

**THE TESSERACT OF IDENTITY: NAVIGATING SELF-DISCOVERY IN A
WRINKLE IN TIME BY MADELEINE L'ENGLE***Aziz Mavlonov**a graduate student of Asia International University*

Annotation: This article analyzes *A Wrinkle in Time* by Madeleine L'Engle, emphasizing its fusion of science fiction and fantasy to explore themes of self-discovery. The protagonist, Meg Murry, embarks on an interdimensional journey that mirrors her internal struggles, learning to embrace individuality and overcome self-doubt. The article investigates that the concept of the tesseract serves as both a scientific mechanism and a metaphor for Meg's growth.

Keywords: self-discovery, science fantasy, individuality, conformity, tesseract, interdimensional travel, Meg Murry, IT, cosmic conflict, young adult literature, love as strength

Ushbu maqola *A Wrinkle in Time* ("Vaqtdagi burilish") asarini tahlil qiladi, unda ilmiy fantastika va fantaziya janrlari uyg'unlashgan holda o'zini anglash mavzusi yoritilganligini aniqlaydi. Asosiy qahramon Meg Murry fazoviy sayohat davomida ichki kurashlari bilan yuzlashib, o'ziga bo'lgan ishonchsizlikni yengishga va o'ziga xosligini qabul qilishga o'rganadi. Maqola "tessarakt" konsepsiyasi ilmiy mexanizm sifatida ham, Megning shaxsiy o'sishini aks ettiruvchi metafora sifatida ham ishlatilganligini sharhlaydi.

Kalit so'zlar: o'zini anglash, ilmiy fantaziya, individuallik, bir xillik, tessarakt, fazoviy sayohat, Meg Murry, IT, kosmik kurash, yoshlar adabiyoti, muhabbat kuchi

Эта статья анализирует произведение «**Излом времени**» (*A Wrinkle in Time*), в котором научная фантастика и фэнтези сочетаются для раскрытия темы самопознания. Главная героиня, Мег Мурри, во время путешествия в пространстве сталкивается с внутренними переживаниями, учится преодолевать неуверенность в себе и принимать свою уникальность. В статье рассматривается концепция «тессеракта», который используется как научный механизм, а также как метафора личностного роста Мег.

Ключевые слова: самопознание, научная фантастика, индивидуальность, конформизм, тессеракт, межпространственное путешествие, Мэг Мурри, IT, космическая борьба, подростковая литература, сила любви

Madeleine L'Engle's *A Wrinkle in Time* is widely regarded as a key work of speculative fiction, not only for its unique blend of science fiction and fantasy elements, but also for its in-depth exploration of self-discovery. Meg Murry, the protagonist, embarks on a journey that is as much about traversing interdimensional space as it is about facing her fears, embracing her individuality, and understanding her position in the broader world. The novel's science fantasy framework externalizes Meg's internal struggles by using creative locations and scientific concepts to mirror her emotional and psychological growth. This mix of personal and cosmic research positioned *A Wrinkle in Time* at the intersection of genre innovation and psychological depth, making it an essential novel for understanding themes of self-discovery in young adult literature.

L'Engle examines Meg's self-discovery via science fantasy, a genre that combines scientific and mystical elements. Farah Mendlesohn describes science fantasy as a genre that **"transforms the external into the internal, using cosmic and otherworldly phenomena to reflect the protagonist's inner journey"** ¹. In *A Wrinkle in Time*, Meg's adventures across space and time are both literal and symbolic of her struggle to find her place in a complex and usually hostile world.

Meg is characterized in the novel as a socially awkward and self-conscious adolescent who is separated from her peers and tormented by feelings of inadequacy. She considers herself a failure, incapable of meeting traditional expectations: "I'm a delinquent." "That is who I am"². This self-perception is reinforced by her scholastic struggles and feelings of helplessness in the absence of her father, whose mysterious disappearance has left a void in her family.

Meg's journey to rescue her father, guided by the enigmatic Mrs. Whatsit, Mrs. Who, and Mrs. Which, evolves into a mission to overcome her feelings of inadequacy and discover her own unique powers. The concept of individuality is important to Meg's self-discovery journey, and L'Engle uses it throughout the tale to counterbalance the forces of uniformity and oppression represented by IT, the disembodied brain that dominates the planet Camazotz. IT enforces a rigorous, mechanical order that removes individuality in favor of uniformity. This powerful representation of conformity emphasizes Meg's effort to embrace her differences and acknowledge their value.

Mrs. Whatsit informs Meg early on in her journey that she must make her own decisions. "You cannot rely on others to tell you what is correct".³ This advice foreshadows the novel's conclusion, in which Meg must confront IT alone, relying only on her own ability to rescue her brother Charles Wallace.

