

# **A Swiftly Tilting Planet Study Guide**

**A Swiftly Tilting Planet by Madeleine L'Engle**

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# Plot Summary

This novel is the third in a series of five books that tell the multi-generational story of the Murry family. In this book, Charles Wallace Murry is sent into the past in a desperate attempt to avert a potential present-day nuclear war. As the narrative describes his experiences slipping in and out of several time frames, it explores themes relating to the interconnectedness of past and present; the tension between will and trust; and the nature of connection with God.

The narrative begins as the Murry family prepares its traditional Thanksgiving dinner. One non-traditional element is the presence of oldest daughter Meg's mother-in-law, the elderly and unhappy Mrs. O'Keefe. The festivities are interrupted by a call to Mr. Murry from the President of the United States who often calls the brilliant Mr. Murry for advice on scientific matters. After he hangs up, Mr. Murry reveals that the President told him that South American dictator Mad Dog Branzillo has threatened to launch nuclear weapons at the United States, an act that could only result in destructive nuclear war. As the family debates the potential consequences of such a war, Mrs. O'Keefe mumbles about a rune, calls Charles Wallace "Chuck," and gives him a mission to stop Branzillo. Charles Wallace agrees. He enlists the support of Meg (with whom he has always had a special closeness), and goes out to what the family calls the star watching rock. Meg, for her part, goes upstairs to bed and falls into a kind of trance, the better to stay connected with Charles.

At the star watching rock, Charles cries out the first words of Mrs. O'Keefe's rune. He is answered by the arrival of a cranky unicorn named Gaudior, who tells him that he has been sent by the Wind, that Charles Wallace is a singer of the Old Music, and that the two of them together are to travel into the past to find a Might Have Been that could change the present if triggered. He also warns Charles Wallace that forces of darkness and destruction called Echthroi will try to block their mission. Charles Wallace climbs on Gaudior's back, and together they fly to the first of several different locations in the When, while always staying in the same Where.

An early stop for Charles Wallace and Gaudior is the far distant past. Charles Wallace's consciousness is sent into a young native boy whose connection to nature and the Old Music is strong. This, Gaudior says, is to give Charles Wallace experience at going Within. Gaudior then takes Charles Wallace (who maintains his psychic connection with the entranced Meg) on a series of journeys into the lives of Mad Dog Branzillo's ancestors, searching for the Might Have Been that will change the present. Charles Wallace, meanwhile, struggles to find the connections between his experiences and those described in a book by writer Matthew Maddox, which he senses somehow has the key to resolving his mission. Throughout their journeys, the travellers are attacked by the Echthroi, who are determined to block their mission in the same way as they (the Echthroi) have been determined, over the centuries, to bring death and destruction into the many generations of Branzillo's ancestors, and into the whole world.



Eventually, Gaudior and Charles Wallace make their way to the time and life of Matthew Maddox himself. Meg, meanwhile, is using their experiences to trace the history of Mrs. O'Keefe, discovering that she is in fact a descendent of Maddox. Eventually, having gone Within Matthew and shaped his life and choices, Charles Wallace discovers the correct Might Have Been, changes the past and in turn, transforms the present into one of peace. His return to his body is difficult and only the intervention of Meg and Mrs. O'Keefe is able to save him. After Mrs. O'Keefe leaves the Murry home, Charles Wallace tells Meg that it was Mrs. O'Keefe and not him that placed herself between the powers of darkness and the possible destruction of the earth.



# Chapter 1

## Chapter 1 Summary

This novel is the third in a series of five books that tell the multi-generational story of the Murry family. In this book, Charles Wallace Murry is sent into the past in a desperate attempt to avert a potential present-day nuclear war. As the narrative describes his experiences slipping in and out of several time frames, it explores themes relating to the interconnectedness of past and present, the tension between will and trust, and the nature of connection with God.

On a stormy Thanksgiving night, the Murry family gathers for its traditional holiday meal. Nobel Prize-winning scientist Mrs. Murry tends to the turkey, while physicist Mr. Murry helps the unusually silent Charles Wallace construct a model of a scientific phenomenon called a tesseract. Twins Sandy (an aspiring lawyer) and Dennys (an aspiring doctor) set the table, bantering with Mrs. Murry. Watching and reflecting on it all is big sister Meg, recently married (to Calvin O'Keefe, in London at a scientific conference) and newly pregnant. As she reflects on the warmth and safety of her family and its traditions, she also reflects on how much she's changed since her difficult adolescence. Aloud, she comments on how much she misses the family's dog, and one of the twins wonders why Mr. and Mrs. Murry haven't gotten a new one. Mrs. Murry comments that the family's dogs always seem to find them. Meanwhile, Meg watches her mother-in-law, Mrs. O'Keefe, withdrawn, bitter, and uneducated, and reflects on how strange it is that intelligent, ambitious Calvin should have come from this rough-hewn woman and her unhappy family.

Dinner preparations are interrupted by a telephone call from the President of the United States who, Mrs. Murry tells the doubting Mrs. O'Keefe, often consults Mr. Murry on matters of science. The family listens as Mr. Murry explains, after the President has hung up, that there is a threat of imminent nuclear war from Mad Dog Branzillo, the leader of the small South American country of Vespugia. Branzillo, it seems, has been threatening to fire nuclear missiles at the United States for some time, and is now poised to act on that threat. The U.S., Mr. Murry says, would have no choice but to respond with missiles of its own. This, conversation further reveals, would inevitably result in the planet's destruction which, Meg argues, could result in a chain reaction that could have devastating consequences for the solar system and the entire universe.

While all this is going on, the storm outside is intensifying, and Mrs. O'Keefe is mumbling some strange words that at first sound like nonsense. Eventually, however, as she and the Murrays are sitting down to dinner, the words come together into a kind of chanted rhyme that Mrs. O'Keefe says is a "rune" passed down to her from her grandmother, a rhyme that protects against evil. As she finishes the rhyme, the lights go out. The family becomes frightened, but Charles Wallace cries out to Mrs. O'Keefe to say the "rune" again, helping her remember the words and chanting along with her. When the rhyme is finished, the lights come back on. Mrs. O'Keefe demands to be



taken home, revealing that she hadn't planned to come but that she woke that morning knowing that seeing Charles Wallace (whom she calls "Chuck", a nickname no-one ever uses) that night was important. She also tells Charles Wallace he has to stop Mad Dog Branzillo.

As Dennys takes Mrs. O'Keefe home, Mr. Murry insists that the family routine continue, in spite of Meg's protests. When Dennys returns, the family flames their usual holiday dessert, a plum pudding. In the light of the flames, conversation refers to the power of fire "to destroy as well as create. This fire," Charles Wallace continues, "is to help and heal." Meg comments that she hopes that's true.

## Chapter 1 Analysis

The narration in this opening chapter accomplishes several important tasks. First and foremost, it establishes the novel's central situation (the imminent threat of nuclear war) and sets in motion the events of the narrative's main plot (Charles Wallace's mission to avert that threat). A related point is that it introduces several elements that play key roles in the development of that plot (Mrs. O'Keefe's rune, the name of the dictator - Mad Dog Branzillo - and the name of the country he controls), the references here foreshadowing several developments later in the narrative in which the origins and influences of all three reappear. Other foreshadowings here include the reference to dogs that find the Murry family, Mrs. O'Keefe calling Charles Wallace "Chuck," and the chanting of the rune. This foreshadows several similar chantings throughout the narrative, but most importantly the climactic moment in Chapter 12 when Mrs. O'Keefe and Meg chant it to save Charles Wallace's life.

Other noteworthy elements in this chapter include the reference to fire at its conclusion (which foreshadows the important role that fire plays throughout the narrative, particularly at the climax of events in Chapter 5), and the symbolism of the weather, its storminess echoing and/or reflecting the storminess of the political situation under consideration. Perhaps more importantly, there is also the portrait of the Murry's family life, its warmth and friendly openness contrasting vividly with the implied horrors of the possible war and which, as the family suggests in conversation, is something worth fighting for. There are also important references to the close relationship between Charles Wallace and Meg (a relationship which plays a key role in the unfolding of the narrative) and related references, subtle but clear, to their shared history of unusual experiences, a history contained in the two previous novels of the series. Both these elements are manifestations of one of the narrative's central thematic considerations, the variety of relationships within families (this theme is also explored in Meg's considerations of how her brilliant, happy husband Calvin is an anomaly within his uneducated, miserable family, embodied by Mrs. O'Keefe). Other thematic elements introduced in this section include comments on the interconnectedness of events (specifically, Meg's references to how destruction of the earth could conceivably affect the entire universe) and on the tension between making choices and simply allowing what is to be. This question is explored in the debate within the family over whether



Charles Wallace should accept his mission from Mrs. O'Keefe, and what exactly he can/should do about it.



## Chapter 2

### Chapter 2 Summary

"All Heaven with its Power" Lonely and frightened in her childhood bedroom, Meg lies sleepless in bed, missing both her husband and the old family dog, and reflecting on the night's events. She is visited by Charles Wallace, who tells her he's prepared to do whatever it takes to face down Mad Dog Branzillo, adding that he feels he will have to go far away. He and Meg discuss what they know of Mrs. O'Keefe, Charles insisting that she's got some connection to Branzillo and that everything is connected to something he once read about a fight to the death between two feuding brothers, but he can remember nothing more. Meg says Mrs. O'Keefe's first name is Branwen and that her maiden name was Maddox, a name that Charles Wallace feels has a connection with the piece of writing he's trying to remember, and that she (Mrs. O'Keefe) gave her some sheets with the initials "M" and "Z" as a wedding present. They also agree to "kythe" with each other (i.e. share Charles Wallace' thoughts) while Charles Wallace is away, and then Charles Wallace goes. Meg shares his thoughts as he goes downstairs, following him when he stops in the kitchen to greet, along with Mr. and Mrs. Murry, what appears to be the Murrys' new dog, whom Charles Wallace names Ananda, a Sanskrit word that he says means "that joy in existence without which the universe will fall apart and collapse". Conversation with Mr. and Mrs. Murry reveals that the Maddoxes are a centuries old family, that the "Z" in Mrs. O'Keefe's initials stands for Zillah and that Branwen was an ancient, powerful Irish queen. At that Charles Wallace convinces his parents to let him go outside to "listen", and Meg, accompanied by the already house-familiar Ananda, goes upstairs to listen with him.

When Charles Wallace reaches his listening place and as Meg "kythes" with him, he cries out the first lines of Mrs. O'Keefe's rune. Almost immediately, he is answered by a beam of light from a particularly bright star, a light that transforms into a unicorn named Gaudior (a name that Charles Wallace translates as "more joyful"). Gaudior reveals he came in answer to Charles Wallace's call, that he doesn't really know what the two of them are supposed to do, and that even though Charles Wallace is connected to "the ancient music", being sent to earth is regarded, by those who inhabit where he comes from, to be "a hardship assignment." With that, and a warning to watch out for Echthroi (the destructive agents of the ancient Enemy), they fly on the wind into the stars.

