Navigator
A novel study guide for
A Wrinkle in Time
by Madeleine L’Engle

Navigator Developer: Rebecca M. Walter

Center for Gifted Education
School of Education
The College of William and Mary
Acknowledgement

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**William and Mary Navigator: A Wrinkle in Time**  
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Introduction

This Navigator is a collection of questions and activities intended to support group or independent study of the Newbery Medal book *A Wrinkle in Time* by Madeleine L’Engle. It is one of a series of Navigators developed by the Center for Gifted Education at The College of William and Mary as a language arts resource for teachers and students.

Novel studies should encourage advanced readers to develop their skills at analyzing and interpreting literature through structured questions and activities that highlight themes and concepts, literary elements, and real world connections contained within the books. In addition, novel studies are opportunities for students to develop their own vocabulary and writing skills by exploring and emulating the language and style used by authors.

**What are the goals of the Navigator?**
The Navigator addresses the following learning goals:
- To develop analytical and interpretive skills in literature.
- To develop understanding of selected literary themes.
- To develop linguistic competency through vocabulary and language study.
- To develop skills in written and oral communication.
- To develop higher level thinking and reasoning skills in language arts.
- To develop research skills.

**Who is the audience for the Navigator?**
This Navigator is intended for readers of *A Wrinkle in Time*, a novel appropriate for strong readers in the middle elementary grades. This novel meets many of the criteria identified by Baskin and Harris (1980) for books for gifted readers, including *rich, complex language; open-endedness, to inspire contemplation; and helpfulness in building problem-solving skills.*

**How should the Navigator be used?**
The Navigator may be used as an instructional tool by a teacher or as an independent study guide by a student or group of students. The central intent is for teachers to use the Navigator to support a novel study with a group of students, selecting questions and activities to assign as desired, given the context. However, teachers may also choose to make the Navigator available to students at a learning center, with expectations specified for students as to which items they should complete.

The Navigator incorporates several types of questions related to the novel. Some of these, identified as “while you read” questions, are specifically intended to be used for reflection and prediction as students progress through the novel. Other questions are intended for response after the reader has completed the novel, while still others may be answered either during or after reading. All of the questions on pages 13 - 23 of the Navigator may be used for writing and/or discussion.
Additional activities beyond the discussion and reflection questions appear on pages 24 - 35 of the Navigator. Some of these activities support further development of the language arts skills identified in the goals, while others provide interdisciplinary connections and research applications.

*What are the prerequisites for students using the Navigator?*
Students using the Navigator should be able to complete the novel itself independently and should be familiar with the literary and reasoning terms utilized in questions. In addition, students will be asked to complete activities that utilize several specific teaching/learning models: the Literature Web, the Hamburger Model for Persuasive Writing, and the Vocabulary Web. If these terms and models are new to students, teachers may wish to conduct mini-lessons on them either prior to or during use of the Navigator. Some guidance for using the teaching models is provided on the following pages.
Teaching Models

The Literature Web
The Literature Web is a model designed to guide interpretation of a literature selection by encouraging a reader to connect personal response with particular elements of the text. The web may be completed independently and/or as a tool for discussion. The recommended use is to have students complete the web independently and then share ideas in a small group, followed by a teacher-facilitated debriefing. The web has five components:

- **Key Words:** interesting, unfamiliar, striking, or particularly important words and phrases contained within the text

- **Feelings:** the reader’s feelings, with discussion of specific text details inspiring them; the characters’ feelings; and the feelings the reader infers the author intended to evoke

- **Ideas:** major themes and main ideas of the text; key concepts

- **Images and Symbols:** notable sensory images in the text; “pictures” in the reader’s mind and the text that inspired them; symbols for abstract ideas

- **Structure:** the form and structure of the writing and how they contribute to meaning; may identify such features as use of unusual time sequence in narrative, use of voice, use of figurative language, etc.; style of writing
The Hamburger Model for Persuasive Writing
The Hamburger Model uses the familiar metaphor of a sandwich to help students construct a paragraph or essay. Students begin by stating their point of view on the issue in question (the top bun). They then provide reasons, or evidence, to support their claim; they should try to incorporate at least three supportive reasons (the “patties”). Elaboration on the reasons provides additional detail (the “fixings”). A concluding sentence or paragraph wraps up the sandwich (the bottom bun).

