

A Wind in the Door Study Guide

A Wind in the Door by Madeleine L'Engle

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Plot Summary

A Wind in the Door is the second in a four-part series of books by Madeleine L'Engle involving the Murry family. These timeless children's classics are remarkably ahead of their time in their use of cutting-edge science. L'Engle blends advanced scientific theory with spiritual mythology to create a magical yet oddly sensible world for her characters. Teenaged Meg Murry and her six-year-old brother, Charles Wallace Murry, are both highly intelligent, good-hearted children. Yet, their advanced knowledge of science, taught to them by their brilliant and famous scientist parents, leaves them feeling different and separated from their peers at school. As different as they are, they suffer all the normal childhood pangs and angst of trying to fit in with their peer group while remaining true to themselves.

In *A Wind in the Door*, Mrs. Murry, who holds two PhDs in biology and physics, is studying the microscopic mitochondria which exist within human cells and which all people need to survive. To Mrs. Murry's dismay, her young son Charles becomes afflicted with mitochondritis. Some mysterious force is killing off his mitochondria, and Charles may not survive. This microscopic plague is somehow linked to the mysterious cosmic star deaths, which her husband, Mr. Murry, is researching at the behest of the president of the United States. Meg, her boyfriend Calvin O'Keefe and Charles Wallace discover the link between these two strange phenomena when they meet Blajeny, a mysterious man who introduces himself as their Teacher. Also being taught by Blajeny are Sporos, a tiny farandola who lives inside Charles Wallace's mitochondria, and Proginoskes, a cherubim who looks like a drive of dragons.

The evil beings behind the cosmic and microcosmic destruction are called Echthroi. Echthroi exist to destroy; their goal is to un-create the universe. The Echthroi are responsible for all war, destruction and lack of communication throughout the universe. They find a foothold in Sporos and also in the un-likeable Mr. Jenkins, the principal at Charles' grade school. As Proginoskes explains to Meg, anyone who does not know who they truly are provides an opening for the Echthroi to do harm. Meg and Proginoskes are Namers. Their job is to help people know themselves better so that they will not become tools of the Echthroi. In order to keep both Sporos and Mr. Jenkins from siding with the Echthroi, Meg must find enough love in her heart to appreciate and recognize who these two individuals really are. As Blajeny teaches them, the balance of creation can hinge on something as large as the birth of a star or something as small as the life of a single child. Charles Wallace's survival is critical to the well being of the entire cosmos. In order to save Charles Wallace's life, Meg and her friends must save Sporos and Mr. Jenkins from the Echthroi. To succeed in these tasks, Meg must come to realize that love is the most powerful force in the universe.



Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary

In this second of four science fiction novels that comprise her magical Time Quartet, author Madeleine L'Engle reintroduces the Murry family, which she first brought to life in *A Wrinkle in Time*. The novel begins with six-year-old Charles Wallace Murry informing his teenage sister, Meg Murry, that there are dragons in the vegetable garden. This bizarre statement alarms Meg from her usually level-headed and brilliant young brother. She surreptitiously eyes Charles Wallace. His clothes are torn, and he sports a fresh bruise under his left eye. Meg questions him about this latest beating. Charles Wallace has only been in school for two months, but every week he comes home with fresh injuries. Meg asks if he's been talking about dragons at school, which she fears would only encourage the kids to bully him more. He assures her he has learned to be careful of what he says at school. Besides, Charles assures her, he didn't see the dragons until after he returned home from school today.

Meg asks where her parents are. Charles Wallace informs her that their mother is in her laboratory working on an experiment and that their father has been called away to Washington by the president again. Sandy and Dennys, their twin brothers, are at soccer practice. Charles Wallace says he hasn't told anyone else about the dragons. He looks uncharacteristically frightened. He's been waiting all afternoon for Meg to return. He asks her accompany him to the vegetable garden to see if the dragons are still there. The Murry family dog, a black Labrador mix named Fortinbras, escorts them to the garden. The garden is tended by Sandy and Dennys, and Meg makes sure Fortinbras does not jump the low wall which bounds the garden since she does not want the dog to trample the vegetables.

As Charles leads her through the rows of corn, Meg notices that he is out of breath and extremely pale. Charles, who has an uncanny ability to pick up on her thoughts, tells her that their mother is worried about his health, too. Mother thinks his pallor and lack of energy is symptomatic of something more serious than being beaten up at school. Meg asks Charles exactly what Mother has said about his health, and Charles admits Mother hasn't said anything. He has picked up on her worries just as he picks up on Meg's thoughts. Charles admits he has been tired for months, and this week his symptoms have gotten worse. Mother's friend, Dr. Louise Colubra, examined him earlier in the day. Dr. Louise did not confide the results of her examination to Charles.

Charles looks out over the garden and is distraught because the dragons are not there. He insists he saw them. They had hundreds of wings with many eyes and were belching fire in the Murry's pasture. Worried they would set the pasture on fire, he asked them to stop, and the dragons complied. Charles is upset that Meg does not believe him. Meg realizes her brother has never before mixed up reality with fantasy, which only deepens her concern. Pretending to be chilly, she tells Charles she wants to run back to the



house to get a sweater. Charles knows she actually wants to speak with their mother about him, but Meg stands behind her lie.

Meg leaves Charles sitting on the low wall surrounding the garden and runs indoors to her mother's laboratory. She demands to know what Dr. Colubra found when she examined Charles. Mrs. Murry tells Meg that Dr. Louise has not yet determined the problem. Meg returns to the garden with her sweater. Charles asks if Mother mentioned mitochondria or farandolae. This further alarms Meg, who recalls that Charles was bullied at school on his first day because he talked about mitochondria and farandolae in class. The other kids think he's weird because he is interested in things they do not understand. Charles thanks Meg for visiting the principal, Mr. Jenkins, on his behalf, but Meg informs her brother that the principal refused to help out with the issue of Charles being bullied by his classmates.

Meg dislikes Mr. Jenkins. Prior to this year, he was the principal at her high school, and they have never gotten along. Nonetheless, when Charles started coming home with black eyes, she went to see him. Meg took the high school bus as usual that day, but she got off at one of the stops in the village and walked two miles to the elementary school. She hid in a storage closet until she could catch Mr. Jenkins alone in his office. Meg tried to explain to Jenkins that her little brother is tormented by his classmates because he has an IQ that is off the charts and because he knows more than any normal first-grader. Mr. Jenkins ignored these concerns, but he did express concern about Charles' unhealthy pallor. Given what Meg has just learned about Charles' health, Mr. Jenkins' words seem particularly worrisome.

Meg sits on the rock wall next to Charles. She looks around worriedly for the large black snake that lives inside the wall. Snakes give Meg the chills, but the twins like the snake and claim it is harmless. They have made a pet of it, naming it after Dr. Louise Colubra, since *colubra* means snake in Latin. Dr. Louise likes snakes and is pleased to have one named for her. She told the twins that since a picture of a snake is on the medical emblem, naming a snake after a doctor is quite appropriate. Fortunately for Meg, Louise the snake is currently nowhere in sight. Meg talks to Charles about his troubles at school. Because their parents are both highly esteemed scientists, all the Murry children are blessed with advanced intelligence and knowledge of things which most of their schoolmates will not learn until college, if ever. Meg has learned to fit in at school after many years of struggling. Only the twins, Sandy and Dennys, managed to fit in with the other kids easily. Meg reminds Charles that they fit in because they don't talk about things like mitochondria and farandolae at school.

Charles explains that he is interested in mitochondria and farandolae not only because their mother is studying them, but also because Mother suspects Charles' illness is related to his mitochondria. He explains that mitochondria are tiny organisms that live inside human cells. Humans are dependent on their mitochondria for survival. Their mother is currently postulating that mitochondria become ill and stop producing vital energy for their human hosts if their farandolae get sick. Farandolae live inside the mitochondria, just as mitochondria live inside human beings. Farandolae are so tiny that



scientists have not yet been able to prove that they actually exist, although Mrs. Murry is working on obtaining this proof.

Just then, Meg is startled to see the snake, Louise, make its appearance on the stone wall. For the first time ever, Meg sees the snake go into attack posture. Charles tells Meg that Louise is guarding them because she senses danger. Charles closes his eyes. He senses the presence of the dragons again, and also someone else, a very tall man. He points off into the orchard. Meg thinks she sees a moving shadow but cannot be sure. Barking loudly, the dog rushes toward a large, flat rock in the north pasture, which the children call their star-watching rock. Meg and Charles follow Fortinbras to the star-watching rock. Here they find fewmets on the ground, or at least what Charles Wallace believes to be fewmets. Fewmets, as Meg knows, are dragon droppings. She must admit that the strange feathers and silver-gold scales on the ground could only belong to some improbable creature like a dragon.

Chapter 1 Analysis

In Chapter 1 of *A Wind in the Door*, the author reestablishes the characters and places that she previously introduced in *A Wrinkle in Time*. While much of the characterization is explicit, the author also expects her young readers to grasp some subtle inferences about protagonist Meg Murry. Meg, without consulting her parents, has gone to visit the school principal about Charles Wallace's troubles with his classmates. This is an interesting choice for Meg to make, and it reveals a lot about her character. Meg has an excellent relationship with her parents and readily confides in them. There seems no reason why Meg should take matters into her own hands and visit Mr. Jenkins without consulting her parents first. Meg has a poor history with Mr. Jenkins, and she knows he is unlikely to take anything she says seriously. Why not, then, ask her highly esteemed parents to visit the principal instead? Mr. Jenkins would have to take Mr. and Mrs. Murry more seriously than he takes Meg.

Two possibilities suggest themselves. The first is that Meg knows her parents well enough to realize they are unlikely to interfere in Charles' problems. The second possibility is that Meg is headstrong and fails to think through her impulsive decisions. Both possibilities are likely true. Meg respects her parents but is unwilling to accept their decision to let Charles work out his own problems. Meg refuses to let her parents' cooler heads prevail and skips school in order to confront Mr. Jenkins on Charles' behalf. Why is Meg so protective of Charles Wallace Murry, though? Certainly the six-year-old boy is charming, bright and loveable, and Meg naturally does not want anything bad to happen to him. Yet, her behavior borders on being overprotective. She is, after all, his sister, not his mother. The reader may wonder if she sees herself in Charles Wallace. She, too, has had trouble fitting in at school. This has apparently been quite painful for her, as she is unwilling to let her brother fight the same battles she was once forced to fight. Maybe she feels that by saving Charles she is going back in time and saving herself from the pain she went through when she first started school. This theory is supported by the author's theme that all life is unified and what people do for each other they do for themselves.



Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary

Meg and Charles return to the house in pensive silence. Inside, the twins wait for Charles Wallace, hoping to play ball with him before it gets dark, but Charles is too tired. Meg finds her mother in the kitchen and tells her that Charles suspects something is wrong with his mitochondria. Mrs. Murry sighs at Charles' prescience. She admits to Meg that both she and Dr. Louise believe the deadly flu virus that has been affecting the populace is really not the flu at all, but mitochondritis. Mother's extreme worry causes her to be sharp with Meg, but she apologizes. Meg suggests that they keep Charles home from school, but Mother insists this would only make it harder for him to adjust to school in the long run. They discuss Charles Wallace's extraordinary insight and intuition. He always seems to know more than he could possibly know.

