

THE
THEATRE SCHOOL
..... AT DePaul University



TEACHER GUIDE

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INTRODUCTION

Madeleine L'Engle's *A Wrinkle in Time* has been lauded as a children's classic book for decades. Many children grow up reading this book, watching it on stage or screen, and imagining what it would be like to travel between worlds. While traveling between different worlds and dimensions is a core idea of *A Wrinkle in Time*, we also can think about our own world.

Everyone exists in the world differently. We live in different houses, we know different people, and we experience different things. At the beginning of the story, Meg doesn't like the world that she exists in. Meg doesn't have a present father in her life, she isn't doing well in school, and she doesn't have any friends. Through her bravery and strength, she ends up creating a world where she has all of those things.

We all can create our own world. A world full of love and joy, but to do this we must be brave and strong like Meg, Charles Wallace, and Calvin. *A Wrinkle in Time*, like many theatre productions, makes us realize how we make space for ourselves and others in the worlds where we exist. Open your heart to yourself and for others, and the world will become brighter.



THEATRE ETIQUETTE

Never been to (dramatic voice) THE THEATRE before? No worries! We've got you covered. Here are all the Do's and Don'ts of going to the theatre:



DO:

- Find your seat (see figure 1 to see how the theatre looks)
- Go to the bathroom before the show starts
- Talk with your seat mates BEFORE the show starts
- Begin to quiet down when the lights dim (this means that the show is about to start!)
- Applaud/clap when the show is done or you see something you want to show support for
- Turn your phone or any device you have on silent
- Enjoy the show!

DONT:

- Talk during the show. If you have to tell your teacher something, be sure to whisper!
- Get up and walk around during the show. You might distract other audience members, or block someone's view of the stage! Try to only get up if you have to go to the bathroom, or if you REALLY need to leave the theatre. If that's the case, tell your teacher and try to find a front-of-house worker to help guide you out. The theatre will be dark! (See figure 2 for what front-of-house workers look like)
- Get on your phone or any electronic device unless it's an emergency. The screen brightness will be very noticeable in the dark theatre, and any noises your device makes might distract the actors.

FIGURE 1: THE INSIDE OF THE MERLE RESKIN THEATRE



FIGURE 2: YOUR FRIENDLY FRONT-OF-HOUSE WORKER! ASK THEM FOR HELP IF YOU NEED IT





CONTENT WARNINGS



WHAT IS THAT?

Did you know that more than 70% of people have reported experiencing a traumatic event in their lifetime? About 30% of people reported experiencing 4 or more traumatic events. With this in mind, it's likely that many students have already experienced something difficult, and may want to be prepared before they see it on stage. Content warnings are verbal or written notices that precede potentially sensitive content. These notices flag the contents of the material that follows, so readers, listeners, or viewers can prepare themselves to adequately engage or, if necessary, disengage for their own wellbeing.

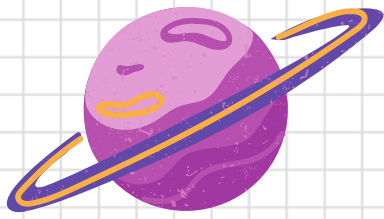
WHAT ARE THE CONTENT WARNINGS FOR WRINKLE IN TIME?

A missing father

Bullying

Brief implication of child abuse

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the House Manager at the box office.

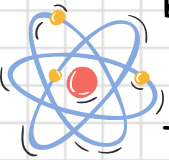


SUMMARY

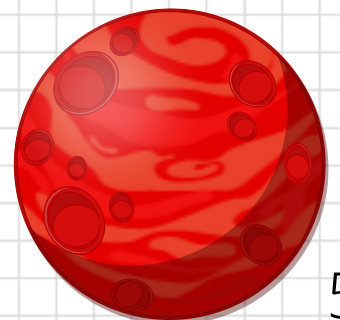
A Wrinkle in Time is the story of Meg Murray as she takes a trip across space and time with her younger brother, Charles Wallace, and her popular friend, Calvin O'Keefe, to save her father and the world.



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.

