

From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler Study Guide

**From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler
by E. L. Konigsburg**

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Overview

Anyone who has ever wanted to run away to escape the trials and injustices of family life will identify with Claudia, who chafes under the outrage of a small allowance and the responsibility of being the eldest child in a family with three younger boys. Anyone who likes adventure will admire the thoroughness and resourcefulness with which Claudia Kincaid plans and executes her escape from Greenwich, Connecticut, to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. Anyone who appreciates a mystery will be attracted to the enigma of Angel, which Claudia feels compelled to solve, even though it has baffled the museum experts. In short, for sheer entertainment value, this book has much to recommend it.

But its appeal goes beyond entertainment, for Konigsburg develops believable characters with whom young people can identify. Claudia, like many another bright eleven-year-old, feels unappreciated by her family. Tired of the arguments over television shows, weary of being responsible for her youngest brother, and basically upset because she is growing up on the inside but getting no recognition for it on the outside, Claudia has important reasons for getting away from it all. Her experience in the museum, which ultimately leads to a resolution of her problems, establishes her maturity. She learns about herself, and in her interactions with nine-year-old Jamie, whom she chooses to accompany her, she realizes the value and the pleasure one finds in teamwork, even when the other member of the team is one's brother. In addition to being an interesting and entertaining story, the novel deals with some important issues of growing up, making it a doubly valuable book to read.

About the Author

Elaine Lobl Konigsburg was born on February 10, 1930, in New York City. Her father, Adolph Lobl, a successful businessman, and her mother, Beulah Klein Lobl, provided their daughter a pleasant childhood. Konigsburg attended Carnegie Institute of Technology, now Carnegie-Mellon University, intending to become a chemist. She earned a bachelor of science degree in 1952 and studied chemistry in graduate school at the University of Pittsburgh until 1954, when she married psychologist David Konigsburg. The two eventually settled in Jacksonville, Florida, where, after teaching science for two years in the public schools, Konigsburg settled down to raise her three children, Paul, Laurie, and Ross.

An uninspired scientist, Konigsburg found her true calling once her children had become more or less independent, and she turned to writing children's stories. Her books found a ready audience and received critical acclaim. *Jennifer, Hecate, Macbeth, William McKinley, and Me, Elizabeth*, her first novel, was an honor book in the Book Week Children's Spring Book Festival and a Newbery Honor Book for 1968.

But the greater honor awaited *From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler*, which won the Newbery Medal in 1968 and a William Allen White Award in 1970. Konigsburg also earned an American Library Association Notable Book Award and a nomination for a National Book Award for *A Proud Taste for Scarlet and Miniver*.

It may seem strange that someone who started out to be a scientist should end up as a writer of books for young adults, but Konigsburg describes her transition as a kind of metamorphosis, with science as the caterpillar stage, childrearing as the chrysalis, and writing as the moth she was destined to become all along. Her remarkable sensitivity to young people's thoughts and feelings stems from close observation of her own children; and her books, which sometimes develop patently impossible situations, always have a ring of truth, for the characters are always real people with real motivations.



Plot Summary

Sixth-grader Claudia Kincaid wants to run away, but doesn't want to do it the regular way, where she's running from something; she wants to do it differently, to run to something. And, so, the adventure of Claudia and Jamie Kincaid begins.

Claudia is mad at her parents. In her view, they take her for granted, because as the oldest of four children and the only girl, she's constantly saddled with household chores and babysitting. Frankly, Claudia has had enough; a germ of an idea gives birth to an entire plan on how she will run away, the mode of transportation she'll use, and where she'll be staying on her adventure. She hatches a plan to run away to the Metropolitan Museum of Modern Art in New York City from her home in Greenwich, Connecticut.

The next decision is who to take along as an accomplice. Claudia decides that her nine-year-old brother, Jamie, is the best choice for two reasons; first, he keeps secrets really well and, second, he saves money like no one else. He has the money for both of them to run away in style; \$24.43 that he gathered from his allowance and cheating at cards with his friend Bruce.

Claudia fills him in on the details of her runaway plan and, the next morning, they hide out on their school bus and make their getaway. Claudia appoints Jamie the treasurer of their adventure. They take a train from Greenwich, Connecticut into Grand Central Station in New York City and then walk to the Museum of Modern Art.

For the next week, Jamie and Claudia manage to hide out in the museum. They have a system worked out where, at the beginning and end of each museum day, they hide in bathroom stalls. During the day, they join school groups, get lunch in the snack bar, and even manage to do their laundry in the local laundromat. When Claudia insists that she and Jamie take a bath in the fountain outside the snack bar, coins discovered in the bottom of the fountain provide extra money for meals.

The exhibition of an angel statue purportedly sculpted by Michelangelo, forms the basis of a mystery for Jamie and Claudia to solve. Through careful research at a local library as well as books in the museum gift shop, Jamie and Claudia are convinced that Michelangelo is the sculptor.

Feeling victorious, they write a letter to the Museum office telling them of their discovery, Claudia, anxious to be the hero who solves the mystery. The Museum writes the back to them in care of a P.O. Box they have rented in Grand Central Station thanking them for their information and advising that they are not sure who the sculptor is but they have top experts working on it.

This letter is the thing that deflates Claudia. Jamie is ready to go home but Claudia still wants to find out, definitively, who sculpted the statue. In the New York Times, the children find out that the statue was sold to the Museum at auction by a Mrs. Basil E.



Frankweiler for \$225. So, Claudia decides that the next place to go is the home of Mrs. Frankweiler in Farmington, Connecticut.

Once at the home of Mrs. Frankweiler, the children are given another mystery to solve. Mrs. Frankweiler's office contains an entire wall full of filing cabinets and she puts Jamie and Claudia to the test telling them that she will give them a ride home in exchange for their finding the file on the angel statue. She tells the children that an answer to their mystery is in that file.

It takes almost an hour to find it but eventually Jamie and Claudia are successful in locating the file. What they find in the file - a handwritten note in Italian and a drawing - suggests that Michelangelo was the sculptor, but there still is no definitive proof. Mrs. Frankweiler tells the children that, in exchange for hearing their story about the adventure of running away from Greenwich to New York City, she will bequeath the note and drawing to them in her Will and they will be free to do whatever they'd like with it.

Jamie and Claudia spend the night with Mrs. Frankweiler, each taking a turn at a tape recorder, telling about their adventure. She tells the children that she will put their transcripts in one of the file cabinets which will then join all of her other mysteries. By this time, the children have spoken with their parents and the Kincaids are satisfied that the children are safe. Mrs. Frankweiler's attorney, Saxonberg (the one to whom Mrs. Frankweiler writes the letter which begins this story), is the children's grandfather and has told Mrs. Frankweiler of everyone's worry.

The next morning, Mrs. Frankweiler has her chauffeur, Sheldon, take the children home. On the ride home, Jamie and Claudia decide that they will adopt the childless Mrs. Frankweiler as their grandmother and promise to go see her as often as they can.



Prologue

Prologue Summary

Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler, the 82-year old narrator of this tale, is writing a letter to her attorney, Saxonberg, enclosing her latest file. She decides to send it by way of her chauffeur because she can't stand seeing the stuffy and officious Saxonberg again. The reason she's enclosing this file is to let her lawyer know of the changes she wants him to make to her Last Will and Testament.

Prologue Analysis

This is the first taste the reader gets that there is a narrator other than the protagonist in this story. The narrator sets up the hint of a mystery which whets one's appetite to find out why she wants to change her Will. While the prologue is short, it creates an ominous beginning which starts the tension on the very first page.



Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary

Sixth-grader Claudia Kincaid wants to run away, but not in the traditional fashion. She doesn't want to run away *from* something; rather, to something; and decides that the best way to do this is to enlist the help of one of her three brothers and that turns out to be Jamie, a nine-year-old third -grader. The reason she chooses him is simple: he's the one she can trust the most and he's also the one who saves his allowance money better than anyone else.

The reason for Claudia wanting to run away is that she's feeling unappreciated. She is the eldest of four children and the only girl. All of the household chores seem to fall to her and, quite frankly, she's had enough, so in protest, she decides that she's going to run away until her family appreciates her more.

She has hatched an elaborate plan to run away from Greenwich, Connecticut to New York City including how she and Jamie will transport their clothes. It has been decided that they will run away on Wednesday because that is music day and they each play an instrument. Claudia has instructed Jamie to take his trumpet out of his case and fill it with clothes.

On the bus home from school one day Claudia corners Jamie and tells him of her plan. At first, he's put out at not being able to sit with his friend Bruce, with whom he plays cards on the bus every day. Then he hears about Claudia's plan to run away, and why she chose him, and he's hooked.

She asks him how much money he has saved from his allowance. He hesitates to tell her, but she finally wrestles out of him that he has almost \$25 saved. A fortune! When asked how Jamie came to have all this money, he explains that he and Bruce play cards for money and he beats him each week. Claudia advises Jamie she will write out the full details of her runaway plan and give it to him but he can't show the plan to anyone and once he's read it, he must destroy it.

Chapter 1 Analysis

In this first chapter, readers meet the protagonist, Claudia Kincaid, and her ally, Jamie Kincaid. Further tension is set by the thought of children running away to New York City, and readers must continue on with the story to find out where Jamie and Claudia will go.



Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary

The night, Jamie finds detailed plans underneath his pillow. The next morning, Jamie and Claudia board the school bus as usual and sit together in back, and as the bus pulls to a stop at their school, they hunker down in the last row and wait for everyone to filter off. They are both very uncomfortable in their positions but must try to hide as well as possible in order for their adventure to begin. Once all the kids are off the bus and on their way up to the front door of the school, Herbert the bus driver pulls away and takes the bus to the lot where it will stay until the end of the school day.

Claudia and Jamie know they have to be quiet and stay hidden until Herbert has left the bus. Claudia checks her watch and they wait exactly seven minutes and 45 seconds before looking to make sure the coast is clear, then slowly pick their heads up and look over the back of the seat in front of them to see a deserted bus, and no Herbert nearby.

Claudia hears a rattling sound as they walk down the aisle of the bus. She turns, looks at her brother, and finds that all of his \$24.43 is in change, resulting in both his pockets being so heavy that they're pulling his pants halfway off. During an argument about the change and the compass Jamie has chosen to bring on this adventure, Jamie finds out that they're not going to be hiding out in the woods but will be hiding out in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City.

On their way to the train station, Claudia mails two letters; one to their parents telling them not to call the FBI and the other is for a \$.25 rebate with two box tops from boxes of Corn Flakes cereal. On the train to Manhattan, Jamie tries valiantly to convince his sister to hide out in Central Park but to no avail, and by the time they get into the city, Jamie has convinced himself that the Metropolitan Museum of Art will have plenty of adventure to suit him. Claudia appoints Jamie the treasurer of their adventure leaving him in charge of not only holding all of their money but approving all of the expenses.

Chapter 2 Analysis

Jamie and Claudia have succeeded in putting the first part of Claudia's plan in motion; that is, not being spotted while remaining on the school bus. A turning point occurs when Claudia's plan actually succeeds and the two children make it safely into New York City on the train. Now the adventure is to see whether or not they'll be able to make it to the Museum of Modern Art unscathed.



Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary

After leaving Grand Central Station, Jamie makes his first decision as treasurer. He decides that he and Claudia are going to walk to the Metropolitan Museum of Art even if it is 80 blocks away; Claudia wants to take a taxi or even a bus but Jamie stands firm about saving money. Claudia relents.

Just before entering the Museum, Claudia explains her plan to Jamie; they'll enter the museum through the front door, walk around for a while, exit the Museum through the same front door, and re-enter it through the Children's Museum door in the back. After entering the museum, they must leave their book bags and instrument cases up front, but Jamie keeps his jacket with him in order to muffle the sound of his \$24.43 rattle.

As the day wears on, Jamie and Claudia scout out a good place to hide for the night. Their investigations uncover a plush, 18th century four-poster bed with heavy draperies. Claudia and Jamie hide out in the bathrooms (standing on the toilets so not to be seen) just as the museum closes, and once sure that everyone has left for the evening, they meet in their "bedroom" and get ready for bed. Even though they are both extremely hungry (they only had a couple of snacks from the snack bar during the day), Jamie and Claudia are exhausted after their first day's adventure.

Chapter 3 Analysis

The tension of the last chapter is eased somewhat when Claudia and Jamie successfully walk to the Museum of Modern Art, enter, and implement Claudia's plan to spend the night. However, tension begins to mount again when they are faced with hiding out after the museum closes and trying to stay quiet so as not to arouse the suspicion of the night watchman. Another turning point has occurred at the time Jamie and Claudia stay hidden enough to spend their first night in the museum.



Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary

Claudia and Jamie wake up very early the next morning, the cold museum causing them to dress quickly. In order to stay undetected, Claudia hides her violin case in a sarcophagus and her book bag behind a tapestry screen in a room of French furniture, and Jamie hides his trumpet case inside an urn and his book bag behind a heavy drapery.

The first order of business that morning was to find something to eat. They made their way out of the Museum down to an automat where Jamie allotted each of them ten of Bruce's nickels. They stocked up on peanut butter crackers to eat later that night and hid them in various pockets in their clothes.

Back at the museum, they joined a school group for lunch in the snack bar. Claudia insists that she and Jamie learn something everyday about everything in the museum, and as this was definitely something Jamie didn't want to do, when Claudia gave him first pick of where they'd go first, he chose the Italian Renaissance room, hoping that she would be extremely bored. As they approached the Italian Renaissance room, they saw a huge line waiting to get in, and finally, they came to the exhibit that everyone had lined up to see; an angel statue allegedly sculpted by Michelangelo.

This was an unusual piece of sculpture because the museum had purchased this piece for only \$225 from a local gallery, and if it truly was a Michelangelo, it was going to be worth considerably more than that. While they were in line, Jamie saw a newspaper reporter and photographer and wanted to get his picture taken. Claudia, on the other hand, didn't want their pictures in the paper at all because the last thing she wanted to do was point everyone to their hiding place.

When they got a good look at the angel, Claudia was intrigued; it was beautiful, ethereal, diaphanous, and made entirely of marble. She wondered aloud what was so special about this sculpture and told Jamie that they'd have to buy a New York Times in the morning to find out. Treasurer Jamie dug his heels in and told her that there was no room in the budget for a newspaper.

The next day, they read an article in the New York Times about the angel statue. Apparently, it had been purchased by a gallery from a Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler who lives on an estate in Farmington, Connecticut. This town was not far from Jamie and Claudia's home in Greenwich, and while there was no conclusive proof at this time of the sculptor of the little angel statue, if Michelangelo were the artist, it could be worth more than \$2 million. Also in the New York Times, but missed by Claudia that day, was a small article about two children from Greenwich, Connecticut who had been missing since Wednesday of that week.



Instead of learning everything about the museum, Claudia decides that they should solve the mystery of the sculptor of the little angel statue, and Jamie wanted to start by comparing fingerprints. Claudia thought that was an idea with little merit.

