



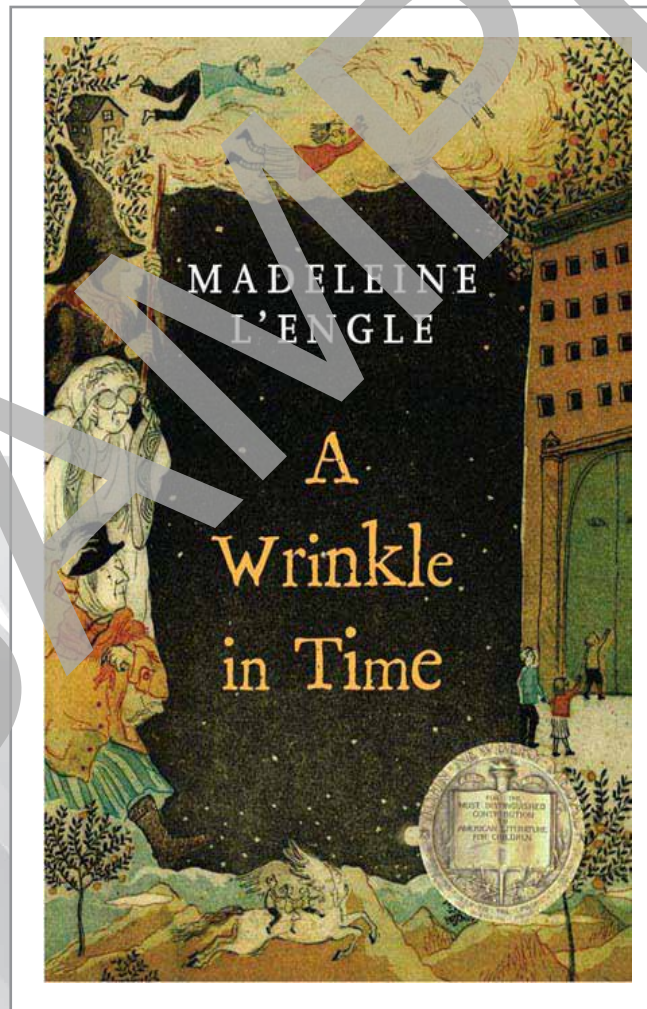
TEACHER GUIDE

GRADES 6-8

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

A Wrinkle in Time

Madeleine L'Engle



READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT

A Wrinkle in Time

Madeleine L'Engle

TEACHER GUIDE

NOTE:

The trade book edition of the novel used to prepare this guide is found in the Novel Units catalog and on the Novel Units website. Using other editions may have varied page references.

Please note: We have assigned Interest Levels based on our knowledge of the themes and ideas of the books included in the Novel Units sets, however, please assess the appropriateness of this novel or trade book for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading with them. You know your students best!

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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

Genre: fiction

Setting: a small town on Earth, a planet in Orion's belt, and three other planets: Uriel, Camazotz, and Ixchel

Point of View: third-person limited; primarily follows Meg

Themes: the value of being different, good vs. evil, the power of love

Conflict: person vs. society, person vs. person, person vs. nature, person vs. self

Style: suspenseful narrative

Tone: magical, quirky, whimsical, frightening, humorous

Date of First Publication: 1962

Summary

Meg and her younger brother Charles Wallace are the children of two scientists and do not exactly fit in with their other siblings or peers. Their father, Mr. Murry, has disappeared under mysterious circumstances, and Charles Wallace soon reveals that he has met a strange woman called Mrs Whatsit in a nearby "haunted house" who may have information about Mr. Murry. After Meg and Charles Wallace meet another boy, Calvin, near the haunted house, Mrs Whatsit and her two friends Mrs Who and Mrs Which reveal themselves as supernatural beings and whisk the children away on a special mission. The group "tessers" (or travels through space in a rapid, magical manner) to the beautiful planet of Uriel, where the three women explain that there is a dark, evil presence in the universe called the Black Thing. The group then tessers to a planet in Orion's belt. Here, the children gaze into a crystal ball and witness Earth overcome by the negative darkness and are informed that important historical figures—including artists, composers, and scientists—have been fighting the darkness. Mr. Murry had also been fighting the darkness, but he became trapped on the planet Camazotz. The three women tesser the three children to Camazotz where the children discover a world of people dominated by IT (the Black Thing), which forces the planet's inhabitants to appear and act nearly identically. The children soon find the center of the city, and after many struggles, are able to free Mr. Murry and escape, but Charles Wallace falls under the spell of IT and is left behind. Mr. Murry tessers with Calvin and Meg to the planet Ixchel, where Meg recovers from the tesser. She soon becomes convinced that she is the only one who can save Charles Wallace and returns to Camazotz alone. When she finds Charles Wallace, Meg realizes that the only thing that can overcome IT is pure love. She expresses her love for her brother, thus releasing him from IT. In that moment, they are both freed from Camazotz and returned to Earth, where the entire family is reunited. The three women reappear briefly, hinting that there is more work to do.

