

# A Wrinkle in Time

Madeleine L'Engle

## PLOT:



MURRY HOME



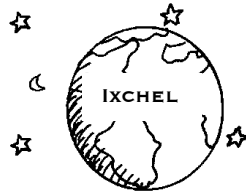
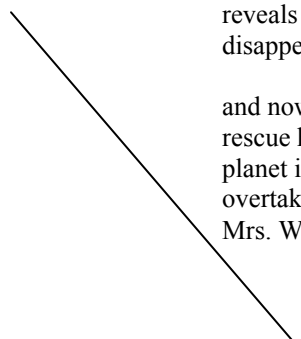
URIEL



2D PLANET

Meg Murry is your average misunderstood teenager – she feels ugly, unpopular, and can't seem to get along in school. To make things worse, her parents are brilliant scientists, her five-year old brother is teased for being "different," and her father has been missing for almost two years and everyone is convinced that he has left for good. One dark and stormy night, however, Meg, her little brother, Charles Wallace, and her mother are in the kitchen for a midnight snack when a most disturbing visitor arrives. The unearthly creature reveals that there *is* such a thing as a tesseract, the very key to Mr. Murry's disappearance.

Mr. Murry had been experimenting with this fifth dimension of time and now Meg, Charles Wallace, and their friend Calvin O'Keefe must find and rescue him. On their journey through the galaxies, they learn that their own planet is in grave danger. An evil shadow – the "Black Thing" – is slowly overtaking the galaxies, and the children must stop its advance with the help of Mrs. Who, Mrs. Whatsit, and Mrs. Which.



IXCHEL



CAMAZOTZ

## THEMES:

### Primary:

The Power of Love. Each character learns for him/herself that love is the force that binds the universe together, and is stronger than fear or hatred.

Individuality. Meg initially sees her uniqueness as a terrible obstacle, but learns that being different is what makes life worth living.

### Secondary:

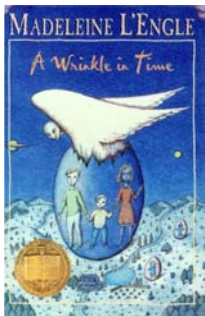
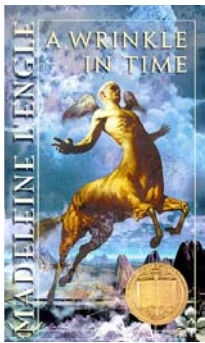
Inadequacy of Words. The author emphasizes time and again that words do not and *cannot* adequately describe the fullness of our experience.

Intelligence. The role of intelligence is interesting in this book. Although Mr. and Mrs. Murry are described as brilliant scientists, their intellects are tempered by emotion and love. Even Mrs. Murry notes that Meg needs to find a happy medium. The depiction of IT is the literal metaphor for what can happen when the mind reigns supreme without emotion.

## SETTING:

The story begins in the Murry home, set in a small community. The bulk of the novel is spent traveling through space and time; the planets visited include Uriel, a star in Orion's belt, Camazotz and Ixchel.

