



Courtesy photo

Madeleine L'Engle, author of the timeless classic "Wrinkle in Time."

Quincy

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her unknowing. The tale hinges on the tesseract – a geometrical model formed from taking the square of a cube, a complex mathematical idea that she took one step further, – into time.

If time were like a tesseract, there might be other ways to skip over "gaps" to shorten the journey. Hence the "wrinkle" in time that enables characters Meg and Calvin to travel in time.

L'Engle went toward the enigmas of quantum reality in the late 1950s, when barely anyone knew what quantum physics was. Physicists were searching for metaphors to explain what did not make sense to the "logical" mind. By training herself to listen to what she did not know, intellectually L'Engle became perhaps the first writer to bring quantum physics out of the laboratory – in its infancy – and into the living room in a young adult novel.

But "Wrinkle" is so much more than scientific fantasy. Like a fine poem, it keeps revealing new truths in layers.

L'Engle: "The fact that 'Wrinkle' is deeply embedded in both theology and physics had little to do with me, and this puts me in my proper place as a servant struggling ... to be faithful to the work, the work which slowly and gently tries to teach me some of what it knows. Sometimes it is years after a book is published that I discover

what some of it meant."

It is no coincidence that the three angelic figures in "Wrinkle" bear the names of questions rather than answers. L'Engle: "Sometimes I believe that good questions are more important than answers, and that the best children's books ask questions, and make the reader ask questions. And every new question is going to disturb someone's universe."

The more she discovered about physics, the more wonder L'Engle saw in Creation and the Creator. As it turns out, "Wrinkle" – and L'Engle – both were way ahead of their time. "Wrinkle in Time" demonstrates that the world, that reality is much larger and wider than human imagination, that it is most likely contradictory to our logic, and filled with unexpected realities we cannot fathom – and evil may be far more pedestrian than we think, as simple and common as clinging to convention or pre-judging others because they differ from us.

In "Wrinkle," L'Engle makes her own argument for both the gap and the journey – the gap between doubt and certainty. When you face a gap between what you know and the unknown, do you bring your sense of wonder or a bag full of judgments?

At no time in history are we made more aware of mystery than now when science surprises us every day. L'Engle warns us to take our humanity with us on this journey across the gap from what we know to what we do not know—and

may even fear because it is new or different. She heralds the power of the individual to impact the cosmos, the power of art to bring cosmos out of the chaos of the world.

And above all, do not underestimate the children who "have an openness and an ability to grapple with difficult concepts which many adults have lost. Writers of children's literature are set apart by their willingness to confront difficult questions."

Truth, it turns out, is a many-splendored thing. Religion – or theology – science and magic may be different aspects of the great mystery we can only partly imagine. The fact that "Wrinkle in Time" has managed to defy categories and labels is much of its greatness, for like all great art, it only begins to suggest and mirror something far greater than the imagination of the artist.

In "Wrinkle," I love what Aunt Beast says so simply: "We do not know what things look like, as you say, we know what things are like. It must be a very limited thing this seeing."

L'Engle constantly challenged herself to listen to the story: "The artist, if he is not to forget how to listen, must retain the vision which includes angels and dragons and unicorns, and all the lovely creatures which our world would put in a box marked Children Only."

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