Claudia and Jamie stood in line the next day to look at the angel. The crowds were even larger than they had been the day before which put Jamie off because he couldn't do his fingerprint work on the statue. So together, they decided to do their investigative work at night when they had the museum to themselves. Claudia and Jamie then decided to go and join a class group for lunch and a history lesson.

Chapter 4 Analysis

Now the story has gone from the tension of the adventure in getting to and hiding in the museum to the adventure of solving the mystery of the sculptor's identity. This heightens the tension and brings in the start of the subplot of the angel mystery; it's becoming clear that even though Claudia feels superior to Jamie because she's older, two heads are better than one when it comes to solving a mystery. Readers also now understand how Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler got into the middle of it all.



Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary

Jamie and Claudia had been gone from home for three days and were in need of clean clothes; it was decided that on this day, Saturday, they would go to the laundromat to wash clothes and then to the library to learn about Michelangelo. They then walked to the main branch of New York City library, where once there, they started looking for information about Michelangelo and were sent to the children's library. They didn't find what they were looking for there and were sent to a branch library.

At the second library, they found the sort of books they were looking for; Claudia assigned Jamie the task of looking for pictures of the angel statue while she did the reading. While Claudia had hoped to become an expert in everything Michelangelo, she was dismayed when she discovered that it couldn't be accomplished in one day; and in the late afternoon, they walked back to the museum laden down with clean clothes stuffed in all of their pockets and went to their stations in the appropriate bathrooms to wait for the museum to close.

But this time, the workers who normally left at 5 p.m. stayed on. For Jamie, the wait in the bathroom was interminable and, when he heard several sets of footsteps walk into the bathroom, almost bolted for the door in fear. He overheard two custodians talking about moving the angel statue. Jamie was concerned that Claudia wouldn't know that the museum still had people in it and thought very hard to convey a message to her through mental telepathy. Somehow, it worked because Claudia did not leave the bathroom and was not caught.

They met up in their "bedroom" and Claudia decided that they both needed a bath. The bath was taken in the fountain where the snack bar was located, and while they were bathing, Jamie found loose change on the bottom of the fountain and, together, they were able to collect another \$2.87 to add to their treasury for meals.

Back again in their bedroom and now in their pajamas, Jamie and Claudia both knew that their best investigative work would be tomorrow morning when the museum was closed. As they lay in the darkness, they talked about homesickness, both deciding that they were very well-trained to manage so well on their own, which is why neither one of them felt particularly homesick.

Chapter 5 Analysis

Jamie and Claudia could have easily been caught this time when workers had stayed on to move the angel statue to the Great Hall for Sunday's exhibit, but fortunately, enough time had gone by living in the museum that both kids were using common sense, as well as their senses of hearing. Finding money in the fountain while taking a

bath was a release of tension as Jamie's and Claudia's funds are starting to dwindle; at the same time, the mystery of the angel statue and her sculptor continues.



Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary

The next morning was a Sunday and Jamie and Claudia awoke early. Claudia wondered aloud if they should go to church when they go out for breakfast and Jamie suggested that they go to the little chapel in the museum, the one with stained-glass, to say the Lord's Prayer.

The two children figured that they had plenty of time this morning to take a look at the angel statue and everything that surrounded her. But they were surprised when, only a few minutes after arriving at the statue, they heard footsteps behind them, so they hid until the guard making his rounds left. They then traveled up the stairs to the location where the angel statue had previously been, and approached the pedestal, covered in blue velvet, upon which the statue had sat. And, in the center of it, were three concentric circles with an "M" in the middle of one of them.

At first, Claudia thought that the janitors moving the statue may have placed their beer cans on this velvet but Jamie corrected her; he remembered seeing the symbol that appeared on the velvet in one of the books he'd read in the library the day before. Speculating that the "M" may stand for Michelangelo, Jamie and Claudia decided to hide again until the museum opened and then go to the bookstore to see if Jamie could find the book. Once in the bookstore, they searched for the book, and when Jamie found it, indeed, the symbol of the three concentric circles with an "M" inside one of them was Michelangelo's stone mason's mark.

Over lunch, they discussed how they would advise the museum of their discovery. Jamie wanted to just go to the head of the museum and tell him or her but Claudia decided that it would be a better idea to write a letter asking the Museum head to respond to them at a postal box in Grand Central Station. Once they had received their answer, Jamie and Claudia could reveal the fact that they had been living, undetected, inside the museum for the past week. Jamie was getting anxious to go home but Claudia wasn't ready yet; She wanted to definitively solve the mystery of the angel statue's sculptor.

Chapter 6 Analysis

A mini climax has been reached with the discovery of the stone mason's symbol together with learning that that symbol was Michelangelo's. While there doesn't seem to be as big a mystery looming anymore, there is still more find out about the statue, but tension is starting to heighten with Jamie's desire to go home and Claudia's desire to stay, even if only temporarily. The angel statue is a symbol of the artistry and purity of a time long gone by, and more than that, it is also Jamie and Claudia's salvation, for without its mystery, they would surely have been bored long ago.



Chapter 7

Chapter 7 Summary

The next morning, Jamie and Claudia go out early in order to rent their post box at Grand Central Station and mail their letter to the museum. Renting the post box is a lot more expensive than Jamie was comfortable with (\$4.50 for 3 months) but, in the end, Claudia convinces Jamie that they need to spend the money and then Jamie convinces Claudia that it would be better to deliver the letter in person to the museum; that way they would have an answer faster and save the cost of a stamp.

Once back in the museum, Jamie and Claudia decide to find a messenger for their letter, as having one of them appear in person in the museum office just wouldn't do as they were both concerned that they would be recognized later. So, off they went in search of the appropriate school group and the right delivery person.

They go to the familiar places that school groups frequent; Arms and Armor and the Egyptian room. Upon entering the Egyptian room, they didn't find a school group but heard the sounds of a group beginning to enter. They hid in a partially constructed tomb where they could stay out of sight, and as they waited, sounds of school children filtered into their spot including names of children familiar to Jamie.

Lo and behold, what class should come around the corner into the Egyptian room but Jamie's third-grade class. Even Jamie's best card playing friend, Bruce, was on this field trip. Claudia had to clamp her hand over Jamie's mouth to keep him from talking to his friends which made him angry, until Claudia explained to him that his class being in the museum was a perfect reason for him to deliver the letter to the museum office. He could say he was a member of that school group and had a letter for the head of the museum, so they went down to the museum office, where Jamie delivered the letter successfully.

Chapter 7 Analysis

The tension in the story again ratchets up another notch, when Claudia and Jamie are confronted with the existence of Jamie's class in the museum. But, this time, the release comes fast because Claudia realizes a perfect opening when she sees it. She convinces Jamie to deliver the letter in person to the museum office and even has a ready excuse in case he's asked his name and what his purpose is. At the end of the chapter, the tension rises again in two ways; what did Jamie and Claudia write in their letter and what will the answer be?



Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Summary

After another laundry trip, Jamie and Claudia go to Grand Central Station and their post box. When they arrived, they looked into the little window and saw that there was nothing there for them. Dejected, they strolled down the streets of New York and found themselves in front of the United Nations building.

Claudia and Jamie went into the UN building and decided to go on a tour. Even Jamie the tightwad didn't mind paying \$.50 for a tour of an interesting building. Their guide was a woman from India and Claudia enjoyed watching her walk in her sari; enjoyed it so much that, after the tour, Claudia started walking just like her. Jamie's favorite part was being able to wear headphones and listen to any language he chose.