Mrs. Murry and Meg begin preparing a spaghetti meal. As they work, Mother counsels Meg to be patient and allow Charles to adapt to school. She reminds Meg of the difficulties Meg had in adjusting to school and suggests it is important for Charles to learn to adapt on his own. Meg says the only reason things are going well for her at school is because her boyfriend, Calvin, is one of the most popular boys in school. His reputation protects her from being teased. Mother reminds Meg that Calvin could have chosen any girl in school, but he has chosen Meg. Meg blushes. She tells her mother that one of Calvin's brothers beat up Charles in school today. Meg expects that Calvin will come to their house tonight to apologize.

As the family sits down to dinner, Mr. Murry calls from Washington to say that he will not be home for a week. This makes Meg uncomfortable. She is accustomed to her famous scientist parents traveling frequently, but lately there has been a rash of break-ins around their home village. Meg is having trouble coping with the realization that their safe little village is actually as unpredictable and precarious as anywhere else. The uncertainty of life alarms her. She wonders if she should mention the dragons to the family, but just then, the twins begin chiding their mother for being impractical. As theoretical scientists, the Murrays spend time considering things that no one else can see or hear. Charles turns to his practical brothers and challenges them to identify the gold-silver feather he and Meg found outside. Sandy notices that the rachis, or part of the quill, is solid rather than hollow, which means it isn't a bird feather. Meg nervously mentions that she and Charles think it may be fewmets.

The twins take no interest in this fantastical topic and ask Mrs. Murry what their father is working on. She looks down at the tablecloth where her husband has absentmindedly inked one of his equations and tells the children that he is working on something that has been in the papers recently. Sonic instruments have been picking up strange sounds from space. The papers have described the sound as a "cosmic scream," and after each scream, astronomers see a new rip in the galaxy where stars have disappeared, leaving absolutely nothing behind. (pg. 37) The twins point out that matter



cannot vanish. As Einstein proved with his $E=MC^2$ equation, matter can be converted to energy, but matter cannot simply disappear. The idea of nothingness is scientifically impossible. Mrs. Murry agrees, and yet this is what appears to be happening.

Just then, the back door bursts open as wind from a sudden thunderstorm pushes into the kitchen. Meg reacts with alarm, but her mother reminds her that she's heard thunder before. Meg asks her mother if the ripping effect in the galaxy is dangerous. Mrs. Murry admits that she does not know. While scientists have only recently been able to hear the cosmic screams and see the resulting rips in space, Mrs. Murry says it may have been happening all along. After all, scientific instruments get more sensitive each year. Perhaps the rips and screams were simply undetectable to human beings before. After dinner, the rest of the family calmly goes about their evening, but Meg remains on edge. She retreats to her attic bedroom, but feeling restless, she sneaks down the stairs and out the kitchen door, stopping to take some rain gear kept by the door.

Outside in the vegetable garden, Meg asks herself what she is doing there. She does not quite believe in Charles Wallace's dragons, despite the strange evidence they found this afternoon. At the rock wall, she sees no sign of Louise. Meg sits down on a large pumpkin in the garden and watches the night. She sees something approach. Surely it couldn't be Louise. Snakes never venture out into such weather. It is Louise, though. The snake has a distinctly threatening look to her, but Meg doesn't think Louise is threatening her. From behind Meg, a voice calls her name. She turns and to her astonishment sees Mr. Jenkins, the elementary school principal. She cannot imagine that he would trouble to seek her out in such a storm or any other time.

Uncharacteristically, Mr. Jenkins apologizes to Meg for his dismissive attitude when she came to see him last week about Charles. He holds out his hand to her. She starts to take it, but just then Louise looms up behind her and makes a strange warning sound. Louise looks poised to strike at Mr. Jenkins. He screams, a high-pitched sound, and rises into the night sky like a great bird. Meg screams, too, as Mr. Jenkins disappears in mid-air. The spot where he disappears is like a rip in the sky or a slash of emptiness. A rotten odor lingers where Mr. Jenkins stood. Meg screams again as a shadowy figure runs towards her. To her vast relief, it is Calvin O'Keefe. He holds her tightly as she sobs. She tells him about Jenkins and asks if he thinks she imagined it. He tells her that he does not know, but he reminds her that she has never hallucinated before. As Meg calms down, he apologizes to her for what his brother did to Charles Wallace. Calvin says "fewmets" to Meg's shock, and he explains that fewmets is his favorite new swear word. Meg grudgingly tells him about the fewmets that she and Charles Wallace found and about the snake's strange behavior.

Calvin insists that he and Meg go to the north pasture and examine the area. By the star-watching rock, Calvin finds more gold feathers and scales. He asks Meg if she has told her parents. Meg says they showed the family the fewmets, but Charles Wallace chose not to discuss it further until they have more to tell. Calvin wonders if Charles would be better off at a school in the city where the students are used to greater diversity. Here in the village, Charles tends to stand out more with his high intelligence. Meg reminds Calvin that he is intelligent, too, but he still manages to blend in with the



other students. Calvin tells her that he plays by the laws of the jungle, just as Meg's twin brothers do. Calvin suggests they discuss the strange events with Mrs. Murry, but just then, Charles Wallace arrives in the garden and says his mother already has enough to worry about. Charles tells Meg that he came outside because he could feel her scream. Meg tells him about Mr. Jenkins in the garden and admits she no longer doubts Charles' dragons. Charles hushes Meg, warning her and Charles that someone else is near. They turn and see hundreds of wings and blinking eyes. These are dragons, spouting flames. From the woods, a voice tells them not to be afraid.

Chapter 2 Analysis

Author Madeleine L'Engle takes an unusual approach to Biblical symbolism in this chapter. The snake in the garden is a clear reference to the Biblical snake in the Garden of Eden. Yet in this story, the snake is not the source of evil. Louise the snake actually protects Meg from the evil in the garden, symbolized by Mr. Jenkins. The man's voice telling the children not to be afraid is also an echo of the Christian Bible, in which God's voice tells Adam and Eve to fear not. Shortly, the reader will learn that the drive of dragons is actually a cherubim, which rounds out the Biblical analogies. In Christian mythology, cherubim are a higher order of beings, associated with angels. Yet again L'Engle turns this myth upside down in the following section by making cherubim, which is the plural verb form of a singular cherub, a singular creature.



Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary

A very tall stranger wearing dark robes strides out of the woods and into the pasture. The stranger again tells Meg, Charles and Calvin not to be afraid of the dragon-like creature. The creature has so many wings and eyes that Meg is not surprised Charles Wallace thought it was a drive, or group, of dragons. Small flames and smoke spurt from the creature. Charles Wallace bravely steps forward and asks who the tall stranger is, and the stranger replies that he is a Teacher. The Teacher introduces them to the bizarre, many-winged creature. Its name, or his name, is Proginoskes. Proginoskes is a single cherubim, although the word cherubim is the plural form of cherub. Proginoskes explains that he is practically plural given his great number of wings and eyes. He insists that he is not a single cherub, but a single cherubim. The cherubim does not speak out loud. Instead, he projects his thoughts directly into their minds.

Charles Wallace is thrilled to learn that the cherubim, Meg and Calvin are all to be taught by the Teacher, whose name is Blajeny. Meg objects, indicating that she and Calvin do not need help with school. Only Charles Wallace needs help. Blajeny asks her why she thinks school should be an easy experience for Charles. Charles agrees that he must learn to adapt to the school environment by himself. Blajeny nods his approval. Blajeny needs the children's help, though. Each of the children has talents that are needed. Blajeny knows Charles is ill and informs them that they cannot afford to lose Charles' talents. Meg asks if Blajeny can help, but he replies that she, Calvin and Proginoskes are the ones who must help Charles Wallace. Calvin asks where their lessons with Blajeny will take place, and Blajeny responds that his classroom is everywhere.

After the exciting build-up, Meg is disappointed when Blajeny sends them home to bed and instructs them to attend their regular school as usual in the morning. They ask Blajeny what he expects them to do, and he gives them assignments. Charles Wallace must learn to adapt while remaining true to himself. Meg and Proginoskes will work together. They must pass three tests, and they should get started right away. However, they must discover what the tests will be. Meg asks what happens if they fail. Blajeny acknowledges that failure is possible, but he would rather they not dwell on this outcome. Meg protests that she cannot take a cherubim to school with her, but Blajeny assures her that Proginoskes can be invisible when he wishes to be. Charles teases that if he took Proginoskes to school with him looking like a drive of dragons, none of the kids would dare give him any trouble. Meg laughs and reminds Charles Wallace that his teacher told him he could bring a small pet to school the next day. Proginoskes takes offense to being referred to as a pet, and Meg assures him she was only teasing.

The Teacher tells them to get some rest. Proginoskes decides to stay in the pasture and asks Meg to meet him before school in the morning so that they can compare their "night thoughts." (pg. 64) With that, Proginoskes disappears in a puff of smoke. Meg



tells Blajeny that the thunderstorm earlier that evening seemed unusual, but she had never imagined it portended that she would meet a cherubim. Calvin asks for his assignment, and Blajeny responds that his assignment is to wait and ask no questions until the time is right. He asks Calvin to skip his after-school activities tomorrow and come to the Murry house instead. They all walk out of the garden. When they reach the low wall, Louise appears and bows in a snaky manner to Blajeny. Blajeny returns her bow and informs the children that Louise is a colleague and fellow Teacher. Louise has befriended Sandy and Dennys because one day they will be Teachers, too.

Blajeny bids them goodnight, and they leave him standing in the orchard. Charles Wallace wonders if this is all a dream, and Meg replies that they will know when they wake up in the morning. The children enter the Murry house through the kitchen. Mrs. Murry is in her laboratory, and Dr. Louise Colubra is with her. Although it is past Charles' bedtime, Mother allows him, just this once, to stay up and make hot cocoa. Dr. Louise suggests they make it in the lab and keep their mother company. Meg fetches the cocoa supplies, wondering how much of the evening's events they should discuss in front of Dr. Louise. The Murrys are extremely open-minded, but Meg is not sure about Dr. Louise. Back in the lab, Dr. Colubra discusses the cosmic screams and rips in space. She has a hard time believing such things, but Mrs. Murry reminds her that she didn't believe in farandolae, either, until Mrs. Murry proved their existence. Dr. Louise replies that Mrs. Murry has not quite yet proven the existence of farandolae. However, Louise thinks Mrs. Murry is probably right because Mrs. Murry goes "'to that idiot machine - ' she pointed at the micro-electron microscope - 'the way my husband used to go to his violin. It was always like a lovers' meeting.'" (pg. 70)

Mrs. Murry mentions that Mr. Jenkins called earlier to suggest Charles Wallace take self-defense classes. Meg realizes she forgot to tell Blajeny about Mr. Jenkins' strange appearance in the garden. Dr. Louise asks after her namesake, Louise the snake, and reminisces about a boa constrictor she once kept as a pet. Once, the snake showed a strong dislike for a patient. The patient turned out to be a murderous individual, and after that, Louise tells the children, she learned to trust the judgment of snakes. Charles studies Dr. Louise before assuring her that he and the other children take Louise the snake very seriously. Dr. Louise tells him that this is what she had in mind. After Calvin departs for the night, Meg retires to her bedroom wondering if Dr. Louise's snake story was casual conversation or if Dr. Louise might have meant something deeper. She drifts off to sleep wondering if her encounter with the cherubim was real.

