Teacher Guide

by Madeleine L’Engle
adapted by Tracy Young
directed by Jeff Mills

guide created by Genevieve Swason, Abby Wesley, Jordan Hardesty, and Connor Carson
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Dear Educator,

It is not often that we see a female protagonist in a science fiction novel, much less one that is insecure as a result of labels she’s given: dumb, unattractive, delinquent, peculiar. Meg Murray is a young girl who is told time-and-time again that she is troublesome and not as smart as her family. And yet, she’s compassionate, driven, and she excels in math and science. On a quest to save her father and the world, Meg is the hero of her own story, and she exceeds expectations. By the end of the novel, we learn that with imagination and love, anything in the vast universe is attainable.

At The Theatre School of DePaul University, the institutional home of Chicago Playworks for Families and Young Audiences, we are dedicated to reflecting our audience's experience in an urban, contemporary, and multiethnic environment. We serve over 3,000 students in the Chicagoland community annually and we present productions primarily touched by undergraduate and graduate theatre students. This packet is a result of an undergraduate class dedicated to viewing theatre as an educational tool. In the guide, you will find articles, activities, games, and a list of books that can be used in conjunction with your upcoming trip to the Merle Reskin Theatre.

We are delighted that you have added the Chicago Playworks for Families and Young Audiences’ Study Guide on Tracy Young’s *A Wrinkle in Time* to your classroom instruction. We hope that the guide can serve you and your class as a tool for learning. We look forward to seeing you at the performance!
**Summary**

*A Wrinkle in Time* is the story of Meg Murray as she takes a trip across space and time with her younger brother, Charles Wallace, and her popular friend, Calvin O'Keefe, to save her father and the world.

Meg Murray is an awkward and supposedly unusual daughter of gifted scientist who has been missing for over a year. One “dark and stormy night,” an older neighbor, Mrs. Whatsit, stumbles into the Murray house revealing to Meg’s mother that what Mr. Murray has been looking for, the tesseract, exists.

The next day, Meg and her genius kid brother, Charles Wallace, meet the popular Calvin O'Keefe who is discovered to be misunderstood and living a life that he feels out of place as a social person. The trio learn from Mrs. Whatsit, and her two friends, Mrs. Who and Mrs. Which, that there is an evil force that imprisons Meg’s father on the planet Camozotz. From here, the trio and the three Mrs. Ws are transported to the foreign planet as they work to bring Mr. Murray home.

Here is the link to the **Kahoot** to take with your students BEFORE seeing the show: https://create.kahoot.it/share/before-a-wrinkle-in-time/26d3cc0f-bdf1-444c-8e8f-3c363acd5c05
The Book

Tracy Young’s play *A Wrinkle in Time* is based on the 1962 novel of the same name by Madeleine L’Engle. The book has won several awards including the Newbery Medal, the Lewis Carroll Shelf Award, and others. *A Wrinkle in Time* has since been adapted many times for theatre, opera, film, and graphic novels. Young’s play is an adaptation of the novel meaning it is a reworked version of the original material meant for the stage. For the most part, the stage adaptation is an accurate retelling of the original story. The main difference is that the story is told through several different characters rather than one voice.

Madeleine L’Engle

Madeleine L’Engle was born in New York City on November 29, 1918. As a child, she knew that she wanted to be a writer when she grew up so she went to Smith College for English. She began a career in writing children’s books soon after, and she had a special interest in writing science fiction. Among her most famous books, she has written *A Wrinkle in Time, A Wind in the Door, An Acceptable Time*, and *Many Waters*. L’Engle died on September 6, 2007 at her family home in Connecticut.
Science Fiction

Science fiction is a genre of literature that deals with stories related to the future, other worlds, space, and technology. Science fiction, also called Sci-fi, is sometimes called the “literature of ideas.” *A Wrinkle in Time* is an example of the genre because it is a story that depicts other worlds and time travel. Other popular science fiction books and movies include Star Wars, Jurassic Park, Journey to the Center of the Earth, and The Avengers franchise.
**Key Characters Explained**

**Meg Murray:** The main character of the play. She struggles with self-doubt and puts immense pressure on herself to be perfect. Meg spends most of her time with Charles Wallace because he is more like her than her other siblings.

**Charles Wallace:** Somewhat of a “child genius” but is seen as odd because of his smarts. He is very intuitive and his knowledge is much more extensive than an average 5-year-old.

**Calvin O'Keefe:** A tall and skinny boy who is on the basketball team. Calvin does not have a stable home life. He joins Charles Wallace and Meg on their adventure.

**Mrs. Whatsit:** The youngest of the magical women, often translates for Mrs. Who and Mrs. Which. She has the power of transformation and transforms into a centaur during the play.

**Mrs. Who:** Described as a plump old woman who wears large glasses. She often speaks in quotes because it is easier for her to process than words that are her own.

