

walking on water by madeleine l engle

Introduction to "Walking on Water" by Madeleine L'Engle

Walking on Water is a profound and thought-provoking work by the acclaimed author Madeleine L'Engle. Known for her remarkable contributions to literature, particularly in the realm of science fiction and children's literature, L'Engle's "Walking on Water" offers a unique perspective on the intersection of faith, art, and the creative process. First published in 1980, this collection of essays explores the complex relationship between spirituality and artistic expression, making it a significant text for both artists and those interested in the philosophical underpinnings of creativity.

Context and Background

Madeleine L'Engle, best known for her classic novel "A Wrinkle in Time," had a multifaceted career that spanned several decades. Her writing often delves into themes of science, faith, and the human experience. "Walking on Water" is no exception, as it reflects her lifelong exploration of how art and spirituality intersect.

The book is a collection of essays that L'Engle wrote over the years, compiled and organized to provide readers with insight into her thoughts on the role of the artist in society, the nature of creativity, and the importance of faith in the creative process. L'Engle's own experiences as an author, her deep Christian faith, and her understanding of the artistic world inform each essay, making this work both personal and universal.

Thematic Exploration

In "Walking on Water," L'Engle addresses several key themes that resonate with readers from various backgrounds. These themes include:

The Relationship Between Faith and Art

One of the central themes in "Walking on Water" is the relationship between faith and art. L'Engle argues that art is a form of spiritual expression and that creativity is inherently tied to the divine. She believes that artists are called to create as a means of participating in the ongoing act of creation, reflecting God's nature and truth.

- Creativity as a Spiritual Gift: L'Engle emphasizes that creativity is not merely a talent but a gift from God. Artists are seen as vessels through which divine inspiration flows, allowing

them to share deeper truths with the world.

- **Art as a Reflection of Faith:** The essays explore how artists can express their faith through their work, providing a means of communication that transcends words and reaches the hearts of others.

The Artist's Responsibility

L'Engle discusses the responsibility that comes with being an artist. She believes that artists have a unique role in society, one that involves both creating beauty and addressing the challenges of the human experience.

- **Speaking Truth to Power:** Artists are called to confront societal issues and injustices through their work, using their voice to challenge the status quo and inspire change.

- **Creating Community:** L'Engle highlights the importance of community in the artistic process. She believes that artists should engage with their audience, fostering dialogue and connection through their creations.

The Nature of Creativity

L'Engle delves into the nature of creativity itself, exploring how it manifests in the lives of individuals:

- **The Creative Process:** She discusses the often tumultuous journey of creating art, filled with doubt, struggle, and joy. L'Engle encourages artists to embrace the full spectrum of the creative experience.

- **Inspiration and Imagination:** The role of imagination in the creative process is a key focus. L'Engle posits that imagination is a powerful tool that allows artists to envision possibilities beyond the ordinary.

Key Essays in "Walking on Water"

"Walking on Water" features several essays that stand out for their depth and insight. Here are a few notable ones:

1. **The Artist's Way** - In this essay, L'Engle discusses the spiritual journey of the artist, emphasizing that the path is often fraught with challenges but ultimately rewarding.
2. **Faith and Fiction** - Here, she explores the role of faith in storytelling, arguing that fiction can reveal truths about the human condition and the divine.
3. **Living with Questions** - L'Engle encourages readers to embrace uncertainty and doubt as integral parts of the creative journey, rather than obstacles to overcome.

Impact and Legacy

"Walking on Water" has left a lasting impact on both readers and artists alike. L'Engle's insights resonate with those who seek to understand the deeper connections between creativity and faith. Many artists have found inspiration in her words, encouraging them to explore their own beliefs and experiences as they create.

- Influence on Contemporary Artists: L'Engle's perspective has influenced a generation of artists, writers, and creators who grapple with the complexities of faith in their work. Her ability to articulate the spiritual dimensions of creativity has encouraged many to delve deeper into their own artistic practices.

- A Resource for Reflection: The essays in "Walking on Water" serve as a resource for reflection and contemplation. Many educators and spiritual leaders incorporate L'Engle's writings into discussions about art, faith, and the creative process, recognizing the relevance of her ideas in contemporary society.

Conclusion

Madeleine L'Engle's "Walking on Water" remains a powerful exploration of the interplay between faith and art. Through her essays, L'Engle invites readers to consider the spiritual dimensions of creativity, urging them to view their artistic pursuits as a means of connecting with the divine and contributing to the greater narrative of humanity.

In a world where the arts often face challenges and underappreciation, L'Engle's work serves as a reminder of the importance of creativity as a vital expression of faith, truth, and beauty. As we navigate our own journeys as creators and individuals, "Walking on Water" encourages us to embrace our gifts, confront our doubts, and continue exploring the profound mysteries of existence through our art.

Ultimately, L'Engle's message is one of hope and encouragement, a call to action for all who seek to walk on water in their own lives.

Frequently Asked Questions

What are the main themes explored in 'Walking on Water' by Madeleine L'Engle?

The main themes in 'Walking on Water' include the intersection of faith and art, the nature of creativity, and the struggle for spiritual understanding in a modern world.

How does L'Engle incorporate her own experiences into 'Walking on Water'?

L'Engle draws on her personal experiences as an artist and her spiritual journey, using

anecdotes and reflections to illustrate her beliefs about the creative process and its connection to the divine.

What is the significance of the title 'Walking on Water'?

The title 'Walking on Water' symbolizes the idea of faith and trust in the unknown, reflecting how creative individuals often step into uncertainty and challenge the limits of their abilities.

In what ways does L'Engle challenge conventional notions of religion in 'Walking on Water'?

L'Engle challenges conventional notions of religion by advocating for a more personal and experiential understanding of faith, emphasizing that spirituality is not confined to dogma but is found in everyday creativity and relationships.

What impact has 'Walking on Water' had on contemporary discussions about spirituality and creativity?

'Walking on Water' has influenced contemporary discussions by encouraging artists and thinkers to explore the spiritual dimensions of their work, fostering a dialogue about how creativity can be a pathway to deeper understanding and connection with the divine.

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