Returning to Grand Central Station, Jamie and Claudia found a letter in their box. It was a very polite letter thanking them for their interest and suggestion in the clue about Michelangelo; it proceeded to inform them, that the museum was aware of the stone mason's stamp and further that one of three things had occurred; Michelangelo sculpted the angel statue; one of his artisans sculpted it and carved his stamp on it; or it was forgery. The director of public relations for the Museum of Modern Art asked them to let him know if they had any other clues leading to the sculptor's identity.

The courtesy and professionalism of this letter depressed Claudia so much that she burst into tears. Jamie let her cry for a while before trying to find out what was bothering her. She told him that she wanted to be a heroine, wanted to return to Greenwich as someone different than the sixth grader who left. Through her tears, Claudia still continued to correct Jamie's grammar and Jamie suggested that *not* correcting his grammar would send her back to Greenwich a different person. This didn't seem to have the desired effect.

Jamie was ready to go home even though their clothes and instrument cases were still at the museum, but just as he was about to buy two tickets to Greenwich, Claudia said she wanted to go to Farmington, in the hope that Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler would be able to solve the mystery of who sculpted the angel statue.

Chapter 8 Analysis

The true identity of the angel statue's sculptor keeps the story moving forward and now readers will get to meet Mrs. Frankweiler personally instead of through her comments in the narrative. But Claudia's hopes are deflated for two reasons; she has neither uncovered the identity of the sculptor, nor was she the hero of the mystery for the Museum of Modern Art.



Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary

In time, Jamie and Claudia arrive at the home of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler, and are immediately in awe of the scope of her property. The house is large and imposing and Jamie remarks that it looks like another museum. After they pay the driver for the taxi ride, giving the driver a tip as well, Jamie advises Claudia that they are now officially broke.

They ring the bell of the old house and are greeted by Mrs. Frankweiler's butler, Parks. He shows them into the reception hall and requests they wait while he talks with Mrs. Frankweiler. The house is filled with antiques very much like the Museum of Modern Art. After waiting what seems to be a lifetime, Parks returns and escorts Jamie and Claudia to Mrs. Frankweiler's "office."

The office looks nothing like Mrs. Frankweiler's home; it is filled with Formica, steel, and one long wall is lined with nothing but file cabinets. Actually, it looks more like a lab than an office and, in fact, Mrs. Frankweiler is dressed in a medical lab coat when Jamie and Claudia are escorted into her domain. She does not immediately acknowledge their presence at first but, instead, keeps them waiting even more while she completes her "research."

The first question from Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler is whether or not they are the kids that have been missing from Greenwich, Connecticut for the past week. This takes Jamie and Claudia by surprise because they didn't think anyone was worrying about them; especially after Claudia sent her letter to her parents telling them not to worry. In fact, they had grown so used to not being discovered, that Jamie and Claudia had forgotten they had run away from home.

Mrs. Frankweiler advises the children that their disappearance has been a top story in many newspapers around the area and it even made the first page of their hometown newspaper. But he assures them that she is not going to divulge their secret to the police.

When Jamie was asked if Mrs. Frankweiler frightened him, he responded that he was used to frightening things and actually, Mrs. Frankweiler was not all that bad looking. Mrs. Frankweiler wanted to know why Jamie was curious about the Italian Renaissance, and he told her of their fervent need to know about the angel statue and whether or not Michelangelo was its sculptor. Mrs. Frankweiler attempted to learn where the children had been all week but Claudia stood her ground and wouldn't divulge that secret; Claudia's determination, a trait with which Mrs. Frankweiler could identify, and appreciate.



She invited Jamie and Claudia to lunch and suggested that they needed to wash up first. While this exercise took Jamie only a few seconds, Claudia was entranced by the bathroom to which she was taken. It was all black marble including a very deep black marble bath tub, which she just couldn't resist so consequently took the plunge and decided to make use of it, since it would be her only opportunity to do so.

Jamie and Mrs. Frankweiler started eating their lunch, deciding not to wait for Claudia, during the course of which he let slip that Claudia even made them take a bath in a fountain at the Metropolitan Museum of Modern Art. Once said, he knew that he had just let the cat out of the bag and had divulged Claudia's only bargaining chip for information.

Jamie and Mrs. Frankweiler found a common bond; they both like cheating at cards. Jamie told her that it was his one big weakness, that he could be honest about a lot of things but he just not when he played cards. Claudia finally appeared after her bath and was put off by the fact that Mrs. Frankweiler and Jamie had not postponed lunch for her. When she asked what was being served, she was given a very French and elegant sounding name, but to her, it was still just plain old macaroni and cheese. Mrs. Frankweiler laughed and replied that she, after all, is just a plain lady despite her elegant surroundings.

Claudia told Mrs. Frankweiler that she wanted to know whether or not Michelangelo was the sculptor of the angel statue, pleading she needed this information desperately in order to be different when she returned home. She liked the idea of planning the run away and hiding so much that it consumed her. After conquering the hiding conundrum, the angel statue mystery filled their days.

Claudia still had not told Mrs. Frankweiler where she and Jamie had hidden all week, still ignorant of the fact that Jamie had already let the cat out of the bag. Mrs. Frankweiler was curious to know why Claudia was holding onto this secret so hard, and Claudia replied that it was because, if she told Mrs. Frankweiler that piece of information, her adventure would be over. She discovered that Jamie had divulged their secret about the museum to Mrs. Frankweiler when he slid down in his chair to hide.

Mrs. Frankweiler made a deal with Jamie and Claudia; tell her everything that had happened to them on their adventure and she would make sure they had a ride home. But that deal wasn't enough for Claudia—she wanted to know about the statue.

So Mrs. Frankweiler told Jamie and Claudia that the secret of the angel statue rested in a file in one of her file cabinets and they had one hour to find it. Claudia stopped Jamie's frantic and random search for the file and made him spend five minutes with her organizing their thoughts regarding where to look. They used almost the entire hour without finding the file, and with only six minutes left, and Claudia beginning to criticize Jamie's grammar again, it was Jamie who came up with the last clue. One of Jamie's favorite phrases when he's frustrated is "oh, baloney." It was the word baloney that caused Claudia to look under Bologna, Italy in the file cabinet. The right file was there waiting for her.



Claudia took the file from the cabinet, walked over to a counter, and sat down; this was Claudia's Holy Grail. She opened up the file very slowly and saw evidence inside that confirmed, in her mind, Michelangelo as the sculptor of the angel statue. Between two pieces of glass lay a very old piece of paper. On one side were notes written in an elegant hand in Italian, and on the other was a rudimentary drawing of the angel statue.

Mrs. Frankweiler returned to the office and saw what the children had discovered. When questioned about how she came into the possession of this document, Mrs. Frankweiler replied that she won it playing poker in post-WWII Italy. Although she could have donated the document to the museum, she was adamant in her desire not to give away all her secrets. She didn't even like museums.

Mrs. Frankweiler knew that Jamie and Claudia would keep her secret because she was about to make a deal with them; they tell her everything about how they ran away and what they did and she would give them Michelangelo's sketch in her Will. She advised the children that if they revealed the secret prior to her death, she would write them out of the Will and they would lose everything. Mrs. Frankweiler knew that just having a secret was enough to make Claudia feel different and return home triumphant.

She planned to add Jamie and Claudia's adventure to the rest of her other "secrets" locked away in her file cabinets. Elated, Claudia could now carry the secret of angel inside her for as long as she wanted and she also knew something about secrets that she hadn't known before.