Mrs Whatsit–Mrs Which

Meg sits awake in her attic bedroom during a “dark and stormy night” (p. 5). She descends the stairs to the kitchen to find her youngest brother Charles Wallace awake and waiting for her. Their mother joins them, and Charles Wallace mentions that he has befriended a strange woman in the woods named Mrs Whatsit. It is not long after that Mrs Whatsit arrives in the storm for a strange visit, mentioning a “tesseract” before leaving. The following day, outcast Meg struggles through another day of school and returns home to join Charles Wallace on a walk in the woods to meet Mrs Whatsit and her friends. In the woods, Meg and Charles Wallace encounter Calvin O’Keefe, a popular athlete at Meg’s school. The three children briefly meet Mrs Who, a strange woman with large glasses who speaks in quotes. Calvin goes home with Meg and Charles Wallace and is introduced to their mother. Calvin feels more comfortable with Meg’s family than his own, and Meg and Calvin begin to bond. Soon after, Charles Wallace announces that they are about to leave to find their missing father. Mrs Whatsit and Mrs Who then appear and are joined by a third strange woman, Mrs Which.

Vocabulary

frenzied
vicious
abandoned
rumored
serenely
exclusive
cunning
adjustment
fragrant
sinister
infinite
limitations

Discussion Questions

1. What kind of student is Meg, and why is this strange? *(Meg is a very poor student at school. She has been “dropped down to the lowest section in her grade” [p. 5] and is doing so badly that her teachers threaten to retain her. Meg lacks the desire to participate at school and does not care for subjects like history and English. She fights with others who pick on her and on Charles Wallace. She says, “I hate being an oddball...” [p. 14]. This poor behavior and performance at school is strange because she is the child of brilliant parents, and tests show that she has a very high IQ.)*
2. How do people treat Charles Wallace? How does he feel about this? *(People call Charles Wallace Meg’s “dumb baby brother” [p. 6]. While people speak unkindly of him and tease him, they are also “a little afraid of him” [p. 10] because of his silence. Charles Wallace “seldom [speaks] when anybody [is] around” [p. 10], and he is aware of how this makes people feel. He almost encourages this image of himself so that they will underestimate him. “Thinking I’m a moron gives people something to feel smug about...Why should I disillusion them?” [p. 33] is his philosophy.)*
3. What do Dennys and Sandy think about Meg and Charles Wallace? Do you think they are supportive siblings? *(Dennys and Sandy are both concerned for their outcast siblings. They worry because Meg takes everything personally and is always getting in trouble because of it and because Charles Wallace never speaks to anyone outside of the family and will most likely “have an awful time next year when he starts school” [p. 25]. Despite the fact that they often scold Meg and Charles Wallace for not trying harder to fit in, they show they are supportive by trying to protect them, defending them in fights, and showing concern for their futures at school.)*
4. Describe Calvin and his reputation. How does he feel about this? Who is the real Calvin? *(Calvin is tall, with red hair, freckles, and bright blue eyes. He is older than Meg, athletic, and very popular at school because he is a good baseball player. What most people do not realize is that he is also very smart and likes biology. He is much more comfortable with his brainier side and does not always enjoy the image that comes with being a popular athlete. He feels very comfortable with other smart outcasts like Meg.)*