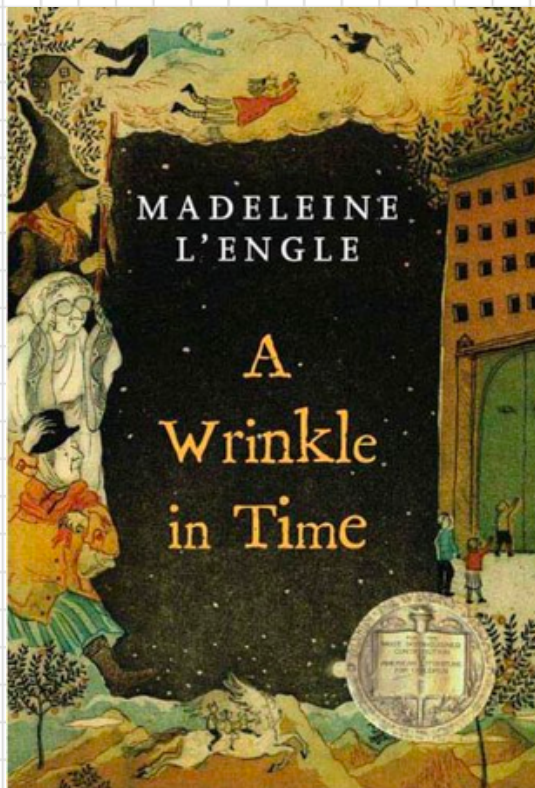


The next day, Meg and her genius kid brother, Charles Wallace, meet the popular Calvin O'Keefe who is discovered to be misunderstood and living a life that he feels out of place as a social person. The trio learn from Mrs. Whatsit, and her two friends, Mrs. Who and Mrs. Which, that there is an evil force 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.



HISTORICAL CONTEXT

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.



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.

The original text of *A Wrinkle in Time* has some pretty controversial themes that have caused it to be removed from many schools over the country. The first time this book was challenged was in 1985 because the themes of the book "oppose Christian beliefs and teach occult practices." This is in regards to the combination of religious references and its connection to science and magic through the plot. There is also an issue of how *A Wrinkle in Time* views good vs bad beliefs and how L'Engle's thoughts differ from the Bible's. In response to schools banning books, L'Engle has said that most of the claims about *A Wrinkle in Time* seem to come from people who have never read the text and do not understand what the story is about. They have instead heard the themes of the book and thought it did not coincide with Christian beliefs and decided it was not okay for their children to read. It is really upsetting seeing this masterpiece of a text being taken out of schools just because it explores the boundaries of science and magic in a way that is hard to imagine for most people considering their religious beliefs. I hope you remember this as you go into the play and come to a decision for yourself if *A Wrinkle in Time* deserves to be banned or if you would like to see it be added back to more shelves.



LOSS AND GRIEF

BY BECCA SMITH

Whether it is misplacing your wallet or having someone you love pass away, everyone experiences loss. Everyone is allowed to feel their emotions in any way that helps them process their situation. In *A Wrinkle in Time* our characters deal with a lot of different types of loss and grief, most notably, Meg's father disappearing from the family. There are a lot of effective ways to help all of us process when bad things happen. We can even look towards the play to see what Meg does to help herself in times of hurt and apply it to our own lives.

Something that can help you in situations of confusion or discomfort is being able to know yourself and know your limitations. If you are someone who naturally becomes very isolated when dealing with issues, remember to take time for yourself. It is okay to be quieter than normal or not as active every once in a while if you know it will help you in the long run. A different person may go about their daily business as usual even when hardships hit close to home and that is perfectly okay as well! Everyone deals with emotions differently and it is important to respect every individual person's healing processes, especially if you do not know someone's full story. It can take a lot of time and effort into understanding how you emote differently from others, so also be easy on yourself if you change your coping styles from time to time.

One of the easiest ways to make yourself feel better when you're feeling down is to look to those around you. Your friends and family, whoever they may be, are there to support you even if the situation is as simple as you are just not feeling too well. I always have days where I need to talk about how I am feeling with a close friend, even if I know the situation will heal in a few days. Finding love through our lives whether that's love for ourselves or from others is what can get us through the day and looking towards our own happy endings!