### Chapter 2 Analysis

This section introduces several key narrative elements into the story. The first is Ananda the dog who, as Mrs. Murry foretold in Chapter 1, finds the family instead of the family finding her. Ananda plays an important role in the narrative, in that she helps and supports Meg through her often difficult kything with Charles Wallace. A related point is the meaning of Ananda's name, the first of several references to transcendent joy throughout the narrative, a joy that, the narrative implies, motivates all positive action





and a core experience of existence that must be defended and protected. A further related point is the introduction of Gaudior, Charles Wallace's guide and guardian on his various journeys into the past. Gaudior is portrayed as essentially a being of light, wind, music and joy, with his horn in particular being particularly radiant. The reference to the horn, in fact, is one of a large number of elements introduced in one context (i.e. in the life and/or time of one character) that makes an appearance in another context (i.e. in the life and/or time of another character). In the particular case of the horn, the reference here can be seen as foreshadowing the eventual title, content and thematic intention of Matthew Maddox's book, "The Horn of Joy." All that aside, it's intriguing (and engaging) to note that while Gaudior's physical being is essentially a fount of joy, his behavior with Charles Wallace is often short tempered, sometimes patronizing, and occasionally impatient. As the narrative indicates, this is because Gaudior is billions of years older and wiser than any human, including Charles Wallace, but sometimes forgets.

A related element also introduced in this section is the term "the ancient music" or "the old music" as it is sometimes referred to in the narrative. The narrative never explicitly defines the term, but it seems to be an experience of harmony, peace, joy and well being that, as noted in reference to Ananda above, is an aspect of existence (a oneness, a sense of unity and connection, and of peace) at the core of the best of humanity. Charles Wallace is described here as being part of that music despite his young age, while Gaudior is in fact an embodiment of that music. Throughout the narrative, several characters describe themselves as, or are portrayed as, being connected to that old music, creating the sense that experiencing and/or celebrating such a connection is both a worthwhile goal and a profoundly important state of being. In contrast to both this aspect of the book and the joy embodied by Gaudior and Ananda, there is the presence of the Echthroi, the force of darkness that contrasts and/or confronts Gaudior's force of light. The Echthroi are portrayed as clever, ruthless agents of destruction. They and their work are always associated with a bad smell or stench, the novel indicating their presence with that stench even when the Echthroi themselves aren't actually included in the action.

Another key element introduced in this section is Mrs. O'Keefe's names - specifically, her first name and her maiden name. Names and their meanings, as well as their many variations, play an integral role in the narrative from this point on, providing clues to both the reader and the Murrays about the truth they're seeking, the nature of the situation in which they find themselves, and solutions to that situation. A question at this point in the narrative is how much the reader is able to put together from even the minimal references to names here. This question arises from the names referred to for the first time here (Maddox, Zillah, and Branwen) and also referred to for the second time (Mad Dog Branzillo). It's clear even in these early stages of the story that there is some connection between Mrs. O'Keefe and the South American dictator about to destroy the world. As the narrative progresses, it's also very clear that there is a long line of ancestry between the various bearers of the various names. One wonders, however, whether the reader could conceivably become tired of and/or confused by these seemingly endless, sometimes unvaried repetitions of names or whether they are, in fact, intriguingly and tantalizingly developed layers and/or elements of the book's central



mystery. In any case, the reference to Charles Wallace's fragmented recollection of an important piece of writing and his sense of its connection to the name Maddox foreshadow important developments that eventually become important parts of the book's time-spanning narrative puzzle. These include the piece of writing Charles Wallace struggles so hard to remember ("The Horn of Joy"), and the eventually revealed name of its author (Matthew Maddox), who becomes a vitally important character later in the narrative.



# Chapter 3

## Chapter 3 Summary

"The Sun with its Brightness" Meg kythes with Charles Wallace as Gaudior takes him back through an experience of the long-lasting harmony between light and dark, and of how tension came into that harmony, back through an experience of creation itself, and back to a time when there were no humans. There, Gaudior tells Charles Wallace that he (Charles Wallace) has been called to enter a "Might Have Been", a point in the past that, if Charles Wallace can change it, will alter the present and prevent the impending war. He also tells Charles Wallace that he (Charles Wallace) is to be sent "Within" where his consciousness is to be merged with that of one or more other people, and that through gently influencing their behavior and choices, he can change that "Might Have Been." He adds that they will only be traveling through time ("When"), not through space ("Where"). Their journeys and experiences will always begin at what was, or will be, the star watching rock. With that, and as Meg continues to kythe (with Ananda's help), Gaudior takes Charles Wallace to their first destination, a When in which the area is covered in water. Charles Wallace goes Within a young man called Harcels, one of The People of the Wind, whose best friends are animals and who, over the time he and Charles Wallace are "together," Charles Wallace prevents from going too close to another tribe. It is, as both Charles Wallace and Meg realize, an experience of pure, natural joy. At the conclusion of this adventure, Charles Wallace worries about maintaining contact with Meg, saying he feels he's going to "need" her. Gaudior then takes him to their next destination, directed by the Wind and warning him again about the Echthroi.

## Chapter 3 Analysis

In this chapter, the narrative develops several previously introduced elements. Most notably, these include new aspects of the journey being undertaken by Gaudior and Charles Wallace. The narrative also develops the book's thematic interest in the connection between all things. The two points are related, in that throughout the novel, the star-watching rock remains essentially the same (i.e. a point / aspect of connection that remains consistent throughout all of Charles Wallace's many journeys). The sense of connection between all things is also developed through the narrative of Harcels, and his connection with the animals, portrayed as pure and simple, ultimately connected to the so-called "old music". With the introduction of Harcels, another important element appears - the "People of the Wind", a tribe of indigenous people that reappears throughout the novel and serves as a source and/or trigger for romance, wisdom and passion. The through-line of the tribe's existence is, like the star-watching rock, is a manifestation of the novel's thematic interest in the connections between all things and in how some things transcend time and transformation. Finally, there is Charles Wallace's expression of need for Meg, a foreshadowing of the several times throughout the narrative when she either provides information or rescues him.



# Chapter 4

## Chapter 4 Summary

"The Snow with its Whiteness" The journey of Gaudior and Charles Wallace through joy and harmony is interrupted by an attack of the Echthroi, who bring with them a horrible stench and blow them into what Gaudior says is a Projection, a dark vision of a possible future that the Echthroi would like to make real. Because Gaudior says that to take any action within a Projection might make the Projection into a reality, Charles Wallace at first feels he has no other option but to wait in stillness as a horrible monster (apparently some kind of mutated human) approaches. In sudden fear, however, Charles Wallace cries out part of Mrs. O'Keefe's rune. Snow begins to fall, and Gaudior and Charles Wallace are able to fly to the next When, where Charles Wallace goes into a young man called Madoc. He (Charles Wallace) realizes that the story of Madoc is part of the novel he has been struggling to remember, but Gaudior urges him to suppress his own thoughts and go deeper Within.

As Meg continues to kythe, Charles Wallace becomes Madoc who is celebrating his wedding to Zyll, daughter to the Old One, one of the last of the People of the Wind. Conversation with Madoc and the Old One reveals that Madoc and his brother Gwydyr left a land across the sea to avoid conflict with his brothers over their father's kingdom, and that Gwydyr died and was buried without Madoc ever knowing where. Conversation also refers to how Madoc was at first believed to be a god by the People of the Wind, how he refused their worship, and how the Old One admires him for refusing. Finally, the Old One reveals his belief that Madoc must fully let go of his desire to know more of what happened to Gwydyr before he can truly join the People of the Wind. Madoc insists he is ready, and when Zyll and the rest of the People arrive, he seems about to do so. But then the celebrations are interrupted by the arrival, accompanied by war-like drumming, of The People Across the Lake, led by a fair-skinned young man whom Madoc happily recognizes as Gwydyr.

## Chapter 4 Analysis

This chapter marks the first active appearance of the stench-associated Echthroi (who here make the first of several attempts to block Charles Wallace and Gaudior from making their journey) and of Projections, which in this particular case can be interpreted as revealing a possible outcome of nuclear war. It also marks another in a series of instances in which a fragment of Mrs. O'Keefe's rune serves as a weapon of defense against the forces of darkness and evil that threaten Charles Wallace and the other characters. There is also a reappearance of The People of The Wind, who were first mentioned in conjunction with Charles Wallace's first going Within (into Harcells) in the previous chapter, and whose presence continues to reappear throughout the narrative. Then there is the use of snow as a source of safety, a foreshadowing of Chapter 8 (in

which both Gaudior and Charles Wallace are healed of their injuries following an Echthroi attack by snow).

Perhaps the most important element introduced here is the character of Madoc, whose relationships with his brother Gwydyr and his betrothed Zyll forms the basis of both the book's core mystery (i.e. its plot) and its central theme (i.e. the inter-connectedness of past, present and future). The relationship, along with its thematic and narrative implications, continues to develop in the following chapter. Eventually, events both here and in Chapter 5 form the basis of family legends passed down to the descendants of both Madoc and Gwydyr, and eventually become the basis of the novel written by Matthew Maddox in Chapter 11. Here again, it's important to note the characters' names, and how they relate to the names of several other important characters. Here again, the novel explores its thematic ideas around the interconnectedness of events and people.



# Chapter 5

## Chapter 5 Summary

"The Fire with All the Strength it Hath" Madoc confronts Gwydyr, who says he faked his death in the first in order to gain the power in the new world he never would have had back home. Gwydyr adds that he has come to extend that power to the People of the Wind and to Zyll. Madoc challenges Gwydyr to combat, and Gwydyr agrees, choosing fire as the weapon of combat. Suddenly the Old One steps forward in defense of Zyll, but Gwydyr knocks him down, the Old One falling near a small puddle of water. As he helps the Old One to his feet, Madoc sees a vision in the puddle - a woman singing to a dark boy named Madog, urging him to destroy his enemies. This vision then turns to one of flaming, violent destruction. Madoc splashes the water away and prepares to fight Gwydyr, with The People of the Wind throwing all their flowers, worn to celebrate Madoc and Zyll's wedding, into to the hole left behind by the puddle. Water seeps into the bottom of the hole, however, and Madoc has another vision, this time of another woman singing to a fair-haired blue eyed boy named El Zarco about the power of peace. That vision too disappears, and Madoc, using the words of Mrs. O'Keefe's rune, calls down fire. The flowers are set ablaze, and Madoc grabs his shocked brother, now making him wrestle. The fight continues for hours, and as the fire of flowers fades into ashes, Madoc gets his brother into the sea, apparently drowning him. Madoc then tells the People across the Lake to take their "king" away and celebrates his wedding night with Zyll, eventually collapsing tearfully in her arms.

Coming out of Madoc, Charles Wallace again struggles to remember more of the content of the mysterious book, which he now recollects recounted a legend of two Welsh princes named Madoc and Gwydyr. He wonders whether he unwittingly gave Madoc Mrs. O'Keefe's rune, and whether that was a Might Have Been. Gaudior doesn't know. He also wonders whether the image of the dark boy was a Projection and whether the image of the fair boy was a What Might Have Been. At that, Gaudior asks the Wind for an answer, and reveals that Gwydyr didn't die, but went into exile in Patagonia, in South America near what becomes Vespugia.