5. Describe Mrs Whatsit. What is so strange about her first visit to the Murry household? *(Mrs Whatsit is bundled in layers of colorful clothing and wearing a man's hat, an overcoat and rubber boots. She has graying hair tied up in a knot, a puckered mouth, and a small nose. Her visit is strange because Charles Wallace admits that he knows her but does not quite reveal how. She seems to know a lot about the family and hints about a tesseract, which is a secret part of Mrs. Murry's research. Mrs Whatsit is certainly more than she seems to be.)*
6. What do Meg and her principal discuss, and why does Meg become upset? *(Meg is sent to the principal's office for being rude in class, and the principal begins to question her attitude, saying she could improve greatly if she would just apply herself. He then asks if her home life is troubling her. She suspects that the principal is just being nosy, so she continues to be evasive. When he asks if she has received "any news from [her father] lately" [p. 27], she is certain that he is just digging for new gossip, since she thinks it is common knowledge that she has not heard from her father in a year. When he pushes her to face facts about her father, suggesting that she let him go and focus on her schoolwork, she becomes angry and states that as long as her mother believes her father is coming home, she will hold out hope, too.)*
7. Describe Mrs Who. How is she different from and similar to Mrs Whatsit? *(Mrs Who is a "plump little woman" [p. 36] who wears large glasses that are twice as thick as Meg's. She is different from Mrs Whatsit in that she speaks mostly in quotations from a variety of famous thinkers and artists who are often better able to express what she is thinking and feeling. However, she is similar in that she seems to know about Meg's missing father and hints that she has more to reveal.)*
8. How does Meg feel after meeting Mrs Who? Why do you think she feels this way? *(Meg feels happy rather than upset or confused. This may be from the excitement of meeting these mysterious beings who seem to have clues about her father, but it may also be because she has met Calvin. There are hints that they like each other, especially when she calls him "handsome" in relation to her father, who is also a tall, skinny, but handsome man.)*
9. What does Calvin think of Meg's odd family life? How does it differ from his family life? *(Calvin thinks Meg's home life is wonderful, that her mother is "gorgeous," and that Meg does not "know how lucky [she is] to be loved" [p. 40]. His own household is not so happy or warm. He says that his mother "doesn't even comb her hair," and while he loves all of his family members, they "don't give a hoot about [him]" [p. 40].)*
10. Why does Meg say she hates herself? Whom does she want to emulate, and how does Calvin make her feel better? *(Meg says she wishes she were a different person because she cries so much about her father and feels weak because of it. She wants to be a stronger person like her mother, but she is constantly judging herself too harshly and does not realize it. Calvin tries to point this out by telling her that her mother is much older and that Meg is the nicest thing that has ever happened to him. He believes she is a wonderful, beautiful person and tries to open her eyes to this fact.)*
11. **Prediction:** Where will the children go to find Mr. Murry?

Supplementary Activities

1. History: Mrs Who frequently quotes many famous thinkers. Choose one of the following people, and write a brief essay explaining who the person is, three important things the person did, and why those things are important: Dante Alighieri, A. Pérez (Alonso Pérez), Seneca, or Blaise Pascal.
2. Time Line: Using the Create a Time Line activity on page 20 of this guide, complete the first two boxes to illustrate major events in this section. Continue the activity as you read.
3. Science: On a sheet of paper, list two members of your family who are older than you (parents, grandparents, older siblings, guardians, etc.) and three traits or habits that you are proud to have acquired from each person. Then, tell why you are proud to have these traits.

The Black Thing–The Happy Medium

The mysterious Mrs Which appears, and Meg falls into a darkness full of strange sensations. She can hear the others, but they cannot see her at first. Then, she discovers they have been transported to another planet. Mrs Whatsit transforms into a magical creature and flies the children over the planet, where they see wonderful sights, as well as a view of the galaxy. Out in the galaxy they see a dark, evil shadow slowly spreading. This great evil has trapped Mr. Murry and threatens the whole universe. The three women explain that they will bypass the darkness by using wrinkles in time, called “tessering.” The group tesser to Orion’s belt to visit the Happy Medium, who looks into a crystal ball that shows the Dark Thing overpowering Earth. The group then tesser to Camazotz, where the three women say the children must find Mr. Murry on their own, but the women give the children talismans and advice to help them on their way. The children find a community where the houses look the same and the people act the same. Then, they walk deeper into the city to find the CENTRAL Central Intelligence office, where Mr. Murry may be.

Discussion Questions

1. According to Meg’s description, what is it like to go through the tesseract? (*First “all light was gone” [p. 55] and then the sound of the leaves disappeared, too. Everything was silent, and Calvin’s hand was “being torn from her” [p. 55]. She is completely alone, and though she wants to panic, she has the feeling that her physical self is gone as well. After some time she can feel her limbs again, and while she can open her eyes, she still feels lost in a great nothingness. It is not a darkness like in a dark room, where you know things are there, but a great void where there is complete emptiness. She then feels her heart beating and her limbs tingling and then movement like gravity. Then she can hear again but not speak, and others cannot see her for some time. Finally she appears to them, and she can speak again.*)
2. Where have the three women taken the children first, and how does Mrs Whatsit change after they arrive? (*The women take the children to the planet Uriel to rest and learn about the mission. Mrs Whatsit also reveals her true self, which is a magical being “more*

