



MADELEINE
L'ENGLE

A
Wrinkle
in Time



An Appreciation

BY ANNA QUINDLEN

The most memorable books from our childhoods are those that make us feel less alone, convince us that our own foibles and quirks are both as individual as a fingerprint and as universal as an open hand. That's why I still have the copy of *A Wrinkle in Time* that was given to me when I was twelve years old. It long ago lost its dust jacket, the fabric binding is loose and water-stained, and the soft and loopy signature on its inside cover bears little resemblance to the way I sign my name today. The girl who first owned it has grown up and changed, but the book she loved, though battered, is still magical.

Its heroine is someone who feels very much alone indeed. Meg Murry has braces, glasses, and flyaway hair. She can't seem to get anything right in school, where everyone thinks she is strange and stupid. And she runs up against some real nastiness at a young age

in the form of all those snide looks and comments about her father, a scientist who seems to have mysteriously vanished—or, town gossip has it, run off with another woman.

But Meg doesn't know real evil until she sets out on a journey to find her father and bring him home, along with her little brother, Charles Wallace, and a boy named Calvin. As they transcend time, space, and the limitations of their own minds, they get help from individuals of great goodness: Mrs Whatsit, Mrs Which, Mrs Who, the Happy Medium, and Aunt Beast. But the climax of their journey is a showdown with IT, the cold and calculating disembodied intelligence that has cast a black shadow over the universe in its quest to make everyone behave and believe the same.

If that sounds like science fiction, it's because that's one way to describe the story. Or perhaps you could call it the fiction of science. The action of the book, the search for Meg and Charles Wallace's missing father, relies on something called a tesseract, which is a way to travel through time and space using a fifth dimension. Although there's even a little illustration to make it easier to visualize, I still am not certain I do. Of course, Meg, who is so bright she can do square roots in her head, doesn't entirely understand it either. "For just a moment I got it!" she says. "I can't possibly explain it now, but for a second I saw it!"

The truth is, I'm not a fan of science fiction, and my math and physics gene has always been weak. But there's plenty in the book for those of us predisposed toward the humanities as well. Mrs Who, who remedies her language deficit by using the words of others to explain herself, quotes Dante, Euripides, and Cervantes, to name just a few. When Meg is trying to keep IT from invading her brain, she realizes the multiplication tables are too rote to do the trick and instead shouts out the opening of the Declaration of Independence: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal." IT retorts that that's the point: "Everybody exactly alike." Meg replies triumphantly, "No! Like and equal are not the same thing at all!"

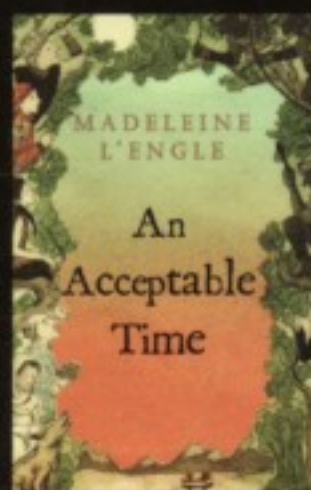
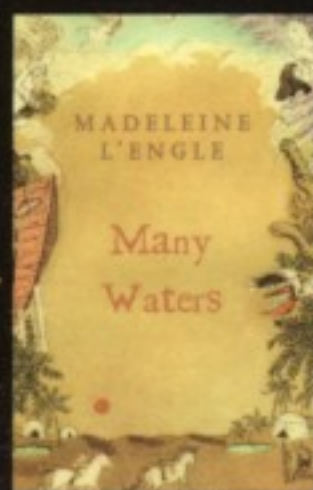
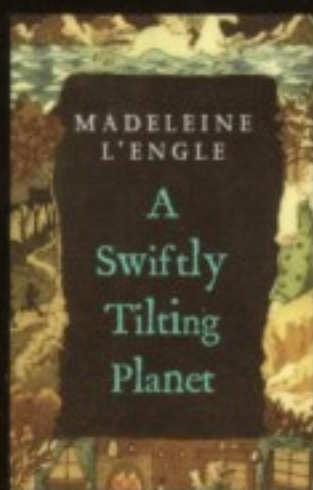
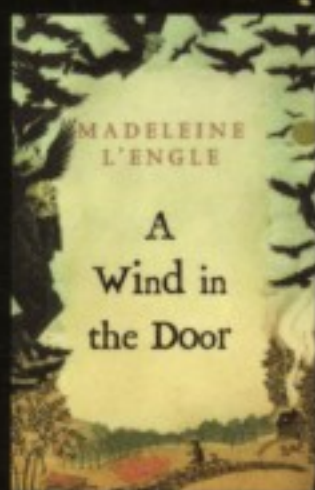
Madeline L'Engle published *Wrinkle* in 1962, after it was rejected by dozens of publishers. And her description of the tyranny of conformity clearly reflects that time. The identical houses outside which identical children bounce balls and jump rope in mindless unison evoke the fear so many Americans had of Communist regimes that enshrined the interests of state-mandated order over the rights of the individual. "Why do you think we have wars at home?" Charles Wallace asks his sister, channeling the mind of IT. "Why do you think people get confused and unhappy? Because they all live their own separate individual lives." He tells Meg what

It was a dark and stormy night.

Out of this wild night, a strange visitor comes to the Murry house and beckons Meg, her brother Charles Wallace, and their friend Calvin O'Keefe on a most dangerous and extraordinary adventure—one that will threaten their lives and our universe.

Winner of the 1963 Newbery Medal, *A Wrinkle in Time* is the first book in Madeleine L'Engle's classic Time Quintet.

OTHER TITLES IN THE TIME QUINTET ARE:



With an Appreciation by Anna Quindlen
LOOK INSIDE FOR **GO FISH** and a personal interview
with Madeleine L'Engle.

For more information about *A WRINKLE IN TIME* and to view *THE WRINKLE IN TIME QUINTET* book trailer, visit www.awrinkleintime.net.

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