



Madeleine L'Engle Herself: Reflections on a Writing Life

Madeleine L'Engle, Carole F. Chase (Compiler)

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The author of over fifty books, including Newbery Award winner *A Wrinkle in Time*, Madeleine L'Engle is internationally acclaimed for her literary skills and her ability to translate intangible things of the spirit-- both human and divine--into tangible concepts through story. In *Madeleine L'Engle Herself: Reflections on a Writing Life*, you'll find hundreds of this celebrated author's most insightful, illuminating, and transforming statements about writing, creativity, and truth.

INCLUDES NEVER-BEFORE-PUBLISHED MATERIAL FROM L'ENGLE'S WORKSHOPS AND SPEECHES.

Madeleine L'Engle Herself: Reflections on a Writing Life Details

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Author : Madeleine L'Engle , Carole F. Chase (Compiler)

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From Reader Review Madeleine L'Engle Herself: Reflections on a Writing Life for online ebook

Kaylin says

I really loved this book. It was so insightful into the world of writing and inspired me to look at the events in my life more intentionally. L'Engle really is a wise woman with much knowledge of writing and of the world in general.

There were some things that seemed a little mystic. I don't really understand the whole "books name us" thing. I did, however, love everything she said about the growth of people, how people change, but all of their other past selves stay with them and keep helping them. And I do agree completely about how secular literature can still display Christian truths.

I want to read this book again, because there are so many gems that I don't think I could've totally absorbed in one read.

Marci says

This is a book of quotes from classes that Madeleine L'Engle has taught. As I went through the book I put bookmarks in to save my favorite pages so I could write the quotes down later but when I went back to write them I realized that I bookmarked almost every page! I'll have to either check the book out again or buy it for my reference library. I agreed with much of what she said and enjoyed that she is not ashamed of being a Christian and writing from that point of view. She has some very good advice about being well prepared for the writing and then letting go and just writing. I also enjoyed reading about how it is the pain and suffering and failure in life that gives us experience to write about and the ground to try something new.

Michelle Kidwell says

Madeleine L'Engle Herself
Reflections on a Writing Life
by Madeleine L'Engle

Crown Publishing

Convergent Books
Christian
Pub Date 18 Sep 2018

I am reviewing a copy of Madeline L'Engle Herself through Crown Publishing and Netgalley:

This book includes 500 of Madeline L'Engle's most insightful, illuminating and transforming statements about writing, creativity and truth.

In Madeline L'Engle herself she points out that to be alive is to be vulnerable. We are also reminded that we need to use the gifts the good Lord had given us.

The author goes on to point out his wounds are his wounds too. We are reminded too our choices help to form our stories! We are encouraged to believe with Childlike wonder. We are reminded too that we are the children of the light, yet we have been walking around in darkness.

L'Engle goes on to point out that solitude can help build a storyteller. We are encouraged to write it down when I have a profound personal experience. We are reminded to that our stories change us.

I give Madeline L'Engle Herself five out of five stars!

Happy Reading!

Ann says

Not what I expected, but a few nuggets from a respected spiritual writer

Elle River says

I fell in love with L'Engle when I read *A Wrinkle in Time*. I was in fourth grade. It cemented my interest in fantasy and science fiction and ignited my hunger for adventure. I identified so strongly with Meg: with her uncertainty, her stubbornness, and her struggles with self-esteem...essentially her faults! Also, here was a science fiction book with heroine. Tired of reading about what felt like the same skinny young boy in every story about magic, L'Engle's Meg let me know that I could have adventures too.

So as an adult picking up Herself, I was excited to learn more about one of my favorite author's philosophies. I was not disappointed, and enjoyed the diary-like entries from her interviews, lectures, and personal writing. I especially appreciated her thoughts on religion and spirituality having recently entered a time of discernment regarding my own faith after growing up Presbyterian. Her musings on how entangled religion, art, and the soul are were interesting to absorb even when I didn't fully agree with them. I sometimes wished I had her clarity as she spoke of ethereal callings and divine knowledge; writing often feels clumsy to me. But L'Engle also shared moments of personal and spiritual struggle which helped me visualize that behind a finished book are many tear-stained, crumpled pages of doubt.

One of my only criticisms of the collection were the amount of near-repeated entries. As a teacher as well as a writer, it's clear that L'Engle would have shared her wisdom with multiple classes, phrased perhaps differently depending on the year and the nature of her students. However, often I'd read an entry - about writing, children, faith, etc. - and feel like I had read it before! Sometimes I'd have to check and make sure I wasn't sleep-reading the same entry or had lost my place and returned to a previous page. Each time it was simply a case of two entries sounding very much like the same advice or thought spoken differently to a

different audience. I wish the book had been curated more to keep the most poignant versions of each entry instead of simply repeating them. It happened often enough that I put down the book a few times and picked up something else due to a feeling of stagnation.

Nevertheless, I finished *Herself* with a tranquil feeling. I never got the opportunity to meet L'Engle or attend one of her lectures, but I feel like this book offered me the closest experience to learning from her in person.