Introduction
(State a point of view.)

Reason

Elaboration

Elaboration

Elaboration

Reason

Elaboration

Elaboration

Conclusion
The Vocabulary Web
The Vocabulary Web is a tool for exploring words in depth. It asks students to investigate a single word in detail, finding its definition, synonyms and antonyms, and etymological information. With this information, students then identify "word families," or other words using the same meaning-based stems as the original word; and they provide an example of the word, which may be a sentence or analogy using the word, a visual or dramatic representation, or another creative form.
In addition to the models discussed here, Navigator developers also used Paul's (1992) Elements of Reasoning in preparing questions and activities. This model for critical thinking emphasizes the following eight elements: issue, purpose, point of view, assumptions, concepts, evidence, inferences, and implications or consequences. Teachers may wish to introduce these terms to students, using a familiar issue such as something being discussed in the school or community; teachers should then encourage the use of the terms and the model in approaching problems and issues.

The Navigator also contains research assignments that are issue-based and connected to the novel. Students should be encouraged to explore multiple points of view and use human and organizational as well as print resources in their investigations of these real-world issues.

Several resources are listed at the end of the Navigator that may be useful to students and teachers in exploring these models further.
Implementing the Navigator

How long does the Navigator take?
Duration of study depends on teacher preference and number of activities and questions assigned.

How does the Navigator address standards for language arts?
The Navigator was designed with an eye to addressing key standards for language arts identified by the National Council of Teachers of English and the International Reading Association (1996) as well as standards from several state-level education departments. Specifically, the Navigator reflects standards in the following areas:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Standards Emphases</th>
<th>Navigator</th>
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<tr>
<td>- Use of strategies to understand, interpret and evaluate text</td>
<td>- Provides the student with an organizer for interpreting text (the Literature Web) and guiding questions to support understanding and critical analysis</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Use of writing strategies and writing process elements</td>
<td>- Provides writing prompts, a writing model, and emphasis on steps of the writing process</td>
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<td>- Use of spoken and written language for particular audiences and to accomplish particular purposes</td>
<td>- Incorporates activities for writing and speaking that emphasize persuasive, reflective, informative, and narrative communication</td>
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<td>- Knowledge of vocabulary, language structure, and language conventions and analysis of how they are demonstrated in text</td>
<td>- Encourages in-depth word study of advanced vocabulary, including emphasis on etymology and usage of words</td>
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<td>- Research on issues and areas of interest, with emphasis on utilizing a variety of technological and informational resources to gather data, interpret results, and communicate findings</td>
<td>- Provides several issue-based research assignments for students, emphasizing data collection from print, non-print, and human resources; analysis and synthesis of data; and written and oral communication of findings</td>
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<td>- Participation as members of literacy communities</td>
<td>- Encourages discussion within and beyond the classroom about the specified text and invites similar exploration of other texts</td>
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<td>- Emphasis on reading a wide range of literature selections to build understanding of the human experience</td>
<td>- Encourages in-depth study of the specified text as well as comparisons to other selected works; suggests specific titles for further reading</td>
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How should the Navigator activities be assigned?
Teachers should specify expectations for students about the number and type of activities and questions to be completed, as well as expectations for quality of work. Teachers may choose to assign Navigator questions and activities using a combination of required and optional items. Several sample organizations of assignments follow.

Sample 1 (Teacher-led emphasis):

- Teacher-led discussion of higher-level questions; 1 to 3 questions assigned for journal response
- Required assignments: Literature Web, book review, one Vocabulary Web, one research assignment
- Choice assignments: student choice of THREE remaining activities
- Oral presentation of one completed piece

Sample 2 (Small-group emphasis):

- Small-group discussion of higher-level questions, with 4 to 5 questions completed in writing for teacher review
- Group assignments: Genre comparison OR concept map, two Vocabulary Webs, one research assignment with group presentation
- Individual assignments: Literature Web, persuasive paragraph/essay OR book review, student choice of TWO remaining activities

Sample 3 (Individual emphasis):

- Written responses to student choice of 2 to 3 discussion questions per category
- Required assignments: one research assignment; student choice of THREE additional activities, of which one must be a completed writing piece or an oral presentation of one assignment
**How should the Navigator activities be assessed?**

Teachers should assess student progress based on the quality of individual products and achievement toward the goals of the Navigator. Decisions about which activities to require students to complete should be based on how the selected activities support multiple learning goals.