Charles Wallace's desperate concern wakens Meg, who realizes she has to help him. She seeks out Sandy and Dennys, who knowledgeable about history and who tell her, among other things, that in the year 1865a group of Welsh immigrants settled near Patagonia. They also do a bit of research, and tell her that a writer named Matthew Maddox published his first novel, and that in 1868 Maddox wrote a second book called "The Horn of Joy", a "passionately anti-war" novel about two Welsh brothers shipwrecked on the North American Coast. Meg returns to bed and her connection with Charles Wallace, wondering what all this information means and how it all connects with Mrs. O'Keefe.



## Chapter 5 Analysis

The confrontation between Madoc and Gwydyr is centrally important to both the narrative's plot and its themes. The nature of the confrontations (the physical one between brothers, the philosophical one between peace and the desire for power) form the basis of Matthew Maddox's book (consideration of which leads Charles Wallace to the realization of the true "Might Have Been" he has been sent to change) , and the novel's overall thematic exploration of interconnections between past and present. The other reason the confrontation is notable has to do with the visions experienced by Madoc, the first one clearly evoking Mad Dog Branzillo and his threats of war, the second evoking the possibility of peace associated with a character introduced here for the first time, El Zarco. These two visions, in fact (and as Charles Wallace eventually realize) are the reality (the first vision) and the Might Have Been (the second vision) he has been sent to transform. For now, though, he doesn't yet have enough information to draw this conclusion, although new information is starting to emerge (in particular, the significance of events in both 1865 and 1868). Here again, the question arises of why, given the number of times variations on the names Maddox (Madog, Madoc) and Zyll (Zillah) appear even at this stage in Charles Wallace's journey, he and the other characters don't start making even tentative connections with Mad Dog Branzillo sooner.

Other important elements appearing in this section include the reference to Gaudior's ability to converse with the wind (which appears here for the first time and which plays an important role in the narrative in chapters to come) and Meg's actual involvement in the main narrative. This is the first of several occasions in which Charles Wallace's intuition that he is going to "need" her appears to be coming true.





# Chapter 6

## Chapter 6 Summary

"The Lightning with its Rapid Wrath" When Charles Wallace tells Gaudior what Meg and the twins found out about Maddox and the book, Gaudior dismisses the information, becoming angry when Charles Wallace tries to get him to travel to 1865. Eventually, however, Gaudior makes the attempt, and in spite of the efforts of the stench-bringing Echthroi to sabotage their journey, they arrive at the star watching rock at another time. Charles Wallace is unable to tell when exactly it is, but does notice that the lake across which Gwydyr traveled is now gone, and the rock sits on the edge of a valley.

Charles Wallace goes within a young boy named Brandon Llawcae who speaks with his sister in law Zylle, an Indian woman with blue eyes married to Brandon's older brother Richie. The style of English spoken by the two characters reveals to Charles Wallace that they are many years, perhaps two centuries, before the time he and Gaudior intended to visit - specifically, early in the time of the pilgrims, around the time of the Salem Witch Trials. As Charles Wallace goes deeper within Brandon, their conversation reveals that Brandon and Zylle both believe in the legend of Madoc and Gwydyr, that Zylle believes she is descended from Madoc, that Zylle's people still call themselves The People of the Wind, and that Zylle is about to give birth to a boy. Conversation also reveals that Brandon has the ability to have visions, and has one during the conversation - of Zylle's baby being born healthily, but then of the baby transforming into a dark, angry young man similar to the man in Madoc's vision (Chapter 5).

The next day, at the farm home of Brandon and his family, Zylle gives birth to a boy, blue eyed like his mother, whom she and Richie name after Brandon. The midwife attending the birth finds it strange that Zylle didn't cry, but Brandon and Richie's supportive, Christian parents tell her it's simply the ways of her people. Later, Brandon is warned by Zylle's brother Madok (who has the gift of foretelling the weather) that there are rumors in the white community that Zylle is a witch, that she is responsible for the months-long drought that is killing the crops, and that charismatic preacher Mortmain and his lustful son Duthbert are preparing to put her on trial. Brandon refuses to believe it, but when the people of the community (including Brandon's best friend) reject him and his family, he becomes concerned. One night he is warned by Madok that Zylle is about to be arrested, and is then taken to see Zyllo, Madok and Zylle's blue-eyed father. Zillo asks Brandon to open himself to a vision, and in spite of having been told by his father to never speak of his visions or try to have them, Brandon does as he's asked. He sees the land of the settlement covered with a lake, and then sees rain coming. Zillo says it's a good vision, and then teaches Brandon some words that "only the blue-eyed children of the Wind People are taught."

On the morning of Zylle's execution, under a heavily clouded sky, her baby is taken from her. Richie and his father are restrained by the men of the community as Zylle is taken to the gallows. As she mounts the steps to where the noose awaits, Madok signals





Brandon, and Brandon cries out the words given to him by Zyllo - the first part of Mrs. O'Keefe's rune. When Brandon reaches the line "And the lightning with its rapid wrath", a bolt of lightning strikes the church and sets it on fire. Mortmain shouts it is the work of the devil working through the suddenly arriving Indians, who he says have bewitched Brandon. Brandon's father, however, shouts that Zylle is a Christian and that the lightning is, in fact, the wrath of God being visited upon Marchmain. The townspeople believe him, and Zylle is released. As she walks away, the clouds open, and long-awaited rain starts to fall, putting out the fire in the church. Back at home, Brandon confesses that he got the words from Zillo, and his father comments on God's mysterious ways and how necessary it is for human beings to accept them, and all his gifts, including Brandon's visions.

Sometime later, Richie takes Zylle and the baby back to Wales. After they've left, Brandon is adopted into Madok's tribe as a brother.

## Chapter 6 Analysis

Once again, variations on the names of the central characters come into play - Rich, Zylle, Zillo, Madok, Brandon ... all are versions of the same names, and in many ways the same sorts of characters and identities, that thread their ways through the book (see "Topics for Discussion - Discuss the ways in which the various..." Also once again, a character draws upon Mrs. O'Keefe's rune as a source of righteous power and strength, the repeated motif (i.e. image, event, or metaphor) serving as one of the book's most evident manifestations of its thematic interest in the cross-time linkages between events, feelings and values.

One of the more intriguing elements of this chapter, and of the book in general, is its glancing but nonetheless potent examination of the definitions of God and Jesus. Several times throughout the narrative, but nowhere more so than in this chapter, the portrayals of God and Jesus are quite different from the traditional, so-called "Christian" interpretations of their existence and teachings. The view here, and arguably within the book as a whole, seems to be that both God and Jesus are manifestations of the creative, nurturing power of nature that can, at times and when necessary, become destructive. There is a sense of freedom about the God and Jesus of this book, a sense arising most clearly from Zylle's comments that Jesus and God are part of "the great music". The puritan conservative view arguably positions both God and Jesus simultaneously within a narrower set of faith boundaries and as the source of those boundaries, said boundaries expressed in the teachings and narrow interpretations of the Bible. This perspective is one that contemporary philosophers and theologians might describe as transcendent of religion, or as expressive of a truth at the core of ALL religions - that faith in something other than physical existence is ultimately transcendent of religion.

In the early days of the colonization of America by puritan immigrants from the United Kingdom, the ultra-conservative religious beliefs of the white community led to fear, hatred and ultimately violent mistrust of anything or anyone that seemed to exist outside



a strict, Biblical-based faith and practice. This reaction extended not only to non-whites, but to anyone (particularly women) who exhibited such behavior. This means that anyone who appeared to be, or was believed to be, something other than a rigid Christian norm was perceived as evil, tried, condemned and ultimately executed. The historical record shows that in a significant number of cases, persecutions along these lines were undertaken for reasons other than the faith based. Businessmen accused other businessmen of witchcraft in order to gain economic advantage, people who simply disliked other people trumped up false claims, and as is the case with Zylle here, scapegoats were found for negative external events over which no-one had any control at all. It was not only a time in which fear of the unknown and the strange was a dominant societal trait, but FAKING that fear became a tool for a kind of terrorism that left hundreds of innocents not only unfairly maligned, but dead. Zylle's story has a happy ending (one that is admittedly fictionalized and somewhat melodramatic), but the point must be made that the persecutions she and her family faces were real, and the endings were not nearly as happy.



# Chapter 7

## Chapter 7 Summary

"The Winds with their Swiftmess" Coming back out into himself, Charles Wallace excitedly tells Gaudior that he's realizing there are connections between the names Madoc and Mad Dog (the latter perhaps being some kind of joke). Gaudior comments that they seem to be getting closer to the particular Might Have Been the Wind needs them to change, but adds that because they're getting closer, the Echthroi are getting more determined to stop them. Charles Wallace insists they need to get to Patagonia and Vespugia, in spite of the Echthroi, and uses ropes from the Murry family's hammock (ropes bought from a store run by a man named Mortmain) to secure himself to Gaudior for the trip. After Gaudior takes off, the Echthroi attack immediately, bringing with them their horrible stench and hurling Charles Wallace and the unicorn into an icy lake and knocking Gaudior unconscious. He recovers long enough to find out from the wind that they are still in the right Where, but he and Charles Wallace are overwhelmed by cold, crashing waves. In the present time, Meg, helped by Ananda, calls out Mrs. O'Keefe's rune while in the past, Charles Wallace and Gaudior are swept onto a nearby beach.

## Chapter 7 Analysis

The consequences of Charles Wallace's actions and choices in this brief chapter come to full fruition in the following chapter, in which the narrative most explicitly explores and / or comments on its thematic consideration of the tension between choice and what might be described as trusting inaction. Meanwhile, Charles Wallace makes a connection (between the names of the various characters with whom he is interacting) that the reader, in all likelihood, started to make some time previously - in other words, the characters are catching up to the reader, a situation that arguably could lead to impatience on the reader's part. Another aspect of this chapter that might trigger uncertainty in the mind of the reader is Charles Wallace's grabbing of ropes from the hammock. His actions raise the question of whether he and Gaudior return to the present between each sojourn into the past. How else would Charles Wallace be able to get the ropes? On the other hand, it's important to note that this is the first and last time, either in narration or in action, that this aspect of their traveling is mentioned. It almost comes across as an error in logic on the part of both the writer and the book's editor.



# Chapter 8

## Chapter 8 Summary

"The Sea with its Deepness" In the first part of the chapter, Charles Wallace and Gaudior struggle to recover from the injuries they suffered during their battle with the Echthroi. Charles Wallace realizes his wilfulness and determination is part of what gets them into difficulty with the Echthroi, and realizes he needs to trust the Wind. Eventually, Gaudior takes them to the one place he knows they will be safe - his home on a distant planet, a place called The Hatching Grounds. There, the snow, moonlight and starlight all have healing and nourishing properties, and Charles Wallace and Gaudior are soon both well. As Gaudior prepares to leave, Charles Wallace asks whether it's possible to watch a unicorn hatch. Gaudior finds an egg that's about to hatch, and he and Charles Wallace watch as the baby unicorn emerges, finds its footing, and learns from Gaudior how to drink moonlight and starlight. When the baby unicorn sees Charles Wallace, it runs off, but Gaudior says it will be all right. When he asks Charles Wallace where he wants to go, Charles Wallace says he'll go where the wind takes them, and they take off.

