

A Wrinkle in Time Study Questions

The highlighted questions are the ones I think are the most important and/or interesting questions to reflect on and discuss.

Note that the page numbers given in some questions below probably differ from the page numbers in other editions.

Chapter 1

- 1.** Describe the characters introduced in Chapter 1: Meg, Charles Wallace, Mrs. Whatsit, Mrs. Murry, and the twins (Sandy and Dennys).
2. What do Meg, Charles Wallace, Mrs. Whatsit, and Mr. Murry all have in common?
- 3.** What shocking thing does Mrs. Whatsit say at the end of the chapter, and what does this reveal?

Chapter 2

- 1.** What happens to Meg at school, and what more does this tell us about her personality and her situation in life?
2. What special ability does Charles Wallace seem to have (other than being highly intelligent)? What does he do that leads him to decide to trust Calvin?
- 3.** Describe Mrs. Who. What peculiar habit does she have?
4. Describe Calvin. What surprising thing does he say at the end of the chapter?

Chapter 3

- 1.** What more is revealed in this chapter about Calvin's family life? What realization does this cause Meg to have?
2. What does this chapter tell us about why Meg has problems in school?
- 3.** Why is Calvin so happy to have met the Murrays, even though he is popular at school? What do you think he means when he says that everybody likes him "for all the most unimportant reasons"? What do you think he considers more important than these reasons?
4. What does Mrs. Murry say about whether there is an explanation for everything? What does she tell Meg about Charles Wallace? What attitude does Meg decide she must have about him? Do you think it's important to be able to see things this way?
5. What do you think Calvin means when he says, "Oh, for crying out loud, you're Meg, aren't you?"
- 6.** What further revelations about Mr. Murry does this chapter contain? What is Meg afraid of regarding her father?
- 7.** What does the end of the chapter reveal about the "Mrs. W's"? Which one of them has a name with a double meaning?

Chapter 4

1. Where do the Mrs. W's take the children? Describe the planet—the things the children see when they arrive and when Mrs. Whatsit takes them for a ride.
2. Why do Mrs. Whatsit and Mrs. Who laugh at Mrs. Which when she materializes?
3. What things do we learn about the Mrs. W's in this chapter?
4. One of the themes of this book is the limitations of human knowledge. What examples of this theme do we see in this chapter?
5. Why do you think the song of the creatures they see is so difficult to translate? Why is Charles Wallace able to understand it more easily than Meg and Calvin?
6. Describe the Black Thing. What does it represent? How does it affect the children and Mrs. Whatsit when they look at it?

Chapter 5

1. Explain what a tesseract is. What examples do the Mrs. W's use to demonstrate this concept?
2. What mistake does Mrs. Which make in tessering to the next planet (p. 79)? Why does she make this mistake? Given that one of the themes of the book is the limitations of human understanding, how is this ironic? What do you think Mrs. Who means when she says, "we are such stuff as dreams are made on" (p. 81)?
3. How do the Mrs. W's take care of the problem of Mrs. Murry worrying about the kids?
4. Describe the Happy Medium's abilities and personality. Can you explain the double meaning of the Happy Medium's name? (See also p. 24.)
5. Describe the appearance of the earth as the kids see it in the Happy Medium's crystal ball. In what way is the earth troubled? Why did the Mrs. W's take the kids to Uriel first?
6. What is the nature of the war against the Black Thing—in general, who are the fighters against the Black Thing praised by the Mrs. W's? What examples of fighters from earth do the kids come up with? What does Mrs. Whatsit mean when she says that Mr. Murry is "on a planet that has given in" (p. 89)?

Chapter 5 Challenge Questions

1. Another theme of the book is the importance of having faith. When Mrs. Which asks Mrs. Whatsit if she is losing faith (p. 82), what does she mean? Why is this faith important?
2. Explain the meanings of two important quotes spoken by Mrs. Who: "Experience is the mother of knowledge" and "Small is the earth to him who looks from heaven." Think about how these ideas can be applied to life.

Chapter 6

1. What do the kids see in the crystal ball at the beginning of the chapter, and what does this tell us about Mrs. Whatsit's true nature? What does this make Meg realize about her?