Mrs. Frankweiler is satisfied with the results of her own research about the angel statue. She told Claudia and Jamie that she had done a lot of work on the subject and felt comfortable that she had the answer. But there was one thing she was missing; and it was something Jamie and Claudia could give her. She wanted to experience being a mother and that's why she wanted to know all about their adventure.

Chapter 9 Analysis

This chapter is the climax of the book and the pinnacle of the story. Not only is the mystery of the sculptor of the angel statue revealed insofar as it is known, but Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler becomes a flesh and blood character. Mrs. Frankweiler, despite her money, feels poor in her soul due to never having been a parent. At least for this moment, in this chapter, she can live vicariously through Jamie and Claudia and feel what their own parents must have felt when Jamie and Claudia ran away. Her character has been the linchpin to the entire story and she is the closure point in Jamie and Claudia's adventure.



Chapter 10

Chapter 10 Summary

Mrs. Frankweiler has the children stay overnight so they could each relate his or her version of their adventure into a tape recorder. While Claudia dictates her version, Mrs. Frankweiler and Jamie play a game of war. Jamie beats her and wins thirty-four cents. When it came time for Jamie to talk into the tape recorder, Mrs. Frankweiler leads Claudia on a top-to-bottom tour of her house, even letting her pick out in which bedroom she would sleep.

At some point in the evening, Jamie and Claudia's parents call and Mrs. Frankweiler assures them that the children are all right. Early the next morning, Mrs. Frankweiler had her chauffeur, Sheldon, drive the children home to Greenwich in her Rolls-Royce, and upon return submits a written report to Mrs. Frankweiler recounting the events of the trip (Jamie couldn't stop playing with all of the buttons), including Jamie and Claudia's final conversation.

Claudia's theory as to why Mrs. Frankweiler hadn't sold the angel statue for more money was that she thought Mrs. Frankweiler was a woman who loved to have secrets. But having a secret isn't any fun if someone doesn't know you have it. So, Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler sold the statue but not the provenance that came with it in order to retain some mystery. Jamie and Claudia decide to adopt Mrs. Frankweiler as their "grandmother" and promise to go visit her the next time they have saved enough money from their allowances and Jamie's card winnings.

Claudia and Jamie are welcomed home heartily by all of the Kincaid family members. The book ends with a note to Saxonberg by Mrs. Frankweiler to change her Will to bequest Michelangelo's note to Jamie and Claudia. Readers also learn that Saxonberg is Jamie and Claudia's grandfather and has been Mrs. Frankweiler's lawyer for 41 years.

Chapter 10 Analysis

All's well that ends well. Mrs. Frankweiler got her adventure and Jamie and Claudia got a ride home in a Rolls-Royce, and while the tension of the previous chapter has been released, there's still a little surprise in store at the end. Saxonberg, the person to whom Mrs. Frankweiler has written her report and letter about the adventures of Jamie and Claudia Kincaid, is the grandfather of the two children.



Characters

Claudia Kincaid

Claudia is a sixth grader and sick to death of being the only girl in a household of four children. Tired of being the one to whom all of the chores (including babysitting) are assigned, she decides to assert her female independence and run away from home - but she's not completely independent because she takes her little brother with her. She believes that, by running away, she will finally earn some family appreciation and have an adventure in the process.

But Claudia wants to do things differently. She doesn't want to run away *from* something; she wants to run away *to* something. And that something is the Metropolitan Museum of Modern Art. And "different" is the watch word. She doesn't want to be the same when she returns, and hopes this adventure will make her different from everyone else.

While it is typical for just about every child this age to want to run away, they rarely do it with the mathematical and analytical approach Claudia takes; she likes order and schedules, which may be why she chose a museum. She loves learning and is fascinated with the mystery of the sculptor of the angel statue, and in the end, it is the holding of a secret that completes her quest for being different - just like the secret of running away started it.

Jamie Kincaid

Jamie is second to the oldest brother behind Steve and is in the third grade. Claudia chooses him to share her adventure because he, above anyone else, knows how to keep a secret and he's the stingiest with money. He proves to be the perfect foil to Claudia, always challenging her assumptions and making her think more deeply about things.

Jamie is also a typical 9-year-old boy; more interested in having fun than in serious learning. For him, this adventure isn't about proving anything to anyone, but something fun and different to do. He gets caught up in the mystery from the standpoint of collecting and analyzing (in his third grade frame of mind) evidence to prove that Michelangelo sculpted the statue, dying to put to use the detective skills he has gleaned from TV shows.

But he also proves to be a 9 year-old who thinks ahead. The combined funds of Jamie and Claudia would have been depleted at a much faster rate if left up to Claudia. It is he who insists that they save their money and not take expensive taxis and buses, and it is also he who discovers coins at the bottom of the museum fountain during bath time, which adds to their available funds.



Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler

Readers get to know Mrs. Frankweiler not only through her narrative about Claudia and Jamie but through her snide comments about and to her attorney, Saxonberg. She is a woman of money but is childless and, so, takes a great interest in Claudia and Jamie and their mystery.

Mrs. Frankweiler is rich in possessions and objects but poor in the one thing she desires most; family. Her entire world exists in her office - a wall full of file cabinets containing her "research." This work keeps her busy and focused on something other than her loneliness, and when Jamie and Claudia come along, she's thrilled to have the distraction of people with whom to interact, other than her staff.

Readers don't find out about the direct relationship of Saxonberg to the children until the end of the novel. Mrs. Frankweiler's attorney, to whom she writes like a little recalcitrant brother, is Jamie and Claudia's grandfather; and he has involved Mrs. Frankweiler in the mystery of their disappearance long before the children show up at her house.

While Mrs. Frankweiler would not like to outwardly be "adopted" by Jamie and Claudia, she secretly hopes they will return to see her.

Steve Kincaid

Steve Kincaid is the oldest boy and the child next in line behind Claudia. He plays a minor role in the story, showing up only in dialogue between Claudia and Jamie regarding why she doesn't choose him to go with her on her adventure, and in one scene where the Kincaid children are walking home from the school bus stop the day before Jamie and Claudia run away to New York City, Claudia shares with Steve the "responsibility" of keeping an eye on Kevin, the youngest Kincaid.

Kevin Kincaid

Kevin Kincaid is the youngest member of the family and the one for whom everyone must watch out. He has the least amount of household responsibility of the four children but is the greatest burden for Claudia as she gets older.

Mother and Father Kincaid

These two parents are never seen in the story. They are only referred to by Jamie and Claudia, and readers hear from Mrs. Frankweiler at the end, that she has spoken with them. Readers are left to their own imaginations about how these parents would feel with not one missing child, but two.



Bruce

Bruce is a large part of the reason Jamie and Claudia can survive for a week in New York City. It is from Bruce that Jamie has amassed his fortune of \$24.43 - all in coins, and Jamie takes advantage of Bruce's confusion at cards (he can't keep the face cards straight) to cheat him out of money during their daily games of war on the bus to and from school.

Saxonberg

On the surface, it appears that Mrs. Frankweiler is mean to Saxonberg. It is a letter and file to him that is the framework of this tale. E.L. Konigsburg builds sympathy for Saxonberg by interjecting Mrs. Frankweiler's less than complimentary comments about his life and work.

It is also through these comments that Mrs. Frankweiler shows her affection for him. If she truly disliked him and what he stood for, she wouldn't have maintained a 41-year business relationship with him; and it is this relationship that is a key part of her life now that her husband has died.

Sheldon

Sheldon is Mrs. Frankweiler's chauffeur and the person who reports the final conversation between Jamie and Claudia back to her. In the interest of completeness, Mrs. Frankweiler asks for and receives a written report from Sheldon about Jamie and Claudia's ride home. She includes this report with her file and letter to Saxonberg.