As Meg continues to kythe with Charles Wallace, he arrives at a more recent time and goes within a boy named Chuck who, with his sister Beezie, sits with his grandmother on the star watching rock. Conversation between the three reveals that Grandmother has a sense of time beyond the present, and that she frequently tells stories of the family's history, and has been telling stories about Irish Queen Branwen. Conversation further reveals that Grandmother's first name is Branwen, and so is Beezie's - Branwen Zillah Maddox. With a shock, Meg realizes that Beezie is a younger Mrs. O'Keefe, that Chuck is her brother, and that she (Meg) is afraid for him.

Grandmother tells the children that one of their ancestors was the Indian princess Zillah, and that another was Queen Branwen, who was kidnapped and imprisoned by an Irish king and who received help from both the gods and her brother by calling out the ancient rune. Further conversation reveals that Chuck and Beezie's father is a disappointed writer, and that he runs a small general store. As Chuck, Beezie and Grandmother make their way back home, narration describes Chuck's gift for intuiting situations and identities through scent, and how when he gets home, he immediately scents something wrong with his father. Chuck says nothing, however, and as the family sits down to a snack, the children ask their father to tell them the story of the Indian princess Zillah. Mr. Maddox says he doesn't know much more than what his ancestor Matthew Maddox wrote about, "a fictional account of two brothers from ancient Wales" who fought over the Indian princess, the younger one winning and the older one going to South America. He describes Maddox's book, "The Horn of Joy", as having a unicorn in it, and as having insight into time and space that prefigures those of Einstein. He also says that according to legend, Maddox was himself descended from the Welsh prince Madoc and the Indian princess Zillah. He then speaks of having to give up his dream of being a writer to take over his father's shop, and also of having to sell his copy of



Matthew Maddox's book in order to make some money. He then goes downstairs to work, and as he goes, Chuck worries about the troubling scent that goes with him ...

In the following week, Chuck has several nightmares, but tells no-one, not even Beezie, what they're about. He distracts Beezie's concern by asking her what she thinks about Paddy O'Keefe, who keeps after her. Beezie comments that O'Keefe's repeated sixth grade three times, and that she can't stand him. One night, desperate to get away from the scent in the house, Chuck goes out with Beezie to the star watching rock to watch fireflies. While there, he feels the rock tilt under him, and suddenly feels the need to get home. When he and Beezie arrive, they discover that their father has been taken to hospital, suddenly stricken with what Grandmother Maddox says is appendicitis. She tries to calm them, but that night Chuck has another dream, and wakes up in the morning knowing his father is dead.

## Chapter 8 Analysis

The first part of the chapter, set in The Hatching Grounds, is perhaps the most poetically written in the book, and the one with the deepest and most moving sense of hope, joy, and possibility. It could be argued, in fact, that the birth of the unicorn is a foreshadowing of the birth of hope and joy that takes place at the end of the narrative, once Charles Wallace has returned from his mission, changed the past, and endowed the present with new hope and possibility. Meanwhile, the hope and beauty of that first section is simultaneously echoed and contrasted with the situation and the story of the following section, the echoes triggered by the poeticism of Grandmother's stories, while the sense of contrast is triggered by the fear and foreboding experienced by both Chuck and Meg.

Then, and as previously noted, the first part of this chapter also contains a clear and direct reference to another of the book's main themes. This is its exploration of the tension between will and trust, or between active choice and what might best be described as positive inaction - or, to look at it another way, the tension that exists between the attempt to define one's life on one's own terms and allowing life to take its own course. Charles Wallace's insights here speak of the dangers of putting too much faith and/or energy in the former and not enough in the latter, a realization that, it could be argued, is the book's position as well. This, in turn, can be seen as a manifestation of a question explored in both the novel and this analysis earlier, the nature and role of God and faith. It could be argued that, in attempting to bend his experiences to his own ideas, will and interpretation, Charles Wallace is manifesting a similar dark, destructive insistence as the evil Pastor Mortmain and, equally arguably, the Echthroi. But when Charles Wallace, over the course of the narrative, surrenders to the will of the Wind (which can be interpreted as representing, at various times, Nature, Destiny, Faith or God), his choices have happier outcomes. This idea is developed further in Chapter 10, when Charles Wallace chooses to follow the will of the Wind rather than that of a voice that seems, to him, to be untrue, unreal, and dishonest.



Another important point to note about this section relates to a characteristic of the narrative as a whole. This is the way the author presents answers to questions posed in previous sections and situations while, at the same time, using those answers as springboards to more questions. Specifically, questions raised earlier about Mrs. O'Keefe (why she calls Charles Wallace "Chuck", how she came to be so unhappy, and her connection to the whole Branwen/Zillah/Maddox chain) are answered at the same time, and often with the same words and phrases, as questions are raised about how everything fits together in the writing of Matthew Maddox. At this point in the narrative, it's starting to seem not only as though Charles Wallace's ultimate and eventual "going Within" will involve Matthew Maddox, and not only that Charles Wallace was/is an influence on Maddox's book. It's also starting to seem that Maddox's life will be the one in which Charles Wallace finds the "Might Have Been" he has been seeking all along, the moment in history that will change the present for the better.



# Chapter 9

## Chapter 9 Summary

"The Rocks with their Steepness" Meg is woken from her kything dream by the ringing of the telephone. When she joins the rest of the family, she learns that the call has come from Mrs. O'Keefe, who says she's found something that the family (and particularly Charles Wallace) needs to see. One of the twins goes to fetch her, and when she arrives, she is shocked when Meg calls her Beezie, insisting no-one has called her that since her brother. She then produces a letter from her attic written in 1865 by Bran Maddox to his brother Matthew. In the letter, Bran refers to having found a new home in Vespugia with a group of Welsh immigrants, and how the community is friends with the local natives, one of whom is a blue eyed woman named Zillie (who reminds Bran of his girlfriend back home, Zillah Llawcae) and another is Gedder, Zillie's arrogant blue eyed brother. Gedder claims, according to Bran, that he and Zillie are descended from a Welsh prince who settled in Vespugia centuries before. Bran also refers to his disdainful sister Gwen and to his hopes that Zillah and Matthew will join him. After the letter is read, Mrs. O'Keefe draws the connection between the names - Bran, Zillah, Zillie - and comes up with Branzillo. Mrs. Murry describes the insight as "amazing". Mrs. O'Keefe asks for Charles Wallace (whom she calls Chuck). This reminds Meg that she needs to get back to kything. She and Ananda go back upstairs to bed, and Meg reconnects with Charles Wallace, deep Within Chuck.

In the aftermath of Mr. Maddox's death, his family discovers just how badly he had managed the store's finances. As they search for something, anything they can sell to make some money, Chuck discovers a locked strongbox. When he opens it, he discovers paintings and diary entries done by Zillah Llawcae, paintings of the star watching rock and diaries referring to Bran's return from the American Civil War suffering from shell shock. The diary entries also refer to Zillah and Matthew having gone down to join Bran in Patagonia, to Zillah waiting (sometimes impatiently) for Bran to get better so he will marry her, and to her wondering whether she should actually marry Matthew. There are also letters from both Bran and Matthew, which comment on Gedder's interest in Gwen. One of the letters is the one Mrs. O'Keefe brought to the Murrys in the first part of the chapter.

As Chuck, Beezie and Grandmother Maddox struggle to help Mrs. Maddox run the store, they become uncomfortably aware that local merchant Duthbert Mortmain is starting to become interested in her. Unhappy about this turn of events, Beezie recalls the story of Branwen and the rune, saying she hates Mortmain so much that she wants to use the rune to prevent him from marrying their mother. Grandmother Maddox tells them the rune is to be used only in the worst emergencies, adding that Beezie will use it when the time is ripe. Meanwhile, Chuck and Beezie are unable to do anything as their mother and Duthbert marry, and as they discover that Mortmain has a violent and controlling temper. At one point, Paddy O'Keefe threatens to defend Beezie against him. One night, Mortmain goes to strike Grandmother Maddox. Chuck intervenes, and takes





the blow. He is knocked unconscious, muttering deliriously to Beezie that she cannot let Gedder marry Gwen.

## Chapter 9 Analysis

Once again, the narrative simultaneously deepens, varies, and tightens the cross-time interplay between the various branches of the Madoc/Gwydyr/Branwen family lines. Echoes of various pasts resound through various presents as the characters either come to grips with, or become aware of, the relationship between what has gone before, what is coming into being, and what might be. Gedder's apparent comments to Bran suggest that he (Gedder) and Zyllie are descended from Gwydyr who, it must be remembered, fled area of the star-watching rock in humiliation after being defeated by Madoc and settled in South America. Meanwhile, interesting new glimpses into the past/present/future interplay are added to the mix. These include the reference to Duthbert Mortmain (as nasty in Beezie's time as he was in Brandon Llawcae's time, centuries before) and Paddy O'Keefe, whose last name clearly ties him to Mrs. O'Keefe's eventual unhappiness and also foreshadows forthcoming revelations that an O'Keefe has a connection to the crippled Matthew Maddox. Here again, however, it must be noted that Mrs. Murry's comment that the connections between the various families and the similarities of the names are all "amazing" may very well prompt a big "well DUH!" from the reader, given that there has been enough conversation between the characters for them to make such a realization LONG before this.

A word about the American Civil War ... a detailed commentary on its causes and consequences are a much deeper and broader subject than can be dealt with in this analysis, but in essence, it was a war fought between the Northern and Southern American triggered by the issue of slavery, but actually fought over questions of what constituted state independence. The idea that it was a fight of brother against brother is not new to this book. It was, and is, a historical fact that many families had sons, fathers or other male members on both sides of the conflict, and that they often came face to face on the battlefield. As such, it was arguably a more intimate war than many other similar conflicts, not just between the anonymous foot-soldiers of rival ideologies but between people who once knew and loved each other but who were driven to mortal combat by an animosity and a rage that forced them to ignore, and even destroy, that love. The echoes of the battle between Madoc and Gwydyr in Chapter 5 are poignant, clear, and essential to the novel's thematic exploration of the connections between past, present, and possibility.





# Chapter 10

## Chapter 10 Summary

"The Earth with its Starkness" As Chuck's thoughts, memories and dreams simultaneously fragment and blend together, highlighting images of unicorns, light, Gedder's gun, and a fight on the edge of a cliff, Charles Wallace remains Within. At one point, a silvery voice calls him to come out, saying that Gaudior has been drained by his attempts to help Chuck heal from the attack by Mortmain, and that he (the speaker) is the voice of the newly hatched unicorn (Chapter 8). But Charles Wallace mistrusts the voice, and chooses to stay Within. Kything with him, Meg senses that the voice was in fact an Echthroi, attempting a new way of trying to manipulate Charles Wallace.

Chuck's consciousness and awareness improve, but his mind is fragmented, shifting between his own reality, that of Bran/Matthew/Zillah (in which he insists that Gedder cannot marry Gwen) and that of Madoc and Gwydyr. As she kythes, Meg starts to make some connections between the three timelines, and makes some important realizations. Meanwhile, in Chuck's reality, Paddy O'Keefe starts paying more attention to Beezie, working with Mortmain in the store and trying to get Mortmain to put Chuck in an institution. For a while Mortmain refuses, but Chuck's sight deteriorates at the same time as his inner visions become more intense, his visions and memories clearly connected to / manifestations of Charles Wallace's past experiences of going Within. As Chuck's consciousness fragments even more, he recalls the words of the two mothers in Madoc's twin visions - one encouraging Madog ("Call the world your own, to keep or destroy as you will).