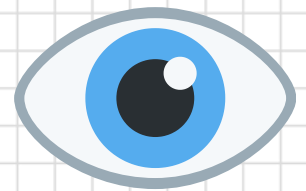
DIFFERENT WAYS OF LEARNING

BY TISBY CRITCHLEY

All humans are different, like snowflakes, no two are alike. *A Wrinkle in Time* shows us how all of us learn, grow, and experience the world differently. In the play, the three main characters are all very different from each other, but they still save the day. These characters all intake and process information in different ways. One theory of how we learn originated from Howard Gardner's Theory of multiple intelligences. Gardner is a Harvard psychologist who hypothesized that everyone possesses multiple intelligences. Which means that everyone has many strengths and skills, which helps them learn. Another theory on how we learn is called the VARK method, which was developed by Neil Fleming in the 1970s. When we learn in school or life, Fleming hypothesized that there are different styles that we can utilize to understand new information that makes sense to us. This is called VARK, which stands for Visual, Auditory, Reading and Writing, and Kinesthetic Learning.

VISUAL LEARNING

Visual learners are people who learn best when there are charts, maps, and drawings. This helps them to understand patterns and process information. Visual learners usually don't enjoy being told instructions, but would rather have them written down. Visual learners don't always participate in class discussions. Some people remember things better by seeing them visually, like Calvin in *A Wrinkle in Time*. Calvin observes Meg using the scientific method of observation. From his observations, he understands more about Meg and Mr. Murry. Through visual learning, Calvin becomes a good friend to Meg.



AUDITORY LEARNING

Auditory learners retain and process the most information through listening. They often like to talk through information in order to understand, meaning that sometimes they can't concentrate when it is too noisy in a room. These learners prefer class discussion and lectures over reading and visual aids. Charles Wallace is an auditory



learner, he prefers things to be read to him and he understands when Mrs. Who speaks in Latin to him. Charles Wallace understands a problem when someone explains it to him, rather than written instructions.

READING/WRITING

Throughout the play, we see characters like Mrs. Murry and Meg, who often like to write things down in order to understand them. This is called a Reading/Writing learning style. They understand words and problems that are written down on paper. They like to read books and take notes so they can better understand the world around them. Meg likes to write down her calculations to solve a problem. Mrs. Murry likes to write letters to process her feelings and understand more about herself.



KINESTHETIC LEARNERS

Kinesthetic learners learn by doing. They retain the most information and display the application of this knowledge through hands-on activities. They do not always learn through lectures or visual presentations. Mrs. Who, Mrs. Whatsit, and Mrs. Which are kinesthetic learners. They learn through experimentation with the tesseracts. These characters figure out how to solve problems from their actions and experiments. Kinesthetic learners work well in groups and when they have plenty of time and space to explore.

The VARK Learning Styles are not the only learning styles that you can be, many people are logical, social, solitary, or verbal learners. Most people are actually a combination of 2 or 3 learning styles, which emphasizes that we all are different and learn things differently. No matter the learning style or how different we are, we can still do great things!

AUTISM CODED CHARACTERS

BY KENZ MANGAN

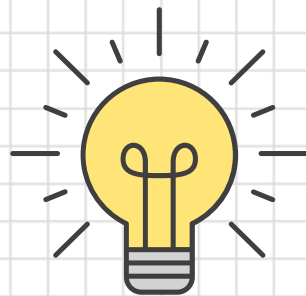
Within the first few minutes of *A Wrinkle in Time*, Meg turns to her little brother and complains that people find him weird. "That little boy just isn't right," says one character, "He never talks." We find out that many people think of Charles Wallace as 'stupid' due to his lack of participation in school. Yet, as we learn later on, he is considered one of the brightest young minds in the universe. The socially-awkward-genius character trope is not uncommon, and in fact may allude to a character having autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Approximately 1% of the population - or 75 million people - live with ASD. In 2021, it was reported that about 1 in 44 kids are diagnosed with ASD. While common, the disorder can have a large range of severity as well as symptoms. Hence, why it's a spectrum. Symptoms of ASD may include problems with social communication and interaction, as well as restricted or repetitive behaviors and interests. People with ASD may also have different ways of learning, moving, or paying attention. This disorder is considered a developmental disability.