Parks

Parks the butler is one of the staff members catering to Mrs. Frankweiler, and is the first person the children meet when they arrive at her home.

Herbert the Bus Driver

It is from Herbert that Jamie and Claudia must hide on the morning of implementing Claudia's run away plan. Readers never meet Herbert face to face but know him only as the bus driver.



Objects/Places

Museum of Modern Art

Also known as MOMA, the Museum is a focal point in New York City for great works of art as well as one that regularly displays priceless works and antiques

Sarcophagus

The resting place, often bejeweled, of Egyptian mummies

Angel Statue

A small, marble statue supposedly sculpted by Michelangelo and purchased by MOMA for a mere \$225.00. It is also the subject of Claudia and Jamie's mystery

Italian Renaissance Room

A room in the museum that houses fifteenth and sixteenth century art

Egyptian Room

A room in the Museum that displays artifacts and jewelry from ancient Egypt

Automat

A place where Jamie and Claudia can buy lunch from vending machines

Laundromat

The place where Jamie and Claudia wash and dry clothes

Library on 42nd Street

The first library Jamie and Claudia go to for research on the angel statue

Donnell Branch Library on 53rd Street

The site where Jamie and Claudia find the most information on Michelangelo



Grand Central Station

The railway station where the children arrive from Greenwich, Connecticut; where they rent a post box for a reply to their letter to the Museum of Modern Art, and from where they travel to Farmington, Connecticut to see Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler

Fountain

Jamie and Claudia take cold baths in this fountain in front of the museum snack bar and find coins on the bottom, giving them more money for meals

Note/Drawing

This document, preserved between two pieces of glass, is purported to be the notes and drawing of the angel statue by Michelangelo; it is owned by Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler

Setting

The story takes place in Connecticut and New York in the mid-1960s. Tired of her responsibilities, eleven-year-old Claudia Kincaid plans an adventure: she will run away and live in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. Her plans involve her nine-year-old brother, Jamie, who is a pennypincher but also a kindred spirit. Both siblings love adventure, and they complement each other well, Claudia being careful about everything except money, and Jamie being careless about everything except money. Together, these two form a team that first manages to invade the museum and then sets out to discover the secret of Angel, a two-foot statue thought to be the work of Michelangelo. Their efforts to prove that the statue is indeed the work of the famous Renaissance artist lead them to make important discoveries about themselves, about each other, and about what it means to be special.



Social Sensitivity

Unlike many adventures, Claudia and Jamie's story involves no struggle between good and evil; no real, threatened, or even potential violence; and no suspense in the usual sense. Nevertheless, many parents may be concerned over some of the actions these two take: running away, stealing coins from the museum fountain, trespassing in the museum, and causing a great deal of pain to their parents. It is important for younger readers to remember that this story presents a kind of childhood fantasy, not a realistic narrative. In fact, many aspects of the story are unrealistic in the extreme: the two children live in the Metropolitan Museum for a week or so, wandering around at night among various exhibits, not to mention splashing about noisily in the restaurant fountain, without setting off an alarm or alerting a guard. Similarly, Claudia's plans work too well. No one ever questions a sixth-grade girl and a third-grade boy on their own in New York City, for example, and the two adventurers manage to rent a post office box in Grand Central Station without having a permanent address or an adult to sign the form. So despite the shady nature of some of Claudia and Jamie's activities, the story is clearly all in fun, and no one could realistically be tempted to treat it as more than a lark.

Literary Qualities

Konigsburg makes the most of her limited number of characters by using a narrative structure that works on several levels at once. First, the narrative that Mrs. Frankweiler sends to her lawyer Saxonberg frames the story. As a commentary from this wealthy, eccentric elderly woman to her counsel, the story develops Mrs. Frankweiler's character, for she learns that loneliness is a high price to pay for eccentricity, on her part, or for stubborn righteousness on Saxonberg's. She teases him about his extreme propriety throughout the narrative, informing the reader both of her feelings for him and of the fact that this story has, after all, ended, for she can tell it to Saxonberg. Thus, although Claudia and Jamie's future remains uncertain, it obviously will be nothing very tragic. Mrs. Frankweiler's tone belies a bad end.

On the level of the story itself, choosing Mrs. Frankweiler as narrator enables Konigsburg to maintain both the objectivity of a third-person narrator and the intimacy of a first-person one. Mrs. Frankweiler can offer an objective perspective since she meets Claudia and Jamie only at the end of the story, but she can also give the reader all the subjective detail of a first-person narration because she demands a complete account from Claudia and Jamie as payment for giving them a ride home.



Themes

Collaboration/Teamwork

From the start of this adventure, to the last page, Claudia Kincaid needed her brother Jamie's help. While Claudia's intent may have started out as mercenary - Jamie is the best saver of money in the family - it quickly became a team effort. Jamie and Claudia had the usual sibling squabbles, Claudia, fond of correcting Jamie's grammar and Jamie likes to correct Claudia's misconceptions.

Claudia devised the run away plan but Jamie helped implement it. For example, when Claudia wanted to take taxis and buses in New York City, Jamie reined her in and saved their funds, and although Claudia was the one who expressed a desire to solve the mystery of who sculpted the angel statue in the Museum of Modern Art, it was Jamie who found a symbol on some velvet that led them to Michelangelo's stone mason's mark. Yet when Jamie wanted to root through every file in Mrs. Frankweiler's file cabinets for the desired file, Claudia pulled him back to think of a more rational way to solve the puzzle.

Neither Jamie nor Claudia could have succeeded at this adventure and mystery alone. It is the collaboration and teamwork that saved the day from the train ride into New York City to the limousine ride home. And it is this adventure that will keep the bond strong between them.

Problem Solving

This theme is intertwined with collaboration and teamwork. Jamie and Claudia are met with problems to solve all along the way; some large, and some small. But together, they are able to face any challenge and make the most of difficult situations.

Part of problem solving is being able to break the problem down into manageable chunks. Jamie and Claudia do this when they hide out on the school bus, when they get to the Museum, and when they research the statue and Michelangelo.

Jamie and Claudia also learn that there can be more than one way to solve a problem and that one solution isn't necessarily wrong if it doesn't work the first time. This is seen in the chapter where Jamie and Claudia go to a library to look for clues to the statue's sculptor. Unable to find what they're looking for in the first library, they go to another branch where they find out more. And, when Jamie notices a symbol in some crushed velvet where the angel statue had been on display, he and Claudia go to the museum gift shop and find the answer they had searched for the day before: Michelangelo's stone mason's symbol.



Alone Against the World

The theme of alone against the world is a subtle but very real theme throughout this novel. It exists most prominently in two characters; Claudia and Mrs. Frankweiler. While some may call it loneliness, the feeling of being alone in the world is different - it exists in people who are rich with friends and family but feel a Don Quixote sense of duty.

Claudia is sure that she's the only one who is put out at home and it is this angst that drives her to want to run away. Many children feel, at one time or another, the need to run away from home but not many will actually execute a written plan the way Claudia did, and most never desire to run away to something or someplace the way Claudia did. Though she had an accomplice in the form of her brother Jamie, she still saw her battle as a singular one; Claudia Kincaid versus The World. And Claudia was out to win. She is determined to return home a different person. The secret she now carries about the likely identity of the angel statue's sculptor is just enough for now.