In Chuck's tilting world, the strongest image is of the fight on the cliff.

## Chapter 10 Analysis

In this relatively brief chapter, the fragmenting of Chuck's mind and its blending with that of Charles Wallace functions on several important levels. First, it's an important aspect of plot, as the collage of images and experiences provides important clues, to both Meg and Charles Wallace, about what they need to do next. Also in this aspect, it returns to the vision experienced by Madoc way back in history (Chapter 5), the contrasting visions of Madog and El Zarco, and reinforces the sense that the Might Have Been sought by Charles Wallace involves somehow making the birth of the latter less of a possibility and more of a reality. The fragmenting of Chuck's perception also draws the reader further into the narrative, as it intensifies the looming inevitability of Charles Wallace's eventual going within Matthew Maddox. In addition, it emphasizes and manifests the novel's thematic interest in the interconnection of all things across time and identity. Finally, the references to the fight on the cliff clearly foreshadow the confrontation on the cliff between Rich and Gedder in the following chapter, a

confrontation that finally, and for good, engages and defines the Might Have Been that will change destiny.



# Chapter 11

## Chapter 11 Summary

"All These I Place" After a long and painful withdrawal from Chuck (whom Gaudior says had been put into an institution by Mortmain) and after a frightening detour into a Projection, Charles Wallace has a difficult time going Within his next host - Matthew Maddox, who lives near the star watching rock in 1865, the time of the American Civil War. Matthew was crippled in a riding accident during which, he comments at one point, he smelled an awful stench. Conversation with Zillah, the betrothed of his twin brother Bran, reveals that Bran is fighting in the war, that Bran and Matthew have a close psychic connection, and that Matthew is himself in love with Zillah. Conversation also reveals that Matthew and Zillah both believe the legends of their distantly-related families being descended from an ancient Welsh prince named Madoc, who married into the People of the Wind, and that Matthew and Bran's sister Gwen looks astonishingly like Zillah. Gwen's blue eyes, however, are described as cold, while Zillah's blue eyes are much warmer.

When Bran returns home from battle, he is shell shocked and traumatized, and for a long time no-one is able to get through to him. Eventually, however, his barriers break down and he reveals the suffering he experienced to Matthew. Bran also confesses his desire to join a new group of Welsh immigrants making a new home in Vespugia, near Patagonia, saying that there are different kinds of war that come between human beings and that his leaving is part of the fighting of that war. Matthew supports him, and when Bran reveals his intentions at a family dinner, both his father and Zillah's father agree. Zillah, however, is forbidden to go with him, her father decreeing that she is too young. Gwen goes with him instead, one of the consequences of her carrying on with servant James O'Keefe.

Through his psychic connection with Bran, Matthew knows everything about the trip to South America, communicating it all to Zillah, eager to travel to join her beloved. Months pass as Bran gets settled, revealing that his best friend is Rich Llawcae whose family, Bran's letter suggests, is descended from Richie Llawcae who fled to Wales with his Indian wife Zylle (at the end of Chapter 6). Also in the picture are the Indian siblings Zillie (who looks like both Zillah and Gwen) and Gedder, dashing and fascinating, eager for power and status. Matthew puts everything he knows from Bran, and some things he only dreams about, into a new novel (which eventually becomes "The Horn of Joy") working on it as much as time and his health allow.

Letters from Bran continue to arrive, triggering Matthew to worry about Gedder's desperation for power, to recall the story of Madog and Gwydyr, to long for Zillah to be with bran, and to write with even greater determination. Meanwhile, he falls unexpectedly ill, and his strength begins to fail him. He writes with even greater urgency, saving the money he gets from selling his stories. Meanwhile, his dreams become increasingly confused. He repeatedly imagines himself on a large flat rock (the



star watching rock) but sometimes with different people - in particular, a young boy in strange, shabby clothes who repeatedly urges him to do what he can to get Gwen to marry Rich, not Gedder, and to get Bran to marry Zillah, not Zillie. He also sees a vision of two young men fighting, narration suggesting they are Madoc and Gwydyr. As a result of all these visions, Matthew strives to put the meaning of it all into some kind of order. Meanwhile, his connection with Bran tells him that Bran is becoming increasingly drawn to Zillie, and Gwen to Gedder.

After several months of intensifying dreams and increasing illness, Matthew gives Zillah his accumulated income and a ticket to Vesputia. She leaves, looking forward to being with Bran but sad to leave Matthew, who braves her father's fury, finishes his book, and ties his mind more closely to Bran's, getting him to wait for marriage until Zillah arrives. It is through that connection that Matthew learns of a fight (narrated in present tense) between Rich and Gedder in which Gedder is accidentally killed. Zillah arrives and marries Bran. The bereft Gwen marries Rich, and they travel back home, but not before Matthew suffers an agonized death, his final illness accompanied by "a rank stink like spoiling flowers."

Meg wakes up from the depths of her kything, but can't feel Charles Wallace in her mind. She goes downstairs in search of him, but he's not there. As she and the family settle in to wait for him, Mrs. O'Keefe suddenly cries out that she has to be taken to "Chuck. Quickly. Before it's too late."

## Chapter 11 Analysis

The complicated entwining of past and present, of possibility and reality, of What Was and What Might Have Been reaches its climax in this chapter, all triggered by Charles Wallace going Within the character that has seemed, for some chapters now, to be his ultimate, inevitable destination, Matthew Maddox. It is Charles Wallace and Matthew together who write so intensely, who save Matthew's income, send Zillah to Bran, and who together influence Bran to wait for her. It's interesting to note, however, that it is not Bran's actions deciding the fate of the entwined families and, indeed of the present. It is those of Gedder and Rich, with the narrative making it very clear that it is the combined efforts of Matthew and Charles Wallace, and perhaps even of Chuck, that shape the events of the fight on the cliff to ensure the right outcome, the changed Might Have Been.

Here is what the fight actually involves, in terms of the various pasts, the various family lines, and the various consequences and/or possibilities of it all. Bran Maddox, Matthew Maddox, and Zillah Llawcae are all descended from Madoc the Welsh prince who married the Indian princess Zyll following the defeat of his brother Gwydyr (Chapter 4). Rich on the cliff is descended from Richie the brother of Brandon, who returned to Wales following the escape of his wife Zylle from execution (Chapter 6). Like Bran, Matthew and Zillah, Rich and Richie are descended from Madoc. Gedder on the cliff, on the other hand, is descended from Gwydyr, the former's character and intentions clearly echoing the dominating, controlling, power hungry intentions of the latter. Gedder's



defeat at the hands of Rich ensures that Gwen marries Rich instead of Gedder, which is what Chuck insisted to Charles Wallace/Matthew had to happen. This means that the destinies of the babies born to Bran and Zillah (who are born into, inherit and manifest the destinies of those born into the peaceful line of Madog) become dominant over those of the babies that would have been born to Gwen and Gedder, babies that would have been born into the violent line of Gwydyr. In other words, the fight on the cliff triggers the birth of the blue-eyed, compassionate El Zarco (who stops the present day war) instead of the dark-eyed, evil El Rabioso (who triggers it). This is the Might Have Been that Charles Wallace is sent into the past to change. The chapter's final moments draw both the reader and the narrative into the book's last chapter, in which the effects of the change in What Might Have Been become apparent in the lives of the book's central characters, and the life of the world itself.

All that said, and among from the various levels of interplay between names, characters and destinies, there are several other intriguing elements. These include the perhaps paradoxical involvement of Charles Wallace in the writing of a book that he remembers as being part of his past and the simultaneous sense that it is not only Charles Wallace whose presence is being felt across time, but also Chuck. Then there are the clear hints of the involvement of the stench-bringing Echthroi in two key points in Matthew's deterioration (the accident that crippled him and his death), and the setting of this chapter's action further back in Matthew's life than Bran's letter writing from Vespugia (i.e. the Civil War).



# Chapter 12

## Chapter 12 Summary

"Between Myself and the Powers of Darkness" Meg and the twins help Mrs. O'Keefe as they all run to the star watching rock, where they find Charles Wallace pale, unconscious, and without a heartbeat. As Dennys tries to revive him, Meg and Mrs. O'Keefe join hands and cry out the rune. Narration then switches focus to Gaudior and Charles Wallace, their conversation revealing that Gaudior got Charles Wallace out of Matthew just before the Echthroi triggered Matthew's death. Gaudior then takes Charles Wallace on one last ride where he is reunited with his body. As Gaudior departs, Meg and the others see a flash of light, and Charles Wallace awakes. The others help him back to the house.

As Charles Wallace recovers, his parents ask him what, if anything, he was able to do about the command Mrs. O'Keefe gave him to stop Branzillo. As Charles Wallace comments on how history and time, past and present, are all interconnected, Meg struggles to remember the details of her kythed experiences with Charles Wallace, catching glimpses of what happened but not knowing what they mean. Meanwhile, the Murrys read the letter brought by Mrs. O'Keefe, a letter now different in content from the letter she brought before Charles Wallace went Within Matthew. In this version of the letter, Bran speaks of his and Zillah's children, Zillah and Matthew, and of how Matthew has been given the nickname Branzillo by the Indian children nearby. A phone call from the President reveals that the leader of Vespugia, El Zarco ("the Blue Eyed") has ended the threat of war posed by his generals, and there is to be peace. Mrs. O'Keefe comments that Meg's baby really will be born, adding that it's time for her to leave. "Chuck and Grandma are waiting ..."

After Mrs. O'Keefe goes, Dennys comments that she's likely dying. Meg comments that there was so much more to Mrs. O'Keefe than anyone thought, adding that she hates "the thought of losing her, just as we're discovering her." Charles Wallace, his eyes "the blue of light as it glances off a unicorn's horn", quietly tells her that it was Mrs. O'Keefe, not him, who enacted the rune that night, placing herself "between us and the powers of darkness."

## Chapter 12 Analysis

The novel's complex network of narrative lines, destinies, fateful confrontations and perilous pasts resolves into a new and peaceful present in this chapter, but not before the aversion of one final crisis - the apparent lack of life in the time traveling Charles Wallace. There is the clear sense here that his spirit, his essence, has left his body, traveling through time on the back of Gaudior the unicorn, and is returned to where it belongs due to the combined efforts of Meg, Mrs. O'Keefe, and Gaudior himself, who simultaneously arrives and departs in a flash of lightning (one wonders whether, once

he has returned to The Hatching Grounds, whether his opinion of humanity has changed as a result of his encounter with Charles Wallace, his family, and The People of the Wind).

Once the two aspects of Charles Wallace's life, the physical and the spiritual, are reunited and are themselves reunited with the rest of the Murrays, all that's left for the narrative to accomplish is to let the reader know whether it's all worked, whether it's all been worth it. And, of course, it has. War has been averted, peace is established, at least for the moment, and the novel's thematic and narrative contentions have come into being - peace is truly the ultimate goal, and the ultimate truth. Or rather, peace, and the sort of selfless, powerful compassion and courage practiced not only by Mrs. O'Keefe (and referred to by Charles Wallace), but by Chuck, Matthew, Brandon, and all the other descendants of Prince Madoc of Wales.



