

A WRINKLE IN TIME (2018)

- Released on March 9th, 2018
- 1 Hour 49 minutes
- \$100 million Budget
- Directed by Ava DuVernay
- Written by Jennifer Lee (screenplay by), Jeff Stockwell (screenplay by)
- Walt Disney Pictures, Whitaker Entertainment
- Rated PG for thematic elements and some peril

QUICK THOUGHTS

- Marisa Serafini
- Phil Svitek
- Demetri Panos

DEVELOPMENT

- *A Wrinkle in Time* was previously adapted into a made-for-TV movie in 2003, which was produced by Walt Disney Television and aired on ABC. But the two-hour movie, starring Canadian actor Katie Stuart as Meg, was not well-received by reviewers.
- In 2013, Disney's executive vice president of production, Tendo Nagenda, decided he wanted to try again
- DuVernay chose to avoid L'Engle's overt religious themes, keeping *A Wrinkle in Time* a secular film
- Production by Walt Disney Pictures and Whitaker Entertainment
- Catherine Hand produced *A Wrinkle in Time* (TV movie) in 2003 and *A Wrinkle in Time* (2018)
 - She read the book when she was 10 years old and immediately began drafting a letter to Walt Disney because she knew he was the only one that could make it. Catherine never sent the letter and Disney died 3 years later
- As a novel, *A Wrinkle in Time* has been a mainstay of middle school English curricula for decades
- "I felt like we were making the new Wizard of Oz for another generation." -Oprah Winfrey
- Ava was actually approached by Disney to do the project
- "Women directors, we're not getting people just saying, 'Hey, let's talk about this \$100 million sci-fi epic,'" - DuVernay
- DuVernay didn't accept the job right away. She had never read the book
- "Ava, imagine the worlds you can create," - Tendo Nagenda, the Disney executive who put the script in her hands
- You could say Hand was the driving force behind Disney obtaining the rights.
- Screenwriter Jennifer Lee made it known on the set of *Frozen* that *A Wrinkle in Time* was her favorite book. Disney had already had the rights for a while, so from there everything else just fell into place and Disney began to go ahead with the 2018 film adaptation.

WRITING (Jennifer Lee & Jeff Stockwell (written for the screen by), Madeleine L'Engle (based on the novel by))

- Book was published in 1962
- The idea for the book came to L'Engle during a family camping trip when the names of three old-as-time ethereal beings—Mrs. Whatsit, Mrs. Which and Mrs. Who—“popped” into her mind
- It was rejected by at least 26 publishers, because it was "too different" and deals overtly with the problem of evil. Publishers thought it was too difficult for kids to understand.
- Screenwriter Jennifer Lee is best known for her work on *Frozen*, for which she earned an Academy Award for Best Animated Feature
- Jennifer Lee first fell in love with *A Wrinkle in Time* when she read it as a 10-year-old girl. In the spring of 2014 Lee heard about the opportunity to write the screenplay for *A Wrinkle in Time* and she went after it
- Lee's daughter happened to be reading *A Wrinkle in Time* when she found out that Disney, whose animation department Lee works for, was looking for a writer to adapt Madeleine L'Engle's 1962 children's book. Inspired, Lee met with producer Jim Whitaker the very next day armed with her screenplay pitch.
- Lee described religion as a “crutch” for the book as a direct opposite of evil, therefore she thought it unnecessary to rely as heavily on it as the book did
- “If you try to stay too true to the book, I think you do it a disservice,” Lee said of her approach.
- Jeff Stockwell, screenwriter of *Bridge to Terabithia*
- The book is actually banned in many places due to claims that it undermines the Christian's world view

STORY/TOPICS

- *A Wrinkle in Time* has an almost entirely female cast and crew
- Follows Meg Murry as she travels across dimensions to rescue her scientist father, accompanied by a trio of guardian angels (Oprah Winfrey, Reese Witherspoon and Mindy Kaling)
- Her dad has been missing for 4 years and she is not sure if he has gotten lost in the universe or he has left her
- Battle of Good versus Evil
- The feeling of being an outcast and being bullied
- Mr. Murry discovered a new planet (Uriel) and used the concept known as a tesseract to travel there, he has been missing for 5 years
- Without Meg's faith, the mission is doomed. She has to learn to believe in herself if she wants to save her father

CAST:

Storm Reid as Meg Murry
Oprah Winfrey as Mrs. Which
Reese Witherspoon as Mrs. Whatsit
Mindy Kaling as Mrs. Who
Levi Miller as Calvin O'Keefe
Deric McCabe as Charles Wallace Murry
Chris Pine as Dr. Alex Murry
Gugu Mbatha-Raw as Dr. Kate Murry
Zach Galifianakis as The Happy Medium
Michael Peña as Red
André Holland as Principal James Jenkins
Rowan Blanchard as Veronica Kiley
David Oyelowo as the IT
Bellamy Young as Camazotz Woman
Conrad Roberts as Elegant Man
Yvette Cason as Mrs. Teacher
Will McCormack as Mr. Teacher
Daniel MacPherson as Calvin's Father

