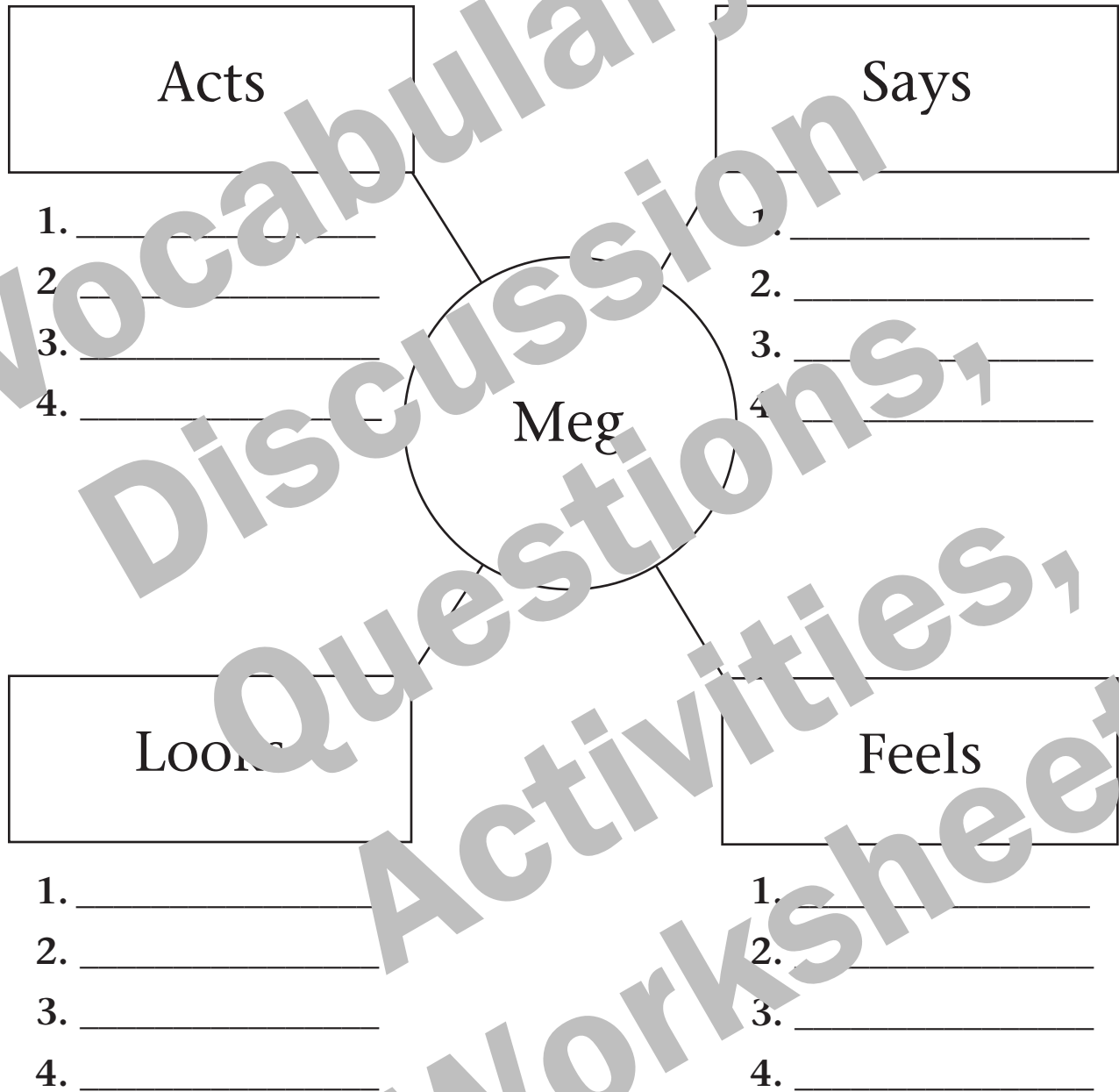
Thought Bubble

Directions: In the bubble below, write what Calvin might be thinking when he sees his mother and siblings in the Happy Medium's crystal ball.



Character Attribute Web

Directions: The attribute web below will help you gather clues the author provides about Meg. Fill in the blanks with words and phrases that tell how Meg acts and looks, as well as what Meg says and feels.



A character attribute web for the character Meg. The central circle is labeled "Meg". Four lines radiate from the center to four rectangular boxes: "Acts" (top-left), "Says" (top-right), "Looks" (bottom-left), and "Feels" (bottom-right). Each box is connected to the center by a line. Below each box are four numbered blank lines for writing.

Acts

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Says

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Meg

Looks

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Feels

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____