Charles Wallace is anti-social to his peers, hyper-interested in things that are unusual for his age, and learns in ways dissimilar to others in the play. Through the text, it's made clear that despite his genius regarding interdimensional travel, he is bullied at school and thought of as odd or stupid. Charles Wallace is not an enigma in the world of fictional characters; Sheldon Cooper from *The Big Bang Theory* and Sherlock Holmes are some of the more well known examples of the socially-awkward-genius, and are often theorized to have autism.

Yet what does it mean to have characters that exhibit all of the symptoms of autism but lack the label? This is something called Autism Coding, a phenomenon in fictional characters that is similar to Queer-baiting, or the act of hinting at queer relationships between characters but not acting on it. Queer-baiting allows shows, movies and plays to interest LGBT+ audience members without losing the conservative audience members who may stop watching if something is labeled as 'Queer.' Essentially, it allows shows to avoid controversy while retaining a more diverse audience.

In the case of autism coding, a character is written with all the traits of someone with ASD, but it is never explicitly stated that they have it. This allows for people with autism to enthusiastically relate to the character without actually labeling the character as having a disability. Keep the fans, avoid the liability. To some, coding a character with the traits of ASD may feel like enough representation. The problem lies in the fact that many non-disabled people struggle to think of disabled people as, well, people. Despite how common ASD is, most neurotypicals will only think of the most severe form of autism when thinking about those living with ASD. Without giving a character a diagnosis, it reinforces the idea that autistic people who pass as neurotypical can't really be autistic. Instead, they are labeled as a little quirky, but mostly 'normal.' This can be damaging for kids who see themselves in a character, or else know that they have autism, but are unable to prove that the character is the same.

It's important to talk about and honor different ways of learning and engaging with the world. If people see autism as something other, then those with ASD will continually be othered. By naming it, the world can learn exactly what makes everyone's brain different, and we can build a world that caters to all types of thinking.



THE SCIENCE OF LOVE

BY ROY

There are many different types of love. In *A Wrinkle in Time*, familial love becomes very important. Familial love can be felt in different ways by different people. For example, siblings feel familial love, and may express it by playing together or helping each other with chores. Different types of love may be felt at the same time. For example, people who feel romantic love for each other may begin to feel familial love over time. Love may look different from person to person on the outside, but on the inside, the way love works in all of our bodies comes down to a few neurotransmitters and hormones.

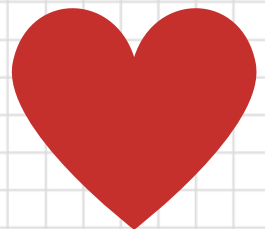
Neurotransmitters

Our nervous system is the way our brains stay connected with the rest of our bodies. If neurons are the messengers, neurotransmitters are what they use to send messages. Dopamine is a neurotransmitter associated with the feeling of love. When we look at the face of someone we love, our neurons send out plenty of dopamine. Dopamine is also associated with being rewarded, which we experience as a positive feeling.

Hormones

Our endocrine system is the way our body takes care of the things we do not think about. For example, when we use food to make energy, when we sweat to cool down, or when we calm down to go to sleep, our endocrine system releases hormones to make sure the right organs are doing their jobs. Oxytocin and vasopressin are hormones released when we feel attached to someone, like a parent or a partner.

Here's a song about the science of romantic love:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VbFchFeINfo>



EXPERIMENT #1: BANNED BOOKS

Grade 5-8. Learning Standards: SS.3-5.IS.3-5, SS.6-8.IS.4.LC, SS.6-8.IS.4.MdC, SS.6-8.IS.4.MC, SS.6-8.IS.6.LC. 20 minutes.