Chapter 3 Analysis

Chapter 3 is the turning point that drives the story into the second act. In Chapters 1 and 2, the children's ordinary world is established, and the author foreshadows the incredible events that are to follow. In Chapter 3, the children meet Blajeny and the cherubim, Proginoskes. These fantastical characters, juxtaposed with the everyday normality of making cocoa at the Murry house, help lend the story characteristics of magic realism. Now that Meg has seen Charles Wallace's "dragons," there is no going back. She can go to bed and pretend the whole thing was just a dream, but since Calvin

and Charles Wallace witnessed all the same events, it is unlikely Meg will be able to retreat into her ordinary world and deny the inexplicable wonders of creation. Neither Meg nor the reader knows what may happen on the morrow, but the course of events has been irrevocably altered. Chapter 4 will initiate the long second act of the story, leading to the climactic resolution and final denouement.



Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary

Meg wakes before dawn. She recalls the events of the previous night, and they do not feel like a dream. The only way to prove this is to go out to the star-watching rock and look for the cherubim. At the stone wall, she sees no sign of Louise. Meg crosses the orchard and climbs the wall on the other side. Louise is still not around. At the star-watching rock, she sees nothing at all. Just as she begins to accept that the whole thing was a dream, Proginoskes materializes.

Proginoskes thanks Meg for her promptness, and Meg tells him they only have an hour before she has to be in for breakfast. Proginoskes says they must determine what their first test will be. She asks him how, and he considers. Proginoskes suggests that since Blajeny has asked them to work together, then Meg must be a Namer like he is. When Proginoskes was in school, he was given the assignment of memorizing all the names of all of the stars. The stars get lonely if no one knows them by name, he explains. Confused, Meg asks him what a Namer does. The cherubim replies that he memorized the star names to make the stars be more themselves, individual and unique. He believes it must be Meg's job to make other human beings feel this way. Meg does not yet understand, and so Proginoskes, or Progo as Meg calls him, asks her if there is anyone who makes her feel more like herself. Calvin does, she tells him.

When Progo asks Meg who makes her feel least like herself, she tells him Mr. Jenkins. Meg tells Progo about Jenkins' strange appearance in the garden the previous night. Meg does not believe it was the real Mr. Jenkins. Proginoskes recoils at this story. His eyes peek out from where he has hidden them under his wings, and he tells her that the bird-like creature that tore a hole in the sky last night must have been an Echthros. Proginoskes thinks this is related to their first test and insists they go see the real Mr. Jenkins today at Charles Wallace's school. Progo laments being sent to earth, which he calls a shadowed planet. He is afraid of the shadowed planets.

In order to explain to Meg what the Echthrois are, Progo offers to take her someplace yesterday. Meg wonders how he can take her someplace yesterday, and Progo insists he cannot possibly take her today because she has less than an hour before breakfast. Therefore, they must go yesterday. He gathers her close with his wings, and she finds herself staring into one of his eyes. Meg is pulled through the dark oval of his eye and finds herself on a bare mountaintop. She and Progo watch the lavender sunset fade into night, and Meg is astounded as the stars come out. The constellations are wholly unknown to her. She sees a crack of nothingness appear, obliterating some of the stars in the sky. The rift in space is accompanied by a horrifying shriek, and she covers her ears. Meg realizes that this cosmic scream and the rip in space are what her father has left town to study. Progo explains that the Echthrois caused the rip. She asks what happened to the stars, and he tells her they have been "Annihilated. Negated. Extinguished. Xed." (pg. 84)



To comfort herself, Meg thinks of her beloved home. She recalls standing at the kitchen sink in her cozy kitchen while her parents talked quietly at the table. She finds she can recall their conversation now perfectly although she wasn't paying close attention at the time. Her parents talk about the cosmic rips. Mrs. Murry laments the fearful changes that have taken place in society in recent years and likens them to the fearful discovery of the cosmic rips. She notices her husband doodling an equation on the tablecloth and asks what he is working on. Mr. Murry suspects that Mrs. Murry's work with farandolae and mitochondria might be related to the cosmic rip phenomenon. Aghast, she realizes that the sound of a sick mitochondrion resembles a cosmic scream. She feels sickened that destruction and violence exist on every level from the microscopic realm to the daily world around them to the cosmos of outer space. Mr. Murry reassures her. "There are still stars which move in ordered and beautiful rhythm. There are still people in this world who keep promises. Even little ones, like your cooking stew over your Bunsen burner. You may be in the middle of an experiment, but you still remember to feed your family. That's enough to keep my heart optimistic," says Mr. Murry. (pg. 87)

are the Greek letters ???, epsilon, chi and theta. Progo tells her they translate as Echth. Meg realizes that this means the Echthroi.

Meg wonders how her father could have known. Based on the conversation they just remembered together, Progo believes Meg's parents are very aware of the evil in the world. Meg admits this is true, but she wishes they could all simply ignore evil. Upon hearing this, Progo forces her to look again at the rip in the sky. Meg asks Progo how the Echthroi created the rip. He explains that it is a process of un-Naming. When she asks what this has to do with Mr. Jenkins, Progo says they must find out. He returns her to the star-watching rock and asks her how to get to Mr. Jenkins. She wants him to make all the decisions, but Progo reminds her he is not from earth and she will have to show him around. Meg is angry to have been given so much responsibility. Progo asks her if she intends to follow or not. Angrily, she says she will. She must work with Progo, since Charles' life is at stake. Meg tells Progo to meet her at the bottom of the hill, and together they will get on her high school bus. Meg returns home for breakfast. When she leaves, she wonders if she will return.

Chapter 4 Analysis

In this chapter, the author makes several references to sound and rhythm. This will be a recurring motif and is fundamental to the story line. The plot of *A Wind in the Door* relies heavily on the concept of sound and its relation to matter. The author demonstrates remarkable prescience with this concept, since only now, some thirty years after the publication of the novel, are scientists beginning to understand the functional relation between sound and matter. Radar and ultrasound were two early concepts associated with this understanding. Nowadays, scientists and doctors understand that the vibration of matter can be affected by sound and light waves, but when this book was written these concepts were still in the theoretical stage. Just as Mrs. Murry's theories are later

put into practice by practical scientists, the theories which underlie Madeleine L'Engle's book have been put into practice in the ensuing years in the form of high-tech laser surgery and the newer, developing technology of sound wave treatments.



Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary

Meg and the now invisible cherubim reach the elementary schoolyard just as Mr. Jenkins arrives. He looks perfectly normal in his usual crisp suit with the usual dandruff dust on his shoulders. He is annoyed to find Meg there and assures her that he and his staff are working on Charles' problem. Mr. Jenkins tells Meg that Charles is so intelligent that they are considering getting him a special tutor. Meg cannot believe that the uncaring Mr. Jenkins would go to any trouble for Charles. A second Mr. Jenkins appears in the schoolyard and tells the first Mr. Jenkins that they cannot go to such trouble for one child. Meg backs away from the two Jenkinsons. Mentally, she can feel Progo enfold her protectively in his wing. She senses that Progo is also afraid.

Meg asks Progo if he can kythe with the two Jenkinsons to figure out which one is real, but he replies that only Meg knows the real Mr. Jenkins. Only she can possibly figure out which is which. Suddenly, a third Jenkins appears and suggests they leave Meg alone for a moment to think. They leave together. Meg thinks aloud, but Progo asks her to kythe with him instead. Meg insists that she is not a cherubim and cannot kythe. Progo tells her that her brain is a storehouse for all of her sensory impressions but that her conscious mind cannot unlock this storehouse. If she will simply allow Progo to access her thoughts, he can open the door to her mental storehouse for her. Meg knows it will be hard to open herself fully to Progo and render herself vulnerable, but she trusts him completely. She agrees to try.

Progo tells Meg that Namers need to know who people really are and who they are meant to be. He laments the darkness of her planet. Meg tells him that her world is beautiful, but Proginoskes reminds her that there are wars on earth, as well as poverty and hate and a lack of understanding between people. He is not surprised to find Echthroi on her planet because Echthroi start all wars. He probes her mind to better explain Echthroi to her in human terms. They are like fallen angels. Their goals are war and hatred, and they un-Name people by making them forget who they truly are. People who know their true selves do not need to hate, explains Progo. Namers like Meg and Progo are needed to remind people of their true selves so that they will not spread hatred and war. When everyone is truly Named, the Echthroi will cease to exist. "The Echthroi are spreading through the universe. Every time a star goes out another Echthros has won a battle. A star or a child or a farandola - size doesn't matter, Meg. The Echthroi are after Charles Wallace and the balance of the entire universe can be altered by the outcome." (pg. 98)

Meg asks what the Echthroi have to do with the three Mr. Jenkinsons and the first test. She thinks this whole thing is insane, and Progo agrees. The school buses arrive with the children. Meg asks Progo if she is naming Mr. Jenkins when she thinks of him with hatred. Progo tells her that by hating him she is Xing him, just as the Echthroi do. Progo explains that when a person does not know who he is, he is open to being either Xed or



Named. Progo believes their first test is for Meg to Name Mr. Jenkins. Meg wonders how she can Name him when all she sees is what a terrible person he is. Progo explains that to Name him, she must love him. Love is what makes people know who they really are. Progo advises Meg that she is full of love but that she does not know how to remain loving when someone is hard to love. She tells him that she absolutely cannot love Mr. Jenkins. Progo asks if Meg loves him, and she thinks about it and realizes she does love Progo. Progo asks her if she loves him the same way she loves her boyfriend Calvin. Meg says that is a different kind of love. Progo assures her that she does not have to love Mr. Jenkins the way she loves Calvin. In order to Name Jenkins, she must love him as she loves Progo or her brother Charles.

Meg asks Progo what will happen to them both if she fails. Progo tells her that she will not be given another chance to learn from a Teacher like Blajeny, but aside from that, Meg will suffer no consequence. Progo, on the other hand, has been taught by many Teachers and is expected to succeed. If he fails, his choices will be harsher. He can either throw in his lot with the Echthroi, or he can X himself. Meg asks him if being Xed lasts forever if you X yourself by choice, as a sacrifice. Progo does not know. Just then, one of the Jenkinsees walks out of the building and back to the schoolyard. He looks down his nose at Meg and admits to being confused as to why two men are impersonating him. Jenkins has been told that it has something to do with Meg and Charles Wallace, and he expresses irritation at being stuck with their problems. Meg has heard similar words from Jenkins many times before.