STORM REID (Meg)

- Debut performance as Emily in *12 Years a Slave*
- Storm originally read the book on her own in sixth grade, 2 years later she was cast as Meg
- Storm hopes to empower young people, especially african american girls
- In the movie Meg spearheads the expedition to find her missing father along with her younger brother and close friend
- “When I was growing up, you often saw stories about girls being perfected over time,” Lee “They start out disheveled, they start out problematic, and then over the course of the journey they become prettier and more perfect and with the right etiquette. It made you feel like you had to change, and that whatever you are isn't enough. But Meg is enough, and she's so much that she saves the universe.”
- “I said I wanted to make sure that Meg was a girl of colour and they embraced that. Then I said the witches should look like all kinds of women, different shapes, sizes, ages. And they right away said yes – I mean, I couldn't believe it.” - DuVernay

OPRAH WINFREY (Mrs. Which)

- No introduction necessary, I think we all know who she is
- She plays the eldest (and leader) of the 3 celestial beings
- Oprah produced & played a role in *Selma*, another movie from Ava DuVernay
- DuVernay stated she cast Oprah because she thought she was the “wisest woman in the world”
- Her character is described as having a “knack for materialization” and being very tall

- “I feel like this film is the culmination of my life’s work. I view it as not just a children’s film, but as wisdom teaching for all time. It feels like we’re making a new generation’s Wizard of Oz.”
- “My character actually says the words, ‘The darkness is spreading so fast these days. The only thing faster than light is the darkness,’ ” she says. “When I said that, I was thinking about all of the protesting going on all over the world. I had images in my head of specific violent acts being committed against groups of people.”

REESE WITHERSPOON (Mrs. Whatsit)

- *Legally Blonde, The Man in the Moon, Sing, Sweet Home Alabama, Walk The Line*
- The first celestial being the kids meet, this is also her first mission interacting with humans
- Mrs. Whatsit has red hair and fair skin
- She is the youngest and is seemingly more naive than the other women
- Mrs. Whatsit transforms in a flying plant-like creature to transport the children
- “We really made it a huge priority to be available to do this together. It flows nicely into all of [DuVernay, Khalin’s, Witherspoon’s] intentions, as creators, as women, and as warriors of the light.
- “This book was very important, and I read the entire series.”
- “I read the book as a little girl, and I really was excited when Ava explained her vision for the film. She was like, “I’m gonna deviate a lot. I want to have the house in Downtown L.A. I want the kids to be of all different ethnicities. I want kids to watch this movie and know that anything’s possible.” I get emotional, thinking how little kids going to the theater will actually see a character and an actor that looks like them. That will make them think it’s possible. And also, they’ll see women who are heroes, who are all different sizes and all different races. Women are the heroes of a lot of kids’ lives, and to see that properly represented is way overdue and exciting. I think it’s exciting to have a director with that kind of vision, and to have Disney’s belief in her, to give her an incredible amount of creative control and free reign to create this magic.”

MINDY KALING (Mrs. Who)

- Only speaks in quotations, i.e. Lin-Manuel Miranda, Outkast, Hamlet
- Mindy started as a write on The Office at only 24 years old and the only woman on a staff of 8, she then played a role in the series
- Star of her own show on Fox The Mindy Project
- Can materialize as a corporeal being, but finds it difficult to put ideas and thoughts into words
- Mrs. Who is the one who ultimately gives Meg the key to reuniting with her father
- Kaling was the first person DuVernay thought of for that role due to her desire to have a diverse cast
- “Most roles I get cast for do not surprise me, and this did,” says Kaling. “I loved the book as a kid, but I always pictured the witches as little old white ladies, right? So this feels almost subversive.”

LEVI MILLER (Calvin)

- Best known for playing Peter Pan in *Pan*
- Spends a lot of time with the Murry family due to his difficult home life
- We see Calvin's dad yelling at him about his grades in a flashback
- Levi describes his character as "kind"
- Calvin has a crush on Meg and stays by her side for the rest of the movie
- Having not read *A Wrinkle in Time* until he became a part of the book's live-action adaptation.
- "In a sense the thing that I really took from *A Wrinkle in Time* the book was the science fiction aspect of it, which was big for me and like the sort of physics and I found it was really cool, and I think this film portrays that very well," Miller said. "So, that was a massive part of it for me, and I think really now because I'm doing physics at school and reading it now would be a big thing for me because it's interesting. It's the 60s."

