



A Wrinkle in Time Educator Guide

A Wrinkle in Time in Your Classroom

The benefits of reading aloud, sharing, and discussing a book can extend into the classroom! Educators may choose to read *A Wrinkle in Time* to their students or use the book for a novel study or literature circle in the classroom. Check out the Library's curated booklists for eResources and book titles centered on topics of the book such as world religions, astronomy, physics, interconnectedness, perseverance, historic thinkers, artists, and scientists. Check calgarylibrary.ca/wrinkle-in-time-booklist

This Educator Guide has curriculum-connected lesson plans, read-aloud tips, discussion questions, and activities designed for grades 4 – 12.

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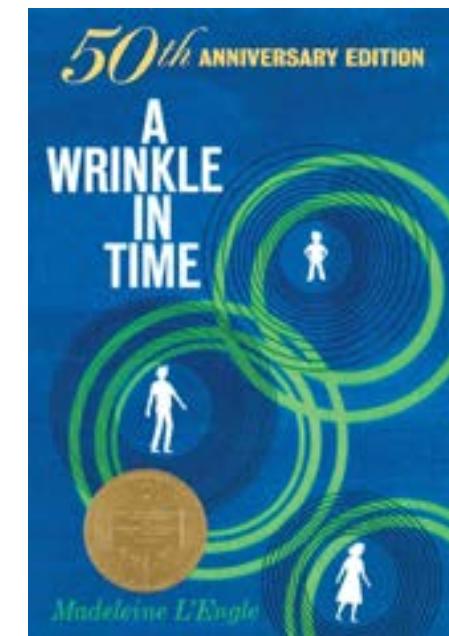
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Author Madeleine L'Engle

Madeleine L'Engle (1918 – 2007) was the Newbery Medal-winning author of more than 60 books, including the much-loved *A Wrinkle in Time*. Born in 1918, L'Engle grew up in New York City, Switzerland, South Carolina, and Massachusetts. Her father was a reporter, her mother had studied to be a pianist, and their house was always full of musicians and theatre people. Madeleine L'Engle described herself as a writer, not solely a children's author, but a writer of the type of books she thought people wanted and needed to read. Despite already being a published author, publishers found *A Wrinkle in Time* difficult to classify, and L'Engle faced many rejections. Once published, it went on to win the Newbery Medal for excellence in children's literature in 1963. Two companion novels, *A Wind in the Door* and *A Swiftly Tilting Planet* (a Newbery Honor book), complete what has come to be known as The Time Trilogy and eventually the series became a quintet with *Many Waters* and *An Acceptable Time*.

Historical Context: Madeleine L'Engle started writing *A Wrinkle in Time* in 1959, but the book was not actually published until 1962. This time, at the start of the Cold War, saw a great deal of change in the United States, including a renewed dedication to science and a new fascination with space exploration. The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) was formed in 1958, and in 1961, President John F. Kennedy stated that he would like to send a man to the moon before the decade was out. In 1969, Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin made the historic voyage inciting worldwide fascination with all things outer space.

Recommended for: Ages 8 and up, grades 4 – 12



Ideas For Reading *A Wrinkle in Time* Together in the Classroom

1. Ask the students to illustrate Meg, Charles Wallace, and Calvin's journey as you read the book aloud. As the story continues, they can add pages to their drawing, making a long, illustrated timeline from the Murrys' kitchen table to the Black Thing to the Tesseract, the transparent column and so on. Encourage deeper thinking about the details in the book by asking students to draw setting details, characteristics, label specific scenes, etc.
2. Invite students to take turns reading paragraphs or chapters aloud.
3. Students may read independently, but simultaneously, chapter by chapter, taking time to demonstrate comprehension by discussing it and reviewing each section afterward.
4. Explore the concept of Readers Theatre by inviting role-play and improvisation. Assign different characters (or even the inanimate aspects of the places they visit) to the students to improvise and act out the scenes as you read them. It can be fun because the actors, the audience, and the reader aren't quite sure what will happen next!
5. There have been several theatre adaptations of *A Wrinkle in Time*. Some scripts can be downloaded for classroom use at Your Stage Partners, such as this 35-minute, one-act version by Morgan Gould, at calgarylibrary.ca/35-minute
6. Invite students to draw and label a character from the book illustrating what the character does, its skills, its likes and dislikes, its motivation, its family, etc.
7. If you read Hope Larson's graphic novel adaptation, invite students to write a chapter summary in a descriptive paragraph. If reading the novel, invite students to storyboard a chapter in the format of a graphic novel.
8. Watch *A Wrinkle in Time*, the 2018 Disney movie adaptation, when you are done. How does the movie differ from the book? Is the movie more like the book or the graphic novel?

Discussion Questions (All Grades)

See where the conversation leads and encourage readers to ask questions of their own. They may write or draw answers in their journals, discuss in a pair-and-share or as a larger class.

1. Mrs. Whatsit tells each child that they have a great gift that will help them through their difficult journey. She helps the children see their strengths. What are your strengths and how do they help you be brave?
 - a. Meg's gift from Mrs Whatsit is her faults. How can someone's faults be a gift?
2. IT believes that everyone is safer and happier because IT controls them and knows what is best for them. In what ways might it be true that having structure, rules, and restrictions is safer and better? In what ways may IT's belief be false?
3. One of the themes in *A Wrinkle in Time* is the idea that humanity often misjudges and fears what we do not understand. Camazotz is an extreme example of a world that is governed by fear and does not allow for difference. Can you think of any real-life examples, from the past or present, that are like Camazotz?
 - a. In your real-life example, what is feared and misunderstood and what are the consequences?
4. What are the limitations of science? Are there questions that science cannot answer?