Mr. Jenkins Two appears beside the first Mr. Jenkins. The second Jenkins tells Meg to stop creating problems and follow the rules. This also sounds authentic to Meg's ears. Mr. Jenkins Three tells Meg to stop panicking and listen to him. Jenkins Two offers to get Charles medical attention if she will Name him as the real Mr. Jenkins. Jenkins Three insists confidently that he is the real Jenkins. Jenkins Two says he has misjudged Charles Wallace. Jenkins Three tells Meg not to trust Two. Jenkins Two offers to be more understanding of Charles and to provide the boy a pleasanter school environment. Jenkins One says he cannot do much to help Charles Wallace because he lacks the cooperation of the School Board and the P.T.A. The school door opens, and Charles Wallace emerges with Louise the snake in his arms.

Chapter 5 Analysis

In this chapter, Proginoskes reveals Meg's strongest quality, her ability to love. Love is a recurring theme in the Time Quartet. In the first book, *A Wrinkle in Time*, Meg learns that love is the only force in the universe that can conquer evil, and this is the primary moral that the author wishes to convey through this series. However, in the first book, Meg was able to focus on her love for her little brother, Charles Wallace, and use this love to defeat the evil forces. In this book, the author raises the stakes for Meg. Progo tells her that loving Charles, Calvin and Progo is easy. The true test of love that Meg must pass is to find it in her heart to love even when love is difficult. Mr. Jenkins' unlovable nature makes Meg recoil from the thought of loving him, but with her brother's life on the line, Progo makes it clear that she does not have the luxury of hating. Hating, he adds, is

tantamount to Xing. By allowing herself to give into hatred instead of cultivating love, Meg is aligning herself with the evil forces of the Echthroi. This is a hard lesson for young Meg, but according to Progo, it is critical that she learns it.



Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary

All three Jenkinses recoil in fear of the snake. Charles Wallace looks at them with interest as Louise makes the same warning sound Meg heard the snake make the previous night. Jenkins One asks what he is doing with the snake, and Charles explains he was told to bring a small pet to school today. Meg is pleased with her brother. Bringing the snake has undoubtedly upset his teacher, which should improve Charles' standing with his classmates. Jenkins Two and Three lecture Charles. Jenkins Three demands to know why he is not in class. Charles' teacher has asked him to take the snake home. Meg looks at the snake appraisingly. She feels certain that the snake knows which Jenkins is which. Progo tells Meg that she must Name Jenkins herself, however. She can't allow the snake to do this for her. Meg accepts this, but she thinks Louise can still help.

Meg takes the snake from Charles and asks each of the three Jenkinses to tell her what they are going to do about Charles and the snake. Charles Wallace cannot walk home alone, since it is too far. How will they each deal with this situation and with Charles' problems at school? Jenkins Three tells Meg he will have a long talk with Charles' teacher, and then he will speak to each of Charles' classmates individually. Jenkins Three will discipline any student who tries to bully Charles. As for right now, he will drive Charles home personally.

Mr. Jenkins Two disavows the plan espoused by Jenkins Three. Jenkins Two says the strong discipline that Jenkins Three supports is tantamount to dictatorship. Jenkins Two tells Charles that he understands why he brought the snake to school. Bringing the snake, says Jenkins Two, will probably help Charles' standing with his peer group, and as far as Jenkins Two is concerned, real success in life means being accepted by one's peers. He offers to help Charles be more normal.

Mr. Jenkins One, though, shrugs off Meg's question. He doubts that his current relationship with Charles Wallace will change at all. Jenkins One wonders why no one except himself seems concerned with Charles' health. He also asks how much longer this silly farce will continue.

Meg is frustrated and confused, but the snake hisses into her ear that this is important. Charles asks for the snake back. He is tired and wants to go home. Jenkins Three orders him to get in the car so that he can drive Charles home. Jenkins One and Two chime in that they will drive Charles home. All three Jenkinses walk off with Charles Wallace and the snake. This gives Meg a chance to think over her decision. After they leave, Progo asks her what is the nicest thing she has ever heard about Mr. Jenkins. Meg insists that she has never heard anything nice about him, but Progo insists she think harder. Progo kythes with Meg, and together they remember the story of Calvin's shoes.



With Progo's help, Meg recalls Calvin telling her about when he started seventh grade. His mother bought Calvin some cheap shoes at the thrift shop. They were women's shoes and three sizes too small for Calvin. Even so, they were more than his parents could afford. Calvin cried upon seeing the shoes. His mother cried at his reaction, and his father beat him up for making his mother cry. Having no choice but to wear the repulsive shoes, Calvin cut the toes out so that he could fit them on his feet. The other kids made fun of him for a few days until Mr. Jenkins called Calvin into his office. Jenkins told Calvin that he happened to have an extra pair of old shoes that he thought might fit Calvin. The shoes were brand new, obviously bought for Calvin by Mr. Jenkins, but Mr. Jenkins had gone to some trouble to scuff them up so that Calvin would think they were used. Calvin has never forgotten this kind act.

Meg tells Progo in her mind that she would prefer to go on hating Mr. Jenkins. Progo asks her how she supposes Mr. Jenkins feels about her. Meg realizes that every time she sees Mr. Jenkins, she is surly. Progo asks her if Mr. Jenkins would believe anything good about her, and she admits that he probably would not because Jenkins has never seen her acting nicely. Progo gets angry when Meg continues to insist on hating Jenkins. Meg asks Progo what he will do if she fails. Will he X himself, or will he join the Echthroi? He doesn't want to tell her, but she insists that it matters. Finally, he admits he would X himself. Meg desperately wonders how she can love Mr. Jenkins when she doesn't feel love for him. Progo tells her that love has nothing to do with feelings. Love is not what you feel but what you do.

The three Jenkinsees return. Meg closes her eyes, and with Progo's help, she enters a realm beyond feeling. Her mind is filled with clarity and awareness. In an emotionless voice, she tells Jenkins Three that he is far too powerful to be the real Jenkins. She tells Jenkins Two that his desire to make everyone be alike is manipulative. Of the three Jenkinsees, only Jenkins One is human enough to make so many mistakes and not learn from them. She startles herself by realizing that she loves Mr. Jenkins One for his fallibility, and she names him as the real Jenkins. Meg has no doubt that she is right. The other two Jenkinsees, both Echthroi, disappear into the air with a slashing rip. As they vanish, Progo materializes, becoming visible. Mr. Jenkins faints.

Chapter 6 Analysis

Each of the three Jenkinsees behaves differently, but their behavior does not necessarily reveal their true nature. If Meg were to focus only on their behavior, she would not be able to Name the true Jenkins. Instead, Meg must go within and find the core center of Mr. Jenkins, that which makes him who he is. The author does not go so far as to use the term "soul," but given the heavy Biblical underpinnings of the novel, this is clearly the concept L'Engle is conveying. Meg must not define Jenkins by how he looks or even by how he acts. She must find that intangible but very real essence of the man himself. The soul represents the best part of a man's nature, and Meg is directed to recognize and love Jenkins' soul even if she deplores his behavior or personality. This concept also focuses on spiritual morality, referring to the Christian admonition to love thy enemy, or love thy neighbor as thyself. However, most religions and spiritual practices

preach this concept as well, and it is, at its core, a humanist concept, whether connected to religion or not. Despite the book's use of Christian mythology, the precepts it teaches are universal.



Chapter 7

Chapter 7 Summary

Blajeny appears on the schoolyard as Meg bends over the prone Mr. Jenkins. Blajeny chides Proginoskes for appearing so suddenly, and Progo apologizes for not taking more care with a limited person like Jenkins. Meg speaks soothingly to Jenkins, assuring him that Blajeny and Progo are friends. Jenkins sits up slowly, certain that he is dreaming. Jenkins shudders visibly when he sees Louise slithering towards them. Blajeny and Louise the snake converse privately for a moment, and then Blajeny informs the others that Charles' mitochondritis is now severe because the Echthroi are enraged over Meg's success. Meg pleads for Blajeny to take them home so that she can be with Charles Wallace. Blajeny insists that there is no time. They must go to Metron Ariston immediately. Blajeny asks Jenkins to accompany them and help. Jenkins thinks he's having a nervous breakdown. Blajeny assures Jenkins that although he is seeing things outside of his current realm of experience, these things do exist. Jenkins asks if the other two Jenkinases are gone for good, and Blajeny replies that once an Echthros takes on a human form, it tends to keep it. Jenkins was a perfect host for the Echthroi. Blajeny likens the process to the old-fashioned notion of possession. This upsets Jenkins, but Meg begs him to come with them. Jenkins says he will come because Meg Named him.

In the blink of an eye, Meg, Progo, Louise, Blajeny and Jenkins find themselves standing at the star-watching rock. Meg is pleased to see Calvin there as well. They all sit on the large, flat star-watching rock and Blajeny instructs them to look up into the sky. Meg gasps when she realizes the stars and constellations are not the ones she is accustomed to seeing over earth. They are in Metron Ariston, which is more of an idea than a place. Metron Ariston is an idea that Blajeny has created within his own home galaxy of Veganuel. Blajeny explains that in Metron Ariston size is relative. "Within Metron Ariston you may be sized so that you are able to converse with a giant star or a tiny farandola." (pg. 128) Blajeny explains how farandolae relate in size to humans. A person is as small compared to a galaxy as a farandola is small compared to a person.

Mr. Jenkins has trouble comprehending this. Blajeny explains that some things can only be understood with one's heart or intuition, not with one's logical mind. Jenkins bemoans his lack of intuition and realizes he has not been a very loving person. Meg realizes intuitively that when she hated Mr. Jenkins, she really hated herself. Her mother tried to explain this. Jenkins admits that Mrs. Murry is right. He thought the Murry family looked down on him, but now he realizes that he simply lacked self-confidence. Jenkins asks what the Echthroi intend to do next. Blajeny says that they plan to X Charles Wallace. Progo enters Meg's mind and helps her see her brother. "In her heart's sight she saw their mother carrying him up the stairs, Charles limp in his mother's arms, legs dangling." (pg. 132) Meg's consciousness returns to Metron Ariston. Blajeny asks the children to imagine that it is daytime. They cause the sky on Metron Ariston to turn to day, and then Blajeny calls forward the final member of their class. A small creature



scampers over to them. It is silver-blue with mousy whiskers, and yet it resembles a sea creature. It speaks in a musical language that the children somehow understand.

The mouse-like creature introduces itself as a young farandola and expresses displeasure at being forced to attend class with lowly humans. The farandola proudly explains how lucky human beings are that their mitochondria are inhabited by farandolae. Just then a bird-like Echthros in the shape of Mr. Jenkins flies across the sky. Blajeny looks grim. Echthroi should not be able to appear in Metron Ariston, since Metron Ariston is an idea created by Blajeny. They must be increasing in power. The farandola introduces itself as Sporos and again insults the earthlings. Everyone including Louise the snake is now irritated with Sporos' bad attitude. Blajeny tells them to prepare for a journey to a far away place. Meg does not want to leave because Charles Wallace is so ill, but Blajeny insists it is the only way to save him. Proginoskes kythes to Meg an explanation of Charles' illness, and Meg translates it into words for Jenkins' benefit. Meg tells Jenkins that human beings need energy to live, and mitochondria are needed to provide that energy. If the number of healthy farandolae living inside the mitochondria drops below a critical level, the mitochondria die. Meg asks Blajeny why Charles' mitochondria are dying. Blajeny tells her that he is going to send them inside Charles Wallace's mitochondria to find out.

