

A Wind in the Door



By

Madeleine L'Engle

A Novel Study
by Nat Reed

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Table of Contents

Suggestions and Expectations	3
List of Skills	4
Synopsis / Author Biography	5
Student Checklist	6
Reproducible Student Booklet	7
Answer Key	84

About the author: Nat Reed was a member of the teaching profession for more than 35 years. He was a full-time instructor at Trent University in the Teacher Education Program for nine years. For more information on his work and literature, visit novelstudies.org.

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Suggestions and Expectations

Each chapter of the novel study focuses on one chapter of *A Wind in the Door* and is comprised of four distinct sections:

1. Before You Read
2. Vocabulary Building
3. Comprehension Questions
4. Language and Extension Activities

A **portfolio cover** (page 7) as well as a **Checklist** (page 6) are included so that students may track of their completed work.

Every activity need not be completed by all students.

Links with the Common Core Standards (U.S.)

Many of the activities included in this curriculum unit are supported by the Common Core Standards. For instance the *Reading Standards for Literature, Grade 5*, makes reference to:

- a) determining the meaning of words and phrases. . . including figurative language;
- b) explaining how a series of chapters fits together to provide the overall structure;
- c) compare and contrast two characters;
- d) determine how characters ... respond to challenges;
- e) drawing inferences from the text;
- f) determining a theme of a story . . . **and many others.**

Themes which may be taught in conjunction with the novel include Science Fiction, bullying, courage and persistence, the importance of empathy, the conflict between good and evil, personal growth, Christian imagery, sacrifice, family and friendship.

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List of Skills

Vocabulary Development

1. Locating descriptive words/phrases
2. Listing synonyms/homophones
3. Identifying / creating *alliteration*
4. Identification of root words
5. Identifying syllables
6. Identify *anagrams*
7. Listing compound words
8. Identifying parts of speech
9. Identify *personification*.
10. Identify *similes*.

Setting Activities

1. Summarize the details of a setting

Plot Activities

1. Complete a *time line* of events
2. Identify conflict in the story
3. Complete Five W's Chart
4. Complete a Plot Outline for a Sequel
5. Identify the climax of the novel.

Character Activities

1. Determine character traits
2. Identify the protagonist/antagonist
3. Relating personal experiences
4. Compare characters

Creative and Critical Thinking

1. Research
2. Write a newspaper story
3. Participate in a talk show
4. Conduct an interview
5. Create a poem
6. Write a description of personal feelings
7. Write a book review
8. Complete an Observation Chart
9. Complete a KWS Chart
10. Create a friendly letter.

Art Activities

1. A Storyboard
2. Create a collage
3. Design a cover for the novel
4. Create a comic strip

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Synopsis

A Wind in the Door is a fantastic adventure story involving Meg Murry, her small brother Charles Wallace, and Calvin O'Keefe, the chief characters of *A Wrinkle in Time*. The seed from which the story grows is the rather ordinary situation of Charles Wallace's having difficulty in adapting to school. He is extremely bright, so much so that he gets punched around a lot for being different. He is also strangely, seriously ill. Determined to help Charles Wallace in school, Meg pays a visit to his principal, Mr. Jenkins, a dry, cold man with whom Meg herself has had unfortunate run-ins. The interview goes badly and Meg worriedly returns home to find Charles Wallace waiting for her. "There are," he announces, "dragons in the twins' vegetable garden. Or there were. They've moved to the north pasture now."

Dragons? Not really, but an entity, a being stranger by far than dragons; and the encounter with this alien creature is only the first step that leads Meg, Calvin and Mr. Jenkins out into galactic space. [Courtesy of the Publisher]

Author Biography

Madeleine L'Engle

Madeleine L'Engle was born November 29th, 1918 in New York City. Even as a young girl she preferred writing stories and poems to doing her school work. At the age of 12 she and her family moved to the French Alps where she attended an English boarding school. A few years later she attended Smith College, continuing her passion for writing by studying English. After graduation she moved to Greenwich Village to work in the theater. During this time she saw her first two novels published. Here she also met her future husband, Hugh Franklin. Madeleine and Hugh had three children.

Madeleine wrote more than 60 books during her illustrious writing career, the most famous being the award-winning, *A Wrinkle in Time*. Sadly, she passed away in 2007.