Unlike her father, who fails in his attempt to overcome IT with intellect, Meg recognizes that her capacity to love—an intensely personal and distinctively human quality—is critical to fighting IT's dominance. This realization marks a watershed point in Meg's journey, as she learns to see her perceived flaws, such as her emotional intensity, as sources of strength rather than weakness. Maria Nikolajeva stated that "L'Engle's depiction of Meg's individuality reflects a broader trend in children's literature, where self-discovery involves not only the recognition of one's unique traits but also the understanding of how those traits contribute to a larger moral and social framework".⁴

Meg's narrative exemplifies this dynamic, as she learns to channel her individuality into acts of courage and compassion, ultimately redefining her sense of self and place in the universe.

¹ Mendlesohn, Farah. (2008). *Rhetorics of Fantasy*. Wesleyan University Press, p.121

² L'Engle, Madeleine. (1962). *A Wrinkle in Time*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, p.8

³ L'Engle, Madeleine. (1962). *A Wrinkle in Time*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, p.98

⁴ Nikolajeva, Maria. (2009). *Power, Voice, and Subjectivity in Literature for Young Readers*. Routledge, p.86

The scientific concept of the tesseract, which is central to the novel, serves as both a physical mechanism for interdimensional travel and a metaphor for Meg's path of self-realization. Mrs. Whatsit explains that a tesseract overcomes conventional spatial and temporal limits by folding dimensions, allowing for instantaneous transit across vast distances. This idea resonates with Meg's journey because she must learn to transcend her own limitations—both real and perceived—in order to achieve her goals.

Mrs. Whatsit introduces the tesseract, stating that it is a basic concept. "A straight line does not represent the shortest distance between two locations."⁵ This response demonstrates Meg's desire to embrace new perspectives and ideas, which challenges her to go beyond linear, black-and-white thinking.

The act of "tessering" mirrors Meg's journey of self-discovery, requiring her to confront her fears, adapt to new situations, and acknowledge the intricacies of her emotions and relationships.

Kathryn Hume brings up the following point: **"The tesseract operates as a symbolic framework for the protagonist's growth, illustrating the necessity of transcending conventional boundaries—both physical and psychological—in the pursuit of self-knowledge"**.⁶ In her work, L'Engle used the tesseract to emphasize the interconnection of Meg's internal and external experiences, emphasizing that self-discovery is as much about navigating one's interior dimensions as it is about confronting external challenges. One of the most defining elements of *A Wrinkle in Time* is the juxtaposition between personal and cosmic scales. L'Engle sets Meg's quest in a vast, multidimensional universe populated by planets, stars, and animals with amazing power and wisdom. This cosmic background raises the stakes of Meg's journey while underscoring the universality of her struggles.

The "Dark Thing," a malevolent creature that threatens to swallow the universe, serves as a metaphor for the internal and environmental elements that stymie self-discovery. Mrs. Whatsit describes it as "a terrible darkness that tries to blot out the light of the stars".⁷ Meg's battle against the darkness mirrors her own struggle with self-doubt and fear. By depicting her personal journey as a cosmic conflict between light and darkness, L'Engle emphasizes the connection of individual and communal fights, meaning that personal improvement and resistance contribute to the larger fight against evil. As Suzanne Rahn puts it: **"L'Engle's use of the cosmic setting serves to universalize Meg's journey, presenting her self-discovery as a microcosm of the human experience"**.⁸ This interplay of sizes allows the work to communicate to readers on several levels, offering both an intimate portrait of adolescence and a vast view of humanity's position in the universe.

⁵ L'Engle, Madeleine. (1962). *A Wrinkle in Time*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, p.84

⁶ Hume, Kathryn. (1984). "Fantasy and Mimesis in Children's Literature." *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, 9(3), p.65.

⁷ L'Engle, Madeleine. (1962). *A Wrinkle in Time*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, p.91

⁸ Rahn, Suzanne. (1991). "Madeleine L'Engle and the Possibilities of Fiction." *The Lion and the Unicorn*, 15(2), p.94

Conclusion

In *A Wrinkle in Time*, Madeleine L' Engle brilliantly explores themes of self-discovery, individuality, and interconnectedness through the lens of science fiction. L' Engle explores adolescent challenges and accomplishments via the character of Meg Murry, emphasizing the importance of Meg's personal journey on a cosmic scale. The novel's incorporation of scientific and fantastical elements not only enriches the plot, but also emphasizes its central message: self-discovery is a process of recognizing one's unique qualities while navigating the complexities of the human experience. By externalizing Meg's emotional struggles inside *A Wrinkle in Time*'s complex universe, L' Engle gives readers with a profound and enduring exploration of what it means to know oneself.

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