

2014 Study Guide for *A Wrinkle in Time* adapted by Tracy Young, from the book by Madeleine L'Engle

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### Before seeing/reading the play

1. Research the life and works of Madeleine L'Engle. These and other websites provide information:

<http://www.madeleinelengle.com/madeleine-lengle/>

<http://www.randomhouse.com/teachers/author/lengle-madeleine/>

<http://sojo.net/magazine/1995/03/depths-human-heart>

2. Familiarize yourself with the following scientific and mathematical terms: megaparsec, the biological definition of the word sport, the first through fourth dimensions and tesseract. These and other websites provide information:

<https://astronomy.swin.edu.au/cosmos/M/Megaparsec>

[http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american\\_english/sport](http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/sport)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UnUREICzGco>

<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/tesseract>

3. What are common elements of science fiction? How does it utilize science fact to create a story? These and other websites provide information:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Science\\_fiction](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Science_fiction)

[http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/lesson\\_images/lesson927/SciFiDefinition.pdf](http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/lesson_images/lesson927/SciFiDefinition.pdf)

4. Research telepathy. How does it differ from clairvoyance? These and other websites provide information:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Telepathy>

<https://www.scimednet.org/sapphire/main.php?url=/telepathy-and-clairvoyance>

5. Familiarize yourself with the backstory of Ariel in *The Tempest*. Read Prospero's account of Ariel and the witch, Sycorax, in Act I, Scene ii, Lines 382-430.  
[http://www.opensourceshakespeare.org/views/plays/play\\_view.php?WorkID=tempest&Act=1&Scene=2&Scope=scene](http://www.opensourceshakespeare.org/views/plays/play_view.php?WorkID=tempest&Act=1&Scene=2&Scope=scene)
  
6. Familiarize yourself with the Declaration of Independence. This and other websites provide information:  
[http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/declaration\\_transcript.html](http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/declaration_transcript.html)
  
7. In the story, Meg, Charles Wallace and Calvin visit a planet called Camazotz. Research the similarly named Camelot of the legend of King Arthur. What were the ideals of Arthur's kingdom? How did Arthur strive to bring perfection and equality to his court? What does the idea of the Round Table symbolize? How is this legend a cautionary tale about perception and outward appearances? These and other websites provide information:  
<http://www.camelotintl.com/legend/>  
<http://www.everycastle.com/Camelot-Castle.html>  
<http://www.quest4camelot.com/legend/history.html>
  
8. Research the philosophies of Individualism, Conformity and Collectivism. What are the advantages and disadvantages to these ways of thinking? These and other websites provide information:  
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Individualism>  
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Collectivism>  
<http://psychology.about.com/od/socialinfluence/f/conformity.htm>
  
9. Research Communism of the Soviet Union in the 1950s and 60s. What was the American view of the Soviet Union and Communism? These and other websites provide information:  
<http://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communism>  
[http://www.tn4me.org/sapage.cfm/sa\\_id/135/era\\_id/8/major\\_id/10/minor\\_id/23](http://www.tn4me.org/sapage.cfm/sa_id/135/era_id/8/major_id/10/minor_id/23)

10. Research NASA in the 1960s. What was the space race? What did the concept of space travel mean to United States citizens in the 1960s? These and other websites provide information:

<http://www.nasa.gov/centers/kennedy/about/history/timeline/60s-decade.html>

<http://history.nasa.gov/sputnik/>

### **After seeing/reading the play**

1. Refer to your research on Madeleine L'Engle and science fiction. How do faith and science manifest themselves in the play? In what ways do they work in harmony? When, if ever, are they at odds?
2. Refer to your research on the definition of the term, megaparsec. Why might Meg's father have given her this unique nickname?
3. Refer to your research on the biological term, sport. Calvin refers to himself as a sport. In what ways is he an evolution from his family? How does this contrast with how Meg and Charles initially perceive him? In what ways are Meg and Charles sports in their own right?
4. As he follows Meg and Charles Wallace to the Murry's house, Calvin says, "I have a compelling feeling that for the first time in my life I'm going home." What is it about the Murry home that makes him feel so safe? How does the Murry home contrast with the planet Camazotz? IT also promises the comforts of home and ease, but the children don't find that to be the case. Why?
5. In this play, the shortest distance between two points is not a straight line. Give specific examples of how characters create their own shortcuts or unique paths in the play. Who makes them? How does creating their own way of doing things help them achieve their goals in the play? In what ways does it hinder their progress? How are those characters different from those who always follow the prescribed path?

