

Novelist and essayist Madeleine L'Engle dies at 88: One of the most banned writers

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Madeleine L'Engle, a best-selling author of children's works that merged the worlds of fantasy, science fiction and spirituality—and in the process raised the ire of some religious conservatives—has died at the age of 88.

L'Engle's death on September 6 in Litchfield, Connecticut, was announced by her publisher, Farrar, Straus & Giroux. She was perhaps best known as the author of *A Wrinkle of Time*, a children's fantasy that has sold some 8 million copies. It has also been the subject of repeated attempts at censorship by public libraries and schools.

While many saw the book as having a deep spiritual message—that the power of love is stronger than the power of hate—some critics termed the book “unchristian” for its depiction of witches and mysterious spiritual elements, making L'Engle one of the most banned writers in the United States, according to some surveys.

In a 2000 interview on PBS's *Religion & Ethics NewsWeekly*, L'Engle said: “You have got to be very careful of banning. What you ban is not going to hurt anybody, usually. But the act of banning is [hurtful].”

A longtime resident of New York City, L'Engle eschewed the description “Christian writer,” telling interviewer Bob Abernethy: “I am a writer. That's it. No adjectives. The first thing is writing. Christianity is secondary.”

She said she believed that religion and science inform each other, with religion being “less accepting than science. Science knows things move and change, and religion doesn't want that,” she said. “So, I am more comfortable with science. At the same time, I am not throwing God out the window.”

L'Engle was a prominent lay Episcopalian who had a strong association with the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in Manhattan, where she served for many years as

the cathedral's librarian and writer-in-residence. She is credited with more than 60 books.

In addition to her well-known fantasy and children's works, L'Engle wrote a number of books for adults that often dealt with religious themes, including *Walking on Water: Reflections on Faith and Art* and *Bright Evening Star: The Mystery of the Incarnation*. -Religion News Service