Chapter 7 Analysis

Although Sporos is an imaginary creature, he represents some very real human frailties. His pride and need to feel superior to others creates a parallel to Mr. Jenkins' character. Yet in this section, Jenkins is beginning to realize that his judgment of others and inflated sense of superiority were actually only masks designed to hide his feelings of inferiority. By Naming him and showing him that he is loveable, Meg has irrevocably changed Mr. Jenkins. He is now capable of seeing the negative effects of his egotism and pride, and therefore he is less susceptible to falling prey to his own weaknesses. As a counterpoint, Sporos' character is introduced. Sporos is too young and immature to see any negative effects to his own egotism and pride. Sporos does not know himself well, and as Progo warned in an earlier chapter, this makes him susceptible to the Echthroi. Naming Sporos will soon become Meg's second task. The similarity between Sporos and Jenkins should not be lost on the reader, as the author intends, with this second task, to reinforce the same lesson she has taught with the first.



Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Summary

Calvin asks Blajeny if he can make them small enough to fit inside the mitochondria, and Blajeny reminds him that size is relative. The particular mitochondrion where Blajeny will send them is called Yadah, and it is Sporos' home. Meg worries about Charles. Blajeny assures her that Dr. Louise Colubra is also a Teacher and will take the best possible care of Charles. Jenkins has been thinking things over and now believes he understands. He explains, with Blajeny's approval, that man is the mean point of the universe, equidistant in size between a farandola and a galaxy. Man falls right in the middle. Charles, therefore, must be the point of equilibrium. All of life depends on whether Charles is Xed by the Echthroi. At that moment, the Echthros Jenkins reappears. Blajeny says they must leave quickly. Before they go, Blajeny shows them a sight to encourage them: the birth of a star. Then, he orders them to leave. Progo pulls them into himself so that they can travel instantly as before. During the momentary trip, Meg feels a horrible pain unlike any other she has ever felt. Progo informs them that they have had a brush with an Echthros.

The travelers find themselves in a green-black environment. Meg can see nothing but feels a rhythmic pulsing like a heartbeat. They are in Yadah, inside Charles Wallace. Meg thinks the heartbeat must be Charles', but Progo explains that time is different here. In Yadah, Charles' heart beats once a decade. The rhythm she feels is the rhythm of Yadah. Meg becomes frightened when she realizes that she cannot move. Progo asks her to do math problems in her head until she calms down enough for him to explain that she can move only with her mind, not with her body. If she imagines stretching out her arm, it will be so. Blajeny has not come with them, and Jenkins, like Meg, is panicking in this strange environment. Progo cannot kythe with Jenkins because he is too close-minded. Meg must kythe with Jenkins and calm him down.

Progo sends Meg images to further explain how the farandolae move, and Meg tries to send the images to Mr. Jenkins. The images are of a kelp bed swaying in the ocean currents and a forest of trees with leaves swaying in the breeze. The farandolae are like a forest of underwater trees, united by a rich, surging song. Jenkins kythes his confusion to Meg. He thinks of farandolae as scampering little creatures like Sporos. Progo explains that Sporos will become a sea tree like the other adult farandolae once he Deepens. "Once he has Deepened he will no longer have to run about. A grown farae is far less limited than a human being is by time and place, because farae can be with each other any time in any place; distance doesn't separate them." (pg. 155) The oldest farae, as grown up farandolae are called, can even communicate with the far-away stars. Progo says their second test is to convince the unwilling Sporos to leave his childhood behind and Deepen. If he fails to Deepen, the Echthroi will win.

With Progo's help, Meg kythes with the farae and learns the joy of Deepening. Deepened creatures, be they farae or human beings, are able to join in with the song of



the universe. Once Deepened, a creature has no limits. However, many people, and apparently Sporos as well, believe that they will be limited once they have Deepened. They prefer to remain immature and run around as they please. Progo tells her that they must all kythe together. Meg tunes into Calvin, and he tells her that Sporos refuses to kythe with them because he doesn't like humans. Meg senses Yadah in greater detail. Around the Deepened farae, little farandolae like Sporos run around and play. Progo reminds Meg to kythe to Mr. Jenkins. Meg imagines holding Jenkins' hand. Suddenly, she screams loudly. An incredible pain fills her; she is being Xed.

Chapter 8 Analysis

Metron Ariston is in reality a Greek phrase that can be translated as the Golden Mean, or "All things in moderation." The author has appropriately named this place where humans, stars and farandolae can all be the same size. The discussion in the previous chapter about the relative size of farandolae, humans and galaxies underscores the symbolism of Metron Ariston, which Jenkins explains at the beginning of this chapter. In size, humans are the mean point between galaxies and farandolae. Metron Arison symbolically portrays the author's message that what happens in the microcosm affects the macrocosm. As the Golden Mean, human beings have the ability to affect their own tiny cells as well as the larger world around them. This is a fairly sophisticated concept that the author asks her readers to grasp intuitively through the metaphor of Metron Ariston.



Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary

Meg kythes frantically for help. Thankfully, her pain subsides. A distraught Progo explains that when Meg reached for Mr. Jenkins' hand, she got a hold of an Echthros-Jenkins instead. The Echthrois have followed them to Yadah. Progo believes Sporos has let them in, since Sporos' pride makes him vulnerable to the Echthrois. Progo thinks this is why he refuses to Deepen. Meg asks how they saved her. Reluctantly, Calvin explains that several of the little farae Xed themselves to save Meg. They tickled the Echthros-Jenkins until it let go of her hand, but they died in the process. The Echthrois are still in Yadah. Progo tells Meg to reach out to the real Mr. Jenkins, but Meg is afraid. She resists, saying that Jenkins is too slow at kything. He will only hold them back. Perceptively, Calvin explains that adults, although slow at picking up kything, can often kythe and think and act on a deeper level than children can. It is worth the slower pace to get better results. Meg remembers that Jenkins left his comfortable school to join them on this dangerous quest. Meg courageously reaches out to Jenkins. She feels love, and with this love she Names him. In response, she feels his hand in hers. It is the hand of the real Jenkins.

Chapter 9 Analysis

Early on, Progo tells Meg that her weakness is her inability to stay in love when love becomes difficult. She has overcome this once already by finding love for the unlovable Jenkins and Naming him. Now, however, her own safety is at risk, and once again she is unwilling to act lovingly towards Jenkins for fear that she will again be harmed by the Echthrois. This chapter is a metaphor for the principle of turning the other cheek, or continuing to love even after one has been hurt. In this way, this chapter deepens the lesson taught earlier in the book. When Meg overcomes her fears and reaches out again to Mr. Jenkins, she is rewarded with success.



Chapter 10

Chapter 10 Summary

Meg works patiently with Jenkins' clumsy kything and tells him of the sacrifice the farandolae made to save her. Jenkins feels deep sorrow at this news, but Meg believes intuitively that Xing oneself is a better fate than being Xed by the Echthroi. Jenkins understands this intuitive thought, but he fails to understand how the Deepened farae communicate without words. Trees do not talk to one another, he says. Meg suggests that trees do indeed communicate with one another, but Jenkins balks at this idea. Calvin kythes excitedly to Meg. He knows how to make Jenkins understand.

Calvin tells Meg the story of his science project. Calvin got the idea from a *Wall Street Journal* article about a biologist who attached electrodes to his houseplant to measure its biological reactions. The plant showed no reaction until the impatient biologist thought to burn one of its leaves. In response to this aggressive thought, the electrode needle moved up and down wildly, as if the plant were feeling alarm. Encouraged, the biologist continued his experiments. He found that the plant's alarm needles jumped as if in fear whenever the biologist left town. The needle jumps coincided precisely with the times the biologist's plane landed or took off. It was as if the plant were concerned with his safety at these times and knew precisely when his flights were taking off and landing. Calvin was so impressed by this that he ran a similar experiment with three bean seeds. One he left on his windowsill at home. Calvin's home is filled with shouting and anger, and although he watered this plant daily, it failed to thrive. The second and third seeds he planted in pots in the library. One of these he watered faithfully. The other he not only watered, but also spent time with and spoke to lovingly. The plant that he only watered grew an average amount, whereas the plant Calvin spent time with thrived.

With this story, Calvin attempts to show Jenkins that farae can communicate without words and at any distance. Distance is irrelevant. Love or hatred can travel any distance. Jenkins finally begins to understand. Progo says it is time for the second test.

Chapter 10 Analysis

Through the story of the biologist, which refers to a report by Cleve Backster in 1968 that has been widely refuted in the scientific community but hailed by ESP proponents, the author attempts to substantiate her fictional concept of kything as a real-life possibility. L'Engle frequently repeats the concept that both size and distance are irrelevant and that life is united on some other, non-physical level. Many philosophers and religions have espoused this theory, but L'Engle's story unites spiritual philosophy with modern science in support of this belief. As such, her story, although founded in Christian theology and scientific theory, is actually a forerunner to metaphysics. Like metaphysicians, she draws on the fascinating advances of modern physicists and hard

science to support and expand common spiritual beliefs. By uniting science and spirituality, she also seeks to open her readers' minds to new and different ideas.



Chapter 11

Chapter 11 Summary

The group listens to the beautiful song of the Deepened farae. Theirs is the song of the universe, and their song orders the rhythm of creation. They sing with the stars, and their physical inability to move does not limit their movement in any way. The song of the farae falters for a moment. Meg can feel the icy cold hand of the Echthroi at work within Yadah. The farae send her an image of the little farandolae, including Sporos, dancing wildly around a Deepened fara. Their dance is frenetic and destructive. Progo explains that through this whirling dance the little farandolae are sucking the life out of the Deepened fara. Meg cries out for them to stop, but the farandolae dance on. Meg can see Charles Wallace gasping for air as Dr. Louise puts an oxygen mask on his face. Meg hears the Echthros-Jenkins speak to the dancing farandolae. It tells them that they will lose their power if they Deepen. It tells them to destroy the farae so that they can rule Yadah. Progo reminds Meg that the Echthroi are behind all warfare, human or farandolae.