- a. What are some of the ways science has benefited humankind?
 5. Who is the most courageous character in *A Wrinkle in Time*, and what makes you say that?
 6. *"The heart alone can have poor judgment, and the mind by itself will fixate on self-interests."*
– Madeleine L'Engle
- The author once called her book's antagonist a "naked brain," evil because IT was devoid of feelings. Meg makes many choices based on her heart and others based on her mind. Why are both important?
7. Although we may have routines and have a structured life, in Canada we are still free to make our own decisions and choices. Why is it important to have free will within an organized and structured life?

Exploring Genre and Form: Comparing Hope Larson's Approach to Madeleine L'Engle's

Curriculum Connections

- Grades 4 – 6 ELAL: Text Forms and Structure
- Grades 7 – 9 ELA: 2.3 Understand Forms, Elements, and Techniques

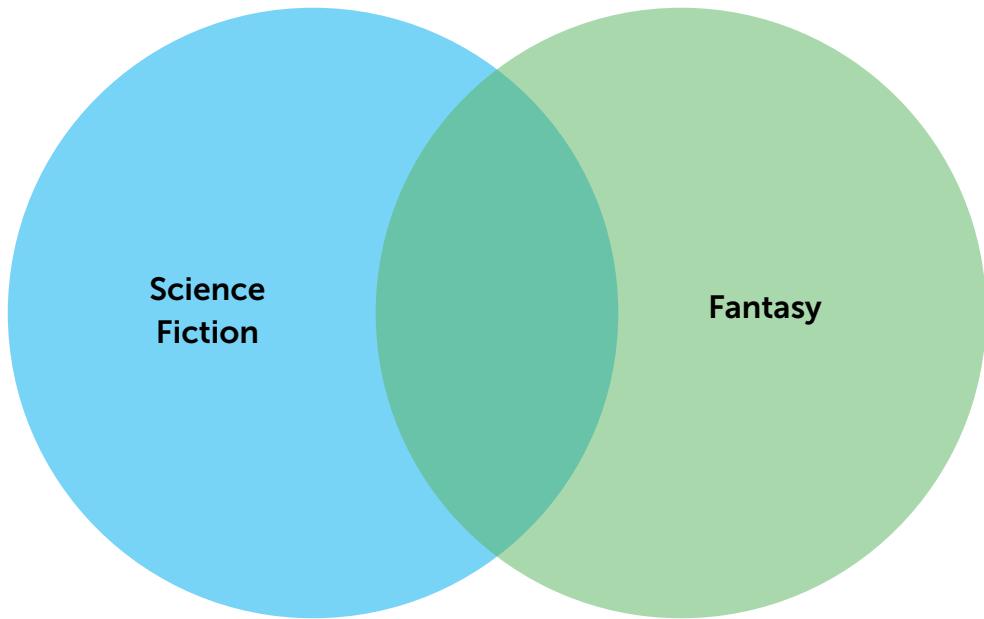
Critics and publishers have found it hard to define the genre of *A Wrinkle in Time*. Is it a science fiction book? A fantasy book? Is it a dystopian novel?

"Science fiction often takes place in the future and contains elements of advanced technology. A fantasy story, on the other hand, is usually set in the fantasy realm and includes mythical creatures and supernatural powers." Visit calgarylibrary.ca/science-fiction-vs-fantasy to learn more about how science fiction and fantasy are distinct.

Rod Serling, screenwriter and playwright of the *Twilight Zone*, argued that science fiction is "the improbable made possible" while fantasy is "the impossible made probable."

Activity: My Proudest Moment in a Different Genre (Younger Students)

1. Review science fiction versus fantasy and create a Venn diagram comparing the characteristics of each. Where the diagram overlaps, list the characteristics they have in common.
2. Invite students to reflect on a proud moment and write a short paragraph in their journal to tell the story as factually as possible. They may use the prompt "beginning, middle, and end."
3. Using their factual paragraph, Rod Serling's definitions of science fiction and fantasy, and the Venn diagram, invite them to re-write their proud moment in the genre of either fantasy or science fiction. How might the parts of the story (beginning, middle and end) change?
 - a. They may even choose to draw it in storyboard format, like Larson's graphic novel.



Activity: Dystopia in *A Wrinkle in Time* (Older Students)

Fifty years after Madeleine L'Engle's novel was published, Hope Larson released the graphic novel adaptation of *A Wrinkle in Time*. In the Kirkus Reviews, she said "you can't make a good adaptation without bringing part of yourself into the mix. It's about finding the balance between respect and innovation."

1. What do you think Madeleine L'Engle would have said about Hope Larson's adaptation of her novel?
2. In your opinion, does Hope Larson show both respect and innovation toward *A Wrinkle in Time*? How or how not?
3. What advantages, or disadvantages, does a graphic novel format have over a novel?

A dystopian novel describes a fictional society, often futuristic, that is flawed, generally undesirable, and representing the opposite of utopia. These novels are characterized by themes of oppression, loss of individuality, surveillance, control by a powerful authority (like a government, individual leader, or a large corporation), and widespread fear and hopelessness, serving as a social or political warning about current trends.