Naomi says

Book R: #6

Pages: 377

(Non-fiction)

From the author of *A Wrinkle in Time*, this compilation of approximately 300 carefully selected readings brings together the best statements of author Madeleine L'Engle on writing and creativity. An insightful and illuminating volume, *Madeleine L'Engle Herself* pages are extremely true and eye opening. On the page "Struggling towards meaning" it says: "To be alive is to be vulnerable. To be born is to start the journey towards death." This page talks about finding meaning because it can't just be no more than "our brief candle." I larded that there's no changing death, "art with affirms the value and the holiness of life, the artist must die." But life isn't meaningless. There are many more pages like this but yet extremely different, this book is insightful and illuminating overall a great book

Steven R. McEvoy says

I had the privilege of meeting L'Engle at a conference 20 years ago now. Reading this book was in many ways like being back at the small retreat with her. I could hear her voice and feel her presence. I am a fan of L'Engle's work in the span of 2 years I read about 30 of her books, spanning the breadth and depth of her writing. And with the reprint of this and I believe 3 other title of her non-fiction works on the same day, I am very excited to see her works coming back into print and being available in numerous formats.

I devoured this book over three days. But that is a bit deceptive. Even though it is listed as nearly 400 pages because of the format some thoughts and reflections take up less than a quarter of a page. The introduction is written by Sarah Arthur, who just published *A Light So Lovely: The Spiritual Legacy of Madeleine L'Engle*.

This book is a collection of thoughts, reflections, and personal history. A number of them stuck me, and made me think of author friends. I shared this one with a friend:

"Cooking Up Stories

When I start working on a book (and I'm usually thinking about several books over several years before I actually start to write one), I'm somewhat like a French peasant cook. There is a big black stove, several pots on the back of it. And the cook goes by and drops a carrot in one pot and a piece of potato in another and an onion and a piece of meat in another. At dinnertime, you look and see which pot smells best and pull it forward. The same thing is true with writing. There are several pots on my back burners. An idea for a scene goes into one pot, a character into another, and a description of the tree in the fog in another. And when it comes time to write, I bring forward the pot which has the most in it—or more likely, this being a less literal

world, the pot shoves itself out at me. Now the dropping in of the ideas is sometimes quite conscious. I know I'm putting a carrot in this pot. But sometimes something has been added when I don't even realize it. And I look into the pot and say, "Oh that's there, just what I need." But I don't know when it got put in. When it comes time to write, I look at everything in the pot. I sort, I organize, I arrange, I discover, I think about character and storyline. And most of this part of the work is done by the me of which I am aware. It is a conscious act."

Another one that really grabbed my attention was:

"The Theological Under Level of Story

C. S. Lewis used to write a book of fiction and a book of theology simultaneously, both dealing with the same theological problem. But if we saw in the fiction theology rather than story, then he would have failed. Obviously, the seven Narnia books are deep Christian parables; but if this message reached all of the young readers in a conscious rather than an unconscious way, first of all they would reach only people who were already Christians. And they wouldn't have that under level, that stratum which makes people go to them and read them again and again and again".

The Chapters In The Book Are:

Forward

Introduction

1. Section I: Serving The Gift

Artists And Their Art

2. Section II: Co-Creators With God

Inspiration And The Creative Process

3. Section III: My Books Wrote Me

Elements Of A Writer's Life

4. Section IV: Faith Foundations

Writing From Truth

5. Section V: An Accepted Wonder

The Wisdom Of Children

6. Section VI: Finger Exercises

A Writer's Technique And Style

7. Section VII: The Empty Page

Getting Started

8. Section VIII: A Life Of Their Own

Creating Characters

9. Section IX: Paints Of The Writer's Palette

Words And Symbols

10. Section X: This I Know

Telling Our Story

Appendix I: Sources For This Book

Appendix II: Index Of Selections And Sources

Appendix III: A Chronology Of Madeleine L'Engle's Life And Books

Appendix IV: Books By Madeleine L'Engle

Reading Guide

But there are 300 separate entries in this collection. One of the other reflections in this volume is:

"Storytellers Search For Truth

People have always told stories as they searched for truth. As our ancient ancestors sat around the campfire in front of their caves, they told the stories of their day in order to try to understand what their day had meant, what the truth of the mammoth hunt was, or the roar of the cave lion, or the falling in love of two young people. Bards and troubadours throughout the centuries have sung stories in order to give meaning to the events of human life. We read novels, go to the movies, watch television, in order to find out more about the human endeavor. As a child I read avidly and in stories I found truths which were not available in history or geography or social studies."

And one final one to share:

"Good Art Heals

Stories should be healing. If they're not, there's something wrong. A story which leaves you frightened, fragmented, depressed, cannot be a Christian story. If I'm in need of healing, if I can go to the museum and look at the paintings, I will be healed. Music is very healing to me. Once I was full of righteous indignation over something and my adolescent said, "Oh, Mother, sit down and play Bach for a while," knowing that if I did and gave that time to the beautiful structure of Bach, I would at least calm down. Art heals us, puts us all together, but only if we're willing to open ourselves to it and collaborate with it".