Mrs. Frankweiler is a different matter. Her isolation exists in the secrets she keeps, and only she is the keeper of answers in her private mystery club, which extends as far as the mystery of the sculptor of the angel statue. She has what could be the determining evidence that Michelangelo sculpted the little statue, purchased by the Museum of Modern Art for \$225. But she hoards this evidence and secret in her own private crusade. Even the future bequest to Claudia and Jamie of the note and drawing lending credence to Michelangelo's identity as sculptor keeps the secret. It would be a betrayal of Mrs. Frankweiler if they were to sell it - even though she has told them that they are free to do anything they'd like with it once she has passed away.

Family

The theme of family is about the family you get versus the family you choose. With the former, it is the clan you are born into and those to whom you are related by blood or marriage. The latter can consist of friends and, often, is the more preferred group.

Claudia and Jamie, being brother and sister, are related by blood, and while they sometimes have heated squabbles (as most brothers and sisters do), they learn things about each other during their adventure that they may never have known. Claudia finds a new appreciation for Jamie as someone who thinks ahead when he has a ready excuse when asked why he isn't in school. She surprises him with the detail of her escape plan and the methodical way in which she attacks problems.

Readers find out in the last chapter that Mrs. Frankweiler's lawyer, Saxonberg, is also related to the children by blood; he is their grandfather. This gives the reader a new appreciation for Saxonberg and a better understanding of how Mrs. Frankweiler came to be involved early on.

The world of an extended family is found in the 41-year business relationship between Mrs. Frankweiler and Saxonberg as well as the burgeoning kinship between Claudia,



Jamie and Mrs. Frankweiler. Although Mrs. Frankweiler makes some unkind comments about Saxonberg, his life, and his taste in everything, she trusts him and feels comfortable enough with him to say what she thinks. He is not only her trusted advisor, he is her friend and she, his. It was to Mrs. Frankweiler that he turned when Jamie and Claudia were missing.

Jamie and Claudia have also found a friend and "grandmother" in Mrs. Frankweiler. She challenges them and doesn't tiptoe around them, saying what she thinks and expecting them to do the same. This is refreshing for Jamie and Claudia, as they probably have never had a grown-up relationship with an adult.



Themes/Characters

Konigsburg works the magic of this story with a very limited set of characters.

In fact, only three are even brought onto the stage for the readers to see. Claudia and Jamie occupy center stage, while Mrs. Frankweiler, the only other major character, acts as the narrator. Although he never actually appears in the story, Claudia and Jamie's grandfather, a lawyer named Saxonberg, is the intended recipient of Mrs. Frankweiler's narrative and the object of her pointed barbs—as well as, perhaps, her affections. None of the other characters—Claudia's parents, other brothers, and schoolmates—function as more than background.

Claudia's adventure springs from one of the major themes of the book. The eldest of four children, the eleven-year-old protagonist is beginning to develop a sense of herself. But when she takes a look at her family situation, she feels that no one recognizes her budding maturity. She still has to do the same old jobs and participate in the same old arguments about which television show to watch. Her high achievements in school, to her way of thinking, are largely unacknowledged.

By running away to the museum and depriving her parents of her services, Claudia intends to prove her value.

When she is gone, they will realize how much she meant to them, how badly they used her, how much she has grown. Although correct in her assessment that she is maturing, Claudia has not by any means learned all she needs to know. In fact, her journey to the museum ultimately shows her that what matters is not so much what others think of her, but what she knows about herself. Jamie and Angel act as the two primary agents who bring her to this realization.

Claudia makes a practical decision when she chooses Jamie as her companion, for he possesses wealth—more than twenty dollars, most of which he has acquired by cheating at the card game of war. Jamie will be the money man, and Claudia the idea person, the planner who will ensure their escape and enable them to enter and live in the Metropolitan Museum. As the story progresses, however, Claudia realizes that Jamie's value goes beyond his money. The two work together to take care of ordinary needs like eating, sleeping, and doing the laundry, tasks that are transformed into adventures by their residence in the museum. Their absolute dependence on one another forces Claudia to realize that family means more than just the arguments over the television and the resentments over babysitting. She begins to find that cooperation can bring pleasure and that being relied on—and relying on someone else—is part of living.

In fact, this cooperation blooms into trust and allows the two to succeed in their quest for the true origins of Angel.



The museum has bought Angel at an auction for only \$225, and if the statue turns out to be Michelangelo's, it will be worth more than \$2,250,000. The money impresses Jamie, but the mystery interests Claudia more.

Together, the two research the statue's origins, but they get nowhere until Claudia decides to go to the source, to Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler, who sold the statue collection. Learning about the statue becomes all-important to Claudia, for she begins to identify with Angel. Both the statue and the girl have a secret, something about them that no one else knows, something that affects their value, their worth.

Claudia's interview with Mrs. Frankweiler makes her realize what she knew all along, that worth is inherent, not external; that is, she and Angel have a certain worth whether others recognize their value or not. Mrs. Frankweiler knows this, for when she sold the statue she possessed documents proving it to be Michelangelo's "lost Cupid." Mrs. Frankweiler knows that the secret itself is worth more than the celebrity that comes with public recognition, and she teaches that lesson to Claudia and Jamie. They become heirs to the secret, but only if they keep the secret long enough to inherit the documentary proof from Mrs. Frankweiler.

So Claudia goes home at last, secure in the knowledge of her own worth as a person and ready to participate in life on a more adult level. More importantly, she has become aware of the real secret inside her, and that knowledge has been worth all the trouble.



Style

Point of View

This novel is told in a multi-level way, much of it being in the third person through the eyes of the narrator, Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler, in the form of a letter to her attorney, Saxonberg. But there is enough dialogue between Jamie and Claudia that the reader feels as though the experiences are occurring first-hand. There is another layer, however, in the narration of Mrs. Frankweiler.

She interjects her viewpoint about how the adventure is going, what the children are experiencing, and what she thinks about pieces in the Museum. Mrs. Frankweiler also comments about Saxonberg's faults and limitations, and this allows readers to form an opinion of her before meeting her in Chapter 9.

The children's adventure is documented in a file, a copy of which is sent to Saxonberg in order to make a change in her Will, and in her own way, Mrs. Frankweiler has documented the reason for this change in order to avoid any future entanglements with her Will. She is a self-sufficient and opinionated woman whose comments throughout the novel remind readers that there's another level of mystery. And that mystery is □who is Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler? In the penultimate chapter, readers meet Mrs. Frankweiler and ultimately learn of Saxonberg's relationship to the children; their grandfather.

Setting

This novel is set in 1960s Connecticut and New York City. It is still a time of relative safety as two children, aged 12 and 9, feel comfortable traveling into New York City alone on a train, walking 80 city blocks to the Museum of Modern Art, and then hiding out there for the better part of a week.

The museum forms the backdrop for the mystery of who sculpted the angel statue. The exhibits are well described and readers can almost smell the mustiness of the Egyptian room and the partial sarcophagus the children hide in. The majority of this book is set in the museum, which is a rich tapestry upon which to paint this tale, therefore readers will experience the museum in two ways: generally as a building and specifically through the exhibits.

The angel statue is a fiction, however, as Michelangelo never sculpted one. The museum pieces mentioned in the novel have been rotated and many are no longer on display, but it's the rich history that E.L. Konigsburg wants to impart and it is that history that comes to the surface both in the museum and Mrs. Frankweiler's house.

While the language used in this novel isn't complicated, some of the museum pieces have names and ideas that are. E.L. Konigsburg has made what could be dry subjects



for children - a museum and history - come alive with the intrigue and mystery of who sculpted the angel statue.