2. What more do we learn about Calvin's mother (and his family life) and Mrs. Murry (what she never lets her children see) from viewing them in the crystal ball?

3. What do you think is the meaning of the hints, gifts, and warnings that the Mrs. W's give the kids before parting ways?

4. Describe what the kids see when they enter the town. What impression does it give them—what is so unusual about it? Why do you think the woman whose son dropped the ball is so frightened of Charles Wallace, Meg, and Calvin?

5. What does Calvin mean when he says of Camazotz, "the whole thing smells"?

6. Describe Camazotz. How might Meg's faults (the gift "given" to her by Mrs. Whatsit) help her in a place like Camazotz?

Chapter 6 Challenge Questions

1. Why do you think the word "aberration" is capitalized? ("The children in our section *never* drop balls! They're all perfectly trained! We haven't had an **Aberration** for three years.")

2. According to the route boy they talk to, his city has five poets, one musician, three poets, and six sculptors. What does this fact say about the culture of the city?

3. Why do you think Charles Wallace can't read the people's minds? How would you explain the perfect coordination of the people on Camazotz? (Remember Charles Wallace's comment about the route boy: "There was something funny about the way he talked, as though—well, as though he weren't really doing the talking.")

Chapter 7

1. How can the men in business suits look both similar and different at the same time? What do you think is the significance of all of the letter and number designations used for everything ("A machine," "S papers," "B slot," "number-one spelling machine," "F grade oiler")? What do you think the Process machine might do? (116) Why do you think being "reprocessed" is painful, and how can the pain be avoided? (118)

2. Based on the voice's comment that he is "here only to save [the kids] pain and trouble," what guess can you make about why the people of Camazotz gave in? (121) How can he claim that he is "peace and utter rest"? How is it that Charles can "get out" if he wants to, and why won't he want to? (130) What do you think this is meant to tell us about human nature?

3. Why does the voice recite multiplication tables? Why does Charles choose to sing children's songs to fight the voice in their heads, and why does Calvin recite the Gettysburg Address? How are these things especially appropriate? (122)

4. Why does Charles hit the man with red eyes? Why does he decide to open his mind to him? What happens to him, and what signs are there that this has happened? What makes him briefly come back to normal consciousness?

5. Why does the food smell so good, even though it is artificial? Why isn't Charles able to smell and taste what Meg and Calvin do? Why do you think the man gives them food—is it because he is concerned about them?

6. Why do you think the man is so honest and open with the kids? Why do you think he doesn't use force against them?

Chapter 8

1. What are the signs that Charles Wallace is possessed ("not himself")? What do you think is the difference between hypnosis and what has happened to him? (137)

2. What does Charles Wallace say at first to try to convince Meg and Calvin to join him? (134-136) How do they respond?

3. What happens to people who become ill on Camazotz? What does this tell us about the value of individuals and individual rights?

4. What argument does Charles Wallace use to convince Meg and Calvin that Camazotz is an ideal society? (140-142) How do they respond to his argument? How do you think this experience might help Meg and Calvin deal with their feelings of loneliness?

5. Whom do they see in a small room, and what is happening to him? What does this tell us about how Camazotz deals with people who don't go along with everyone else?

Chapter 8 Challenge Question

1. What does the name "the Happiest Sadist" mean, and how is it a pun?

Chapter 9

1. What does the quote from *The Tempest* (by Shakespeare) have to do with the situation the Murrys and Calvin are in, and how does Calvin use it to try to reason with Charles Wallace?

2. What realization does Meg have about her father after finding him and still having to fight to get Charles Wallace back from IT?

3. How does IT first try to get control of Mr. Murry, Meg, and Calvin? How does Meg try to resist?

4. What does Meg's realization that "*like* and *equal* are not the same thing at all" mean? How does IT (through Charles Wallace) argue that Camazotz is a utopia (perfect society), and why does Meg think Camazotz is such a horrible place?