I want to speak about this one. A few years before I discovered L'Engle's writings I was a huge fan of Frank E. Peretti. I loved *This Present Darkness* and *Piercing the Darkness*. But when I finished his book *The Oath* I literally felt slimed. I felt like I had read a Christian Stephen King, and never read another book by him.

This book is full of wit and wisdom. It is advice from a Christian artist to Christian artists. Anyone who would like to have their faith reflected in their art would take something away from this book. And for fans of her writings it gives us a deeper insight into the woman, her faith and her process.

An excellent read, for readers and for writers.

Read the review on my blog [Book Reviews and More](#) and reviews of other books by and about Madeleine L'Engle.

Lisa says

This is a compilation of quotations from L'Engle's writings, speeches, and classes, and is the next best thing to a book she could write about her thoughts on writing--her own and others'. Although the author's titles for the entries downplay the Christian content of some of L'Engle's statements, the book is for every writer and admirer of L'Engle's works. The timeline and bibliography are helpful. L'Engle would not teach people how to write, believing that it cannot be taught in classes such as are sometimes offered to aspiring writers, but she has given plenty of good advice on writing and thinking and believing, and most of it seems to be collected in this small but potent book. And it made me want to reread L'Engle's wonderful books, which is high praise for the compiler.

Tracy says

I wouldn't call myself an avid fan of Madeleine L'Engle's writing, simply because I haven't actually read that much of it. But I have labeled *A Wrinkle in Time* as one of my all-time favorite books. And when there is a book--or a song, or a painting--that I thoroughly enjoy, I'm always interested in the creator behind the art, and the source behind that creativity. What in an artists' life has caused her to create such art?

For Madeleine L'Engle, writing was a calling for her. It was her way of being a light in the darkness, of sharing the truths she found in Christianity through the medium of story, just as Jesus shared truth by telling parables. There is a power in story that the world often thinks is foolish, but L'Engle understood it very well. In one passage, she writes, *"We do not draw people to Christ by loudly discrediting what they believe, by telling them how wrong they are and how right we are, but by showing them a light that is so lovely that they want with all their hearts to know the source of it."* Perhaps as a Christian myself, L'Engle's reason for writing means that much more to me. I rejoice when fellow believers have the courage to credit their talents to Christ, the giver of all good gifts. *"Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created"* (James 1:17-18).

Reading *Madeleine L'Engle Herself: Reflections on a Writing Life* has edified me as a Christian, and it has encouraged me in two ways: First, to read more of her books to find out if I like her other writings as much as *A Wrinkle in Time*; and second, to try my own hand at writing stories. Because this small, unassuming book has inspired me in these ways, I think it deserves five stars.

Hallie says

A collection of her quotes on a variety of writing-related topics. I personally did not enjoy this - there were some gems, but not a lot compared to the volume of the collection. Many were repetitive, and too many were religion-focused for my taste.

Bethany says

This woman is simply inspiring when it comes to writing and storytelling.

This book has bite-sized clips of her writings, and probably quotes from things she said in writing seminars and conferences and classes.

Madeleine L'Engle is the type of writer that makes you compelled to sit and write, not just wallow in the details and procrastinations of pre-writing.

Amber says

review pending, book club read

Kaseka says

I really liked *Herself!* It takes small, readable chunks (rarely more than a page at a time) from L'Engle's lectures, workshops, and other books, and shows cohesively, through these pieces, L'Engle's viewpoint on writing and faith. I initially got the book from the library, but after typing up passages I wanted to keep for later reference got ridiculous--so much of what I read struck cords in me--I bought a copy and finished the book when it arrived.

Chase organized L'Engle's ideas thoughtfully and well, in ten parts holding overarching ideas, which the short chapters then expand upon in different directions. Given so many sources, I'm especially impressed by Chase's selection and sorting. I also found her inclusion of an index listing the source for each short chapter, from first to last, incredibly helpful and easy to navigate.

Herself is a wonderful journey into the mind of a woman who was both writer and Christian, and who saw both as integral and intertwined parts of her identity. *Herself* articulated many thoughts relating faith and writing that hold true for me, but which I had not yet voiced. This book was a joy and a comfort to read. I'd recommend it to anyone interested in the writing life, or in how spirituality and stories can relate even when the stories being written aren't "religious."

Megan Byrd says

This is a collection of quotes from Madeleine's writings as well as lectures and classes she gave over the years. It is divided into ten sections and talk about writing, reading, and story. It was an encouraging and inspiring read.

Catherine Gillespie says

Because I'm now such a huge Madeleine L'Engle fan, I checked out Madeleine L'Engle *Herself: Reflections on a Writing Life*. However, once I got it home from the library I realized it was not another book by L'Engle, but rather a compilation of quotes taken from her other works. This was a disappointment to me, because while I enjoy quotes, and took a vast number of pages of them down while reading other L'Engle books, I prefer to read her essays in their entirety. When you just get a quote that someone else thought was important, you miss the whole development of the argument, and the quote often loses much of its weight.

{Read my full review here}
