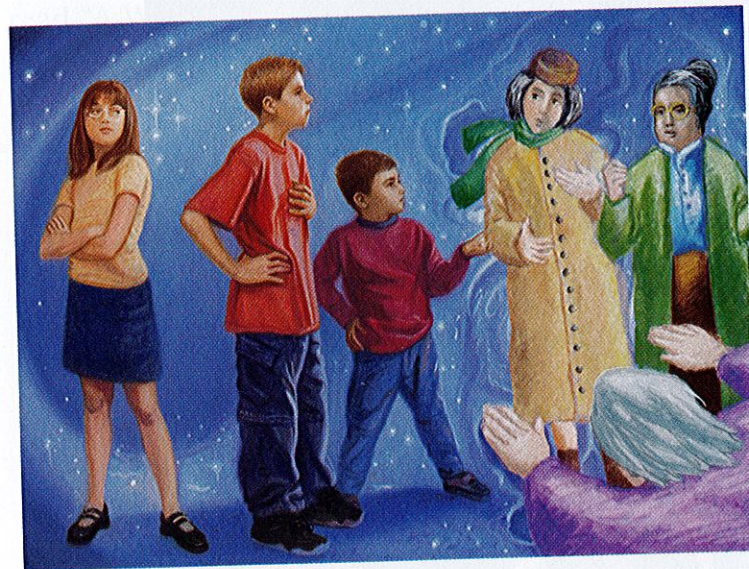




Audio
CD 3, Tr. 7

Prologue

Meg and her brother Charles Wallace are looking for their father, who is a scientist. He disappeared while doing top secret work on something called a tesseract, which is a way to travel through dimensions. Three mysterious women appear, who call themselves Mrs. Which, Mrs. Who, and Mrs. Whatsit. They take Meg, Charles Wallace, and their friend Calvin across space and time to look for the missing man. Meg is losing hope. Note Mrs. Which's speech: She repeats sounds in words.



Describe Mental Images

Imagine how Meg looked as she felt her fear.

1 “My child, do not **despair**. Do you think we would have brought you here if there were no hope? We are asking you to do a difficult thing, but we are **confident** that you can do it. Your father needs help, he needs courage, and for his children he may be able to do what he cannot do for himself.”

2 “Nnow,” Mrs. Which said. “Aare wee rready?”

3 “Where are we going?” Calvin asked.

4 Again Meg felt an actual physical tingling of fear as Mrs. Which spoke.

5 “Wwee musstt ggo bbehindd thee sshadow.”

6 “But we will not do it all at once,” Mrs. Whatsit comforted them. “We will do it in short **stages**.” She looked at Meg. “Now we will **tesser**, we will wrinkle again. Do you understand?”

7 “No,” Meg said flatly.

despair feel hopeless
confident with strong belief in one's ability or that something will definitely happen

stages periods of time
tesser use a tesseract to travel

8 Mrs. Whatsit sighed. “Explanations are not easy when they are about things for which your **civilization** still has no words. Calvin talked about traveling at the speed of light. You understand that, little Meg?”

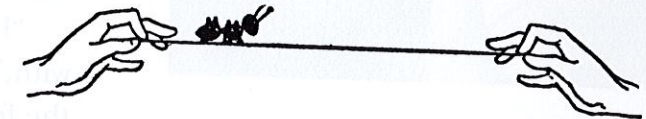
9 “Yes,” Meg nodded.

10 “That, of course, is the **impractical**, long way around. We have learned to take short cuts wherever possible.”

11 “Sort of like math?” Meg asked.

12 “Like in math.” Mrs. Whatsit looked over at Mrs. Who. “Take your skirt and show them.”

13 “*La experiencia es la madre de la ciencia*. Spanish, my dears. Cervantes. *Experience is the mother of knowledge*.” Mrs. Who took a **portion** of her white robe in her hands and held it tight.



14 “You see,” Mrs. Whatsit said, “if a very small insect were to move from the section of skirt in Mrs. Who's right hand to that in her left, it would be quite a long walk for him if he had to walk straight across.”