The group argues with the Echthros. They tell him that he is nothing and would create nothingness. The real Mr. Jenkins tells them that this is the wrong approach. They must feel the emptiness of the Echthros. Not understanding, Meg calls out to the dancing farandolae. Some of them listen and come away from the dance, but Sporos continues to whirl around the fara. Meg's group and the Echthros speak to Sporos, competing for his attention, and Sporos is confused. Calvin bravely decides to join the whirling dance. Meg jumps in after him. The dance drains the life from Meg, but she clings to the dying fara in the center of the circle and lends it what strength she has. As her own strength falters, she feels Mr. Jenkins' arms around her, lending her his strength. Calvin holds Sporos in his arms. Now that Sporos has stopped dancing, the Echthros-Mr. Jenkinses form a circle around the real Mr. Jenkins and try to steal the life from his heart. Meg begs Sporos to Deepen, saying that it is their only chance of survival. Sporos turns to Senex, the adult fara that is Sporos' parent, and he decides to Deepen. All of the little farandolae Deepen together, and the music of Yadah is strengthened. Meg feels relief, but Progo reminds her that there are three tests in all. The Echthroi still have Mr. Jenkins. They must save him to complete the third test. Meg looks at the real Mr. Jenkins and watches as the Echthroi possess his body.

Chapter 11 Analysis

Despite the climactic scene in Yadah, the story has still not reached its full climax. Meg has one more test to pass. With only one chapter to go in the story, the author's pace is reflective of a cliffhanger structure. The story will not gently rise to and fall from a climax, but instead the climactic peak will be a jagged drop saved for very nearly the end of the book. Because there is still one test to go, the reader is forewarned that the transition from the climax to the necessarily brief denouement will be rapid and sharp.



Chapter 12

Chapter 12 Summary

The Echthroi and Jenkins now speak with one voice. Sporos begs Meg's forgiveness and begins to sing for them, and his song causes the Echthroi to recoil. Jenkins-Echthroi tells Meg to give up, saying that human civilization is a failure. There is no point in continuing. Calvin tries to wrestle with Jenkins, but the Echthroi pull him inside. Meg kythes to Calvin with all her strength, loving and Naming him. Progo stops her. He will help Calvin himself, but only Meg can help Jenkins. Meg is afraid to reach out her kything to Jenkins because she remembers the pain of touching the Echthroi. She realizes that the only reason Jenkins is currently possessed by the Echthroi is because of Jenkins' love for Meg. He sacrificed himself to save her. She kythes her love for Jenkins and somehow reaches the real man inside the Echthroi. Jenkins tells her that nature abhors a vacuum. Calvin hears this and kythes to Meg that she must fill the emptiness of the Echthros.

Meg throws herself into the Echthroi. Cold and pain fill her being, and she is becoming nothingness itself. Suddenly, she feels Progo enter the nothingness. Progo Xes himself to save her. In that moment, Meg realizes what she must do. She must hold them all: Jenkins, Calvin, Charles Wallace and the Echthroi. She must love them all. With love, she can fill the void. Size does not matter. Her love is large enough to hold the entirety of creation. Meg summons love from deep within herself and Names the Echthroi. Meg sings a song, and as she sings, she realizes that the words are not her words alone. They are the words of the farae, humanity, the earth, the sun, the moon and the stars. The words belong to the cherubim and seraphim and to all the galaxies of the universe.

Someone calls Meg's name. Meg realizes that she is in Charles Wallace's room, and he holds her with his small arms. The Murry family and Dr. Louise stand around the bed. They look exhausted but happy. Charles is sitting up now and smiling. Health has returned to his face. Mr. Murry tells Meg that Charles, in his delirium, spoke of Echthroi and said that Meg was inside of his mitochondria. Meg tells her father that this is so. Her father is in no mood to doubt her words, having just witnessed the miraculous recovery of his youngest son. Behind Meg, Mr. Jenkins speaks up to support her story. The twins are the only ones who do not believe. Dr. Louise tells them that Charles should be completely well within a few days. Meg asks Jenkins what will happen at school. Will things be better for Charles? Jenkins tells her that Charles will have to adapt on his own, but he assures her that he is less fearful of the situation than he was before. After his adventures with the Echthroi, his problems at school seem minor.

The Murrays and Dr. Louise go downstairs to make dinner, leaving Meg and Calvin with Charles Wallace. Meg asks Calvin about Proginoskes. Cal explains that Progo Xed himself, but he assures Meg that the Echthroi did not get Progo. After dinner, Charles suggests that Meg and Calvin go out to the star-watching rock. Meg and Calvin slip outside to do as Charles has asked. On the way, Meg and Calvin realize that they will



not be able to speak of their adventure at school. At the star-watching rock, they see no sign of Progo. Calvin assures Meg that somehow Progo will be all right. As they return to the house, Louise the snake appears on the wall and bows to them. Meg feels strangely reassured by this. After they enter the kitchen and close the door, the door blows open of its own volition, just as it had the night they first met Progo. There is no wind tonight, though, to explain why the door blew open. Calvin and Meg exchange a long look, and then Meg goes upstairs to be with her little brother.

Chapter 12 Analysis

In this climactic chapter, the author concludes her morality tale by advancing the notion that struggling with evil is not an effective way of overcoming it. As she emphasizes in each of the Time Quartet books, love is the strongest force in the universe, and only through love can evil be vanquished. Also, L'Engle rounds out the Christian theme of her story by revealing the meaning of her title, *A Wind in the Door*. In earlier chapters, the door being blown open by the wind was associated with the presence of the cherubim, Proginoskes. Now that Proginoskes has sacrificed his life to save Meg and the other children, Meg is left wondering whether he might still somehow be all right. When the door blows open on a windless day after the death of Proginoskes, it is an allusion to the afterlife, presumably the Christian view of the afterlife, since Progo is a cherubim. The Christian perspective would indicate that the good-hearted Progo has earned his entry into heaven by laying down his life for the children. However, the liberties L'Engle has taken with Biblical symbolism throughout the novel indicate that her views of the afterlife are open to interpretation and may not coincide precisely with established Biblical viewpoints. Open-mindedness is a trait she espouses throughout the Time Quartet, and she leaves it for the reader to decide what has happened to Progo even as she reassures her young readers that Progo is, somehow, all right.



Characters

Margaret (Meg) Murry

Meg, like all the Murrys, is extremely intelligent. Unlike many teens and preteens, Meg likes to spend time with her boyfriend working out trigonometry problems. Her other hobbies include physics and reading. Despite the fact that her interests are different from the interests of most of her peers, Meg is still in many ways a typical teenager. Many young readers will be able to relate to her headstrong impatience, quick temper and stubborn independence. She doesn't mind doing high-level math because it comes easily to her, but like many young people, she balks at performing tasks that are not easy or do not yield immediate results. Her greatest challenge in the novel is to find a way to love the unlovable Mr. Jenkins.

The rebellious Meg has had many run-ins with her former principal, and even though her brother's life is on the line, she still prefers to keep hating Mr. Jenkins. Whenever Meg is in Jenkins' presence, she feels gawky, awkward and ugly. She feels her faults more keenly in his presence and believes it is because Jenkins looks for fault in everything and everyone. While this is true enough, Meg suffers from typical adolescent insecurities about her appearance and self-worth. She finds it easier to blame Jenkins for the way she feels about herself, but with the help of the loving Progo, Meg comes to realize that Jenkins is merely a mirror for her own insecurities. As Progo teaches her, when one knows and values oneself, one is not so susceptible to being judged by others. In the end, Meg is able to find depths of love within her heart great enough to vanquish all of her judgments and insecurities. She is able to view Mr. Jenkins as a fallible human being. Despite his flaws, or rather because of them, she learns to love him when she finally realizes that his judgmental attitude masks his own deep insecurities, the very insecurities she shares.

Charles Wallace Murry

Charles Wallace is the light of his sister Meg's life. A gifted little boy, his brains and talents are outweighed only by his incredibly loving heart. Charles' most notable quality is his uncanny ability to sense the thoughts and feelings of other people. Progo uses the term kything to explain this ability. Cherubim, farandolae, plants and even stars all naturally kythe with one another, but human beings are only beginning to learn this art. Charles Wallace, therefore, is on the cutting edge of human development in this respect. Charles plays a smaller role in this novel than he plays in the other Time Quartet books because he is too sick to take part in the adventures. Nonetheless, his character is the catalyst that drives the plotline. Additionally, in an unusual twist, Charles Wallace himself is one of the primary settings of the novel. Many events take place within his physical body. He is the point of equilibrium in the universe, and if the battle to save Charles Wallace is lost, the evil Echthroi will have won the war. In a later novel in the Time Quartet, Charles Wallace's importance is revealed, as he becomes



instrumental in preventing a nuclear holocaust. However, at this point, the reader does not yet know why his life matters so deeply or what Charles may accomplish in the future. Yet the author does a wonderful job of conveying Meg's abiding love for her little brother, and any reader who has ever loved a sibling or close friend can understand that this is reason enough for Charles' life to matter.

Blajeny

Blajeny refers to himself as a Teacher. He describes his classroom as being "Here, there everywhere. In the schoolyard during first-grade recess. With the cherubim and seraphim. Among the farandolae." (Chapter 3, pg. 61) Initially, this sounds like an artful way of saying that the whole world - the whole universe - is a classroom and that life itself provides many opportunities for lessons. Yet as the novel progresses, the reader learns that Blajeny's description is actually literal. Once the children join his class, their lessons begin in Charles Wallace's first-grade schoolyard. They take place with the cherubim and among the farandolae in Yadah. In fact, much of what Blajeny says has meaning on more than one level. Thus Madeleine L'Engle's books may be enjoyed at face value, and they may also be read over and over by her loyal fans, with each reading perhaps revealing a little more about the mysteries of life that she and Blajeny enjoy discussing.

Proginoskes

Proginoskes is surprisingly loveable for a creature who belches fire and has hundreds of mismatching wings and eyes. His nature is mythical and mystifying, for he is a single cherubim. Cherubim, in Christian mythology, is the collective, plural term for cherub and refers to an angelic, loving group of creatures. In traditional mythology, a cherub has a single pair of wings. Since Progo is a cherubim, he is a single creature with a great many wings. By definition, he is a contradiction in terms. The jolly Proginoskes accepts his contradictory nature by stating that since he has so many wings, he is practically plural.

Although Proginoskes is male, his character more often takes on the traditionally feminine trait of nurturing. Whenever danger threatens, he enfolds the children with his wings protectively, much like a hen does with her chicks. Progo's ability to read the thoughts of others and to instantly transport himself and his classmates to any time or place helps move the story line along. His character serves as a *deus ex machina* that allows the author to instantly transport the characters from place to place and time to time. As his character is based on religious mythology, Progo represents heavenly wisdom and teaches the children about the importance of love.

Mr. Jenkins

Mr. Jenkins is initially portrayed as a stern, uncaring and unlovable man. As first a high school and later a grade school principal, his primary job is ensuring the future of his



young charges. However, Jenkins does not care about the students under his protection. He seeks only to enhance his own ego and reputation and lacks the courage to fight for his students' best interests when necessary. He is fallible and flawed and makes himself feel better by looking down on his students. Whenever Meg is in his company, she feels gawky and ugly, which is how she imagines Mr. Jenkins sees her. Indeed, he does see her in a negative light. It is easier for Jenkins to find fault with Meg since this eases his own low self-esteem and helps him cope with his inner belief that the Murry family is better than he because of their worldly success.