# Characters

## Charles Wallace Murry

Charles Wallace is the book's central character, a slender and pale fifteen-year-old who is portrayed as having unusual emotional, intellectual and psychic sensitivities. This book adds a spiritual sensitivity to that list of attributes, as Charles becomes increasingly aware, over the course of the narrative, of not only different kinds of spirituality at work in the world over time, but also comes to an awareness of his own. He comes to realize, in an enactment of one of the book's core themes, that true spirituality, true connection to the ways of the universe and faith, has more to do with trust in, and connection to, the unseen life force than it has with the restrictive rules and values imposed by rigid interpretation of the Bible. It could be argued that the author's thematic intent is to extend this perspective to include other so-called Holy Books, but that's the subject for another novel and another analysis.

Charles Wallace displays considerable courage throughout the novel, as well as a determination to do well by his family and the world that gave him life. He is portrayed as being connected to what several characters (including Gaudior, his cranky but transcendently spiritual unicorn guide) refer to as "The Old Music" a source of wisdom and insight that, in Charles Wallace's case, seems to fuel both his courage and his connection. He is not perfect - he is also portrayed as being willful and single minded in spite of being connected to "the Old Music." There is the sense that on some level, his willfulness is representative, at least to some degree, of that of all of humanity. This, in turn, means that Charles Wallace's journey through time and into himself is intended to be seen as a metaphor for the overall experience of being human. To look at it another way, the portrayal of Charles Wallace could arguably be viewed as a portrait of an experience of transformation that humanity as a whole needs to take, if it is to avoid the self-destruction threatened by Mad Dog Branzillo and those like him who embrace anger, destruction, and the desire to control.

## Meg Murry O'Keefe (Calvin O'Keefe)

Meg, like Charles Wallace, is a principle character in the earlier three books of the Murry family series. In the first two books, she is portrayed as, in many ways, a typical teenager - rebellious, angry, unhappy with her looks, jealous of those in her family who seem to have life easier than she does. In this book, she seems to have transcended those parts of her youth, and thanks in part to the loving attention of her husband Calvin, she is maturing into a beautiful, wise, loving (but still questioning) woman. She is also portrayed, in all three books of the series in which this generation of Murrays figures, as having a close emotional and psychic bond with Charles Wallace, a fierce sense of both pride in him and protectiveness of him, and a powerful intelligence and compassion of her own. These latter characteristics come to the fore in this book of the





series, as her "kything" with Charles Wallace supports and protects him on his perilous journeys through time and Within the lives and psyches of other people.

## **Mrs. O'Keefe**

Mrs. O'Keefe is the mother of Meg's husband Calvin, and therefore Meg's mother-in-law. Elderly and unkempt, she is initially portrayed as being bitter and angry, uneducated and suspicious of those who are. As the narrative progresses, however, she reveals unexpected depths, including a connection with Charles Wallace that, in turn, suggests that in spite of the hard life she has been forced to live, she too is still connected, somewhere inside, to "The Old Music." It is her presence at the Murry family's Thanksgiving dinner, and more specifically her recalling and reciting of what might best be described as an ancient rune of power, that sets the plot in motion. The words and power of that rune recur, with minor variations, throughout the narrative, but manifest perhaps most importantly and potently in the novel's final chapter, when she and Meg use the rune to bring the spirit of Charles Wallace back into his body. As Charles Wallace suggests, it is Mrs. O'Keefe who is, in fact, the heroine of the story, and who saves the world from nuclear war. He is acting only as her representative and her agent.

## **Mr. and Mrs. Murry**

The scientist parents of Charles Wallace and Meg Murry are, here as in the other books in the series, as almost paragons or ideals of good parenting. Incredibly intelligent and dedicated to their work and their research, they nonetheless manage to establish and maintain strong, individualized, loving relationships with all four of their very different children. Mrs. Murry is perhaps a little wiser, and has a deeper sense of herself and the world, than Mr. Murry, who can be absent minded. It is Mrs. Murry, for example, who suggests that there might be more to Mrs. O'Keefe than meets the eye. It is also Mrs. Murry who, in a glancing manifestation of the book's thematic emphasis on trusting fate, says that rather than going out and finding a new dog, they should wait for a new dog to find them, as the Murry family's dogs always do.

## **Sandy, Dennys**

The middle siblings in the Murry family, twins Sandy and Dennis, are portrayed here and in the other novels as, for the most part, being much more "normal," to use a term that the younger Meg would use, than either Meg or Charles Wallace. They display no psychic or spiritual connections, between themselves or with other members of the family, are active, bright, and concerned with more earthly aspects of existence. In one of the other books in the series they have an otherworldly adventure of their own, but their lives are not defined by and/or grounded in such experiences in the same way as are the lives of Meg and Charles Wallace.



## **Branzillo (El Rabioso, El Zarco)**

Dictator of the fictitious South American country of Vespugia, Branzillo never actually appears in the narrative, but is referred to several times throughout the narrative. He is referred to most significantly at the beginning, at which point Mr. Murry discovers that Branzillo is planning to unleash nuclear war on the world, and then at the end when, thanks to what the reader knows has been the intervention of Charles Wallace, history has been changed and that war that that war has been averted. It's essential to note that, also as the result of Charles Wallace's intervention, that Branzillo's name and identity are both transformed, from that of El Rabioso to that of El Zarco.

## **Ananda**

Ananda is the dog that finds her way to the Murry home on the dark and stormy Thanksgiving night on which the story takes place. Ananda is instinctively connected to the Murry family, and most strongly to Meg, for whom she acts as a calming, focusing influence as she kythes with Charles Wallace on his various journeys into the past.

## **Gaudior**

Gaudior is a being of light and joy, a spiritual entity manifesting as a unicorn sent to help Charles Wallace fulfill the mission placed on him by Mrs. O'Keefe to change history and save the world. Gaudior is billions of years old, and very strongly connected to "The Old Music." As such, he is occasionally impatient with the spiritually younger and much less evolved Charles Wallace. But over the course of their adventures together, in which they each save each other's lives on a number of occasions, they come to a powerful mutual respect and even affection for each other.

## **Harcels, The People of the Wind (Chapter 2)**

Harcels is the first of five people that Charles Wallace travels "Within" in order to experience history and discover the "Might Have Been" that will change both history and the present. In terms of evolution and time, Harcels is the most ancient of these people, he and his community existing in a time when humanity, nature, and animals co-existed in complete harmony and mutual respect. As the result of his going Within Harcels, Charles Wallace makes his first discoveries of what being connected to "The Old Music" means and feels like.

## **Madoc, Zyll, the Old One, Gwydyr (Chapters 4 and 5)**

Peaceful Welsh prince Madoc is the second of the individuals that Charles Wallace goes Within. Zyll is his beloved and the Old One is Zyll's father, both belonging to The People of the Wind and both still connected to The Old Music, an experience of



existence to which the sensitive Madoc aspires. Gwydyr is Madoc's older brother who, having journeyed with Madoc to the new world, is desperate to gain the power and status he never could in their homeland of Wales and attempts to exercise that power over Madoc. With the help of the Within Charles Wallace, and the support of Mrs. O'Keefe's rune, Madoc triumphs over Gwydyr and sends him into exile. The conflict between Madoc and Gwydyr forms the basis of centuries of inter-family fighting between their respective descendants, and it is the resolution of that age-old conflict that changes the present and saves the modern world from the nuclear destruction threatened in the book's first chapter.

## **Brandon Llawcae, Richie, Zylle, Maddok, Zillo, Pastor Mortm**

Teenaged Brandon is the third person that Charles Wallace travels within. He and his family (most importantly his brother Richie and his Indian sister-in-law Zylle, a member of The People of the Wind tribe) live at the time of the Puritans, who came to power and influence in America shortly after it was initially settled. Maddok is Zylle's brother Brandon's best friend, while Zillo is the father of both Maddok and Zylle, and Brandon's friend and confidante. Together, and with the influence of the Within Charles Wallace, they manage to save Zylle from the condemnatory attacks of the conservative minister Pastor Mortmain and his lustful son Duthbert, who are determined to put Zylle to death as a witch.

## **Chuck Maddox, Beezie Maddox, Grandmother, Mr. Maddox, Duthbe**

Chuck is the fourth person Charles Wallace goes within. Beezie (whose name is a variation on her initials, B Z, which in turn are variations on the names Branwen and Zillah) is his younger sister, their relationship having clear echoes of that between Charles Wallace and Meg. Beezie, as it turns out, is the name used by Mrs. O'Keefe in her childhood, the time of her life when she was carefree and happy, taught the stories of her past by her Grandmother who is, in turn, still connected to The Old Music. Chuck and Beezie's father, Mr. Maddox, is descended from the writer Matthew Maddox, whose book "The Horn of Joy" is a partial source for information that leads Charles Wallace to the resolution of his quest. Duthbert Mortman, apparently a descendent of the Puritan-era character of the same name, marries Chuck and Beezie's mother after the death of Mr. Maddox, and is the character whose violence results in Chuck's being brain damaged and eventually institutionalized. Paddy O'Keefe is the older boy whose somewhat creepy interest in Beezie is initially rebuffed, but eventually becomes a source of safety for her as she marries him to get away from Mortmain. Charles Wallace's experiences in the time of Chuck and Beezie play a fundamental role in helping him and Meg understand his role in the resolution of his quest, a quest that comes to fruition in his final going Within.



## **Matthew Maddox, Bran Maddox, Zillah Llawcae, Gwen, Jack O'Ke**

Charles Wallace's final journey *Within* takes him into the life of Matthew Maddox, a crippled writer living at the time of the American Civil War (see "Objects/Places"). Bran Maddox is his twin, a man with whom Matthew shares a similar psychic connection as that shared by Charles Wallace and Meg. Zillah is a distant cousin, descended from the line of Madoc and Zylle (i.e. The People of the Wind) and beloved by both Brandon and Matthew, but engaged to Bran. Gwen is the twins' rebellious younger sister, sent by her father to accompany Bran as he emigrates to South America as the result of her dalliance with the lower class Jack O'Keefe (apparently an ancestor of Paddy O'Keefe). When Bran and Gwen arrive in South America, they encounter Rich Llawcae (a descendent of the Richie Llawcae who returned to Wales after his family's encounter with the Puritans) as well as Gedder and Zyllie, descendants of the violent Gwydyr. It is through the influence of Charles Wallace, acting via Matthew and Matthew's psychic connection with Bran, that results in Gwen's marrying the loving, steady Rich rather than the violent, power hungry Gedder, changing history, and ultimately transforming El Rabioso into El Zarco (see "Branzillo", above).

## **Branwen**

Branwen is the ancient, and perhaps mythological, Welsh princess who, according to legend, gave birth to a line of princes and heroes that several of the book's characters have come.



# Objects/Places

## New England

While never actually identified as such, the North Eastern corner of the United States, the arrival site of several waves of immigration into the New World, is the setting for the novel's action in both past and present.