6. What are the different ways in which beings communicate in this play? Calvin and Charles Wallace share similar gifts in communication; in what ways are they similar? How are they different? How do they each use their skills to communicate with Meg and with each other? Why does Mrs. Who communicate only in quotations? How does this improve her ability to communicate with humans? How does this hinder it? How does Aunt Beast communicate with the humans? What are other examples of characters with unique ways of communication? What does Meg learn by communicating in these different ways?
7. Refer to your research on telepathy and clairvoyance. Which characters use telepathy? How do they use it? Which characters are clairvoyant? IT tells Megs to relax and then speaks directly to her mind. What other characters also speak directly to Meg's mind? How are their motivations different from IT's?
8. What is a happy medium? Think about the character, the Happy Medium; in what ways does she embody the concept of a happy medium? In what ways do her actions and reactions contradict her name? Who else in the play needs to find a happy medium in their lives? How do they go about finding it?
9. When the Happy Medium shows the children Earth, they see that a dark shadow hovers over the planet. Mrs. Which tells them it is evil. What does this evil represent?
10. Meg, Charles Wallace and Calvin list great thinkers who battled the darkness that hovers over Earth. In what ways are they like those great thinkers? How do their space-traveling adventures compare to the battles fought and won by the historical figures that they name?
11. Refer to your research on the American fear of Communism in the 1960s. Refer to your research on Individualism and Collectivism. Meg's brothers, Sandy and Dennys, tell her life would be easier if she could blend in and act like everyone else. While under the influence of IT, Charles Wallace tells Meg that it is easier to give over to the

giant brain and its collective way of thinking. How does Meg battle the concept of Collectivism? How do the ideologies of Individualism and Collectivism battle each other in the play? Which ultimately prevails and why?

12. Before leaving the children on their own, Mrs. Whatsit strengthens a gift that each of them possesses. She tells Meg that her greatest gift is her faults. What does Meg learn from her faults? What strength do they give her? How do they help her battle the evil of IT? How does the inverse apply to Charles Wallace; how do his strengths turn out to be weaknesses?
13. Refer to your research on the Declaration of Independence. What is the significance to Meg reciting the Declaration of Independence to combat IT? What ideals do the document contain that could combat the ideals of Camazotz?
14. Refer to your research on Camelot and the Arthurian legend. Compare the world of Camazotz with King Arthur's Court. In what ways are Camelot and Camazotz perfect? In what ways are they imperfect? What do these stories say about the appearance of perfection? What are examples in the play where appearances are deceiving? When in the play do appearances accurately reflect the truth of a situation and when do they run in opposition to the truth?
15. Charles Wallace and Calvin both claim to be the caretakers of Meg. In what ways do they care for her? How are their ways of caretaking different? Meg strives to take care of Charles Wallace and her father. How are her caretaking instincts different from the two boys?
16. How does Meg's understanding of love change through the course of the play? How does Charles Wallace's understanding of love change? What does Calvin learn about love? What do they teach each other? How does Meg's ultimate understanding of love help her battle the evil of IT at the end of the play?
17. In what ways is this play a coming of age story for Meg, Calvin and Charles Wallace? What do they learn about themselves on their journey through space and time? How do they each grow and change from beginning to end?

18. If you are seeing *A Wrinkle in Time* and *The Tempest*: Compare the science fiction elements in both plays. Which characters in *The Tempest* are other-worldly? What are the magical elements in *A Wrinkle in Time*? Mrs. Who references Ariel's imprisonment in a cloven pine before the children venture to Camazotz. What characters in *A Wrinkle in Time* are similarly imprisoned? Prospero's magic releases Ariel; what is the magic that releases the characters in *A Wrinkle in Time*?

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