1. Invite students to discuss or reflect in their journals:
 - a. the purposes and characteristics of science fiction vs fantasy writing
 - b. the purposes and characteristics of graphic novels vs novels
 - c. evaluate the effectiveness of a graphic novel for presenting ideas and information versus a painting
 - d. evaluate the effectiveness of a graphic novel for presenting ideas and information versus a novel
 - e. consider how appropriate the graphic novel form is (or is not) for the readers of *A Wrinkle in Time* today
2. Research other dystopian novels such as Orwell's *1984* or Collins' *The Hunger Games*. Look at art that depicts dystopian subject matter such as those of surrealists or gothic artists like Zdzisław Beksiński. Visit **calgarylibrary.ca/dystopian-surrealism** for more information about dystopian art.
3. Integrating what they have learned, students will write a short review of an imaginary dystopian book (or work of dystopian art) for a popular culture blog. The review can be of a dystopian novel that is either science fiction or fantasy OR a dystopian artwork that is either science fiction or fantasy. Their review should explain which genre and form the book or artwork takes and who the audience is, in addition to a short synopsis of the imaginary plot or description of the artwork.

Worldview, Identity, and Perspective

Curriculum Connections

- Grade 3 Wellness (Growth and Development): Development is the process of becoming a unique person.
- Grade 4 Wellness (Character Development Perseverance and Resilience): How can a variety of life experiences influence resilience and perseverance?
- Grades 4 – 6 ELAL: Organizing Idea: Comprehension
- Grades 7 – 9 ELA: 1.2 Clarify and Extend
- Grades 8 and 9 ELA: 2.2 Respond to Texts
- ELA 20 and 30: 2.1.1: Discern and Analyze Context
- ELA 10, 20, and 30: 5.1.2 Appreciate diversity of expression, opinion, and perspective

Madeleine L'Engle's worldview influenced her identity and the art she made. She was an author and mother who was fascinated by modern science and astronomy. She was also a Christian with a strong religious practice and a curiosity about the meaning of life and the mysteries of spirituality.

"Throughout the Golden Age of science fiction (1938 – 1950), the genre grew dramatically through mass-market magazines ... This interest was spurred and heavily influenced by the events of the two World Wars. The technological advancements that came with and due to warfare, like the atomic bomb and the space race, directly affected literature, storytelling, and the thirst for science fiction stories." – The Children's Book Council, 2022.

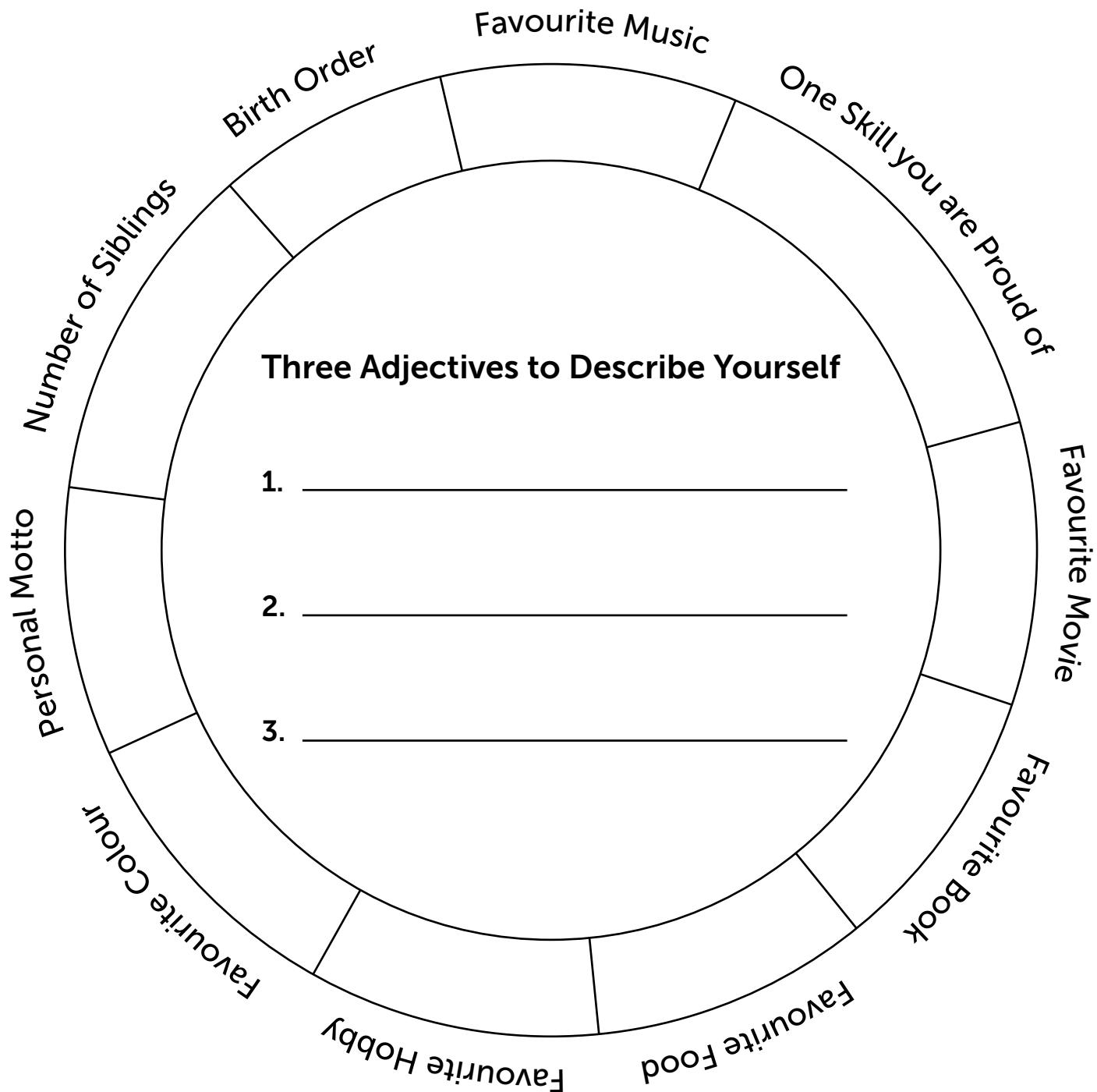
Visit calgarylibrary.ca/on-science-fiction for more information.