A Wind in the Door

By Madeleine L'Engle



Student Checklist

Student Name _____

Assignment	Grade/Level	Comments

A Wind in The Door



By Madeleine L'Engle

Name: _____

A Wind in the Door

By Madeleine L'Engle

Chapter 1



Before you read the chapter:

The **protagonist** of *A Wind in the Door* is Meg Murry, but a number of other characters play significant roles as well. What might be the advantage of having several significant characters in a story? What might be a disadvantage to this strategy?

↑	
↓	



Vocabulary:

Choose a word from the list to complete each sentence.

forage	forlorn	lethargic	delusion
misdemeanor	postulate	preliminary	subtle

- The mayor made a few _____ remarks before launching into a tirade.
- The children had to _____ for scraps of food.
- Thinking that you will beat him in the race is quite a _____ on your part.
- Sarah felt very _____ after taking the strange-looking pill.
- Thankfully he was only charged with a _____, so he won't have a record.
- His insult was so very _____ that only a few people realized what he really meant.
- I'm sure Sheldon will _____ some absurd theory that no one will understand.
- Raj looked quite _____ when his puppy became ill.

Questions



1. What is the **setting** of the story at the beginning of Chapter One?

2. Why was Charles Wallace being bullied?

3. What was your impression of Mr.Jenkins as a school principal? On what did you base this assessment?

4. What did Meg mean when she said that Mr. Jenkins believed in the law of the jungle?

5. Other than being bullied, what else was there about Charles Wallace that concerned Meg and her mother?

6. Do you believe that Charles Wallace actually saw dragons, or was he hallucinating? Please explain your reasoning.

7. What did Charles Wallace warn the dragons not to do?

8. Meg told Charles Wallace she was returning to the house to get her cardigan, but what was her real reason for going back to the house?

9. Charles Wallace said that although the bullies from school were frightening, the dragons were even more terrifying. True or False

10. Record your impression of the way that Charles Wallace's teacher handled his explanation of farandolae and mitochondria.

11. What did Charles Wallace tell Meg regarding why he was ill?

12. What did Meg and Charles Wallace find at the end of the chapter which might just confirm the fact that Charles Wallace did indeed see dragons?

Language Activities



A. Personification is giving human qualities to something that is not human. The following is an example from Chapter One: ... *in the grey, uninviting light of an early morning brewing a nor'easter.*

Describe how the morning is personified in this sentence.

Create your own example of personification.

As you continue to read through the novel be on the lookout for other examples of this literary device. If you should find one, come back to this question and enter it below.

B. Many authors enjoy using **alliteration** – a literary device where the author repeats the same sound at the beginning of several words. Here is such an example from Chapter One: ... *leaf-shaped scales* ...

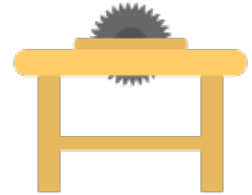


Using your imagination, create your own examples of **alliteration** from the following topics. Each example must contain a minimum of three words.

The squeal of brakes.	
A sunset.	
Your choice.	

C. Anagrams

An **anagram** is a word that is formed by changing the order of the letters of another word. For example, the letters in the word **WAS** can also form the word **SAW**. Follow these directions to form the anagrams:



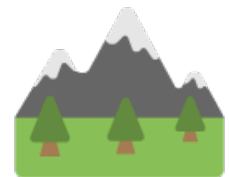
a) read the clue in the right-hand column.

b) Using the word in the left-hand column move the letters around in any order, but you must use all the letters. All of the words in the left-hand column can be found in the first five chapters of *A Wind in the Door*.

Word	Anagram	Clue
seven		You might roll this.
wrong		Underwent natural development.
graders		Give my ____ to Broadway.
boarded		Material laid down to form a highway.
please		The passage (of time).
parents		Snares.
words		An ancient weapon.

