# CENTRAL MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY THEATRE PRESENTS



**EDUCATIONAL GUIDE AND ACTIVITY PACKET** 

# A WRINKLE IN TIME Summary

It was a dark and stormy night.

That is where the story starts. Meg Murry, an intelligent young girl, is dealing with many problems. She gets into fights in school and she is missing her father, who hasn't been seen in a year. She lives with her mother and her younger brother Charles Wallace, who can read minds.

Meg, Charles Wallace, and their friend Calvin (a popular athlete who goes to school with Meg) find themselves thrown into an adventure by three magical beings. This adventure is not only to save their father, who found a way to travel across space and time using an item known as a tesseract, but also to save the universe itself.

An evil being known as The Black Thing is taking over planets across the universe, infecting them with its evil and ultimately destroying them. It's up to Meg, Calvin, and Charles Wallace to save one particular planet being impacted by The Black Thing. The people of Camazotz have been taken over by IT, a being of evil controlled by The Black Thing.

Will good defeat evil? Can Meg, Calvin, and Charles Wallace save the world and their father? All is explored in this landmark Science Fiction story.

## ABOUT THE ORIGINAL BOOK AND ITS AUTHOR

A Wrinkle in Time was published in 1962, written by author Madeleine L'Engle. It won the Newberry Medal in 1963. It is the start of L'Engle's Time Quintet, a series of books following members of the Murry and O'Keefe families.

L'Engle was inspired to write A Wrinkle in Time during a ten-week cross-country trip that she made with her husband and children to move to New York. L'Engle combined her interests in theology, cosmology, and physics to create the science-fiction story. A Wrinkle in Time was rejected over 25 times before it was published. Now, A Wrinkle in Time is a beloved book with multiple film adaptations.

"In my journal I recorded this moment of decision, for that's what it was. I had to write. I had no choice in the matter. It was not up to me to say I would stop because I could not. It didn't matter how small or inadequate my talent. If I never had another book published, and it was very clear to me that this was a real possibility, I still had to go on writing."



-Madeleine L'Engle on writing

# **CAST OF CHARACTERS**

**MEG:** A young teen girl. She is fiercely protective of the people she loves, even if it means she is sometimes prone to anger if people are being mean to her family. She is strong, brave, and intelligent, even if she doesn't always have the self-confidence to see it. She is the protagonist of the play.

**CHARLES WALLACE:** Meg's younger brother. Other people in town deem him "strange", mostly because of his high intelligence and supernatural intuitive sense to know what people are thinking.

**CALVIN:** A neighbor to the Murry children. He is a popular athlete who goes to Meg's school. He is the oldest of many children in his family, and he often goes unnoticed by his family. Despite this, he is very loving and caring, and is a calming force for Meg.

MRS. WHATSIT: One of the three celestial beings who recruits and helps the children on their mission. She is the youngest, and is a former star who gave up her star form to fight IT. She is adventurous and youthful, despite being many hundreds of years old.

**MRS. WHO:** One of the three celestial beings who recruits and helps the children on their mission. She is the second oldest, and speaks mostly in literary references and quotes. Her understanding of language inspires the children and also provides a challenging but helpful perspective to them in times of need.

MRS. WHICH: One of the three celestial beings who recruits and helps the children on their mission. She is the eldest of the three, and as such is often looked to as the one in authority. She is mysterious and wise, and while she makes sure the children take the situation seriously, she also offers them comfort and humor.

**AUNT BEAST:** An alien creature who might seem scary at first, but is ultimately kind and loving and saves Meg when she is in danger.

**MRS. MURRY**: Meg and Charles Wallace's mom. She is a beautiful and extremely intelligent biologist, who misses her husband ever since he went missing.

**MR. MURRY:** Meg and Charles Wallace's Dad. He is a physicist who works with the government on space travel, where he gets trapped on the planet Camaztoz. He has been missing for over a year.

IT/The Black Thing: A cold and dark shadow that symbolizes the evil forces that Meg, Calvin, and Charles Wallace must fight against in order to rescue their father. IT is a physical embodiment of the Black Thing on Camaztoz, being a brain that controls the inhabitants of the planet against their will.

# Explore and Discuss the Story

Read the first chapter of *A Wrinkle in Time* by Madeleine L'Engle with your class. After reading, explore these different activities to engage with your class and get them thinking about this story!

## Reflect

As a class or in small groups, discuss the first chapter. What did you like? What interested you? What questions do you have? What do you think will happen next? Who was your favorite character?

### Write

A Wrinkle In Time begins with the iconic opening line, "It was a dark and stormy night." Have your students write their own story that begins with "It was a dark and stormy night". Just like how A Wrinkle in Time establishes Meg, where she is, and what is going on, have students establish their own character, where they are, and what is happening on this dark and stormy night.

# Compare

After seeing the play, have students pick two characters in the play. In what ways are these characters similar? In what ways are they different?

Lead a conversation comparing the alien planet Camazotz to Earth. What parts of the alien planet are familiar to Earth, and what parts are foreign? What do you think Camazotz represents in respect to the themes of *A Wrinkle in Time*?

# Compare

Having read the first chapter of the book and seeing the play, how did they compare? Did you hear any familiar lines in the play that were from the book? What elements of the book had to be changed for the play adaptation? Did you see anything that was described in the book?

## Review

After seeing the play, have your students write theatre reviews for the experience. Use their answers from the reflection exercise to guide them. Critique the performance and design. What worked? What didn't? What would they do differently?

## Examine

The characters in this play are put in tough situations, and have to make hard decisions. Pick one scene of high tension from the play, like when the kids tesser for the first time, or when they encounter IT on Camazotz. Encourage your kids to think about why the characters make the decisions they do. Would they make any decisions differently? Why?

# THEMES IN A WRINKLE IN TIME

There are many themes to be explored in *A Wrinkle in Time*. Below a few are listed. Guide your classroom in a discussion. After seeing the play, what themes did they identify? What are examples of each of these themes from the play? What themes resonated with them personally?

CONFORMITY VS. NONCONFORMITY

GOOD VS. EVIL

**FRIENDSHIP** 

THE POWER OF LOVE

**COURAGE** 

**FAMILY** 

DISCOVERY AND LEARNING

# Learn About Theatre

Theatre is more than just the actors on stage. It takes a whole company of people to make a show happen! Use the materials below to teach your students about different jobs that you can have in the theatre. Then, explore the different activities provided to give them hands on practice in theatre design!

#### **ACTOR**

Actors are the people you see on the stage. They get cast as one of the characters in a show, and then they have to memorize lines, blocking, and sometimes music. They work to bring the characters you see to life.

#### **DIRECTOR**

Directors are the leaders of the show. They come up with the vision for the play, and lead all of the designers and actors in achieving it. They make sure the show is cohesive. They study the script and help actors understand the story they are telling.

#### STAGE MANAGER

Stage managers are the right hand to the director. They ensure that rehearsals run smoothly and on time, take notes for blocking and designers, and are in charge of the show once it is performing. They call cues to the crew to make sure the show is consistent.

#### SOUND DESIGNER

Sound designers pick all of the sound effects and music for a show. The ensure any music or sound picked matches the tone of the show. They also make sure the sound is leveled well, loud enough for the audience to hear, but not too loud that it hurts!

#### LIGHT DESIGNER

Light designers ensure the stage is lit so you can see the show! They pick all of the colors of the lights, make sure all of the lighting equipment is there and in the right place, and work with the director to light the show in a way that compliments all other visual elements.

#### COSTUME DESIGNER

Costume designers
decide what the actors
will wear on stage. They
draw sketches of
costume, and then either
buy, borrow, or create
pieces for the actors to
create a costume that fits
the actor and portrays
the character's
personality.

#### **PLAYWRIGHT**

Playwrights write the scripts for shows. They write the dialogue and all stage directions.
Playwrights often write the plays and publish them long before the show is performed, but sometimes playwrights work to develop plays alongside a company in a process called devising.

#### SET DESIGNER

Set designers create the physical location of the show on the stage. They design a set, and send it to builders to have it made!

They supervise the creation of the set, and provide drawings of the stage to the director so that they know what the stage will look like.

#### Discussion!

Encourage your students to think about which job is most interesting to them. Have them research more about that job and write down one fun fact and one question they would ask someone with that job.

# **Create: Costuming**

Read the physical descriptions below of the different Mrs. W's. Have your students design and draw their own versions of what they think their costumes might look like. Afterwards, have them group up and compare drawings. What similarities/differences do they see? How do their costumes reflect the character descriptions?

Mrs. Whatsit: "The age or sex was impossible to tell, for it was completely bundled up in clothes. Several scarves of assorted colors were tied about the head, and a man's felt hat perched atop. A shocking pink stole was knotted about a rough overcoat, and black rubber boots covered the feet."

Mrs. Who: "In a dilapidated Boston rocker sat a plump little woman. She wasn't Mrs. Whatsit, so she must, Meg decided, be one of Mrs. Whatsit's two friends. She wore enormous spectacles, twice as thick and twice as large as Meg's."