5. Why can't IT simply be physically destroyed?

Chapter 10

1. Find an example of foreshadowing on page 163.

2. According to Mr. Murry, how were they able to resist IT even though IT is so powerful? (164)

3. Why did Mr. Murry go to Camazotz? (165) How is time on Camazotz different from time on earth? (166) What exciting discoveries have the scientists working on the tessier project made? (167) How does Mr. Murry describe human beings (specifically, the people working on the tessier project), and why is he in a hurry to return to earth? (168)

4. How does Mr. Murry explain his decision to tesser away from Camazotz and leave Charles Wallace there? (171) Why do you think Meg is so unreasonable in talking with her father and Calvin—why does she blame her father for things that aren't his fault? Why is her disappointment described as being “as dark and corrosive in her as the Black Thing”? (171 & 172) How does Mr. Murry try to soothe her and give her hope? (172)

Chapter 10 Challenge Questions

1. Why do you think the life forms of this planet have so little color, and why is it so fragrant?
2. What is the true temperature of the planet? Why does Meg at first think it's bitterly cold, and what does this tell us about the nature of our sensory perceptions? How does this relate to Meg's realization that she must seem as strange to the beast as it seems to her (even though it apparently can't see her)?
3. Why do you think the title of this chapter is “Absolute Zero”? What does this term usually mean, and why is it appropriate to describe this chapter?

Chapter 11

1. Describe the “beasts.” In what ways are they different from human beings, and in what ways are they similar? (For a couple of examples of similarities, see pages 183 and 186.)
2. Describe the experiences that Meg, Calvin, and Mr. Murry have on Ixchel. In what ways do the beasts' society and lifestyle seem different from ours? In what ways are Meg, Calvin, and Mr. Murry strange to the beasts, and why do the beasts accept them and decide to help them despite this strangeness?
3. What name does the beast who is caring for Meg decide she should be called, and how does she decide on this name? (184)
4. Why can't Meg, Calvin, and Mr. Murry simply tesser back to Camazotz and rescue Charles Wallace? (188)
5. What does it mean that Meg feels she is “being measured and found wanting,” and why do the beasts not judge her harshly despite her bad attitude? (189)
6. Why is it so hard to describe the Mrs. W's to the beasts? What realization does Meg have about her own senses as compared to the senses of the beasts, and how is it that the beasts can know the stars so well even though they can't see? (181, 185)

Chapter 12

1. Why do you think the Mrs. W's deal with Meg so coldly and matter-of-factly?
2. Why is Meg the only one who can save Charles Wallace, and why does she have to go alone? How does she react to this situation? How do Mr. Murry and Calvin react?
3. What reason do the Mrs. W's have to be optimistic about Meg's chances? (198) Why can't the Happy Medium see the future when it comes to individuals' decisions and fates, and what analogies does Mrs. Whatsit use to explain why not? Discuss Mrs. Whatsit's view of the roles that fate and freedom play in people's lives.

4. How does Meg explain her earlier behavior toward her father? Why do you think Meg decides not to tell Mr. Murry what she wants to say to her mother? (200)
5. What do you think is the meaning of the Biblical quote that Mrs. Who tells Meg? (201-202, 205) What is it that Meg has that IT doesn't have? (203, 207)
6. How does IT first try to break down Meg's resistance? (206) Why does Meg almost **succumb** (give in) to IT, and what saves her? (207) How does Meg defeat IT and save Charles Wallace?

Review Questions

1. Write a summary of the plot of the novel. Be sure to make your explanation of the people, places, and events connected and clear enough that someone who has not read the novel will understand it.
2. Describe the major characters in the novel. What facts about each one are important to the story?
 - Meg
 - Charles Wallace
 - Mrs. Murry
 - Mrs. Whatsit
 - Calvin
 - Mrs. Who
 - Mrs. Which
 - the Happy Medium
 - the man with red eyes/IT
 - Mr. Murry
 - Aunt Beast
3. Discuss the important relationships among these characters and explain why they are important to the story—for example, Meg's relationships with Charles Wallace, Calvin, her father, and Aunt Beast.
4. Describe and discuss the major settings of the novel: the Murrys' home and hometown, Uriel, Camazotz, and Ixchel.
5. What are the major themes and messages of the book? Discuss how the characters, events, and settings express these ideas.
6. What aspect(s) of the story do you like best? Discuss why you like these things.