Readers quickly see that Claudia's world and language are vastly different from Jamie's; this difference is all about age and gender. While Claudia is fascinated by the angel because of her beauty, Jamie is interested in proving the sculptor's identity, and he also likes to outsmart the sister who always thinks she's smarter than he . It is the teamwork in solving the mystery that brings two siblings together as a family unit and binds them in a way that can never be broken.

In fact, it is a pet phrase of Jamie's when he's frustrated that helps solve the mystery. Since this is still the 1960s and kids haven't begun to use the four letter words that they do today, Jamie says, "Oh, baloney," when he's frustrated or upset. It is this phrase that turns Claudia to Bologna, Italy as a file drawer heading when they must find the file that holds the clue in Mrs. Frankweiler's office.

Structure

This tale begins in the form of a letter by Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler to her attorney, Saxonberg. It continues on in chapter format but is clearly meant to be a file that she has enclosed with her letter detailing a mystery unveiled by Claudia Kincaid and her younger brother, Jamie.

In each chapter, Mrs. Frankweiler makes comments to Saxonberg which appear in parentheses. In this way, readers will get to know Mrs. Frankweiler even though she doesn't experience the story first-hand; her thoughts about the adventures of Jamie and Claudia as well as her disdain for Saxonberg are evident throughout.

The novel begins with a prologue from Mrs. Frankweiler but it isn't until Chapter 9 that readers meet her face to face. Each chapter has an illustration that blends well with the prose and gives young readers a view of what Jamie, Claudia, and even Mrs. Frankweiler look like. Even some of the museum exhibits are drawn and this lends further interest to the book.



Quotes

"Flattery is as important a machine as the lever, isn't it, Saxonberg? Give it a proper place to rest, and it can move the world." (Chapter 1, page 14)

"I guess I like complications." (Chapter 3, page 35)

"Angels wear clothes and wings and are Christian. Cupids wear bows and arrows; they are naked and pagan." (Chapter 5, page 73)

"Claudia, dear, I'm no angel. Statue or otherwise." (Chapter 5, page 75)

"Rich people have only penny wishes." (Chapter 5, page 84)

"And I didn't run away to come home the same." (Chapter 6, page 98)

"You're quite a kid." (Chapter 8, page 112)

"But we never even used the radio. How can we face them at home? Without the radio and all. With nothing. We've accomplished nothing." (Chapter 8, page 117)

"I want to know how to go back to Greenwich different." (Chapter 8, page 119)

"Jamie, when the stakes are high, I never cheat. I consider myself too important to do that." (Chapter 9, page 148)

"Returning with the secret is what she really wants. Angel had a secret and that made her exciting, important. Secrets are the kind of adventure she needs. Secrets are safe, and they do much to make you different. On the inside where it counts." (Chapter 9, page 150)

"Happiness is excitement that has found a settling down place, but there's always a little corner that keeps flapping around." (Chapter 9, page 151)

"Because after a time having a secret and nobody knowing you have a secret is no fun. And although you don't want others to know what the secret is, you want them to at least know you have one." (Chapter 10, page 158)

"Let's visit her every time we save enough money. We won't tell anyone. We won't stay overnight. We'll just tell Mom and Dad we're going bowling or something, and we'll take a train up instead." (Chapter 10, page 159)

Adaptations

From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler was adapted to the screen in a 1973 movie of the same title.

Later reissued as *The Hideaways*, the film was directed by Fielder Look and stars Sally Prager, Johnny Doran, and Ingrid Bergman as Mrs. Frankweiler.



Topics for Discussion

What is Mrs. Frankweiler's personal mystery to solve?

What is the solution that leads Mrs. Frankweiler to change her Last Will and Testament?
What problems could arise from this change?

What problem-solving strategies could Claudia have used to avoid running away?

Define homesickness and how Jamie and Claudia dealt with it.

When asked why she didn't sell the note or the drawing, Mrs. Frankweiler says she needed the secret more than she needed the money. What does she mean by this?

Why does Claudia want to be "different" when she goes home?

Will Jamie and Claudia sell or donate the note and drawing after Mrs. Frankweiler dies?
If yes, why? If no, why not?

1. Claudia plans to run away because she was "bored with simply being straight-A's Claudia Kincaid. She was tired of arguing about whose turn it was to choose the Sunday night seven-thirty television show, of injustice, and of the monotony of everything." Are these and the other things Claudia complains about—housework, babysitting duties, insufficient allowance, and so forth—enough justification for running away from home?

2. Claudia tells Jamie that she "didn't run away to come home the same." What does she mean? Does she "come home the same"? Why or why not?

3. How realistic is this story? Which events seem believable and which seem unlikely?

4. Claudia chooses Jamie because she feels that they complement each other perfectly: "She was cautious and poor; he was adventurous and rich." Are there other ways in which Jamie and Claudia complement each other? What makes them such a good team?

5. Mrs. Frankweiler knows immediately that Jamie has been cheating at war, the card game he plays with his friend Bruce. How does she know that?

What does her intuition say about the similarities between her and Jamie?

6. Mrs. Frankweiler seems to understand Claudia better than Claudia understands herself. What makes Mrs. Frankweiler so sympathetic towards Claudia?

7. Mrs. Frankweiler goes to quite a bit of trouble and inconvenience to write this account of Claudia and Jamie's experience and to send it to Saxonberg.



Why does she do it?

8. This book really has only three characters in it: Claudia, Jamie, and Mrs. Frankweiler. Why did Konigsburg choose such a small number?

9. What would be the effect on the story if Konigsburg had chosen to show more of Claudia's parents, including their reactions to her running away?

10. This story is set in the late 1960s.

How might it differ if it were set in the present? How would it be the same?

11. Claudia and Jamie have a routine at the museum very much like that they had at home—well-balanced meals, regular bedtime, education, and so forth. To what extent do they run away from home, and to what extent do they take home with them?

12. Considering the pains most museums take with their security systems, how likely is it that Claudia and Jamie could get into the Metropolitan and stay there, undetected, for as long as they do?



Ideas for Reports and Papers

1. Pretend that while Claudia is at Mrs. Frankweiler's house she writes a letter to her parents, explaining to them why she ran away and what she has learned, and asking their forgiveness for the worry she has caused them. What would she say in the letter?

2. Look up the Metropolitan Museum of Art in library books and make a map of Jamie and Claudia's adventures there, using the map that Konigsburg provides as a starting point. This activity can be extended by using a map of Manhattan and tracing their activities through the streets of New York.

3. Jamie and Claudia run away from home, causing their parents to worry; trespass in the museum; and steal coins from the fountain. What, if anything, makes these actions all right? Also, they are never punished for doing these things. Does this demonstrate that the world Konigsburg writes about is different from the real world? How?

4. A rich woman who likes to keep to herself, Mrs. Frankweiler is a secretive person. Why, then, does she agree to see Claudia and Jamie, and what makes her so interested in their adventures?

5. When Claudia returns home, in what way will her life differ from the way it was before she left? How will it be the same? Considering these similarities and differences, was running away worth the trouble?

6. Claudia seems to identify with the statue, Angel. Compare Claudia and Angel and explain why Angel attracts Claudia so strongly.

7. Consider why this story is told the way it is. Why would the author choose to have Mrs. Frankweiler tell the story?

Would Claudia have been a better choice? Would Jamie?

8. Assume that a year has passed since the end of the story and that you are a newspaper reporter who has been assigned the task of finding out what has happened to the people involved in this story. You go out to interview Claudia and her family; Morris, the museum guard; Mrs. Frankweiler; Saxonberg; Sheldon, the chauffeur; and anyone else who might know something of value to you. Write your news story.



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