Mrs. Which: "then there appeared a figure in a black robe and a black peaked hat, beady eyes, a beaked nose, and long gray hair; one bony claw clutched a broomstick."

#### PICTURED: Costume designs from different productions of A Wrinkle in Time







#### Listen to Broadway Costume Designer Linda Cho talk about Anastasia!



Read About how Paco Delgado designed costumes for the movie "A Wrinkle in Time"



https://www.wmagazine.com/s tory/a-wrinkle-in-timecostume-designer-pacodelgado

## Create: Sound

One of the technical elements used in theatre is sound design. Sound designers use a variety of techniques to create sound in plays. They might record it, find audio files online, or they could have actors produce the sounds themselves.

A theatre game that teaches actors how to make environment sounds is called Soundscapes. With your class, play this game to create the sound of a storm in your classroom (just like Meg experiences at the beginning of the book). Use the activity not only to explore an aspect of theatre, but also to encourage your students to identify different elements of a storm.

#### **Soundscape Instructions:**

- Sit in a circle so that everyone can see one another and the leader.
- Review the kinds of sounds you hear during a storm (e.g. wind, drizzle, rain)
- Practice making different sounds for each element. For example:
  - Rubbing your hands together (wind)
  - Snapping your fingers (drizzle)
  - Lightly slapping your knees (light rain)Light clapping (steady rain)

  - Heavy clapping (heavy rain)
  - Foot stomping (heavy rain and wind)
- Create a storm soundscape from beginning to end. Start by rubbing your hands together. Transition step by step to heavier and heavier weather, until you have a full-blown storm (foot stomping).
- Quiet the storm by working backwards from foot stomping to rubbing hands
- OPTIONAL: Break your students into groups that represent each element of the storm and lead the storm "orchestra" by pointing at various groups at different times.

#### Check out this example of a classroom soundscape!



#### Listen to this video of a storm! How does your soundscape compare?



# Tessering: Time Travel On Stage

In the play, the characters travel through time using a system called tessering. Before seeing the show, read the description of time travel below. In theater, we don't have the ability to use CGI to show off these effects. How do your students think we will achieve this effect live on stage? Encourage them to use aspects of theatre design in their guess (Lighting, sound, set, props, etc.) Have them write down their guesses on an index card. After seeing the show, go over the class guesses. How did it compare to what happened in the play?

"There was a gust of wind and a great thrust and a sharp shattering as she was shoved through—what? Then darkness; silence; nothingness. If Calvin was still holding her hand she could not feel it. But this time she was prepared for the sudden and complete dissolution of her body. When she felt the tingling coming back to her fingertips she knew that this journey was almost over and she could feel again the pressure of Calvin's hand about hers. [...] This time she was pushed out of the frightening fifth dimension with a sudden, immediate jerk. There she was, herself again, standing with Calvin beside her, holding onto her hand for dear life, and Charles Wallace in front of her, looking indignant."

A Wrinkle in Time, Madeleine L'Engle

## The Science of Stars

The characters travel through time and space in A Wrinkle in Time. They get to observe many different stars and planets, and even meet the stars themselves! You can see the stars outside when the sky is clear at night, and you see a star every day when you see the sun! But why is the sun so much brighter than the other stars? Using the data below, examine the information and make a graph that might help you discover the reason the sun is brighter than other stars in the sky!

## Step One: How Bright?

Look at the pictures of the stars below. Rank them on the table on the next page from brightest to dimmest!







The Sun

Wolf 359

Alpha Centauri

Barnard's Star

Star Name	Brightness (1=Brightest, 2= Bright, 3= Dim, 4= Dimmest)
Sun	
Wolf 359	
Alpha Centauri	
Barnard's Star	