DERIC MCCABE (Charles Wallace Murry)

- The 9-year-old bested hundreds of other hopefuls when he won the role of Charles Wallace Murry
- "I'm reading [book] right now but I didn't read it before cause I didn't know it was a book. Ava was like, 'Oh, it's also a book' and I was like 'It is, it's a book?' And she's like 'Yeah, you should read it.' And I'm in the book.
- "Well that character's a genius and when Ava told me that he was gonna be big and mean and dark, I was like 'Can I do that?' So, it was kinda hard to go from, every time I was nice, she would call me sweetest boy in the world, so it was kinda hard to go from 'sweetest boy in the world' to 'darkest mind in the universe.'" - McCabe
- "I learned that when you're on set, there are green screens behind you and they do clean shots, so when they didn't get a shot that they wanted, they put you on the green screen or blue screen or whatever, and take that clean shot and put it behind you, so then it looks like you're like you're actually there."
- Meg's little brother who happens to be adopted
- Charles Wallace is a prodigious genius, as well as boundlessly kind and optimistic
- 5 years old but has intellect and empathetic qualities of someone much older
- Deric is from Whitefish, Montana. He is just beginning his career and so far has appeared in *Hold On* and *Stephanie*
- "This kid came in. He really is a find. The fact that he was a Filipino-American boy, first Disney was like, 'How is he going to fit in?' I said, 'I really want him in the family, this is the boy'."
- "At the end of shooting, Ava the director said 'Cut' and that's the last time she said 'Cut' and Oprah said, 'There's more to come,' and I'm like, 'What? No, I want to keep working on this, it was fun.' But she said there was more to come."
- "The first Filipino star of a major studio motion picture in Hollywood. It's a big deal," DuVernay
- "I'm proud to be a Filipino and to represent them."

BOOK VS MOVIE

- Perhaps the most obvious change from the book was to cast the Murrays not as a white family in Connecticut but as a multi-racial family living in California
- Sandy and Dennys, Meg's younger brothers, don't exist at all in the movie
- The Happy Medium is a man in the movie, a woman in the book
- Unlike the book, Charles Wallace Murry in the movie is adopted
- "This is a subtle but significant shift in the film adaption—the absence of Christianity. L'Engle's book wasn't exactly subtle about its Christian themes. At one point, the creatures on the planet Uriel sing a Psalm from the Bible. When Mrs. Whatsit is naming the great fighters of planet Earth in the book, Jesus is the first on her list. When Mrs. Which takes that line in the film, Jesus is omitted."
- L'Engle was a frank Christian who put her beliefs into her work, and her *Wrinkle in Time* is both open about its religious imagery, and about her belief that love is a powerful force against the self-serving power of evil.

DIRECTING (Ava DuVernay)

- First African-American woman to direct a movie budgeted over \$100 million
- DuVernay chose to avoid L'Engle's overt religious themes, keeping *A Wrinkle in Time* a secular film
- DuVernay believes she is leading a crusade for young girls, especially young girls of color, by having made a movie full of hope and strong female characters
- In 2017, DuVernay became the first black woman nominated for an Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature, for her film *13th*
- "DuVernay test"- (in movies) African-Americans and other minorities have fully realized lives rather than serve as scenery in white stories
- Popular opinion is that she is not taking criticism of 'A wrinkle in Time' well
 - "According to her twitter feed, white journalists of either gender simply don't understand her vision for the movie"



Ava DuVernay
@ava

Follow

You were the only Caucasian journalist of any gender to see it, understand it and seriously ask me about it. Appreciate the chat, the sensitivity and the writing.

Kyle Buchanan @kylebuchanan

I talked to @ava about one of the most subtle, resonant threads in A WRINKLE IN TIME: Meg's insecurities about her hair. vulture.com/2018/03/ava-du...

- "DuVernay has implied that sites based on amateur user reviews are heavily flawed, and that the overwhelmingly white, male, professional movie critics' write-ups simply don't understand her 'girl power' message"

- She strives to cultivating a new way of looking at the world
- Looking over her history, she typically makes movies and documentaries that focus on black lives, including Selma
- She says she knew it would be difficult to translate the highly imaginative book onto the screen and that is why she did it. She wanted a challenge
- “I was a little scared [Ava joining], Lee saying, 'Does she want me here or not? Because she's a writer herself,'" Lee said. “And at that stage when the director comes on, it's up to them, and respectfully I knew there was a chance that I wouldn't be on it anymore. But that's not what she wanted.”