Vocabulary

reassuring
solemn
radiant
grateful
incapable
evaporate
frantic
accurate
intoned
faltered
talisman
identical
peculiar

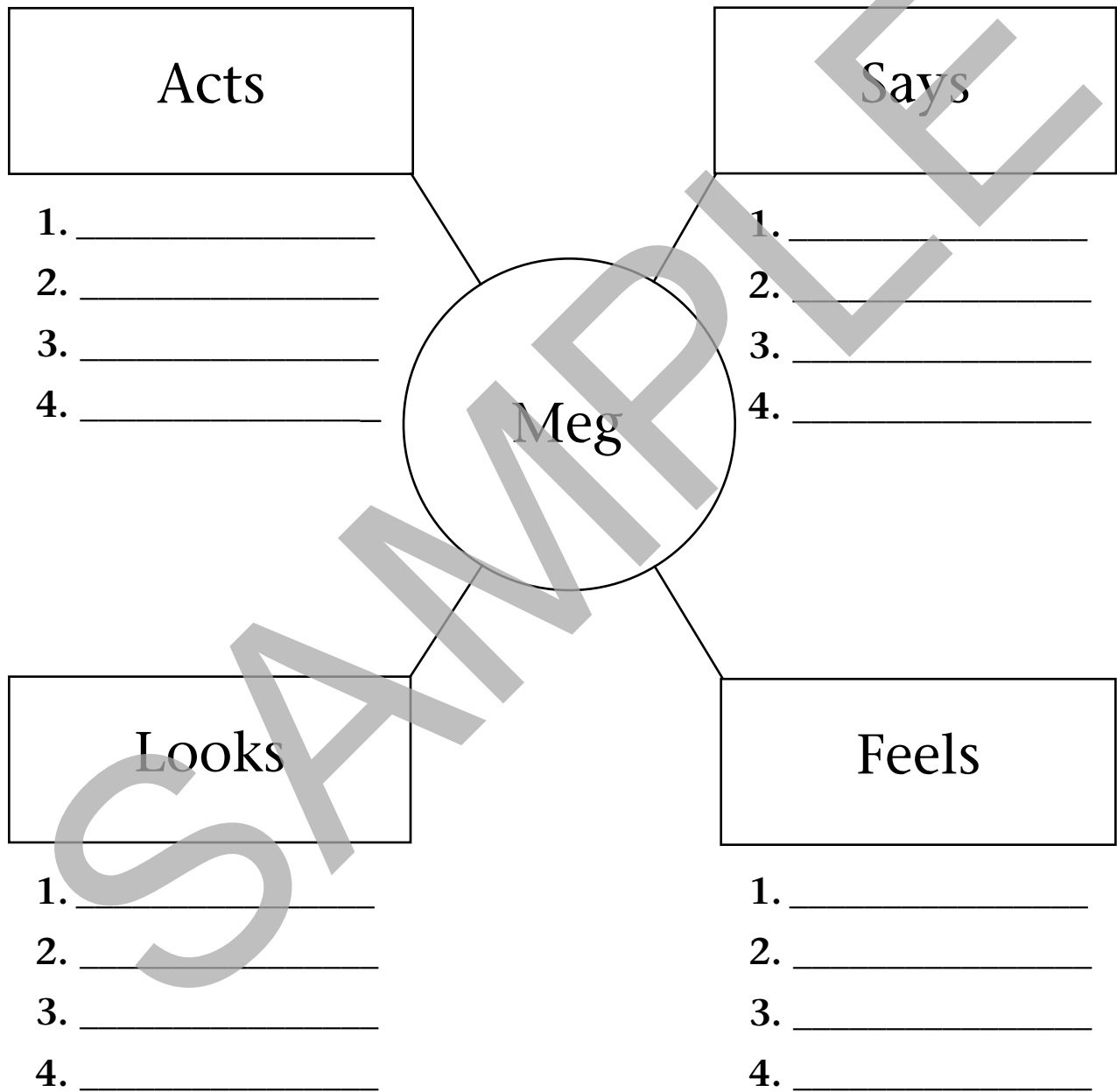
Thought Bubble

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 rectangular boxes are connected to the circle by lines, representing different attributes: "Acts" (top-left), "Says" (top-right), "Looks" (bottom-left), and "Feels" (bottom-right). Each box has four numbered lines for writing.

Acts

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

Says

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

Meg

Looks

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

Feels

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

Cause/Effect Chart

Directions: List the effects of Charles Wallace challenging IT.