Question responses should be assessed based on demonstration of insight and ability to use text to support inferences. Writing activities should be assessed based on clarity and insight, and may also be assessed for writing style and mechanics as desired. Oral presentations of completed work should be assessed based on coherence, content, and clarity of the presentation. Teachers may provide rubrics for students related to the required assignments or work with students to develop rubrics for assessment.

Completed Navigator activities should be collected into a folder for assessment, and final assessment may include self-evaluation by the student.

The following chart demonstrates how the Navigator activities support the identified goals:

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<td>Discussion/Writing Questions</td>
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<td>Literature Web</td>
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<td>Book Review</td>
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<td>Persuasive Essay</td>
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<td>Concept Map</td>
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<td>Vocabulary Web</td>
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<td>Advertisement</td>
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<td>Genre Comparison</td>
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<td>“Light-Bearers” Research</td>
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<td>Character Analysis across Novels</td>
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<td>Movie Review</td>
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<td>Time Travel Research</td>
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<td>Religion Comparison</td>
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What additional resources are required to use the Navigator?
Most of the activities in the Navigator require only the novel itself and regular classroom supplies. Vocabulary activities will require the use of a good dictionary, including etymological information on words. Recommended dictionaries include The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language and the Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary. Interdisciplinary and research activities may require additional supplies and access to library and Internet resources. The Guide to Teaching a Language Arts Curriculum for High-Ability Learners (Center for Gifted Education, 1998) provides guidance in the use of the literature, persuasive writing, and vocabulary study models used in the Navigator as well as other guidelines for language arts with high-ability populations.

A listing of additional resources and suggestions for further reading appears at the end of the Navigator.

Technology Integration

Several opportunities for technological connections and development of technical skills are incorporated in the Navigator. Based on the resources available in your classroom or media center, consider the following uses of technology:

- Access to the Internet for research projects. Key websites are listed in the resources section.
- Use of word processing and/or publishing software for writing assignments.
- Use of presentation software for presenting research findings and completed activities.
- Use of Inspiration or similar software for creation of concept maps.
Synopsis

When Meg's physicist father disappears while doing work for the government, she must go on an adventure through time and space to save him. Traveling in the fifth dimension with her brother Charles Wallace, and a new friend, Calvin, the three children are guided by a mysterious trio of women who give them the tools they need to fight the powers of evil that are holding Meg's father captive. Along the way, the children learn about good and evil, universal harmony, and appreciation of their own unique talents and gifts.
Higher-Level Questions for Discussion and Writing

While You Read...

When Mrs. Whatsit tells Mrs. Murray, “By the way, there is such a thing as a tesseract,” Mrs. Murray has an odd reaction (p. 21). What does she do? How does she act? Why might she have had this reaction?

What is a tesseract? Explain how it works (Ch. 5).

What is the Thing? How does it affect earth and other planets? (Ch. 5-6) How can the Thing be fought? Who on earth has fought against it? (p. 89)

Why couldn’t the children survive on a two-dimensional planet? What happened to them there? (p. 80)
Why does the man with the red eyes recite the multiplication tables? What is he trying to accomplish? (p. 122)

Why couldn’t Charles Wallace taste the food offered by the man with the red eyes, even though Meg and Calvin could? (p. 129)

In what ways are Mrs. Who’s glasses useful for Meg on Camazotz? (pp. 148-150)

What did Meg have that IT did not? How did this help her to save Charles Wallace? (p. 208)
Exploring the Story

On page 17, Mrs. Whatsit says she knew it was Charles Wallace's house by the smell. Name some times when any of the senses (sight, taste, touch, sound, or smell) play an important role in the story. In chapter 10, we meet the beasts. In what way are their senses different from humans’?

Before the children go to Camazotz, they are given gifts by the Mrs. W's (pp. 100-101). What gifts do they receive? How do these gifts help them? How do the gifts match each child’s personality and strengths?