Yet as the story progresses, Meg is forced to seek the positive aspects of Jenkins' character. In order to Name Jenkins and save Charles Wallace's life, she must find a way to love Jenkins despite his flaws. Once Meg begins to see Jenkins in a more positive light, he rewards her kind efforts by living up to her positive expectations of him. He responds to her love in kind, by becoming more loving himself. Through Jenkins' character, the author teaches her youthful readers that the ability to find the good in others helps others to find the good in themselves.

Sporos

Sporos represents the human flaws of pride and selfishness. He is a farandola, a mythical creature invented by the author to advance the story line. Farandolae live in human mitochondria, and their work is the same as the work of the stars in the heavens: to sing. With their song, they provide order, beauty and harmony to the universe. Sporos, however, is a stubborn adolescent and does not want to leave his childish ways behind to join the adult farae in their song. He joins a farandolae rebellion, incited by the Echthroi, who convince the young farandolae that they should not give up their carefree freedoms to take on dull adult responsibilities. Sporos' character enables the author to provide a moral lesson about the importance of creating roots in one's life. Through Sporos, young readers learn that creating a solid foundation in life is necessary in order to reach for the stars and achieve one's dreams.

Mrs. Murry

Holding a double-PhD, Mrs. Murry is a brilliant scientist renowned for her cutting-edge work. Through her character, the author is able to incorporate scientific theory to support the magical plotline. Mrs. Murry is not only a famous theoretical scientist, but she is also a devoted mother. She is open-minded, and her children, even the rebellious, teenaged Meg, feel comfortable talking over their problems with her and greatly value her advice. Mrs. Murry spends a great deal of time working in her home laboratory, but no matter how important her experiments are to her, she always finds time to feed her four children and loving husband. The household that she and her husband have created is idyllic, cozy and lovingly warm.



Mr. Murry

Mr. Murry is Meg's father and, according to Proginoskes, a very wise man. Mr. Murry manages to retain his optimistic faith in his fellow human beings, not by ignoring the evil in the world around him, but by looking for and acknowledging the good.

Sandy Murry

Sandy Murry is Dennys' twin brother. Both the twins are exceedingly intelligent like the rest of the Murry family, but unlike Charles and Meg, they have no trouble fitting in at school.

Dennys Murry

Like Dennys' twin brother, Sandy, Dennys is both smart and popular. The twins have a knack for fitting into their environment. They are able to be themselves while still remaining receptive to the differing needs of others. Perhaps for this reason, the Murry twins are destined to one day become Teachers like Blajeny.

Echthroi

Echthroi is actually a Greek name meaning "the enemy," and indeed in the novel the Echthroi are the enemy. They are the enemy to all things good. Echthroi represent, symbolically, the evil in men's hearts. In the story, the Echthroi attempt to convince young Sporos to seek short-term pleasure at the expense of the greater good.

Louise the Larger

The large black garden snake that lives in the stone wall surrounding the twins' vegetable garden is actually a spiritual Teacher, much like Blajeny. She protects the children from the Echthroi and serves as a liaison between Blajeny and Dr. Louise Colubra.

Dr. Louise Colubra

Dr. Louise is a good friend of Mrs. Murry's, and she is Charles Wallace's doctor as well. Louise has the gift of speaking on one level while simultaneously thinking on a higher level. The children sense that Dr. Louise knows more than she says about the real cause behind Charles' illness. They are not surprised to learn from Blajeny that Dr. Louise is a Teacher as well. Dr. Louise does not directly communicate with Blajeny or Louise the snake, but it becomes clear from the doctor's conversational hints that she understands the importance of her "name-snake," and she takes care to advise the children to take Louise the snake seriously.



Objects/Places

Metron Ariston

According to Blajeny, Metron Ariston is more of an idea or a postulatam than an actual place, although it looks like a physical place to the children while they are there. Within Metron Ariston, size is relative. The children are able to see the microscopic farandola, Sporos, as if he were actually their own size. Interestingly, the name the author has chosen for this place/postulatam is an actual phrase meaning "all things in moderation" or "the Golden Mean."

Veganuel

Veganuel is Blajeny's home galaxy and the location of Metron Ariston.

Charles Wallace's Mitochondria

The climax of the story takes place inside of Charles Wallace's mitochondria, which are tiny structures found in human cells and which are needed for cellular energy production.

Yadah

Yadah, a specific mitochondrion within Charles Wallace, is Sporos' home planet.

Meg's Attic Bedroom

Featured throughout the Time Quartet series, Meg's attic bedroom can be a bit drafty in cold weather, but with several quilts piled on the bed and the warm, furry Fortinbras curled up beside her, Meg's bedroom is the coziest imaginable haven.

The Star-Watching Rock

Located in the north pasture of the Murry family property, the large, flat star-watching rock is an excellent place for the children to lie back and look up at the stars. This rock is featured throughout the Time Quartet series of books.

Mrs. Murry's Laboratory

The laboratory is a stone-floored room inside the Murry house which was used to keep perishable food cold back before the invention of the refrigerator. Mother has adapted it



to her purposes, and now the long stone counter that was once used to prepare food is covered with her scientific equipment. She can usually be found perched on one of the lab stools.

The Schoolyard

Much of the plot takes place in the schoolyard of the elementary school that Charles Wallace attends. This school is run by Principal Jenkins. Mr. Jenkins One, Two and Three appear to Meg and Proginoskes in this schoolyard. Determining which of the three Jenkinsees is the real Jenkins is the first of the three tests that Blajeny assigns to Meg and Progo.

The Checkered Tablecloth

A red and white checked tablecloth graces the table in the Murrays' cozy kitchen. Mr. Murry absentmindedly doodles a scientific equation on the tablecloth one evening in ink. The inked equation fails to come out in the wash, and so it stays on the tablecloth as a reminder to Meg and Mrs. Murry of Mr. Murry's scientific work. The equation on the tablecloth turns out to be an important clue pointing to the involvement of the Echthroi.

Fewmets

Fewmets are dragon droppings. When Charles and Meg find silver and gold feathers and scales in the north pasture, they initially believe them to be fewmets. Later, when they meet Proginoskes, they realize that the scales and feathers are actually cherubim droppings.



Themes

Good versus Evil

In the novel, the Echthroi represent all evil. The word "echthroi" stems from a Greek word that translates as "the enemy," and author L'Engle proposes in her novel that there is only one enemy, one source of evil, collectively known as the Echthroi. As the cherubim Proginoskes explains, Echthroi are the cause behind all warfare, destruction, distrust and miscommunication. Through Proginoskes' character, L'Engle defines and characterizes the nature of evil. Proginoskes calls earth a shadowed planet, and he finds it a frightening place to be. When protagonist Meg Murry defends her home planet, telling Progo that the earth is beautiful, Proginoskes reminds her that there are wars, discord and disharmony on earth. This is an interesting perspective on good and evil. The author is taking a very hard line against evil. Through Progo's character, L'Engle makes the black and white statement that both good and evil are absolute. If there is any war on the planet, the planet must be inhabited by evil, as symbolized by the Echthroi. However, there is still hope for the denizens of earth. The heavenly forces, symbolized by the cherubim and the Teacher Blajeny, have not given up on earth. They are prepared to keep fighting the Echthroi until one side or the other decisively wins the battle. Cohabitation with evil is not an option left open by the author.

The opposite of evil is defined as love, and love is subsequently defined as order, harmony and the beautiful rhythms of nature. In order for good to win, love must reign on all levels, from the vast cosmic scale of the stars to the microscopic minutiae of the farandolae. Yet, evil is never literally fought against in the novel. In fact, the author states, fighting with evil only lends evil more power. To truly conquer evil, Meg Murry must summon enough love within her heart to embrace and love the destructive Echthroi. Only by loving her enemy can she prevail in this cosmic battle.

The Nature of Consciousness

The Time Quartet seeks to expand human awareness of the nature of consciousness. This is a puzzle that philosophers have long sought to solve, dating back to Renee Descartes' memorable attempt to prove that the existence of objective reality by beginning with the one thing of which he is empirically certain: "I think, therefore I am." The author expands the understanding of consciousness to include all things, from plants to stars. This idea is not without predecessors among world religions. Beliefs that personified elements of nature have often been termed primitive and pagan by both conflicting religions and advocates of naturalism, although certain Eastern philosophies to this day continue to believe that everything in creation carries sentient awareness. In the early twentieth century, the study of physics yielded early proof that all matter, be it a doorknob or a human being, is composed fundamentally of energy. Metaphysics arose from a spiritual interpretation of these twentieth century discoveries and has led to the advent of New Thought religions based on a unity between science and spirituality.



However, any spiritual interpretation of the tantalizing discoveries of science, from the subatomic level to the astronomic level, is subjective instead of scientific.

A Wind in the Door, although grounded in Christian mythology and scientific theory, reaches many metaphysical conclusions and can fairly be considered a groundbreaking fictional exploration into metaphysics. In *A Wind in the Door*, Madeleine L'Engle presents the idea that human cells contain entire worlds, and within these worlds are inhabitants with conscious awareness of their position in the universe. Not only do the mitochondria within Charles Wallace's body display sentient awareness, but Charles Wallace, their host, is also aware of the conscious life within him. L'Engle thus presents a unique twist to the metaphysical belief in mind-body awareness. In her story, Charles is aware of the illness and evil in his body, and his body is aware of him as well. This is all presented in an amusing, offbeat manner through the character of Sporos. Sporos, one of the many sentient entities living inside Charles Wallace, has definite opinions about Charles Wallace's character. Sporos has an amusingly low opinion of his human host. Fortunately, the other farandolae inside Charles' body think well of him and manage to convince Sporos in the end that it is necessary to live in harmony and respect with their human being.

The Interconnectedness of Life

That all life is fundamentally interconnected is one of the main themes of Madeleine L'Engle's novel, *A Wind in the Door*. This theme is often associated with either Eastern or Native American religion and philosophy, but in *A Wind in the Door* it is presented through the lens of Christian mythology and supported by interpretations of science. Protagonist Meg Murry's parents are both highly respected scientists. Mr. Murry works in the field of astronomy and thus deals with the larger side of creation. Mrs. Murry spends most of her time peering through her micro-electron microscope at things too small to be seen by the human eye. Both scientists are simultaneously needed to work on crises in their individual fields, and the Murrays soon begin to suspect that the phenomena of cosmic rips in space and ailing mitochondria inside human cells are connected in some way. The cosmic scream picked up by sensitive scientific instruments when a star vanishes into nothingness sounds exactly like the pained cries of a dying mitochondrion. What's more, the Murrays intuitively connect the macrocosmic and microcosmic deaths to the everyday evil going on around them such as the recent spate of break-ins in their normally safe hometown.