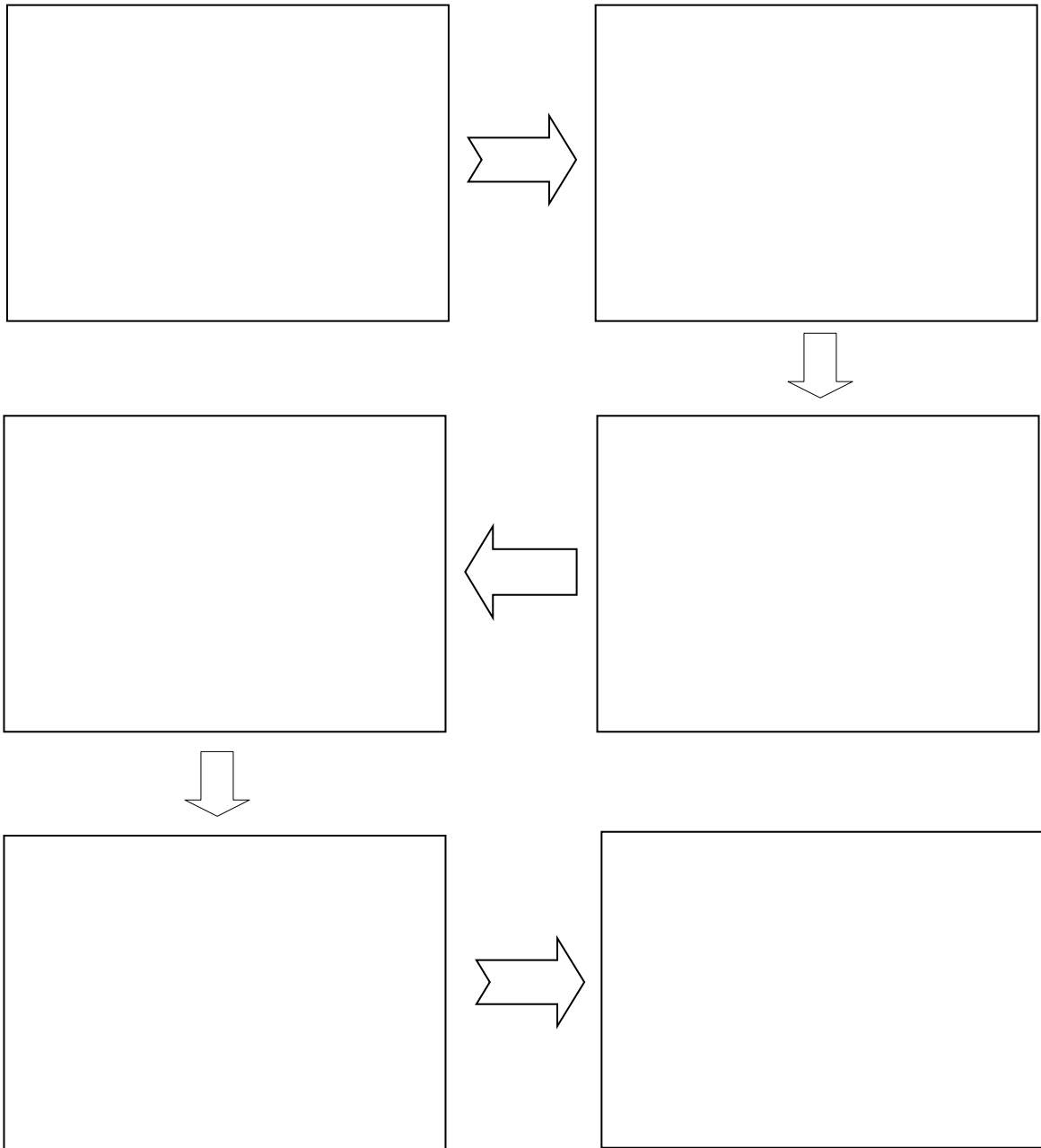
D. Cliffhanger

Chapter One contains an important literary device called a **cliffhanger**. A cliffhanger usually occurs at the end of a chapter when the author leaves the reader in suspense. How is this true in Chapter One? Why do you think the author ended the chapter this way?



E. Sequence Chart

Choose what you consider to be the six most important events in this chapter. In each of the six boxes below list the six events that you have chosen, describing what happened and telling why you consider this to be an essential part of the story.



Extension Activity



A Picture's Worth a Thousand Words



Use the three boxes to describe and illustrate the beginning, middle and end of the first chapter.

Beginning Picture:	Beginning:
Middle Picture:	Middle:
Concluding Picture:	Concluding: