ADVANCED ETHICAL LITERARY INQUIRY

A WRINKLE IN TIME

Pre-Assessment & Interpretation Guide

CENTRAL IDEA

When something offers to take away your struggle, what exactly is it taking — and why does this book hand the rescue to the character everyone has been telling to fix herself?

Novel: A Wrinkle in Time by Madeleine L'Engle

Setting: A New England town, and several planets reached by folding space, at no stated date

Designed for: Advanced readers in grades 6–8, with adaptable supports

TEXT USE

Use a teacher-approved copy of the complete 12-chapter novel. This resource supplies original prompts and no reproduced passages.

Purpose & Directions

This pre-assessment reveals current reasoning about labels applied to people, about what is surrendered when difficulty is removed, about arguments built from quotation, and about who decides what counts as a problem. It does not require any knowledge of the novel and should not be used as a gatekeeping score.

ADMINISTRATION

Allow 25–40 minutes, or split across two sittings. Students may write, dictate, or record oral responses. Keep the reasoning demand constant.

Student Directions

- Explain how you know; more words do not automatically mean stronger thinking.
- Name uncertainty when evidence is limited.
- You may revise any response.
- Do not search the internet during this task.

1. The Trait They Want Fixed

SCENARIO

Several adults tell the same young person that a particular quality of theirs is a problem that needs correcting.

Task

How would you decide whether they are right? What would you want to know about the adults?

2. The Place With No Friction

SCENARIO

A community is organized so that nothing goes wrong, nobody disagrees, and every decision is already made.

Task

What real problems does that genuinely solve? What is being given up, specifically?

3. The Offer

SCENARIO

Something offers to take away all of your hard decisions permanently. You would not miss them, because you would not remember having made any.

Task

Is that a loss? To whom? Explain how you would know.

4. Borrowed Words

SCENARIO

Someone argues a position entirely by quoting famous people rather than saying anything in their own voice.

Task

Does that make the argument stronger? What does it prove, and what does it not?

5. The One Who Has to Go

SCENARIO

The person least prepared for a task turns out to be the only one who can do it, for a reason no one can change.

Task

What would make that a good story rather than an unfair one? Does the reason matter?

6. Using a Word From Another Field

SCENARIO

A writer takes a precise technical term and uses it loosely to mean something else.

Task

Is that a mistake? What does it gain, and what does it cost the reader?

7. Who Decides What You Read

SCENARIO

The same book is rejected as unsuitable, given a major award, and later challenged and removed from some libraries.

Task

Who made each decision, and on what grounds? Whose judgment should count?

Student Self-Reflection

Which response best shows your thinking? Why?

Where did you need more evidence?

Did any answer change while you were writing it?

Facilitator Interpretation Guide

Dimension	Emerging	Developing	Advanced
Claim	Opinion or summary	Defensible but broad	Nuanced, conditional, revisable
Evidence	Unanchored assertion	Relevant example	Selects evidence by purpose and names its limits
Perspective-Taking	One party's view only	Names two views	Explains why views differ and what each one misses
Reasoning	Evidence listed	Explains a link	Explains mechanism, motive, and uncertainty
Complexity	Dismisses alternatives	Mentions another view	Tests counterevidence and revises

Look Especially For

- Item 1: does the student ask about the adults' motives rather than evaluating the trait in isolation? That question runs the whole Fault Ledger.
- Item 2: does the student credit the genuine problems that uniformity solves before objecting? Students who cannot do this will handle Camazotz shallowly.
- Item 4: does the student see quotation as rhetoric rather than as proof? Mission 2 depends on it.
- Item 6: does the student treat imprecision as a choice with consequences, rather than as an error to correct?

Do Not

- Convert the matrix into an IQ label or a single permanent score.
- Penalize handwriting, spelling, speech, or length when they are not the construct.
- Assume a confident answer equals a well-reasoned one.
- Delay access supports until a student struggles.

Instructional Decision Sheet

Dimension	Current Evidence	Next Challenge / Support
Claim		
Evidence		
Perspective-Taking		
Reasoning		
Complexity		

Compacting Decision

☐ Maintain core sequence ☐ Compact routine practice ☐ Accelerate to independent inquiry

Access Plan

Reassessment after Mission 3