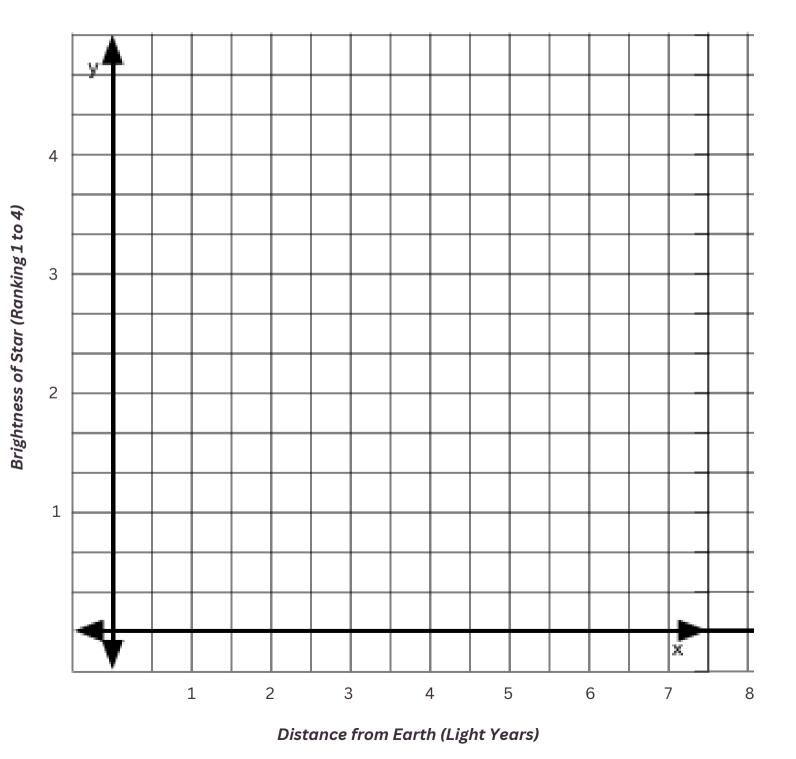
# Step Two: How Far?

Below are the listed distances that each of the stars are from earth. Observe the varying distances!

Star Name	Distance from Earth (in light years)
Sun	0.00001581
Wolf 359	7.795
Alpha Centauri	4.367
Barnard's Star	5.978

## Step Three: Graph

Using the information from the previous two tables as a guide, make a graph on an X-Y axis, the X-axis representing the distance from Earth, and the y-axis representing the brightness of the star. Plot each star with the correct information and label it. What trends do your students notice from the graph? What conclusions can we draw about why the sun seems brighter than other stars in the sky? In the end, your class should be able to succeed in supporting an argument that differences in the apparent brightness of the sun compared to other stars is due to their relative distances from Earth.



# **EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS**

This study guide contains materials fit for Michigan Educational Standards of 5th and 6th grade, as listed below:

- ART.T.II.5.3 Create simple scenery, costumes, sound, and props in the dramatic process.
- ART.T.III.5.1 Understand characters' thought processes during dramatic scenes.
- ART.T.III.5.4 Suggest and implement alternative characters, settings, or events after viewing or participating in a performance.
- ART.T.III.5.5 Display skills to critique self and others in a respectful and constructive manner.
- ART.T.III.5.7 Question emotions and thoughts evoked by performances.
- ART.T.II.6.4 Discuss the role of the designer and technical elements in the theatre process.
- ART.T.III.6.2 Recognize elements of dramatic structure (foreshadowing, flashbacks, rising action, crisis, and denouement) that impact technical needs.
- ART.T.IV.6.3 Research and identify a wide variety of professions related to theatre; playwriting, acting, design, and directing
- *RL.5.2* Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text, including how characters in a story or drama respond to challenges or how the speaker in a poem reflects upon a topic; summarize the text.
- *RL.5.3* Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., how characters interact).
- W.5.3.a Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences. Orient the reader by establishing a situation and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally.
- *RL.6.7* Compare and contrast the experience of reading a story, drama, or poem to listening to or viewing an audio, video, or live version of the text, including contrasting what they "see" and "hear" when reading the text to what they perceive when they listen or watch.
- 5-ESS1-1 Support an argument that differences in the apparent brightness of the sun compared to other stars is due to their relative distances from Earth.
- 5.G.1 Graph points on the coordinate plane to solve real-world and mathematical problems.

## **FURTHER RESOURCES**

Study Guide provided by Stage Partners, the publisher of the script:

https://www.madeleinelengle.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/A-WRINKLE-IN-TIME-5-Lesson-Plans.pdf

A collection of resources for teaching and studying the original book:

https://www.madeleinelengle.com/for-educators/wrinkle-in-time-teacher-resources/

A resource guide developed by the Wheelock Family Theatre for the John Glore adaptation of the play:

https://www.wheelockfamilytheatre.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/a-wrinkle-in-time-curriculum-guide.pdf

A resource guide for the play created by Prime Stage Theatre

https://primestage.com/files/pdf/resource\_guides/resource\_guide awit.pdf

## **ACTIVITY CREDIT**

"Storm in the Classroom" Soundscape activity provided by Science world https://www.scienceworld.ca/resource/storm-classroom/