15 Swiftly Mrs. Who brought her hands, still holding the skirt, together.

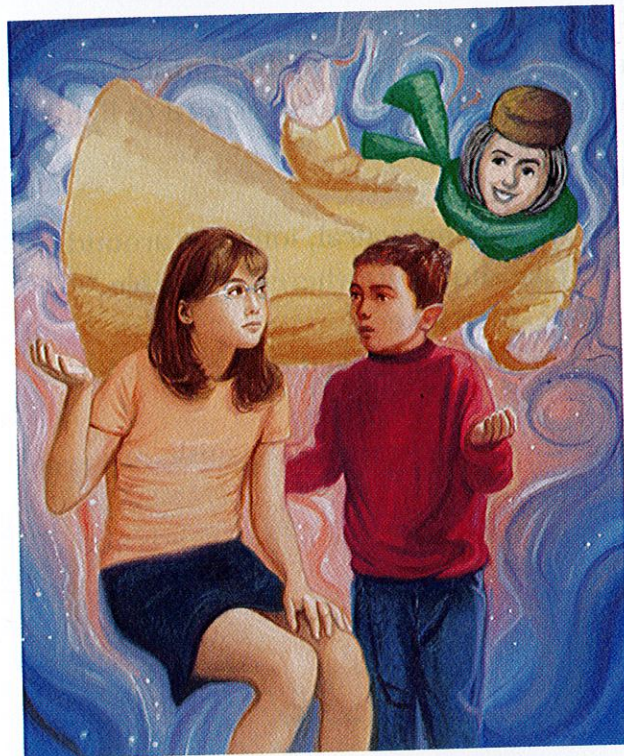
16 “Now, you see,” Mrs. Whatsit said, “he would *be* there, without that long trip. That is how we travel.”

Describe Mental Images

What image of Mrs. Who do you have in this paragraph?

civilization a high level of government, laws, written language, art, music, and so on, within a society or culture

impractical not practical, not sensible
portion a small piece of a larger thing



Describe Mental Images

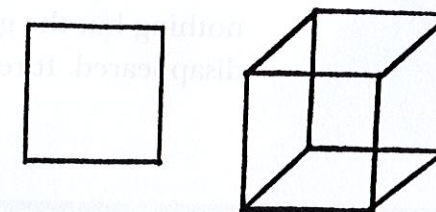
Charles is embarrassed. How does he look?

- 17 Charles Wallace accepted the explanation **serenely**. Even Calvin did not seem **perturbed**. "Oh, *dear*," Meg sighed. "I guess I *am* a moron. I just don't get it."
- 18 "That is because you think of space only in three dimensions," Mrs. Whatsit told her. "We travel in the fifth dimension. This is something you can understand, Meg. Don't be afraid to try. Was your mother able to explain a tesseract to you?"
- 19 "Well, she never did," Meg said. "She got so upset about it. Why, Mrs. Whatsit? She said it had something to do with her and Father."
- 20 "It was a **concept** they were playing with," Mrs. Whatsit said, "going beyond the fourth dimension to the fifth. Did your mother explain it to you, Charles?"
- 21 "Well, yes," Charles looked a little embarrassed. "Please don't be hurt, Meg. I just kept at her while you were at school till I got it out of her."
- 22 Meg sighed. "Just explain it to me."
- 23 "Okay," Charles said. "What is the first dimension?"
- 24 "Well—a line: _____"
- 25 "Okay. And the second dimension?"
- 26 "Well, you'd square the line. A flat square would be in the second dimension."
- 27 "And the third?"
- 28 "Well, you'd square the second dimension. Then the square wouldn't be flat any more. It would have a bottom, and sides, and a top."

serenely very calmly, peacefully
perturbed upset, flustered

concept a general idea

- 29 "And the fourth?"
- 30 "Well, I guess if you want to put it into mathematical terms you'd square the square. But you can't take a pencil and draw it the way you can the first three. I know it's got something to do with Einstein and time. I guess maybe you could call the fourth dimension Time."
- 31 "That's right," Charles said. "Good girl. Okay, then, for the fifth dimension you'd square the fourth, wouldn't you?"
- 32 "I guess so."



Describe Mental Images

What image of Meg do you have in this paragraph?