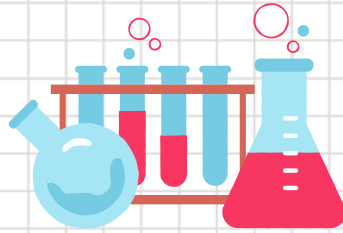


1. Go to the website for Banned and Challenged Books at the link below:
 - a. <https://www.ala.org/advocacy/bbooks/frequentlychallengedbooks/classics>
2. Scroll through the list of common books that are banned in schools and take a look at the reasons they are banned.
 - a. Think about what are some common reasons books get banned according to the website? Notice any trends? Are there any books you recognize or have previously read that have been taken out of schools?
3. Select one book that speaks to you from the list and do a separate search specifically surrounding that book.
4. What is the reason your book was banned? Do you agree with the people taking it out of schools or not? Do you notice any similarities to why *A Wrinkle in Time* was banned and why the book you selected was banned?

Talk amongst your class about the questions posed in the activity. Hear from each other about the specifics of each book's reasonings for being banned. What conclusions have you all come to as a class? Do you have different opinions about the books you researched? Does it make sense why *A Wrinkle in Time* was banned or do you disagree with the reasoning provided?

EXPERIMENT 2: SCIENTIFIC METHOD

Grade Level 6-8, Learning Standards: WHST 4, 10, WHST.6-8.7, CC.6.W.4, CC.6.W.7



"If, Then, Because" Hypothesis creation

In the play, we see five "How to Tesser" experiments. Take a moment to make a list of however many you remember and what they looked like. In your groups, design an outline for a fictional lab write-up for the experiment. Make sure to include:

- A title for your experiment
- The problem you are trying to solve
- Your hypothesis (if we try _____, then _____ will happen. This will happen because...)
- Materials you would need
- The procedure for the experiment

Since your experiment will be other-worldly, there's no need to include observations or data. The outline will be done in groups, and the full write-up will be done individually.

For homework, turn the bullet point ideas you came up with as a group into a full write-up. For each section, except the title, you should have 3-5 sentences.

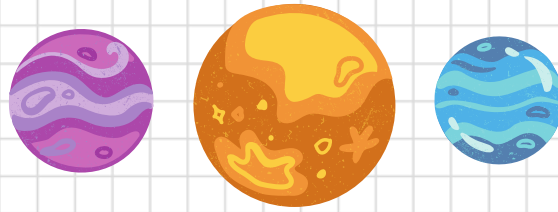
Next class, we will meet in groups once more and prepare to share each group's experiment with the class.

Bonus: If your class has access to the internet, be sure to look into real theories on inter-dimensional travel. This video references the movie adaptation of the novel and is a good place to start:

<https://youtu.be/8RIA9JxbRnY>

EXPERIMENT #3: BUILD YOUR WORLD

Grade level 3-5. Learning Standards: TH:C.10.1.3-5, SELS 2B.1a-3b. 45 minutes.



Items needed: 3 sheets of paper per student, scissors, glue, any available craft supplies

1. On one sheet of paper, design what your world looks like now? Where do you live? What does your family look like? Who are your friends? What do you do for fun?
2. On your second piece of paper, design a tesseract. It can look like anything you want. What color is it? What shape is it? How does it work?
3. On your third piece of paper, design the world that you would use your tesseract to travel to. What does this new world look like? What does the sky look like, or the ground? Is it futuristic? Is it medieval? What happens in this world? Who lives there?
4. Compare each drawing of worlds; how similar are the worlds? How different are the worlds? Is the second world where you thought your tesseract would take you? Which world is better to live in? How could you make your new world look like your old world and vice-versa?

GAMES

Fun theatre games to play with your class!

BEST AUDIENCE EVER (2-5 MINUTES)

Pre-Show Game

This game teaches students how to be a good audience by paying attention to the performer and congratulating people for a job well done!

1. Have students form an audience on one side of the room.
 - a. This game can also be played in line for a bus, sitting, standing, or anywhere you see fit.
2. Have students step forward one at a time and perform anything they want for 5 seconds.
 - a. Students can dance, jump, say their favorite color, etc.
 - b. Students can also perform in pairs or small groups.
3. After the student has performed, have the audience cheer and clap for their classmate(s).
4. Make sure everyone has a turn and have fun!