Madeleine L'Engle grew up during the Cold War in America, a time described by Encyclopedia Britannica as "the open yet restricted rivalry that developed after World War II between the United States and the Soviet Union and their respective allies." To learn more, visit calgarylibrary.ca/cold-war

Activity: Personal Identity Wheel (Younger Students)

1. Establish or review classroom norms with respect to difference and sharing.
2. Review concepts: Worldview is a collection of beliefs about life and the universe held by an individual or group; the lens through which the world is viewed by an individual or group. Identity is who a person is, formed by their beliefs (worldview), values, and experiences, while perspective is the unique way they see and interpret the world.
3. Invite students to work independently to complete the Personal Identity Wheel handout. This is a great activity to use as an icebreaker at the beginning of the school year where students can use their wheels to meet and learn about each other and discuss commonalities and differences.

Name: _____



Inspired by a 2020 lesson plan created by Philip Michael Abduo at the University of Michigan's Equitable Teaching Team.

Taking it Further:

Have a class discussion or invite students to reflect in their journals on their Personal Identity Wheel.

1. How would you describe yourself?
2. What values do you hold on to as being important?
3. What groups do you identify with?
4. Do you belong to a group that you do not really feel a part of?
5. Can anyone share the skill they are proud of?
6. Who would like to share the three adjectives they used to describe themselves?
7. What were some things people found in common with each other?

Activity: A Banned Bestseller: Intellectual Freedom in Canada (All Grades)

1. Review concepts of intellectual freedom in Canada, including the role of the public library in Calgary (and public libraries worldwide) and the history of challenged books in Canada.

At Calgary Public Library, intellectual freedom means providing the tools and spaces to support the free exchange of information and ideas and respecting each individual's right to privacy and choice: calgarylibrary.ca/collections-at-calgary-public-library

Every year in Canada, libraries and schools recognize Freedom to Read Week, usually during the last week in February. Learn more at freedomtoread.ca

Check out books from your local library that have been challenged in Canada. Suggested titles include *Captain Underpants*, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, *Where The Wild Things Are* and *The Giver*. Additional titles, and their reasons for censorship can be found at calgarylibrary.ca/challenged-books-canada

2. Wrap the books in opaque paper. Do not write the title or author's name on the front but do write why the book was challenged. Invite students to choose a mystery book to read based on its reasons for censorship and discuss if they agree or disagree with the challenge. Older students might write a position paper whereas younger students might choose to defend the book or choose to defend the challenger orally.

Taking It Further:

Page is a short, stop-motion animated video set in Central Library, where a magical world exists after the Library closes and the books come to life. The character Page goes on a journey to embrace growth and discovery. As they explore Central Library after hours, Page shows us that when we have access to different books, ideas, and ways of thinking and knowing, we have endless opportunities to grow and change. We may find ourselves on a new adventure completely. Watch Page at calgarylibrary.ca/page

Download a classroom poster of books challenged in Canada in recent decades at calgarylibrary.ca/41-challenged-publications

Activity: I Hate This Book (Older Students)

Tweens and teens are often as enthusiastic about books they hate as they are about books they like. While this can be a useful tool to help them find books to read, it can also form the basis of a thought-provoking discussion about challenged books and intellectual freedom.

According to the American Library Association, *A Wrinkle in Time* is one of the most challenged books in the United States. It was ranked #23 on the American Library Association's (ALA) 100 most frequently challenged books from 1990 – 1999, and #90 on the ALA's list from 2000 – 2009. These challenges focused mainly on the book's blend of religion, the supernatural, and science, and has been criticized both for being too religious and for not being religious enough. *A Wrinkle in Time* asks readers to consider that religion, magic, and science can be viewed from different perspectives and are influenced by worldview.

1. What did students like or dislike about the book (encouraging students to be honest about their opinions).
2. If someone said that nobody else should read this book, what would you say? Why? What if someone else liked it?

Care needs to be taken to ensure that conversations are civil and constructive, but the resulting discussion can also be lively and often funny. The American Library Association recommends these two tips (ALSC, 2021):

"Encourage readers to be honest with their reactions to a book, and don't limit discussion to positive feedback. Steer discussions into a constructive comparison of opinions, and don't shy away from examining why a book's content or premise might be problematic."

"Resist the urge to get preachy or didactic. While intellectual freedom concepts are important, in a book club they should still take a back seat to reading that actively interests and engages the young readers attending the club."

Lesson plan inspired by the ALSC Intellectual Freedom Programming Toolkit, found at calgarylibrary.ca/alsc-toolkit

Taking It Further:

1. Read Jessica Wong's CBC article "Calls to ban books are on the rise in Canada. So is the opposition to any bans" (February 21, 2024), as a class at calgarylibrary.ca/banned-books-rising-canada
2. Compare it to another CBC article by Cassidy Chisholm "Nova Scotia schools remove The Hate U Give from curriculums due to profanity" (October 4, 2023), found at calgarylibrary.ca/ns-bans-book
3. Invite students to write their own article on the topic of challenged books in Canada using the prompt, how much power do books have in society today?

Activity: Space Sonnet (Older Students)

- ELAL Grades 4 – 6: Organizing Idea: Writing
- ELA 10, 20, 30: 4.1.2 Consider and address form, structure and medium

In Chapter 4, the **sonnet** is a metaphor used by Mrs. Whatsit to explain that life has a structure (a form) and rules, but individuals have complete freedom to write their own content within that structure. Just as a sonnet has a fixed number of lines (14) and a rhyme scheme (**iambic pentameter**), life has its own rules, but it is up to each person to fill that structure with their own choices and words. While *A Wrinkle in Time* is a timeless story in many ways, several of its themes capture the historic events happening when the novel was published. In the early 1960s, the Space Race was a competition between the United States and the Soviet Union to explore the solar system.

Use the subject of "outer space" to write a sonnet.

Taking it Further:

1. Consider the Space Race. Begin by examining:
 - a. What were the biggest accomplishments for the US and the Soviet Union?
 - b. What were the biggest failures during that time?
 - c. In what ways was the competition between these two governments symbolic of the political and philosophical differences in leadership?
 - d. Why was NASA formed?

Over the past 50 years, and since the publication of *A Wrinkle in Time*, space exploration has remained a national priority, but due to other needs, funding for the program has waned, and some believe it is no longer a necessary or justifiable expense. Taking what you have already learned, continue your research to study how the space program is now funded as well as what its current goals and objectives are. Examine your collected data to determine whether you believe support of the program is still warranted and write a persuasive paper that shares your position. Adapted from Macmillan Publishing's Teacher's Guide for *A Wrinkle in Time*, at calgarylibrary.ca/wrinkle-in-time-teachers-guide

Choice, Freedom, and Structure: Camazotz vs Canada

Curriculum Connections

- Grades 4 – 6 ELAL: Organizing Idea: Comprehension
- Grade 6 Social Studies, 6.1.2 - Demonstrate an understanding of the fundamental principles of democracy
- Grades 7 – 9 Draft Social Studies: Systems
- Social Studies 9: Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms
- Grade 12 Social Studies: 30-1 Perspectives on Ideology 30-2 Understandings of Ideologies

Political systems can be classified on a spectrum from total political control and authority, or totalitarian dictatorship, to a lack of political control and authority, or anarchy. Societies can be a democracy or an autocracy and everything in between. In Chapter 6, the Murry children and Calvin arrive on the planet of Camazotz. This, they learn, is where Mr. Murry is imprisoned, and IT controls everything and everyone. On Camazotz, individuality is strongly discouraged, even dangerous.

Introduce or review concepts such as direct democracy versus representative democracy, inclusivity, freedom, human rights, and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Use a graphic organizer to list the characteristics of Camazotz's society in comparison to Canadian society.

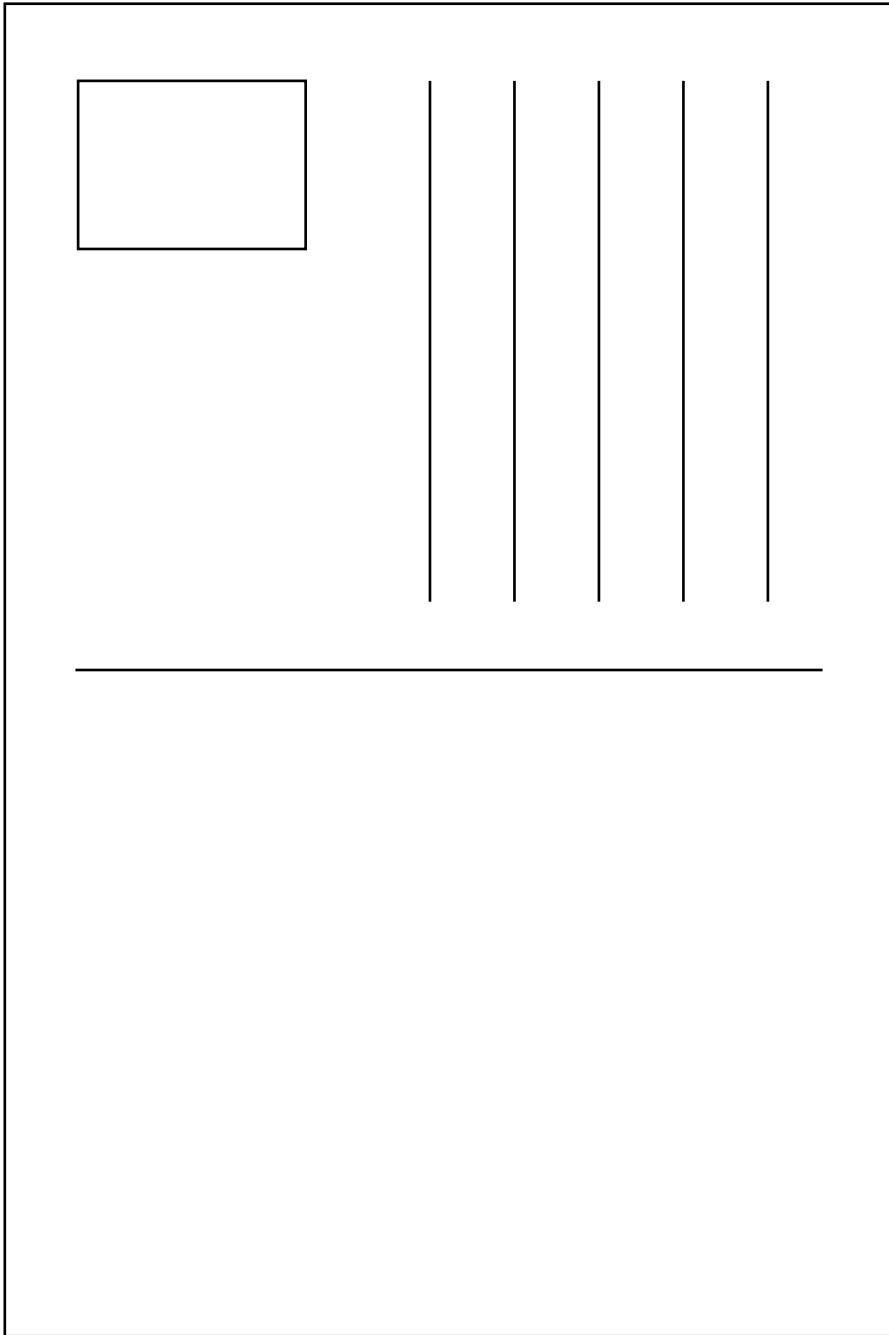
Activity: Wish You Were Here! A postcard from Camazotz (Younger Students)