Throughout the story, we find different instances where Charles Wallace is able to communicate with others, or “read” others, without speaking to them. How does he use this ability? Does this ability ever cause him harm? What other characters in this story have this skill?
Why do you think the characters do so much traveling in this novel? Would the novel have been as effective if it had taken place in one location, or even on one planet? Why or why not?

Describe Camazotz. What is this planet like? How is it similar or different from earth? Do you think the people on Catazotz are human? Why or why not?

When they are on Camazotz, Charles Wallace tells Meg, “This isn’t a fairy tale. Spells indeed.”(p. 136) Do you think the novel could be characterized as a fairy tale? Why or why not?
Meeting the Characters

Sandy and Dennys see themselves as protectors of the Murray family, especially when their father is away. "Let us do the fighting when it's necessary," they tell Meg (p. 4). Later, they inform their mother, "If you're going to let old tramps come into the house in the middle of the night, Mother, you ought to have Den and me around to protect you." (p. 23) Do you think that Meg, Charles Wallace, and Mrs. Murray need protection? Why or why not?

Charles Wallace possesses special skills that other people do not have. What are these skills? Cite specific examples of when we see them in the story. Would you describe Charles Wallace as abnormal? Why or why not?

When Aunt Beast takes Meg to heal her, Meg resists. Aunt Beast says, "Stop fighting. You make it worse. Relax." Meg replies, "That's what IT said!" (p. 178) In what ways is Aunt Beast similar to IT? In what ways is she different?
On pages 31 to 32, Charles Wallace and Calvin both describe themselves as 'sports.' Charles Wallace gives the definition for this word on page 32. How are Charles Wallace and Calvin alike? How are they different?

When we meet Mrs. Who on page 35, we discover she speaks in quotations. Why do you think she chooses this mode of speaking? Provide evidence from the story to support your answer.

What is your impression of Father before you met him in the novel? Did this impression change after you met him in the story? Why or why not?
When explaining about Mrs. Who, Mrs. Which, and Mrs. Whatsit to the beasts, Calvin describes them as guardian angels, as messengers of God. (p. 191) Do you think this is a good description? Why or why not?

Before Meg goes back to Camazotz the second time, the Mrs. W's are less affectionate than they were before. (Ch. 12) Why do you think this is? Provide evidence from the story to support your answer.
Understanding the Ideas

There are several references to God and the Bible in the story (e.g., pp. 67-68, p. 89, pp. 201-202). Would you characterize the novel as religious? Why or why not?

After the Mrs. W’s and the children accidentally land on the flat planet, Mrs. Whatsit explains, “It’s very difficult for Mrs. Which to think in a corporeal way.” (p. 81) What does she mean by this? How are the Mrs. W’s different from the children? Are they human beings? Explain.

Mrs. Whatsit tells the children, “But of course we can’t take any credit for our talents. It’s how we use them that counts.” (p. 84) How do Meg, Charles Wallace, and Calvin use their own individual talents in the novel? Provide specific examples from the text.
On page 160, Charles Wallace tells Meg that on Camazotz, they have achieved equality: “Complete equality. Everyone is exactly alike.” Meg replies, “No! Like and equal are not the same thing at all!” Do you agree with Charles Wallace or Meg? Explain your answer.

On page 168, Mr. Murray tells Calvin, “One thing I have to tell the others it that we know nothing... We’re children playing with dynamite.” What does he mean?

Why do you think that a giant brain was unable to feel love? What human organ is usually associated with love? Do you think it is significant that the author chose to portray IT as a brain?
Connecting to You

In chapter 1, Meg tells her kitten, “Just be glad you’re a kitten and not a monster like me.” (p. 6) Later, she tells her mother, “I hate being an oddball.” (p. 12) Have you ever felt like a monster or an oddball? When and why? How did you handle your feelings?

Charles Wallace tells Meg, “I think it will be better if people go on thinking I’m not very bright. They won’t hate me quite so much.” (p. 30) Have you ever had to pretend to be something different than what you really were? When? How did this feel? Why do you think you chose not to “be yourself”?