- 33 "Well, the fifth dimension's a tesseract. You add that to the other four dimensions and you can travel through space without having to go the long way around. In other words, to put it into Euclid, or old-fashioned plane **geometry**, a straight line is *not* the shortest distance between two points."
- 34 For a **brief illuminating** second Meg's face had the listening, probing expression that was so often seen on Charles's. "I see!" she cried. "I got it! For just a moment I got it! I can't possibly explain it now, but there for a second I saw it!" She turned excitedly to Calvin. "Did you get it?"

geometry the mathematical study of lines, angles, shapes, and so on
brief short

illuminating giving light to

Describe Mental Images

What do you “see” in your mind as Mrs. Whatsit and Mrs. Who disappear?

35 He nodded. “Enough. I don’t understand it the way
Charles Wallace does, but enough to get the idea.”
36 “Sso nnow wee ggo,” Mrs. Which said. “Tthere iss nott
all thee time in the worrrld.”
37 “Could we hold hands?” Meg asked.
38 Calvin took her hand and held it tightly in his.
39 “You can try,” Mrs. Whatsit said, “though I’m not sure
how it will work. You see, though we travel together, we
travel alone. We will go first and take you afterward in the
backwash. That may be easier for you.” As she spoke the
great white body began to **waver**, the wings to **dissolve** into
mist. Mrs. Who seemed to **evaporate** until there was
nothing but the glasses, and then the glasses, too,
disappeared. It reminded Meg of the **Cheshire Cat**.



waver become unsteady
dissolve disappear slowly
mist a cloudy haze

evaporate change into a gas
Cheshire Cat a character in the story *Alice in Wonderland*; the Cheshire Cat faded slowly until the only thing left was his smile



40 —I’ve often seen a face without glasses, she thought—
but glasses without a face! I wonder if I go that way, too.
First me and then my glasses?

41 She looked over at Mrs. Which. Mrs. Which was there
and then she wasn’t.

42 There was a gust of wind and a great thrust and a sharp
shattering as she was shoved through—what? Then darkness;
silence; nothingness. If Calvin was still holding her hand she
could not feel it. But this time she was prepared for the
sudden and complete **dissolution** of her body. When she felt
the tingling coming back to her fingertips she knew that this
journey was almost over and she could feel again the
pressure of Calvin’s hand about hers.

Describe Mental Images

What do you “see” happening to Meg in the first sentence of this paragraph?

dissolution slow disappearance

Describe Mental Images

What do you "see" happening to Meg in the first two sentences of this paragraph?

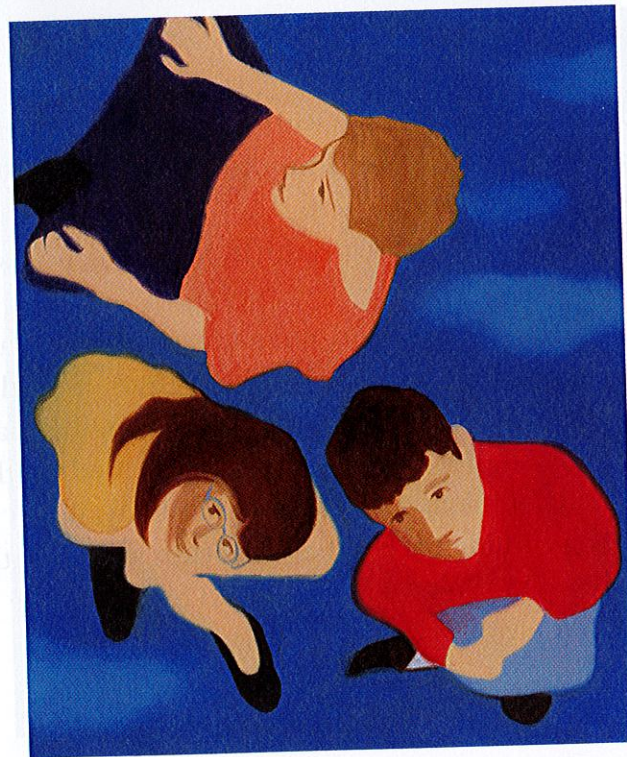
43

Without warning, coming as a complete and unexpected shock, she felt a **pressure** she had never imagined, as though she were being completely flattened out by an enormous steamroller. This was far worse than the nothingness had been; while she was nothing there was no need to breathe, but now her lungs were squeezed together so that although she was dying for want of air there was no way for her lungs to **expand and contract**, to take in the air that she must have to stay alive. This was completely different from the thinning of atmosphere when they flew up the mountain and she had had to put flowers to her face to breathe. She tried to gasp, but a paper doll can't gasp. She thought she was trying to think, but her flattened-out mind was as unable to **function** as her lungs; her thoughts were squashed along with the rest of

her. Her heart tried to beat; it gave a knifelike, sidewise movement, but it could not expand.