**Mrs. Which:** The oldest of the magical women, seen as the most knowledgeable. Her age necessitates her to speak much slower.

**Mother:** Beautiful and nurturing, Mother to the Murray children. She is also a scientist like Meg’s father. She is often sad and lonely because she misses her husband.

**Father:** Father to the Wallace children. He is a physicist and works for NASA. When the play begins mystery surrounds his whereabouts.

**Dennys and Sandy:** The twins brothers of Charles Wallace and Meg. They are seen as the “normal” children of the family.

**Fortinbras:** The Wallace Family dog and a key companion for Charles Wallace.

**Man With The Red Eyes:** Controlled by the IT, his look can control your mind, giving the IT power over you.
The Female Protagonist

A Wrinkle in Time is an exciting story not only because of the epic space battles but because it has a female protagonist. A protagonist is the main character of the story. Meg is different from the typical protagonist because she constantly doubts herself. She is somewhat of a perfectionist. She also craves reassurance from her peers. Throughout the story Meg learns to overcome her insecurities and trust in her own strength.

Meg is an interesting character in that we are able to see her flaws. Like many of us she is not perfect, but that is what makes her beautiful and relatable. Meg is also able to use her strengths and smarts to help others. It is exciting to have strong women who younger girls will be able to look up to and for all children to be aware of strong female role models.

Timeline of a Few Famous Women

1860-90s-Harriet Tubman
Famous abolitionist and political activist

1848-Susan B. Anthony
Helped run the Seneca Falls Convention that fought for women’s rights

1928-Amelia Earhart
First woman to fly across the Atlantic Ocean

1955-Rosa Parks
Famous activist in the civil rights movement

2014-Malala Yousafzai
Pakistanian spokesperson for human rights, education, and women’s rights. Nobel Peace Prize winner

2019-Lori Lightfoot
First openly gay African American mayor of Chicago
Make Your Own Magic Contraption

Our main character, Meg, is very skilled at math. In the play we can see how math can be a powerful and fun tool but we understand sometimes it's hard to see it this way. Try this fun activity that uses fractions to create a magic contraption that can answer any question you ask to it.

Supplies: You will need scissors, paper and markers

Directions:
1. Cut out the large square. Ignoring the smaller shapes inside of it!
2. Take each corner and fold it into the center. You should have four flaps once you are done.
3. Flip the paper over so the flap side is down.
4. Take the four corners again and fold it into the center. You should have four flaps with eight triangles when you are done.
5. Label each triangle 1-8.
6. Lift each flap and write a fortune on the under side of the 8 small triangles. Do this until you have an answer under each one. Close the flaps.
7. Turn the paper over and put a label on them. You could do a color or a name of your favorite characters.
8. Fold paper in half. Using both hands slide your thumb and index fingers underneath flaps to open your paper fortuneteller.
How to use:

1. Have someone ask a question that you would like the magic contraption to answer.
2. Have them pick a color or name of the character.
3. Spell out the color as you move the contraption back and forth (i.e. Meg—three letters, move 3 times).
4. Have them pick a number from the inside.
5. Move the contraption that many times (i.e. if you pick 4 have the fortune teller move four times).
6. Choose a final new number.

COMMON CORE STANDARDS:

CCSS.MATH.CONTENT.3.NF.A.1. Understand a fraction 1/b as the quantity formed by 1 part when a whole is partitioned into b equal parts; understand a fraction a/b as the quantity formed by a parts of size 1/b.

CCS.MATH.CONTENT.4.G.A.3. Recognize a line of symmetry for a two-dimensional figure as a line across the figure such that the figure can be folded along the line into matching parts. Identify line-symmetric figures and draw lines of symmetry.
MAGIC CONTRAPTION TEMPLATE

SPACE TRAVEL PHYSICAL WARM UP

1. Reach up to the space above you (stretch up tall towards the sky).
2. Fold yourself in half so you can easily travel into other dimensions (touch your toes).
3. Reach for your ankles (forward fold).
4. Reach for your toes.
5. Calmly prepare to face the IT (slowly roll up on the count of 8).
6. Make your body look like a moon (half moon stretch on both sides).
7. Time travel (wiggle your body out however feels good, being respectful of the space and people around you).
8. Orbit your body (circle head both ways, being careful to be gentle with your neck).
9. Connect with your mind like Meg (touch your temples and gently massage your face).
10. Stretch out your body wide as wide as the galaxy (make your body really big)
11. Strike your most courageous pose.
12. Congrats, you’re finished!

ISBE PE/HEALTH LEARNING STANDARDS:

19.A.2a Demonstrate control when performing combinations and sequences in locomotor, non-locomotor, and manipulative motor patterns.
19.B.2b Develop a basic understanding of multiple basic movement patterns with additional combination movement patterns.
Want to try some warm ups like the ones actors do before they perform? Try these tongue twisters with your friends. You can even have a competition to see who can say them the quickest. Remember, you’ll only improve with practice so don’t feel discouraged if you aren’t able to say them super fast right away.