Like Meg, Calvin, Charles Wallace, and Mr. Murry, you find yourself on Camazotz. Using a lined index card or the postcard template, students can write to a friend or family member back home about their experiences. Invite students to include relevant details from the novel to support their ideas. The blank back of the index card or postcard template can be used to draw an image of what life is like on Camazotz.

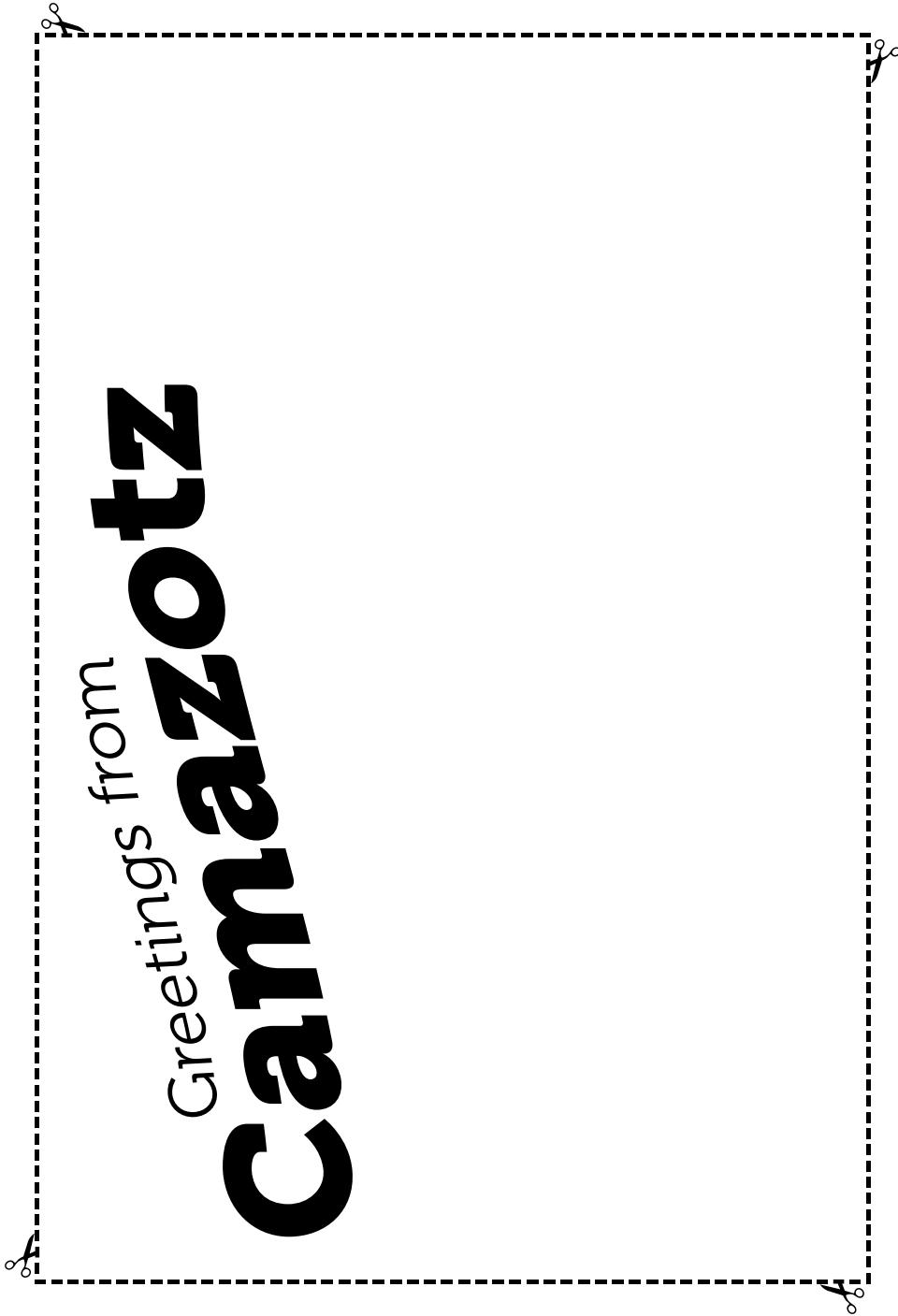
Activity: A Manual for Life on Camazotz (Older Students)

"It is the ability to choose which makes us human," Madeleine L'Engle wrote in *Walking on Water*. "When we censor out most of the world in order to protect our own little version of it, we are creating a kind of hell."

