



A Wrinkle in Time Study Guide

by Teri Shagoury

For the novel by
Madeleine L'Engle

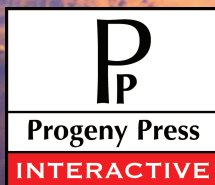


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Synopsis

It is a dark and stormy night. Alone in her attic bedroom, Meg Murry lies awake worrying about the storm, her troubles at school, and her many faults. When she joins her brother, Charles Wallace, and their mother in the kitchen for a midnight snack, they are interrupted by the arrival a strangely dressed woman. The stranger, Mrs. Whatsit, upsets Mrs. Murry when she announces, “There *is* such a thing as a tesseract” before hurrying out the door.

Two years earlier, Meg’s father disappeared while experimenting with tesseracts. Mrs. Whatsit, and her friends Mrs. Who and Mrs. Which, know where Mr. Murry is, and they enlist Meg, Charles Wallace, and their friend Calvin O’Keefe to help rescue him.

Traveling by tesseract, the three children are taken on a journey through space to the distant planet of Camazotz where a shadow of evil—a “Black Thing”—has enslaved the population. Though Mr. Murry is found and freed from his prison, Charles Wallace is ensnared by a powerful enemy known only as IT.

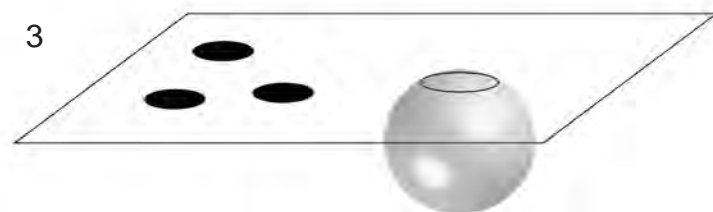
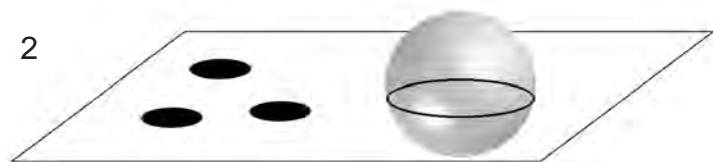
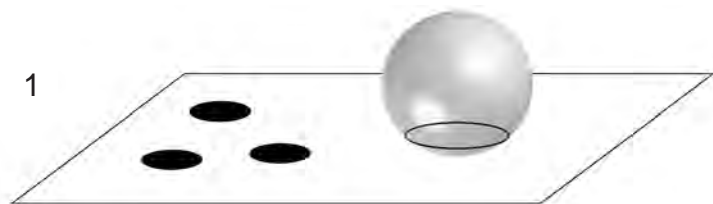
Because she shares a close relationship with Charles Wallace, only Meg can save him, but to do so she must rely on her faults and her weaknesses, and learn to trust when hope seems lost.

Although *A Wrinkle in Time* can be classified as science fiction, it also contains elements of fantasy, philosophy, Biblical truth, and a glimpse of the cosmic battle between the forces of good and evil waged in a distant galaxy.

The second dimension is a plane. It has length and width, but no height. Try this example: use a large sheet of paper as a representation of a two dimensional “world.” Cut a number of small circles from another sheet of paper and place them on this “world.” Imagine that these circles are the inhabitants of the two-dimensional world. Assuming that they have some means of mobility, it’s easy to see that these circles have much more freedom of movement than the residents of a one-dimensional world. They could conceivably move around and visit all their neighbors. Without the dimension of height, imagine how these circles must appear to each other.



Now imagine a three-dimensional object, such as a sphere, intersecting this two-dimensional world. To any of the circles living in that world, a sphere would appear as just another circle. (Fig. 1) But as the sphere moved down through their world, it would seem to mysteriously change its size. (Fig. 2, 3). Perhaps this is the reason Mrs. Whatsit can easily change her shape: she is a being from a higher dimension, but appears merely three-dimensional when she enters our three-dimensional world.



Now pick up one of the circles and put it down someplace else on the two-dimensional world. From the point of view of one of those inhabitants their circular friend would have seemed to disappear from one location only to magically reappear in another. Though this movement through “space” is completely normal to you, to

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the inhabitants of a two-dimensional world, it is virtually impossible because they have no conception of “up” or “down.”

In the same way, Mrs. Which, Mrs. Who, and Mrs. Whatsit use a higher dimension to easily transport Meg, Charles, and Calvin to another planet. Like the circle you moved, Meg, Charles, and Calvin moved through a dimension they did not understand to arrive at a location far from their starting point.

Allusion:

An *allusion* is a brief reference to a literary or historical person or event with which the reader is assumed to be familiar. Authors can add meaning to a story by drawing upon the thoughts and feelings a reader associates with the allusion.

Identify the original source the author alludes to in the following passages from *A Wrinkle in Time*.