MOVE AROUND THE SPACE (10-15 MINUTES)

This game teaches spatial awareness, body awareness, and focus

1. Begin by clearing the space, it should be enough room for all students to comfortably move.
 - a. If classroom space cannot support this game, try outside or any bigger space available.
2. Start slow, have everyone begin to move around the space.
3. Encourage them to be quiet and focus on what their bodies feel.
4. Make sure the students don't just follow each other around, encourage them to move in any pattern they want.
5. Give the students prompts on how to move in the space. They should alter the way they move for each one.
 - a. How would you move if you were a liquid?
 - b. How would you move if you were a gas?
 - c. How would you move on the planet Uriel?
 - d. How would you move on the planet Orien?
 - e. How would you move on the planet Camazotz?
 - f. How would you move when you wrinkle using a tesseract?

LOVE AND LIBERATION

AN ESSAY FOR TEACHERS AND INSTRUCTORS

BY JOAN STARKEY & LAURA RODRIGUEZ SIERRA

A Wrinkle in Time explores the ever-presence and abundance of love. Yet, arguments on the novel's Christian elements have overshadowed Madeleine L'Engle's purpose of expressing universal liberation through the power of Love, regardless of religious structures instilled within the text. For example, Charles Wallace has a proclivity for Bible study, the alien song on Uriel is translated to a Bible verse, and Mrs. Who confirms that Jesus worked alongside figures like Buddha and Gandhi to fight the Black Thing, the symbol of great evil. Christianity within the narrative of fantasy, specifically in our story of A Wrinkle in Time, uses its religious allusions and structures not for the impetus of dogmatic influence but in the spirit of theological liberation.

Liberation theology is a faith-based approach that uplifts and strives for the liberation of the oppressed. Liberation theology roots its beginnings from the oppressions of Christianity during the Age of Exploration where conquistadores stripped indigenous bodies of their history, culture, and being. Through various liberation movements across the globe, the history of liberation theology has blossomed within most if not all forms of the major religions led by the human race including Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, and of course, its founding religion, Christianity. The common thread of all the theological approaches to spiritual and oppressive liberation is love. Muslim tradition follows "Sadaqa" which is "expressed as any act of giving based on the believer's compassion, love, or generosity." And for Hinduism, "according to the Upanishads (later Hindu scriptures), is avidya, an ignorance requiring riddance so that the human spirit, awakened to its true self, can unite with Brahman, the absolute. This unity moves the heart toward divine love (bhakti), which motivates the self toward liberative acts." L'Engle's comparison of the biblical Jesus to great figures involved in liberation movements is not used in vain nor to corrupt the Christian faith, but to unite the human creation of religion into the singular, reigning divinity that is God who is found in the Universe and who is Love.

In addition to greater universal liberation, A Wrinkle in Time centers Meg's individual spiritual journey as the hero of the story. Throughout her grand journey, enabled by the Love given to her by Calvin, the Guides, The Happy Medium, and Aunt Best, Meg sheds her insecurities, enormous anger, and fear. She resolves the conflict that traps her baby brother by confidently harnessing the power of Love. She finds that the Love she can give her brother is infinitely stronger than the evil force of IT that restrains him. Through Meg's liberation of Charles Wallace and herself, and thus the reuniting of their family, Madeleine L'Engle promotes a universal theology of Love that is not limited by specifics of belief.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

BY JEFF MILLS

We dedicate this show to all the librarians! They are our everyday heroes, and they don't get enough respect. In this theatrical version of Madeleine L'Engle's classic story, we have made librarians the true protagonists. We've imagined a chorus of twelve magical librarians who have been called to this place (this theater) to assist and mentor Meg Murry. Through the course of the play, they help Meg face her own darkness, despair and self-loathing. As she travels through time and space to rescue her father and younger brother, she discovers her true purpose, and realizes that she is responsible for creating her own sense of meaning. As she explores the farthest reaches of the universe, she proves that nihilism, cynicism, greed, cruelty, selfishness, and everything evil can only be defeated by love. In the end she realizes how much love she has inside her and that only by expressing her love can she bring the universe back into balance. I was about Meg's age when I learned that. I learned that by reading *A Wrinkle in Time*, and it was a LIBRARIAN who gave it to me! Thank you Librarians!