Calvin appears in the story abruptly, and becomes fast friends with Meg and Charles Wallace. Describe a time when you unexpectedly or quickly made a new friend. What was it that made the friendship grow quickly?
Meg is very good at math, but has problems with other subjects in school, like geography and English. What are some of your strengths and talents, either in school or in other areas? What are some of your weaknesses? How do these strengths and weaknesses help you in your life?

When Mrs. Whatsit tells the children they are going to Camazotz (p. 98), "Meg did not like the sound of the word or the way in which Mrs. Whatsit pronounced it." What are some words that you dislike the sound of? What are some words that you find especially pleasant to say or hear? Do you see any kinds of patterns in the types of words you like or dislike? Explain.

When she has to go back to Camazotz to save Charles Wallace, Meg admits that she does not have the courage to do so, but that she knows she must. Have you ever been in a situation where you knew you had to do something, even though you didn’t feel courageous? Describe what happened.
Differentiated Activities for Gifted Learners

Complete a Literature Web about the novel, or a specific chapter in the novel. Fill in responses to each of the bubbles, using the questions below as a guide.

**Key Words:** What were some words and phrases in the novel that were especially interesting or important?

**Feelings:** What feelings did you have while reading this novel? What feelings did the characters have? How were those feelings expressed?

**Ideas:** What was the main idea or theme of the novel? What other major ideas and concepts were important? What message was the author trying to give about those ideas?

**Images/Symbols:** How did the author use description and imagery in the novel? What sensory images came to your mind? How did the author use symbols?

**Structure:** What type of writing was this? What literary and style elements did the author use? How did the structure of the writing contribute to the meaning of the novel?
LITERATURE WEB

Key Words

Feelings

Ideas

Images/Symbols

Structure
Use the Hamburger Model as a guide to help you organize your responses to the activities on the following pages.

THE HAMBURGER MODEL FOR PERSUASIVE WRITING
Write a book review about *A Wrinkle in Time*. In your review, state and explain your point of view about the quality of the story, and provide specific details about why you would or would not recommend this book to other students your age. Use the Hamburger Model as a guide, and follow the steps of the writing process to review and revise.
Choose one of the following quotations from the novel. Write a persuasive essay in which you discuss whether or not you agree with the ideas expressed, using examples from the novel, other books you have read, or your experience. Use the Hamburger Model as a guide for your writing, and follow the steps of the writing process to review and revise.

- “We let no one suffer. It is so much kinder to annihilate anyone who is ill.” (p. 139)
- “Maybe if you aren’t unhappy sometimes you don’t know how to be happy.” (p. 142)
- Life is like a sonnet. “You’re given the form, but you have to write the sonnet yourself. What you say is completely up to you.” (p. 199)
Create a concept map about how one of these ideas is explored in the novel: courage, love, language, individuality, conformity, or trust. Use specific characters and events from the novel to demonstrate how the concept is developed. Then write at least two generalizations you can make about the concept. A sample concept map is started for you below.
Do a "word study" of one or more of the vocabulary words (listed below) from the novel. Find out the definition of the word, synonyms and antonyms, and word stems and origin. Then find at least three other words that use one or more of your word's stems, and create an example to explain your word (a sentence, an analogy, a visual representation, etc.) Use the Vocabulary Web to organize your responses.

prodigious (p. 11)  
belligerent (p. 26)  
antagonistic (p. 27)  
morass (p. 49)  
paltry (p. 54)  
inexorable (p. 58)  
aïve (p. 62)  
monoliths (p. 66)  
corporeal (p. 81)  

sonorous (p. 85)  
compulsion (p. 113)  
recourse (p. 121)  
grimace (p. 137)  
sadist (p. 141)  
dais (p. 157)  
nauseating (p. 158)  
miasma (p. 159)  
despondency (p. 188)
Develop an advertisement for a travel agency that uses tessering to transport its clients to new and exciting locations in other galaxies. Think of several different ways to convey your ideas, such as a magazine ad, a newspaper article or advertisement, a television commercial, or a website. Be sure to describe several destinations to which your clients can travel, and explain the process of tessering to the clients in the advertisement.
In the field of literature, science fiction and fantasy are related but separate genres. The difference between the two is sometimes described as follows: Science fiction involves things that may someday be possible, while fantasy involves things that are inherently impossible. Create a chart showing the elements in *A Wrinkle in Time* that may someday be possible, and those that are impossible. Then, write an article for a literary magazine in which you describe in which genre *A Wrinkle in Time* would be classified. Support your argument using your chart and elements of the story.
Interdisciplinary and Research Connections