Considering L'Engle's quote, imagine what a manual for life in Camazotz would look like. With the support of a graphic organizer or jot notes, students can write and design content for the manual, creating a comprehensive guide to a place where uniformity is valued above all. For students with developing writing skills or EAL, invite them to draft the table of contents for the manual.



Greetings from
Camazotz



Taking It Further

Download a copy of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms at calgarylibrary.ca/canadian-charter-of-rights-and-freedoms. The charter is available not only in Canada's official languages, but also most languages spoken by newcomers to Canada, Indigenous languages, and Braille.

This classroom poster, from [calgarylibrary.ca /canadian-charter-poster](http://calgarylibrary.ca/canadian-charter-poster), outlines the seven rights in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms in an easy to read and understand format.

Making A Wrinkle in Time

Curricular Connections

- Grades 4 – 6 Math: Organizing Idea, Geometry
- Math 30-1 and 30-2 Math: trigonometric, polynomial, exponential, and logarithmic functions

Note - This section should happen only after the students have been introduced to the idea of the tesseract in Chapter 5

Activity: Flat Planet Collage (Younger Students)

According to Mrs. Whatsit, to **tesser** is to shortcut through time by wrinkling it, bringing two divergent "time-places" closer together.

1. As a class, watch Carl Sagan explain the 4th dimension using illustrations, shadows, a story of Flatland, and apples at calgarylibrary.ca/4th-dimension
2. Using black construction paper as their foundation and white pencil or wax crayons to draw, as well as various paper or textile collage materials, ask students to cut out shapes to represent characters, planets, and / or "time-places" from the book. They may be inspired by Sagan's stamping techniques in the video.
3. They can glue their "time-places" to the black cardstock which represents space and the in-between times during tessering. (White crayons can more easily draw on black paper to write, to draw stars, other planets etc.)
4. Students can cut a piece of yarn and glue one end to a "time-place", character etc. and the other end to another shape; to "tesser" between the shapes with yarn.

Lesson plan inspired by calgarylibrary.ca/teaching-a-wrinkle-in-time

Activity: Building A Tesseract (Older Students)

1. As a class watch the video at calgarylibrary.ca/tesseract-for-non-physicists referencing *A Wrinkle in Time* and describing a tesseract for non-physicists by physicist David Morgan of the Bryant Park Project on NPR (4:48 min).
2. You may also view this mathematical model at calgarylibrary.ca/tesseract
3. Split the class into groups of four or five students. Give each group at least 24 straws and a ball of string.
4. Using the string to wrap around and connect the straws, have the students build:
 - a. First, a square
 - b. Second, a cube.
 - c. Then, by combining two groups together, they can connect the two cubes and make it into a hypercube.
 - d. Next, instead of having two same-size congruent cubes interlock and form a hyper cube, have one group make a large cube (by placing two or more straws end to end—they may need tape) and another group make a smaller cube. Then the smaller cube can be placed inside the larger cube and then suspended with string. This approach would give the students another view of the hypercube. This view is more closely associated with the idea of a tesseract.

Group questions: Ask the students to think about the progression used in creating this object.

- What do you start with when creating this object? (one straw - a line segment - one dimensional)
- What do you create next? (a square - two dimensional)
- After that? (a cube - three dimensional)
- What must be next? (a “hypercube” or tesseract - four dimensional)

Taking It Further

Carl Sagan (1934 –1996) was an American astronomer, planetary scientist, science communicator, and Pulitzer Prize-winning author. Watch Carl Sagan: The Great Space Communicator on Kanopy Kids, free with your Calgary Public Library card (and with rights for classroom use) at calgarylibrary.ca/great-space-communicator

Carl Sagan explains the 4th dimension using illustrations, shadows, a story of Flatland, and apples at calgarylibrary.ca/4th-dimension Like Mrs. Whatsit, he also reminds us that there are limitations to our understanding:

“So, you see, while we cannot imagine the world of four dimensions, we can certainly think about it perfectly well.” – Carl Sagan

“Explanations are not easy when they are about things for which your civilization still has no words.” Mrs. Whatsit (p72, *A Wrinkle in Time*)

Activity: Mrs. Which's Fighters (All Grades)

In Chapter 5, Mrs. Which explains to the children that they are “not alone” in their fight against evil. The book uses allusion, a passing reference to a person, event, or thing within a work of literature, to refer to many fighters. Meg, Charles Wallace and Calvin offer their own suggestions of historical figures who have fought against darkness in the past: Jesus, Shakespeare, Gandhi, Beethoven, Copernicus, da Vinci, and other great artists and thinkers who were the light fighting against the darkness.

1. Ask students to research a historical figure mentioned in the book or a 21st-century modern “fighter” who works to combat evil or injustice in the world.
2. Young students may create a bio page, complete with headshot, for their figure, like those found in the end pages of a book. Older students may write a resume for their fighters.
3. In a class discussion, consider what the various historical figures have in common. Older students often identify that many of the people who are commonly considered to be changemakers in history are typically white and male, and have made significant contributions in science or the arts.