PRODUCTION (Tobias A. Schliessler) director of photography

- Principal photography began on November 2, 2016, in Los Angeles, California
- Production budget of \$100 million
- Filmed in New Zealand for 2 weeks also a sequoia forest in Northern California
- Released in Disney Digital 3-D, Real D 3D, and IMAX
- A Wrinkle In Time started shooting in November 2016, with the cast and crew all participating in an epic "mannequin challenge" video that ended with the reveal of the March 9, 2018 release date.
- HOUSE:
 - After looking at about 50 homes in Los Angeles, production designer, Naomi Shohan says, they finally settled on an American Craftsman style home in West Adams, a historic neighborhood of Victorian mansions and Craftsmans from the late 1800s and early 1900s. “The house had a really good flow, and the woodwork is this beautiful golden color which we didn't find anywhere else,” Shohan says. “We painted the interior yellow because it was originally a kind of cold yellow and we made it warmer. Architecturally, the only thing we did inside of the house was add some beams in the living room, but that was only so that the electricians could hide their cables.”
- MRS. WHO'S HOUSE
 - Mrs. Who. Her house is actually a rundown bungalow about a mile away from the Murrays' Craftsman, located in the same West Adams area. The small interior was filled with stacks of books because Mrs. Who only uses famous quotations when she speaks.
- LAB
 - Shohan and her set decorator, Elizabeth Keenan, consulted with scientist Rohit Bhartia of NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) on the look of the lab. “We wanted to get real equipment and make sure that it was totally realistic,” Shohan explains.
- The backyard had to be re-created on an empty lot in Santa Clarita, California, because the production's lighting equipment was too big to use at the West Adams house. “We made the backyard bigger and prettier than at the house,” Shohan says.

EDITING/VFX (Spencer Averick)

- Critics "taking issue with the film's heavy use of CGI"
 - The plot and background story were lacking and it seemed as if the over-the-top CGI was used as a distraction
- Averick has worked with DuVernay on multiple other movies including *Selma*, *13th* and *Middle of Nowhere*
- ILM visual effects supervisor Rich McBride (Oscar-nominated for "The Revenant")
- After a preview screening revealed a scene that was visually confusing, the director requested a VFX change. "It hit me as a whole," DuVernay said. "This whole scene, an exterior [set], I want to take that out, put it inside [an interior digital scene], roto out the people and put them in [the other] scene."

SOUND/MUSIC (Ramin Djawadi)

- "Game of Thrones" composer Ramin Djawadi and convinced singer-songwriter Sade to write her first movie song in more than three decades.
- Sade contributes the song "Flower of the Universe," the lead tune on the Disney Records soundtrack. It's her first film song since "Killer Blow" for "Absolute Beginners" in 1986.
- Ramin Djawadi was announced as the composer for the film, replacing Jonny Greenwood, who was initially chosen to compose, and scored the film
- The soundtrack would feature appearances from Sade, Sia, Kehlani, Chloe x Halle, Freestyle Fellowship, DJ Khaled, and Demi Lovato
- Four time Emmy nominee
- Djawadi assembled a 71-piece orchestra, a 40-voice choir and a 24-voice children's choir, then adding synthesizers and solo instruments from around the world — the sonic equivalent of DuVernay's multicultural, multiethnic cast.
- Spent five months writing more than 100 minutes of music late last year, collaborating closely with DuVernay. "He was with me through all of the different cuts, as we made major changes," she says. "We found new storylines in the edit, and he was giving us music as we were cutting."
- "When you're talking about fantasy, about transporting people to other worlds, there's no medium greater than music to do that," says "A Wrinkle in Time" director Ava DuVernay. "Music is so necessary to help inform a heightened reality."
- "In some places in this film, music takes precedence even over the image, in terms of being able to stir emotion," DuVernay says. "Music is the magic that connects our everyday human interaction to a higher, elevated place."

PROMOTION

- DuVernay announced a teaser trailer for the film would debut at the 2017 D23 expo; it was released on July 15, 2017
- Trailer was featured in a Golden Globes TV Spot
- Real Housewives of Atlanta Promo:
<https://twitter.com/Andy/status/971473057184350208>

BOX OFFICE

- While the reviews are mixed for Duvernay's film, the opening weekend box office—\$33 million—signifies at least some level of success.
- Marked the first time in cinema history that the top 2 movies in the box office were the work of black directors (*A Wrinkle in Time* and *Black Panther*)

RECEPTION

- RT: 42% Tatometer: 36%
- IMDB: 4.1/10
- Cinemascore: B
- “Black Panther” director **Ryan Coogler** praised DuVernay for her staunch support of him and other men and women she has championed. “Being here for her tonight is incredible because she’s put her arms around all of us, and taught us the way,” Coogler said. “We support each other. We give each other notes and talk through situations when they’re tough so we can learn from each other’s mistakes and build off each other’s victories.”