## Wales

This part of the United Kingdom is the land from which Madoc and Gwydyr travel in search of freedom (in the case of the former) and power (in the case of the latter). Later in history and the narrative, it is the land to which Richie Llawcae and his family return after their encounter with the hateful Puritans led by Pastor Mortmain, and the land from which a group of Llawcae's descendants return to colonize America a few hundred years later. Wales, in reality, is a land of mysticism and fable. According to some stories, Wales is the land from which King Arthur is supposed to have emerged, and from which he will one day return to save England.

## The Murry House

The Murry family lives in a large, rambling, centuries-old farmhouse. Mr. and Mrs. Murry, both scientists, conduct experiments in a renovated barn on the property.

## Meg's Bedroom

Meg sleeps in a small bedroom in the attic of the old farmhouse. It is here that she, with the help of Ananda the dog, kythes (i.e. connects psychically) with Charles Wallace as he travels into the past.

## The Star Watching Rock

This large, flat stone outcropping on the fringes of the Murry family's property has a clear, unobstructed view of the sky and, at night, of hundreds (thousands?) of stars. It is from the star watching rock that Charles Wallace, in the company of Gaudior the Unicorn, launches his journeys into the past, and it is around the star watching rock that those journeys are centered.



## Vespugia, Patagonia

Vespugia is the name of the small, fictitious South American country ruled at the beginning of the novel by dictator Mad Dog Branzillo, a country near to what is now known as Patagonia (a real-life territory on the southern tip of South America governed jointly by Argentina and Chile). As Charles Wallace travels through the past, he learns more about the settlement of Vespugia by Welsh immigrants.

## The Old (Ancient) Music

This is the term used several times, and by several different characters, to describe the ways of harmony and peace that have existed in the universe since the dawn of time, and which are threatened (and sometimes destroyed) by the actions and intentions of the Echthroi (see below). Charles Wallace and Mrs. O'Keefe are the present day characters who are described as still being connected to the "Old Music", and to the peace and harmony it simultaneously represents and manifests.

## The Wind

The wind, throughout the narrative, is portrayed as both a manifestation of, and a means of connecting to, "The Old Music". Gaudior gets important information from the Wind, while the tribe of indigenous natives called The People of the Wind are the source of much of the spiritual depth and truth experienced by the characters, and particularly by Charles Wallace.

## Echthroi, Projections

The Echthroi are agents of chaos and evil, sent out over the centuries to detour and/or destroy efforts to move Earth's destiny in the direction of the Wind, or the "Old Music". Several times throughout the narrative, the Echthroi attempt to sabotage Charles Wallace's journeys into the past. They do this by sending him and Gaudior into Projections, possible alternative futures in which life in earth is empty of joy, and of the Ancient Music.

## The Hatching Grounds

After a particularly vicious attack by the Echthroi, in which both he and Charles Wallace are seriously injured, Gaudior travels to the place where he was born. There, he and Charles Wallace are healed of their injuries, and witness the hatching of a newborn unicorn.



## **The Horn of Joy**

This is the book written by Matthew Maddox and dimly remembered by Charles Wallace as the source of possible clues to the nature and potential outcome of his world-changing excursions into the past. The book tells the ancient story of the battling Welsh princes Madog and Gwydyr and recounts the lives of their hundreds-of-years of descendants, of which Matthew himself is one. The narration suggests that while within Matthew, Charles Wallace has a significant impact on both the content and the creation of the book.

## **Mrs. O'Keefe's (Bran's) Letter**

Mrs. O'Keefe brings the Murry family a letter originally written to Matthew Maddox by his brother Bran, in which Bran describes the unhappiness of the situation in which he finds himself following his immigrating to Vespugia. Later, however, after Charles Wallace has engineered the Might Have Been change in the past that transforms the present, the letter's content changes, and becomes more positive.

## **Merioneth**

Merioneth is the house in which Matthew Maddox and his family live, and from which Bran Maddox departs to begin a new life in Vespugia.

## **The Salem Witch Trials, the American Civil War**

Both these historical incidents are integrated into the fictive story of the narrative, their histories of suspicion and intolerance (in the case of the former) and of violently divided unions (in the case of the latter) are effective real-world contexts for the novel's narrative and thematic explorations.

## **Mrs. O'Keefe's Rune**

Initially perceived as the ramblings of a nearly demented old woman, the poetic verse Mrs. O'Keefe speaks at the beginning of the narrative becomes an important tool / weapon in the protagonists' fight to change the past, preserve the present, and protect the future. In some cases, there is a question that the narrative raises intriguingly but never clearly answers. This is the question of whether the characters in the past who use the rune know it BEFORE Charles Wallace goes Within them. It's certainly true of Zillo, Zylle's aged father in Chapter 6, who recites the rune because it's been passed down to him from his ancestors, which include Madog (Chapter 5). But where did Madog get it - from his family back in Wales, or from the consciousness of Charles Wallace, now within him and who got it from Mrs. O'Keefe? It's an intriguing question

with perhaps a paradoxical answer that, in many ways, echoes and manifests the book's thematic interest in the interconnection of all things.





# Themes

## The Interconnectedness of Past and Present (and Future)

In many ways, the narrative's three central themes are all quite tightly entwined between the past and present; event and reaction; reason and faith. If distilled into a single word or concept, that thread might best, or most accurately, be described as harmony, or balanced, interdependent connection - between past and present, between humanity and God, and between the individual and identity.

The most apparent, and narratively relevant, thread of harmony that the book explores is the relationship between past and present, the one affected and/or defined by the other, whether moving forward from the past into the present or backward from the present into the past. Throughout the narrative, circumstances in the past are explained by insights realized in the present, while actions in both past and present each affect circumstances and actions in the other. The goal of all these interactions, in the minds and discoveries of the characters, is the stabilizing and protecting of a relatively safe and familiar future. Specifically, they act out of a desire and a determination to create a future in which relationships and rituals, such as those constructed around family and family events can provide the security that they do at the moment at which the novel's crisis begins (the present) and as they have always done (in the past).

Ultimately, the book seems to be coming close to suggesting, in fact, that time is on some level an illusion, that past and present exist simultaneously and powerfully interact with each other.

## The Nature of Connection with God

The second of the novel's three primary thematic threads that entwines into a contemplation and/or portrayal of harmony is its consideration of the nature of God and faith and how faith brings one into a connection with God. That connection, the narrative clearly suggests, depends on what definition of God one is operating with. The characters in the novel tend to follow one or the other of two main definitions. The first might be described as a conservative, or traditional, or Biblical, or Western definition, as manifest in the will and ways of Pastor Mortmain and the other Puritan Christians of Chapter 6. The second, and vividly contrasting, definition of God followed and experienced by the majority of the characters is what might be called a less traditional, less conservative, more Eastern definition that portrays God not as the stern, lawgiving, patriarch of the Mortmain style of faith but as nurturing, open, mysterious and nature-oriented. The latter God is viewed and/or experienced more as a manifestation of nature in all its beauty and power, cycling through life and death and rebirth and more death, sustaining and filling past and present and future with possibility, freedom, and joy. The novel so clearly ties the resolution of the tensions that initiate and drive its plot to acts of



faith and trust anchored in the second sort of faith, while portraying the strict advocates of the first sort of faith as fearful, corrupt, and monstrous.

## Trust vs. Will

An aspect of the so-called non-traditional faith discussed above that receives particular narrative attention in Chapter 8. There, Charles Wallace clearly and specifically realizes that in making choices and/or taking action based on what he wants, rather than on trust in where the Wind takes him, he is in fact contradicting the will of God, nature, fate, and destiny. Here again, the point must be made that the reader's reaction to this particular theme will depend on his/her understanding of the nature of God.

Many believers in the so-called traditional Western faiths believe clearly and unshakeably in following the will of God as opposed to the will of the Self. The novel argues, however, through the portrayal of / reactions to Pastor Mortmain and the other Puritans, that because the God of that definition is constrictive, destructive and judgmental, people following the WILL of that God share similar characteristics and are, in fact, acting in contradiction of God's true ways, which embrace freedom, compassion, forgiveness. In other words, the novel advocates both trust in the mysteries of life and faith that those mysteries have an affirming, God-given purpose. This is opposed to the other spiritual perspective portrayed in the narrative, which essentially values and practices the condemnation and reshaping of the unknown (out of fear?) to fit the controlled, controlling and restrictive definitions of what life is, what right is, what truth is, and what God is.



# Style

## Point of View

The narrative unfolds with an intriguing, engaging, and constantly shifting point of view. While that point of view is consistently from the third-person and limited perspective, the narration shifts from the outlook of one character to another. In other words, the story unfolds sometimes from Meg's point of view, sometimes from that of Charles Wallace, and sometimes, and perhaps most intriguingly, from the perspective of the characters that Charles Wallace goes Within. This gives the reader an intimate and immediate connection to the experiences of the various characters, to what drives and motivates them, and above all to their shared, common experiences of being connected with past, present and future.

In terms of the novel's thematic point of view, perhaps the most important point to note relates to the discussion above about the novel's views on God and faith. The novel is not at all ambivalent about what side of the spiritual argument it takes and/or advocates. There are only a few characters who preach and/or practice the values of the first sort of faith, and they are, without exception, portrayed as violent, vindictive, cold and hard. Yes, there are portraits of Christian characters who come across as open-minded. It's important to note, however, that their interpretation of so-called Christian faith is, at least in the eyes of the novel, MUCH more in line with those who interpret God from a broader, non-Biblical perspective. They are in fact, more like those who practice and experience the second sort of connection, on the other hand, are portrayed as fulfilled, joyful, genuinely powerful without being domineering, and above all happy. In other words, the novel is clearly advocating open-minded, open-hearted spirituality of the sort that trusts the ways of the spirit as it interacts with the self, as opposed to a close-minded, cold-hearted spirituality that judges and values others and their actions, almost always negatively.

## Setting

The first point to note about the novel's setting is that its primary setting is in the relatively recent past. Personal computers make few, if any appearances, and there are no cell phones (the long-distance barrier between Meg and her husband could, in contemporary writing, be transcended by texting or Skype). Ultimately, though, this aspect of the book's setting is of relatively little importance, given the circumstances the opening stages of the narrative describes - even in contemporary society, there is the threat of the world being destroyed by a nuclear war triggered by a political fanatic.

The second point to note about setting is that while the narrative moves back and forth across time, crossing centuries and even millennia, it stays relatively stable in terms of place (the exception is Chapter 8, in which Gaudior the Unicorn takes Charles off-planet to the mysterious and magical Hatching Grounds for an experience of healing). For the



most part, the action is centered almost entirely in the North-East corner of the United States, an area commonly referred to as New England, which has a centuries-long history of being settled by colonists from Great Britain and other parts of Europe. The idea of, and principles behind, colonization play an important and/or defining role in much of the narrative, those principles often being associated with the immigrants' desire to control, dominate, and exploit the new land at the expense of those who were there before.