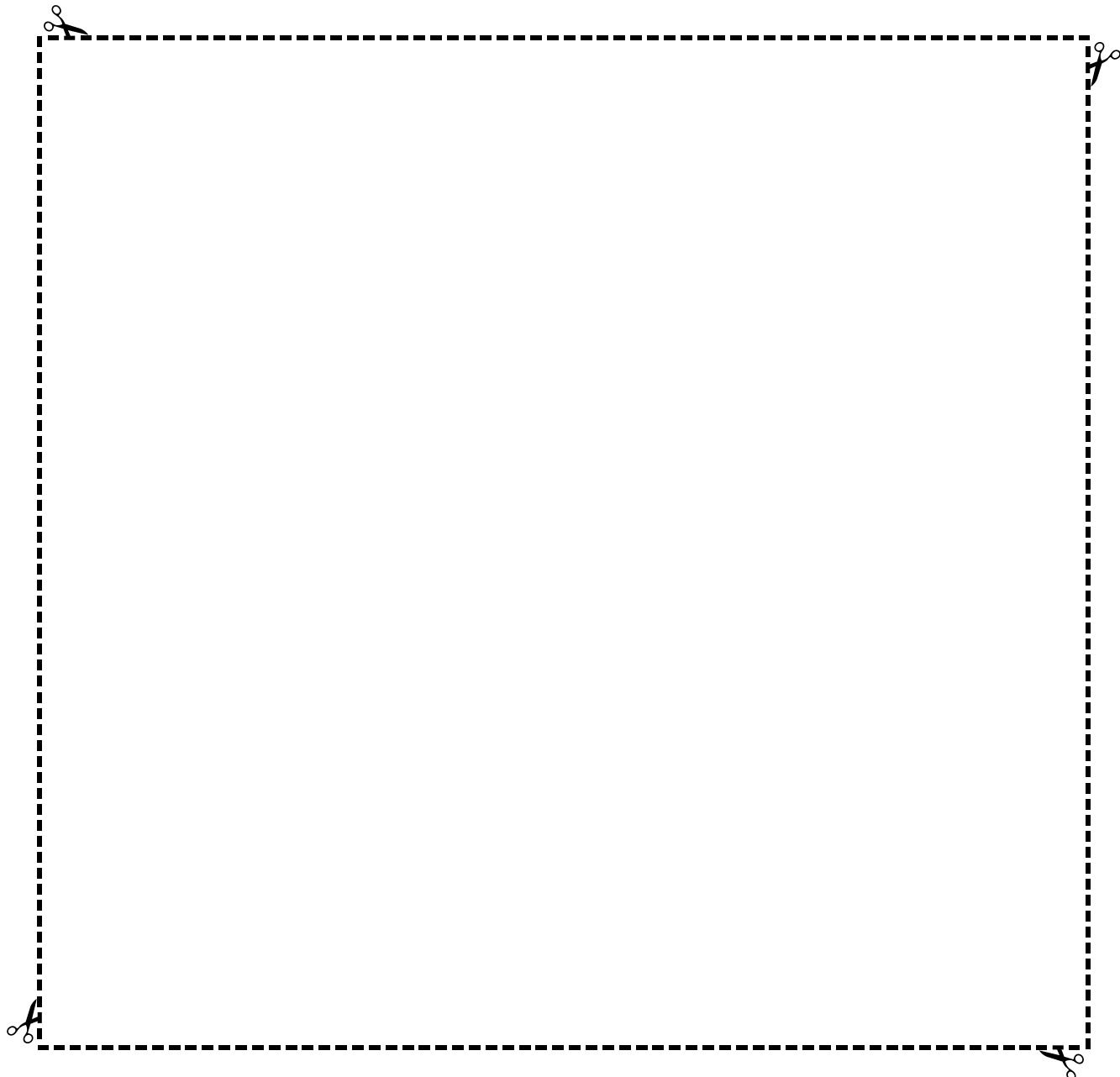
Taking it Further

Madeleine L’Engle was also a fighter that had to persevere to have her book published. It was rejected 26 times. She never gave up. Madeleine L’Engle’s granddaughter speaks about the inspiration behind *A Wrinkle in Time* and her grandmother’s challenges publishing it. Watch this video at calgarylibrary.ca/dont-people-read-books, which shows footage of the draft manuscript and L’Engle’s handwritten edits written on them.

Book Cover Re-Imagined

Artists, authors, playwrights, screenwriters, and directors have adapted *A Wrinkle in Time* into various forms. Despite having the same characters, setting, and plot, each adaptation has its own look and feel. A book cover is important to entice a reader to choose the book from a shelf of many, while also giving an idea for what the book is about and who it is written for.

How would you adapt the cover of *A Wrinkle in Time*? Create your version (in two or three dimensions) and share it with us!



Complete this activity and invite your students to bring this page back to the Library to collect a prize. We will hang it up in an art display!

Or share a photo of your class' book cover adaptations with the Library on social media **@calgarylibrary**. No faces of students please, but we would love to know your school's name, teacher's name, and grade in your post!

Use this label template to attach to your artwork before bringing it into the Library:

First Name: _____ Grade: _____

School: _____

I read *A Wrinkle in Time* with my _____
(family, classroom, grandmother, parents, dog, etc.)