The Murrays' daughter Meg is soon to find out first-hand that these two phenomena are indeed connected. Meg meets the Echthroi, which are portrayed as the cause of all evil in the universe. The Echthroi attack on all levels, from the stars to mitochondria to Meg's human friends. The Echthroi destroy by creating disharmony. Meg learns that everything in the universe is connected through rhythm and harmony. The stars sing the same song as the mitochondria sing, and this song provides order and structure to all matter in the universe. This is similar to the metaphysical concept that "uni-verse" means "one verse," "one song" or "one harmony." The song symbolizes love, which along with its counterpoint, evil, are the two connecting forces which touch all of life equally. If evil



reigns inside Charles Wallace's mitochondria, then Charles Wallace dies. If the boy dies, a gaping hole is left in the world around him, which is capable of wiping out even the stars in the faraway heavens. L'Engle shows through the parable of the Echthroi that all life is inextricably bound together. When Meg Murry learns to sing the same song that issues from the stars and the mitochondria, she succeeds in healing her little brother with the unifying power of love.

Style

Point of View

The point of view throughout the novel is restricted to what Meg thinks, feels, sees and hears, and it is presented in the third person. This is called a third-person semi-omniscient narrator because it allows access to one (or sometimes a limited number of) character's thoughts, while an omniscient narrator has access to all the characters' minds. Teenaged Meg has much to learn. Each of the other characters provides important lessons, but oftentimes these lessons must be repeated several times before Meg grasps their significance. Meg is not the only one who has trouble absorbing new ideas. Mr. Jenkins and Sporos are slow to understand as well, which allows the author to employ the narrative technique of repetition to bring home the unique ideas that she wishes to convey through her narrative.

Usually when the narrative viewpoint is restricted to the protagonist, the thoughts of the supporting characters can only be conveyed through dialogue and action. However, L'Engle adds an unusual element to her narrative revelations by introducing the concept of kything. Kything is the direct transference of thought and emotion. It enables Meg to directly experience the thoughts and memories of Calvin, Proginoskes, Mr. Jenkins and Charles Wallace. The fact that the author never switches from Meg's point of view does not restrict L'Engle in any way. She is still able to convey the thoughts and emotions of the other characters by directly impressing them into Meg's mind. However, as the reader is privy only to Meg's mind, the narrative is occasionally bogged down by the practicalities of kything. Meg is able to kythe with Mr. Jenkins while the other characters cannot, but she is not capable of kything with Sporos. Meg must go through Calvin to communicate with Sporos, and the other characters must go through Meg to reach Mr. Jenkins. This chain of communication provides the author with even more opportunities to employ the narrative technique of repetition.

Setting

The settings of *A Wind in the Door* are charming and memorable and have been instrumental in making the entire Time Quartet a timeless children's classic. The Murry home is situated in a quaint but modern-day village, and the house itself exudes the very essence of charm. Meg's attic bedroom is romantic and whimsical, as is the cozy central kitchen. Mrs. Murry's laboratory combines modern scientific equipment with an old-fashioned, stone-floored milk and butter room. The grounds surrounding the house are equally idyllic with the well-tended vegetable garden surrounded by a low, rock wall, an orchard and most importantly, the north pasture where the star-watching rock provides a place for the children to stargaze and dream. These settings are evocative of the picturesque country settings portrayed in another classic children's series, *Anne of Green Gables*.



Madeleine L'Engle also takes her young readers on imaginative flights of fancy to such places as the Veganuel galaxy and Metron Ariston. The latter is not a true place but only an idea. The idea of Metron Ariston is created by Blajeny, co-created by the children and solid enough to seem real. The most notable setting in the book, however, is the planet of Yadah. Yadah is physically located within young Charles Wallace's body. Yadah is the name of one of his mitochondria. Mitochondria are tiny enough to reside within human cells, and yet when the children are magically transported to Yadah, Yadah appears as a planet large enough to house an entire population of fictional farandolae. Both time and size are relative within Yadah. A human heartbeat occurs only once a decade. There is no physical motion in Yadah, since all motion is accomplished through the mental and emotional bridging of distances. These imaginative settings are metaphors created by the author to enhance and further her story line.

Language and Meaning

Although the Time Quartet novels are classified as children's books, author Madeleine L'Engle incorporates facts and knowledge with which many adults are unfamiliar. The author holds high expectations for her young readers, and this refusal to condescend to her young audience is one of the reasons her books have become enduringly popular with children of all ages. Often in children's literature when new facts, concepts or vocabulary words are offered to the reader, the adult characters in the story do the explaining. Conversely, in *A Wind in the Door*, the children are faster at grasping new concepts and must make an effort to explain them to the adults. This role reversal lends a sense of empowerment to young readers, and yet L'Engle also takes care to explain that adults, though slower to grasp new concepts, are able to think them through more thoroughly and provide wisdom that the children lack.

Unless one studies medieval mythology, one may not know that a group of dragons is properly called a drive of dragons, but this is the sort of interesting intellectual tidbit which L'Engle's readers will learn. Whenever such facts are introduced, the author takes care to explain them so that the reader is not left in the dark. L'Engle's characters explain that fewmets are dragon droppings and that a rachis is the correct term for the hollow tube which makes up the quill of a bird's feather. Actual facts are intermingled in the text with make-believe facts. A factual explanation of mitochondria and their DNA blends smoothly with a fictional explanation of the imaginary farandolae which supposedly inhabit human mitochondria. Even a well-educated reader may be hard pressed to distinguish fact from fantasy in the realistic magical world that the author creates.

Structure

The story consists of twelve chapters that progress more or less chronologically, despite the fact that the relativity of time is one of the story's motifs. The original, recurring Murry characters are introduced in the first two chapters, along with Meg Murry's kindred spirit, Calvin O'Keefe. Once the reader is familiar with the human characters



and their backstories, the author proceeds to introduce the other, more magical, characters of Blajeny, Proginoskes and Louise the Larger in Chapter 3. Chapter 3 is also the first major turning point that drives the action into the second act. The plotline centers on the three tasks assigned to Meg and Proginoskes by their Teacher, Blajeny, and Chapter 4 serves as a transitional chapter in which Meg must decide if she will accept this responsibility. Chapter 5 introduces the first task, and in Chapter 6, Meg solves it. Rather than proceeding directly to the second task, Chapters 7 and 8 complicate matters for Meg as the author creates additional obstacles for the protagonist. By the end of Chapter 9, Meg has been forced to resolve the first task, and the author has laid the groundwork for the second task, which is introduced in Chapter 10. The author picks up the pace at this point. In Chapter 11, Meg solves the second task but is immediately confronted with the third and final task, which is also the most challenging. Chapter 12 contains the final climax in which Meg solves the third test. The denouement is foreshortened and brief and comprises the tail end of Chapter 12.



Quotes

"It would have been easier if Charles Wallace had actually been stupid. But he wasn't, and he wasn't very good at pretending that he didn't know more than the other six-year-olds in his class." Chapter 1, pg. 14

"There's been an unexplainable phenomenon, not in our part of the galaxy, but far across it, and in several other galaxies - well, the easiest way to explain it is that our new supersensitive sonic instruments have been picking up strange sounds, sounds which aren't on any normal register, but much higher. After such a sound - a cosmic scream, the *Times* rather sensationally called it - there appears to be a small rip in the galaxy." Chapter 2, pg. 37

"Flame spurted skywards in indignation at the doubt in the atmosphere. Great wings raised and spread and the children were looked at by a great many eyes. When the wild thing spoke, it was not in words, but directly into their minds." Chapter 3, pg. 55

"Come, littleling. I'll take you some place yesterday and show you."

"How can you take me yesterday?"

"I can't possibly take you today, silly. It's time for you to go in to breakfast and your mother dislikes tardiness. And who knows what we may have to do or where we may have to go before tomorrow? Come." Chapter 4, pg. 82

"Proginoskes probed into her mind, searching for words she could understand. 'I think your mythology would call them fallen angels. War and hate are their business, and one of their chief weapons is un-Naming - making people not know who they are. If someone knows who he is, really knows, then he doesn't need to hate.'" Chapter 5, pp. 97-98

"Meg looked at Louise, at the hooded eyes, the wary position of the head, the warning twitching of the last few inches of her black tail. Blajeny had told them that Louise was a Teacher. Louise herself had certainly shown in the past twenty-four hours that she was more than an ordinary garden snake." Chapter 6, pg. 110

"They are no size and they are every size. An Echthros can be as large as a galaxy and as small as a farandole. Or, as you have seen, a replica of yourself. They are the powers of nothingness, those who would un-Name. Their aim is total X - to extinguish all creation." Chapter 7, pg. 142

"Remember, Mr. Jenkins, you're great on Benjamin Franklin's saying, 'We must all hang together, or assuredly we will all hang separately.' That's how it is with human beings and mitochondria and farandolae - and our planet, too, I guess, and the solar system. We have to live together in - in harmony, or we won't live at all. So if something



is wrong with Charles Wallace's mitochondria - ' Her voice trailed off." Chapter 8, pg. 147

"Your scream shook the entire mitochondrion. I only hope it didn't hurt Charles Wallace.'

"She flinched, then held onto something, she wasn't sure what, but it felt like a lifeline. After a moment she knew that it was coming from the cherubim, an outflowing of love, love so tangible that she could hold onto it." Chapter 9, pg. 163

"When Sporos Deepens,' Proginoskes told Mr. Jenkins, 'it means that he comes of age. It means that he grows up. The temptation for farandole or for man or for star is to stay an immature pleasure-seeker. When we seek our own pleasure as the ultimate good we place ourselves as the center of the universe. A fara or a man or a star has his place in the universe, but nothing created is the center.'" Chapter 10, pg. 178

"Fool. Once you Deepen and put down roots you won't be able to romp around as you do now.'

"But - '

"You'll be stuck in one place forever with those fuddy-duddy farae, and you won't be able to run or move, ever again.'

"But - '

"The strength and calm of Senex cut through the ugliness. 'It is only when we are fully rooted that we are really able to move.'" Chapter 11, pg. 190

"Hold them, Meg. Hold them all. Put your arms around them, around the Echthroi spreading their gaping, tearing nothingness across creation.

"Size does not matter. You can hold them all, Charles and Calvin and Mr. Jenkins and the burning sphere of the newborn star -

"She cried out, 'I hold you! I love you, I Name you. I Name you, Echthroi. You are not nothing. You are.'" Chapter 12, pp. 202-203



Topics for Discussion

In Chapter 11, Senex says, "It is only when we are fully rooted that we are really able to move." (pg. 190) What does the author mean by this, and how might it apply to your life?

What clue does the author give at the end of the book to indicate that Proginoskes is really all right despite having Xed himself?

Why is it better to X oneself than to be Xed by the Echthroi? What is the difference?

Despite the fact that grown-ups have a harder time kything and may be slower at it than children, Calvin believes adults are able to go deeper than a child can once they get the hang of it. What does he mean by this? Can you give two examples from the story in which Mr. Jenkins proves that Calvin is right about this?

Describe the process of kything. Do you believe humans are really able to do this? Why or why not? Is there a way that humans kythe metaphorically?

What qualities does Sporos have which make him vulnerable to the Echthroi?

? » { " " ? w x tm ? ? in 1968. This experiment has been widely refuted by scientists, but it is often hailed by proponents of extrasensory perception. Research this controversy on-line or at your local library and discuss your findings.