This, in turn, relates to the third point to note about setting - specifically, the settings in time of the various "going Within" sequences. These can be seen as representing key points in the history of America and of the region in question in which tensions between what might be described as the ways of "The Old Music" and new ways came into being and peaked. The time of Harcels is a time of pure connection and harmony between humanity and nature while, by contrast, there are the scenes of conflict between Madoc and Gwydyr, between Mortmain and Zylle (Chapter 6), a point at which said conflict was at its height, to the present day. There, it could be argued, the ways of "The Old Music" are almost entirely forgotten, and the world is dominated by perspectives dominated by the intentions and will of the colonizing that have become so ingrained and habitual they have almost become human nature ... which, some might say, they actually are.

## Language and Meaning

For the most part, the language used in the narrative is fairly straightforward. There is an expansive vocabulary, which includes the use of several scientific terms which, given the employment and lifestyles of Mr. and Mrs. Murry, is entirely appropriate, but which neither distracts from nor obstructs comprehension of the narrative. Dialogue is fairly realistic and well individualized, vividly and clearly defining the various characters, their intentions, and their identities. Language used in narration and/or description is occasionally poetic, but in the sections discussing and/or portraying the more spiritual aspects of the narrative, is actually somewhat restrained, for the most part avoiding both floweriness and earnestness. In other words, narration doesn't seem to be trying too hard or being too obvious. Thematic intention is certainly clear, and occasionally veers close to heavy-handedness, but for the most part functions well. There is a degree of complication and/or convolution to a certain element of the text, however, and that has to do with the use of such similar names across so many different time periods and in so many different settings. There is also a certain sense of convolution about who is doing what to which relative with what purpose and with what ultimate effect.

Meanwhile, and perhaps paradoxically, the repetitive names of the characters in past and present are doubtless a key component of the narrative's thematic and narrative purposes, but are so obvious to the reader that they will, in all likelihood, start drawing conclusions about connections long before the characters actually make them. On the one hand, this heightens the reader's sense of anticipation about how the narrative is going to unfold. On the other hand, it might trigger a sense of impatience, of wondering when the characters are going to catch up with the story.



## Structure

In the same way as point of view shifts constantly from person to person, and in the same way as setting shifts from time period to time period, narrative line or structure shifts back and forth from plot to plot. This happens as Meg and Charles Wallace put the pieces of the Mad Dog Branzillo puzzle together and, ultimately, change the destiny of the planet. The present day narrative line (the first and last chapters presenting the nature and solution of the problem, the several sections in between in which Meg interacts with the non-kything members of the family) follows a fairly straightforward, linear pattern. In other words, the present day narrative is like the thread of a necklace upon which various beads are strung.

The action similarly progresses in a relatively straight forward line, from cause to effect, from action to reaction. What's intriguing and challenging about the structure of the book as a whole is, as mentioned, how each of the narrative lines interacts with the others, not only in terms of the previously discussed knowledge and insights that get passed from one to the other, but how events in one trigger events in the other. This aspect of structure, in turn, can be seen as a technical and/or narrative reflection or manifestation of the novel's thematic interest in the interconnected nature of past, present and future.



## Quotes

"It seemed only a few months ago that she had had braces on her teeth, crooked spectacles that constantly slipped down her nose, unruly mouse-brown hair, and a wistful certainty that she would never grow up to be a beautiful and self-confident woman like her mother. Her inner vision of herself was still more the adolescent Meg than the attractive young woman she had become" (Chapter 1, p. 4).

" 'The Western world has used up more than our share of the world's energy, the world's resources, and we must be punished...we are responsible for the acutely serious oil and coal shortage, the defoliation of trees, the grave danger to the atmosphere, and he is going to make us pay'" (Chapter 1, p. 10).

"At Tara in this fateful hour / I place all Heaven with its power / And the sun with its brightness / And the snow with its whiteness / And the fire with all the strength it hath / And the lightning with its rapid wrath / and the winds with their swiftness along their path / And the sea with its deepness / And the rocks with their steepness / And the earth with its starkness / All these I place / By God's almighty help and grace / Between myself and the powers of darkness" (Chapter 1, p. 16-17).

"The world has been abnormal for so long that we've forgotten what it's like to live in a peaceful and reasonable climate. If there is to be any peace or reason, we have to create it in our own hearts and homes" (Chapter 1, p. 23).

" 'There are many who would like to let you wipe yourselves out, except it would affect us all; who knows what might happen? And as long as there even a few who belong to the Old Music, you are still our brothers and sisters'" (Chapter 2, p. 43).

"Light and darkness dancing together, born together, born of each other, neither preceding, neither following, both fully being, in joyful rhythm...and then a dazzling star turned its back on the dark, and it swallowed the dark, and in swallowing the dark it became the dark, and there was something wrong with the dark, as there was something wrong with the light...the glory of the harmony was broken by ... laughter which held no merriment but was hideous, horrendous cacophony" (Chapter 3, p. 46).

"When people are worshipped, then there is anger and jealousy in the wake. I will not be worshipped, nor will I be a king. People are meant to worship the gods, not themselves" (Chapter 4, p. 82).

"...and on the sphere were blotches of green and brown for land, and blue and grey for seas, and a soft darkness for clouds, and from the clouds came strange dark objects which fell upon the land and fell upon the sea, and where they fell, great clouds arose, umbrellaing over the earth and the sea; and beneath the bulbous clouds was fire, raging redly and driven wild by wind" (Chapter 5, p. 88).



" I do not know what pagan means. I only know that Jesus of Nazareth sings the true song. He knows the ancient harmonies...why should he not sing? ...the very stars sing as they turn in their heavenly dance, sing praise of the One who created them. In the meeting house do we not sing hymns?Scripture says that God loves every man. That is in the Psalms. He loves my people as he loves you, or he is not God" (Chapter 6, p. 128).

" I've learned that every time I've tried to control things we've had trouble. I don't know what we ought to do now, or Where or When we ought to go from here. I just don't know" (Chapter 8, p. 154).

"Chuck liked neither the trucks nor the planes. They all left their fumes behind them, blunting the smell of sunlight, of rain, of green and growing things, and chuck 'saw' with his nose almost more than with his eyes. Without looking he could easily tell his parents, his grandmother, his sister. And he judged people almost entirely by his reaction to their odor" (Chapter 8, p. 172).

"In his sleep he dreamed that he was lying on the flat rock, and feeling the swing of the earth around the sun, and suddenly the rock tilted steeply, and he was sliding off, and he scabbled in terror to keep from falling off the precipice into a sea of darkness ... the grandmother put her hand on the rock and steadied it and he stopped dreaming" (Chapter 8, p. 180).

" Branwen hated not. Branwen loved, and was betrayed, and cried the rune for help, and not for hate or revenge ... and the lightning carried her message to her brother, Bran, and her Irish king fled to his ship and the wind blew him across the sea and his ship sank in its depths and Bran came to his sister Branwen and blessed the stark earth so that it turned green and flowering once more" (Chapter 9, p. 199-200).

"Sometimes the earth started to tilt again and he could not stand upright against the velocity. Then he had to stay in bed until the tilting steadied" (Chapter 10, p. 213).

"What's coming clear, she thought, is that it's important to know whether Mad Dog Branzillo is from Madoc's or Gwydyr's line. Somehow or other, it's between the two babies in the scry, the scry which both Madoc and Brandon Llawcae saw" (Chapter 10 p. 213-2).

"He stood by Matthew's couch. 'You can't wait any longer. You have to get Zillah to Vesputia now, or it will be too late.' Matthew is writing, writing against time. It's all in the book Pa talked about. They don't want me to see the book...but Zillah isn't there - why is there an Indian girl instead? Because it isn't Zillah's time. She comes later, in Matthew's time ... Unicorns can move in time ... did you not learn in Gwynedd that there is room for one king only" (Chapter 10, p. 219).

" 'When the sons of men fight against each other in hardness of heart, why should God not withdraw? Slavery is evil, God knows, but war is evil too, evil, evil" (Chapter 11, p. 241).





" 'This book is pushing me, Zillah, making me write it. It excites me, and it drives me. In its pages, myth and matter merge. What happens in one time can make a difference in what happens in another time, far more than we realize. What Gedder does is going to make a difference, to the book, perhaps to the world. Nothing, no-one is too small to matter. What YOU do is going to make a difference'" (Chapter 11, p. 250).

"Beside the growing pages of the manuscript lay a genealogy which he had carefully worked out, a genealogy which could go in two different directions, like a double helix. In one direction there was hope; in the other, disaster. And the book and Bran and the Vespuagian colony were intertwined in his mind and heart" (Chapter 11, p. 251).

"He rode a Gaudior who had become as tiny as a dragonfly, rode among the fireflies, joining their brilliant dance, twinkling, blinking, shooting over the star watching rock, over the valley, singing their song, and he was singing too, and he was himself, and yet he was all he had learned, he carried within himself Brandon and Chuck and their song and the song was glory" (Chapter 12, p. 263-4).

"...and he rode a Gaudior who had become as large as a constellation, rode among the galaxies, and he was himself, and he was also Madoc, and he was Matthew, Matthew flying through showers of stars, caught up in the joy of the music of the spheres...part of the harmony, part of the joy" (Chapter 12, p. 264).

"Beezie must have married Paddy O'Keefe for more or less the same reasons that her mother had married Duthbert Mortmain. And she learned not to feel, not to love, not even her children, not even Calvin. Not to be hurt. But she gave Charles Wallace the rune, and told him to use it to stop Mad Dog Branzillo. So there must be a little of the Old Music left in her" (Chapter 12, p. 269).





## Topics for Discussion

Discuss the ways in which the various characters given similar names share similar characteristics. In what ways, for example, are the various Madoc/Madog/Maddox people the same? The various Gwydyr/Gedder people? The various Rich/Richard/Richie people? The various Zylle/Zillo/Zyllah/Zyllie people? In what ways do these similarities reflect any/all of the book's principal themes?

Identify the various ways in which various aspects of the novel portray the connection and /or interaction between past and present. Your discussions should include, but not be limited to, the book's characters, relationships, events, circumstances and actions.

Consider the physical similarities of the words "familiar" and "family". What do the similarities suggest to you - what circumstances? What values? What needs, or stresses, or benefits, or constrictions?

Discuss your experience of God and faith - specifically, what is your perspective on the relationship between God and the natural world? Do you agree or disagree with the book's thematic advocacy of a spiritual relationship with a kind of God that has ways and a will other than those professed by so-called Western religion? Why or why not?

Have you ever had an experience where you were in a place of having to choose between making an active choice or trusting that things would work out? What did you choose? What were the consequences? If you have or if you haven't, discuss your perspectives on the novel's thematic consideration of the difference between acting out of desire or will, and acting (or not acting) out of trust.

Consider and discuss the circumstances around a possible Might Have Been in your life. Can you think of a time when a particularly important choice or change made a difference in your life, either negative or positive? What might have been the outcome of you'd done something different? How might your life have been changed? How might the world have been changed?

Decide on a particularly significant, relatively recent historical event. Imagine and discuss how the world would be different if it hadn't happened. OR recall a particularly significant event in your family's past, either recent or long ago. How might your family be different if this event hadn't happened? How might YOU be different? OR choose an important moment in history. Research the backgrounds of that moment and the people involved. If you were given the chance to go back in time and change it, what specifically would you change? How would you go about doing it?

Discuss the ways in which the various chapter headings (i.e. lines from Mrs. O'Keefe's rune) reflect, either literally or ironically, the content of the chapters they each head.