**Meg’s miraculous mind wanders into the sublime.**

**Ten tesseracts twinkle twice in time.**

**Mrs. Who, Mrs. Whatsit, and Which, whips worlds around with a twitch.**

Benefits of Tongue Twisters:
- Help clarify the pronunciation of words
- Strengthen the muscles that you use to speak
- Promote a pace of speaking that allows for clear understanding
- Prepare you for big speeches

https://busyteacher.org/22924-tongue-twisters-pronunciation-howwhy-to-use.html

Create your own! With the help of a teacher, divide up into groups and try and come up with two more tongue twisters based on *A Wrinkle in Time.* Act them out and show them to the whole class.

**COMON CORE STANDARDS:**

ELA-LITERACY.SL.3.4. Report on a topic or text, tell a story, or recount an experience with appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details, speaking clearly at an understandable pace.

ELA-LITERACY.SL.3.5. Create engaging audio recordings of stories or poems that demonstrate fluid reading at an understandable pace; add visual displays when appropriate to emphasize or enhance certain facts or details.

ILLINOIS ARTS LEARNING STANDARDS:

TH:Pr6.1.3 a. Communicate through a drama/theatre work with peers as an audience.
In they play, Meg and Calvin use the scientific method in order to find out where Meg's dad is. They use these six steps to draw a conclusion.

1. Ask a Question
What do you want to know about?

2. Gather Information
What can you find out about your topic?

3. Form a Hypothesis
What do you think the answer to your question is?

4. Test It! (the hypothesis)
Design an experiment to test your hypothesis.

5. Analyze Your Data
Were you right? Does your hypothesis match what you found?

6. Draw Conclusions
What did you learn? Do you have more or different questions?

Calvin and Meg Example:
1. Where is Meg's dad?

2. He was doing top secret work for NASA and the government.

3. He is not dead. He is on a mission.

4. They search for him with Charles Wallace and the Mrs.s

5. They find Father alive!

6. Father was on a mission to solve time travel.
Try an experiment with your class! Use paper rockets to travel space!

1. Ask a Question: Do longer paper rockets go farther than shorter paper rockets?
2. Gather Information: How heavy is the paper? How many sheets of paper do you use? What else do you need to know?
3. Form a Hypothesis: ex. (Longer rockets go farther.)
4. Test It!: Make a chart of how long rockets are and how far they go (each student is assigned a length to make their rocket). Then make a graph to show your findings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length (in)</th>
<th>Distance (ft)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
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5. Analyze Data: Through the evidence provided by the chart see if your hypothesis is correct. What length went the farthest?

6. Draw Conclusion: ex. Longer paper goes farther but only if… (put what you find)

COMMON CORE STANDARDS:
3-LS3-2. Use evidence to support the explanation that traits can be influenced by the environment.
3-5-ETS1-2. Generate and compare multiple possible solutions to a problem based on how well each is likely to meet the criteria and constraints of the problem.
CCSS.MATH.CONTENT.3.MD.B.3 Draw a scaled picture graph and a scaled bar graph to represent a data set with several categories.
“It was a dark and stormy night…”

These are the words that famously begin *A Wrinkle in Time*. We all tell a variety of stories in several different ways. In the lines below, write a story that describes your day. Was it a “dark and stormy” day? Who did you see today? What did you have for breakfast? How did you get to school?

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COMMON CORE STANDARDS:

ELA-LITERACY.SL.3.4. Report on a topic or text, tell a story, or recount an experience with appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details, speaking clearly at an understandable pace.

ELA-WRITING.3.3a. Orient the reader by establishing a situation and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally.
Further Readings:

MORE BOOKS BY MADELEINE L'ENGLE

The Austin Family
Meet the Austins (1960)
The Moon By Night (1963)
The Young Unicorns (1968)
The Ring of Endless Light (1980)
The Anti-Muffins (1980)
The Twenty-Four Days Before Christmas (1984)
Troubling a Star (1994)

Time Quintet
A Wrinkle in Time (1962)
A Wind in the Door (1973)
A Swiftly Tilting Planet (1978)
Many Waters (1986)
The Arm of the Starfish (1965)
Dragons in the Water (1976)
An Acceptable Time (1989)

MORE BOOKS LIKE A WRINKLE IN TIME

The Countdown Conspiracy by Katie Slivensky
A Crack in the Sea by H.M. Bouwman
The Gauntlet by Karuna Riazi
Beyond the Doors by David Nielsen
Ambassador by William Alexander
When You Reach Me by Rebecca Stead
Watership Down by Richard Adams

Study Guide Created By:
Genevieve Swanson
Abby Wesley
Jordan Hardesty
Connor Carson

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