44

But then she seemed to hear a voice, or if not a voice, at least words, words flattened out like printed words on paper: "Oh no! We can't stop here! This is a *two-dimensional* planet and the children can't manage here!"



pressure weight
expand and contract take air in and out

function work



45

She was whizzed into nothingness again, and nothingness was wonderful. She did not mind that she could not feel Calvin's hand, that she could not see or feel or be. The relief from the **intolerable** pressure was all she needed.

46

Then the tingling began to come back to her fingers, her toes; she could feel Calvin holding her tightly. Her heart beat regularly; blood **coursed** through her veins. Whatever had happened, whatever mistake had been made, it was over now. She thought she heard Charles Wallace saying, his words round and full as spoken words ought to be, "Really, Mrs. Which, you might have killed us!"

47

This time she was pushed out of the frightening fifth dimension with a sudden, immediate **jerk**. There she was, herself again, standing with Calvin beside her, holding on to her hand for dear life, and Charles Wallace in front of her, looking **indignant**. Mrs. Whatsit, Mrs. Who, and Mrs. Which were not **visible**, but she knew they were there; the fact of their presence was strong about her.

Describe Mental Images

Meg's trip is over. What mental image do you have?

intolerable difficult or painful
coursed flowed
jerk a quick, sharp movement

indignant angry because of unfairness
visible able to be seen

Describe Mental Images

What image do you have of Mrs. Whatsit?

48 “Cchildrenn, I appolloggize,” came Mrs. Which’s voice.
49 “Now, Charles, calm down,” Mrs. Whatsit said,
appearing not as the great and beautiful beast she had
been when they last saw her, but in her familiar wild garb
of shawls and scarves and the old tramp’s coat and hat.
“You know how difficult it is for her to **materialize**. If you
are not substantial yourself, it’s *very* difficult to realize how
limiting **protoplasm** is.”

50 “I *ammm* sorry,” Mrs. Which’s voice came again; but
there was more than a hint of **amusement** in it.

51 “It is *not* funny.” Charles Wallace gave a childish stamp
of his foot.

52 Mrs. Who’s glasses shone out, and the rest of her
appeared more slowly behind them. “*We are such stuff as
dreams are made on.*” She smiled broadly. “Prospero in *The
Tempest*. I *do* like that play.”



materialize appear in solid form
protoplasm a sticky liquid found in all living things

amusement entertainment, fun

53 “You didn’t do it **on purpose**?” Charles demanded.
54 “Oh, my darling, of course not,” Mrs. Whatsit said
quickly. “It was just a very understandable mistake. It’s very
difficult for Mrs. Which to think in a **corporeal** way. She
wouldn’t hurt you **deliberately**; you know that. And it’s
really a pleasant little planet, and rather amusing to be flat.
We always enjoy our visits there.”

55 “Where are we now, then?” Charles Wallace demanded.
“And why?”

56 “In **Orion’s Belt**. We have a friend here, and we want
you to have a look at your own planet.”

on purpose intentionally
corporeal with a body

deliberately on purpose
Orion’s Belt part of a constellation of stars visible
from Earth

About the Author

Madeleine L’Engle (born 1918)



Madeleine L’Engle was born in New York City. Although L’Engle claims not to know exactly how many books she has written, the number is at least 60, including fiction for children, young adults, and adults. L’Engle is best known for combining fantasy and science fiction. “A Wrinkle in Time” was written in 1962. This book was the first book of three about Meg and her family and friends. Madeleine L’Engle has said, “I have written since I could hold a pencil, much less a pen, and writing for me is an essential function, like sleeping and breathing.”

► If you could ask Madeleine L’Engle a question about this story, what would it be?

A Wrinkle in Time



an excerpt from a science fiction novel
by Madeleine L'Engle