## CHARACTERS:



- Meg Murry – The book’s heroine and protagonist, Meg is described as homely and awkward but fiercely loving and loyal. Her greatest faults are anger, impatience, and lack of self-confidence, but she ultimately uses them to rescue her father and brother.
- Charles Wallace Murry – A five-year old child prodigy who has the uncanny ability of reaching into people’s minds. He also has an incredible gift for understanding complex concepts.
- Sandy and Dennys – the Murry twins who seem to be average in every way, except for their highly remarkable family. They are average students, good athletes, and popular at school. Though they do not understand their family, they Mr. Murry – A physicist who worked for the Institute for Higher Learning in Princeton, and also for the government. He has been missing for several years, after leaving on a mission for the government.
- Mrs. Murry – a singular beauty who is as brilliant as her husband. She had worked with him over the years, and had not given up hope of his return.
- Calvin O’Keefe – “Tall he certainly way, 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” (31). Calvin is a basketball player, a few grades older than Meg and attending her same school. He becomes good friends with the Murry family and aids in the rescue of Mr. Murry.
- Mrs. Who – one of the three creatures who come to help Meg and Charles in the rescue of their father. She is identified by her constant quirk of quoting, especially in other languages because she has a hard time “articulating.” She also wears spectacles which seem to linger after she has disappeared.
- Mrs. Whatsit – the youngest of the three creatures who first appears as an unkempt tramp with a voice that sounds like an “unoiled door hinge.” Later she metamorphoses into what is described as “a marble white body with powerful flanks, something like a horse, but at the same time completely unlike a horse, for from the magnificently modeled back sprang a nobly formed torso, arms, and a head resembling a man’s, but a man with a perfection of dignity and virtue, an exaltation of joy...From the shoulders slowly a pair of wings unfolded, wings made of rainbows, of light upon water, of poetry” (64). Mrs. Whatsit is the most affectionate and lighthearted of the group. We learn later that she had once been a star who gave up her life in a battle with the Black Thing.
- Mrs. Which – usually appears as a mere shimmer as an indication of her inability to appear corporally. She is the authoritarian figure and acts as leader for their mission. Though she is the strictest and the most disapproving, she is vitally concerned for the welfare of the children and their families.
- The Happy Medium – a jovial being who lives on a gray planet in a cave where she amuses herself by looking into her crystal ball. When asked to show the “dark planets” (those overcome by the Black Thing), she is overcome with sadness. “She wore a turban of beautiful pale mauve silk, and a long, flowing,

purple satin gown. In her hands was a crystal ball into which she was gazing raptly” (85).

- Man with the Red Eyes – although he introduces himself as the Prime Coordinator, he seems to be merely a façade through which IT talks. His eyes are “bright and had a reddish glow. Above his head was a light, and it glowed in the same manner as the eyes, pulsing, throbbing, in steady rhythm” (121).
- IT – “A disembodied brain. An oversized brain, just enough larger than normal to be completely revolting and terrifying. A living brain. A brain that pulsed and quivered, that seized and commanded...IT was the most repellent thing she had ever seen, far more nauseating than anything she had ever imagined...or that had ever tormented her in her most terrible nightmares” (158).
- Aunt Beast – one of the many beasts who nurse Meg back to health on the planet of Ixchel. She is described as a tall creature with two arms, and tentacles in place of ears, hair, and fingers. She is covered with soft, gray, fur that smells of flowers. In place of facial features, every beast has soft indentations; although they are blind, their extraordinary other senses compensate for their inability to see or comprehend sight. (185)

### **CHAIN OF EVENTS:**

#### **Initiating Events**

Mr. Murry has been working on “top secret” government projects experimenting with the fifth dimension of time. After being called to several areas, he suddenly stops sending letters and is finally considered missing after two years.

Mrs. Whatsit visits Meg, Charles Wallace and Mrs. Murry to tell them that there is such a thing as a tesseract.

#### **Internal Response**

Meg is obviously shaken by Mrs. Whatsit’s visit, but finally decides to trust the creatures, as Charles Wallace does, in an effort to save their father.

#### **An Attempt**

Meg is put through a rigorous journey in which her courage fails her many times. After landing on Camazotz, she bravely resists the power of IT in rescuing her father, only to fail at the last moment – leaving Charles behind in the power of IT.

After her recovery on Ixchel, Meg discovers that she must be the one to rescue Charles Wallace, although she had previously been counting on her father to solve their problems.

#### **Outcome**

Not only does Meg come to discover herself, but learns that her power of love is beyond IT’s power. She is able to rescue Charles Wallace through loving him, and finds herself happily home, reunited with her entire family.

#### **Conclusion**

The galaxy is saved from the spreading influence of the evil Black Thing, and Meg completes the transformation from childhood to adult.

