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## Literature Teaching Unit

Chapter-by-Chapter Study Guide



### A Wrinkle in Time

by Madeleine L'Engle

- Learning objectives
- Study Guide with short-answer questions
- Background information
- Vocabulary in context
- Multiple-choice test
- Essay questions
- Literary terms



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# A Wrinkle in Time

## Note to the Teacher

The same element in the novel is referred to variously as “The Dark Thing” and “The Black Thing.” Rather than picking one name and sticking with it, we have used whichever name appears in the chapter at hand. Some questions are set in the past tense instead of the present. This is done on purpose to keep them the same as the tense in the book.

All references come from the Bantam Doubleday Dell edition of *A Wrinkle in Time*, published 1976.

## Objectives

By the end of this Unit, the student will be able to:

1. discuss L'Engle's use of light and dark imagery to symbolize Good and Evil in the novel.
2. define symbolism, allusion, simile, metaphor, theme, pun, and protagonist and provide examples of each from *A Wrinkle in Time*.
3. trace the ways in which Meg Murry's character and self-image develop over the course of the novel.
4. discuss the different forms of and the significance of communication in *A Wrinkle in Time*.
5. discuss the ways in which the idea that "appearances can be deceiving" applies to Mrs. Whatsit, Charles Wallace, and the beasts of Ixchel.
6. evaluate Camazotz as a utopia.
7. discuss IT as a symbol for the pressure to conform to society's norms.
8. discuss the ways in which Meg's feelings for and expectations of her father change over the course of the novel.
9. compare and contrast the benefits and drawbacks of "sameness" on Camazotz and on Earth.
10. discuss the benefits and drawbacks of "difference" on Earth as they are presented in *A Wrinkle in Time*.
11. discuss L'Engle's use of fantasy to provide a commentary on reality.
12. define the vocabulary words listed in the study guide.
13. discuss the ways in which Mrs. Who's quotations from Pascal ("The heart has its reasons, whereof reason knows nothing") and the Bible ("And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not") apply to *A Wrinkle in Time* in general and Meg's battle with IT in particular.

### Questions for Essay and Discussion

1. Using specific examples from the text, trace the ways in which Meg Murry's character and self-image develop over the course of *A Wrinkle in Time*.
2. Discuss and point out examples of L'Engle's use of light and dark imagery to symbolize Good and Evil. Can you think of other books or movies in which light and dark symbolize these things? Why do you think L'Engle chose light for Good and dark for Evil instead of the other way around?
3. Discuss the ways in which the idea that "appearances can be deceiving" applies to Mrs. Whatsit, Charles Wallace, and the beasts of Ixchel.
4. How do Meg's feelings for and expectations of her father change over the course of the novel? What can we reasonably expect of our parents?
5. Consider the many different ways people and creatures communicate in *A Wrinkle in Time*. Does L'Engle seem to prefer any one way over the others?
6. Meg has a hard time explaining concepts like "light" and "vision" to Aunt Beast. What things, if any, cannot be communicated in words?
7. Are all of the citizens of Camazotz as happy as IT says they are? Does L'Engle give us any indications that they might not be?
8. What measures does CENTRAL Central Intelligence take to ensure that all citizens of Camazotz are exactly alike? What, for example, happens to a citizen who gets a cold?
9. On Earth, Meg and Charles Wallace are each "punished" for being different and pressured to conform to society's norms. Similarly, citizens on Camazotz are punished for being different. IT pressures them to conform and is nearly impossible to resist. What might L'Engle be saying about the urge and pressure to conform on Earth? What is the equivalent of IT on Earth?
10. Discuss the ways in which Mrs. Who's quotations from Pascal ("The heart has its reasons, whereof reason knows nothing") and the Bible ("And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not") apply to *A Wrinkle in Time* in general and Meg's battle with IT in particular.
11. Why do you think L'Engle had Meg rescue Charles Wallace alone?

## Chapter 12: The Foolish and the Weak

### Vocabulary

**exuberance** – joy; enthusiasm  
**ceased** – stopped  
**reiterating** – repeating  
**vestige** – trace  
**appallingly** – dismayingly; disgustingly  
**abruptly** – suddenly  
**unadulterated** – complete; pure  
**vulnerable** – open to attack  
**formidably** – impressively; frighteningly

1. What about Mrs. Whatsit's manner surprises Meg?

*It surprises Meg that Mrs. Whatsit is cold to her.*

2. Why does it have to be Meg that goes to Camazotz to rescue Charles Wallace?

*It has to be Meg who attempts to rescue Charles Wallace because she is the one that Charles understands intuitively and is closest to.*

3. How do Calvin and Mr. Murry respond to the idea that it must be Meg who goes to Camazotz?

*Both Calvin and Mr. Murry say they will not "allow it."*

4. According to Mrs. Whatsit, why is life like a sonnet?

*Life is like a sonnet in that we are given a strict form (or set of parameters) but have freedom within that form. As Mrs. Whatsit puts it, "You're given the form, but you have to write the sonnet yourself. What you say is completely up to you."*

5. What makes tessering back to Camazotz so risky?

*Tessering to Camazotz is risky because one has to pass directly through the Black Thing.*

6. What does Mrs. Which say that she cannot do for Meg on this journey?

*Mrs. Which says that she cannot hold Meg's hand on this journey.*

### Chapter 6: The Happy Medium

#### Vocabulary

**chiding** – scolding  
**aberration** – deviation from the norm  
**myopic** – near-sighted  
**malignant** – harmful  
**resilience** – ability to bounce back  
**propitious** – favorable

1. How did Mrs. Whatsit battle the Dark Thing in the past?

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2. In what way does witnessing her mother’s sadness help Meg?

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3. When she tesser to Camazotz, what about Meg’s experience differs from the other times she has tessered?

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4. What is Meg’s first impression of Camazotz’s landscape?

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4. Why is there no need for color on Ixchel?

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5. Why does Meg trust the beasts more than she trusts Calvin and her father?

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6. To what does Aunt Beast attribute Meg's harsh and impatient attitude towards Mr. Murry?

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7. How does Calvin describe Mrs. Whatsit, Mrs. Who, and Mrs. Which to the beasts?

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