Meg, Charles Wallace, Calvin, and the Mrs. W’s talk about those people throughout earth’s history who fought the darkness of the Thing. Those “light-bearers” mentioned in the novel are Jesus, Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, Shakespeare, Bach, Pasteur, Madame Curie, Einstein, Schweitzer, Gandhi, Buddha, Beethoven, Rembrandt, St. Francis, Euclid, and Copernicus.

• Choose one person from the list above, and research the major contributions they made to humanity. For what are they known? What did they create or discover?

• Next, choose another person from history (or in the present) who is not mentioned in the novel, but that you believe is also a light bearer. Research their contributions.

• Finally, create a presentation (i.e. a poster, power point, book, etc.) showing your two light-bearers’ work or telling their story. How are the two people you chose similar? How are they different? How did their work help to fight darkness?

Madeleine L’Engle wrote several other novels about the Murray family, including A Wind in the Door, Many Waters, and A Swiftly Tilting Planet. Read one of these other novels, and choose one character that appears in this new novel and A Wrinkle in Time to analyze. Create a Venn diagram showing the characters traits and actions as they appear in A Wrinkle in Time, and as they appear in the other novel you select. Then, write a short essay describing whether you believe the character’s portrayal in the two novels is consistent.
Watch the movie version of *A Wrinkle in Time*, which was aired on television in 2004. Make note of the similarities and differences to the novel. Then, prepare a review of the movie for a magazine telling others your opinion. Be sure to discuss the movie's similarity to the novel in your review.

In the novel, Meg, Charles Wallace, Calvin, and the Mrs. W's travel through both space and time. Research the idea of time travel. Have scientists attempted time travel? What do they think will happen when it is attempted? What are some scientific ideas or terms associated with it? Is time travel feasible? What scientists have worked on or theorized about time travel? Present your findings in a poster or slideshow format.
Madeleine L’Engle makes many religious allusions throughout the novel, usually involving Judeo-Christian ideas of faith, and usually involving the basic concept of good vs. evil. Research the author’s ideas about religion, and the role it plays in her life and her writing. Then research a non-Judeo-Christian religion (such as Buddhism, Taoism, or Hinduism) and the beliefs associated with it. Can L’Engle’s ideas about good and evil be applied through the lens of other religions? Create a piece of artwork and a short written explanation to convey your findings.
Resources

Teacher resources


Boyce, L. N. (1997). *A guide to teaching research skills and strategies in grades 4-12*. Williamsburg, VA: Center for Gifted Education.


For further reading - some other books by Madeleine L’Engle

*A Wind in the Door*
*A Swiftly Tilting Planet*
*Many Waters*
*An Acceptable Time*
*Meet the Austins*
*Arms of the Starfish*
*Camille*

For further reading – some other books your might read

*Island of the Blue Dolphins* by Scott O’Dell
*From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler* by E.L. Konigsburg
*The Westing Game* by Ellen Raskin
*Ender’s Game* by Orson Scott Card
*The Dark is Rising* by Susan Cooper
*Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH* by Robert C. O’Brien
Useful websites

http://www.m-w.com (Merriam-Webster Dictionary site)

http://dogfeathers.com/java/hyprcube.html (Animation of a tesseract)

http://www.math.brown.edu/~banchoff/Yale/project12/math.html (An analysis of the accuracy of L’Engle’s math in *A Wrinkle in Time*)

http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/time/ (Resources about time travel)

http://www.crystalinks.com/timetavel.html (Information about the theory of time travel)

http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/time/sagan.html (An interview with scientist Carl Sagan about time travel)

http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/week412/profile.html (Interview with Madeleine L’Engle about her books and her religion)


http://www.newsweek.com/id/105017 (An interview with Madeleine L’Engle about *A Wrinkle in Time*, its movie adaptation, and religion)