1. “When shall we three meet again, / In thunder, lightning, or in rain,” came Mrs. Who’s voice. (Chapter 4)
2. The resonant voice rose and the words seemed to be all around them so that Meg felt that she could almost reach out and touch them: “*Sing unto the Lord a new song, and his praise from the end of the earth, . . .*” (Chapter 4)
3. Mrs. Who seemed to evaporate until there was nothing but the glasses, and then the glasses, too, disappeared. It reminded Meg of the Cheshire Cat. (Chapter 5)
4. Mrs. Who’s spectacles shone out at them triumphantly, “*And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.*” (Chapter 5)

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9. What “gifts” did each of the three Mrs. Ws give to the children? Complete the table below by listing each gift in the appropriate space.

	Calvin	Meg	Charles Wallace
Mrs. Whatsit			
Mrs. Who			
Mrs. Which			

10. Why does Mrs. Whatsit say that the danger is greatest for Charles Wallace?
11. In general terms, describe the appearance of the town on Camazotz and the behavior of its citizens. What is unusual about the boy bouncing the rubber ball?
12. What is the mother’s reaction when the children knock at the door to return the rubber ball?

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16. Read Matthew 25:14–28. The term “talent” found in this parable was originally a unit of weight and then later became a monetary unit. The modern-day usage of “talent” to refer to one’s innate abilities is derived from this original usage. What does this parable teach about how we should use our talents?
17. What talents do you think you have? If you aren’t sure, ask your parents or friends. How can you use your talents in a way that is pleasing to God?
18. Meg tells the Happy Medium that her anger helps her, because when she’s mad she hasn’t got room to be afraid. Later Mrs. Whatsit tells Meg, “Stay angry—you will need all your anger now.”

Can you think of a situation where being angry helped you? Can you think of another time when being angry was harmful? Write about these situations in two or three paragraphs.
19. Read Proverbs 16:32, Proverbs 29:11, Ecclesiastes 7:9, Romans 12:16–21, Ephesians 4:26–27. In one paragraph, summarize what these verses—taken together—teach about anger.

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3. genial, gentle / acerbic, caustic
4. tolerating / hating, detesting
5. withstand, oppose, resist / yield, assent, accommodate
6. congeniality, sociability / hatred, aversion, horror

Questions:

1. He wore no glasses, which had been a trademark, his eyes seemed to look inward. He had grown a beard and his hair was long, almost to his shoulders, with a touch of gray. He looked like a shipwrecked sailor with an expression of suffering endurance on his face.
2. Charles says that to help her father Meg must surrender to IT.
3. Calvin remembers from his study of *The Tempest* at school that Ariel was stuck in a cloven pine and that it was the witch who put her there. Calvin told Charles, "You are like Ariel and IT is the witch who put you in there." Mr. Murry is trapped in a tubular shaped column, like a pine, and Meg suggests that the quote applies to both Charles and her father.
4. Meg puts on Mrs. Who's glasses and is able to pass through the wall into the cell with the transparent column. Apparently the glasses allow her to rearrange the atoms in the wall just as Charles had done earlier.
5. Meg expects everything to be all right once she reaches her father. ("Father will make it all right, Meg thought. Everything will be all right now.") All her efforts had been wrapped up in finding him. After she's found him, she realizes that their struggle is not over, and that he has no easy solutions to their predicament.
6. IT is a disembodied brain, somewhat larger than normal. IT is "completely revolting," and "the most horrible, the most repellent thing" Meg had ever seen. IT emits a pulsing, overwhelming rhythm, and Meg struggles to avoid falling into this rhythm.
7. They worried that if they destroyed IT, they would destroy all the people on the planet who had become dependent on IT—including Charles Wallace. They had to leave Charles Wallace behind because Meg and Calvin were weakening and on the verge of giving in to IT. Had they all given in, there would be no hope of getting Charles Wallace back.
8. Mr. Murry and about six other men had been involved in a project, presumably experimenting with tessering. They drew straws and he was the second. The group waited a year after the first man left before sending out Mr. Murry. The first man never came back.
9. Meg's feels as though every part of her is frozen. Even her mind seems stiff. At first she cannot move or speak properly. Slowly, with pain and great effort, she begins to thaw out. Meg also seems to have been affected mentally because when she can speak again she begins blaming her father for everything that has gone wrong. The accusatory words she uses do not even seem to be hers. She is "as much in the power of the Black Thing as Charles Wallace."

Thinking About the Story:

10. Remembering Mrs. Whatsit's words, Meg relies on her anger, her impatience, and her stubbornness to save herself from giving in to IT.
11. Mr. Murry means that he and the other scientists have little understanding of how dangerous their experiments are. And that lack of understanding could bring terrible harm.

Dig Deeper:

12. Answers will vary. Equality, as it is used in the portion quoted, is a statement of value. All people