

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

About the Book...

Claudia knew that she could never pull off the old-fashioned kind of running away...so she decided not to run FROM somewhere, but TO somewhere. And so, after some careful planning, she and her younger brother, Jamie, escaped — right into a mystery that made headlines!

About the Author...

E. L. Konigsburg is the only author to have won the Newbery Medal and be runner-up in the same year. In 1968 *From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler* won the Newbery Medal and *Jennifer, Hecate, Macbeth, William McKinley, and Me, Elizabeth* was named Newbery Honor Book. Almost thirty years later she won the Newbery Medal once again for *The View From Saturday*. She has also written and illustrated three picture books: *Samuel Todd's Book of Great Colors*, *Samuel Todd's Book of Great Inventions*, and *Amy Elizabeth Explores Bloomingdale's*. In 2000 she wrote *Silent to the Bone*, which was named a New York Times Notable Book and an ALA Best Book for Young Adults, among many other honors.

After completing her degree at Carnegie Mellon University, Ms. Konigsburg did graduate work in organic chemistry at the University of Pittsburgh. For several years she taught science at a private girls' school. When the third of her three children started kindergarten, she began to write. She now lives on the beach in North Florida.

Discussion Questions...

1. There are many ways to show humor in a novel. Sometimes the humor is in what the characters do, other times it is in what the characters say. Name some situations in the book that you think are funny. E. L. Konigsburg uses sarcasm to add humor to the story. Find examples of sarcasm in the book. Which character is the most sarcastic?
2. Mrs. Frankweiler tells her lawyer, Mr. Saxonberg, that "Manhattan called for the courage of at least two Kincaids" (page 27). What is courageous about Claudia and Jamie's adventure? How does running away to a city take a different kind of courage than running away to a rural area?
3. Planning is one of Claudia's talents. She also is extremely resourceful. How does being resourceful help the planning process? How is Jamie resourceful? Discuss whether Claudia and Jamie could have survived their week in the museum had they not been resourceful.
4. Mrs. Frankweiler says that before Claudia and Jamie ran away, they only "acted like a team." Their adventure made them "feel like a team" (page 39). At what point in the story do the children become a team? Why is teamwork important to the success of their caper? Discuss Claudia and Jamie's chances of continuing to "feel like a team" once they get home.

5. Describe Claudia and Jamie's relationship. Why does Claudia need Jamie? Claudia is described as being "cautious" and Jamie is said to be "adventurous" (page 17). Find evidence in the novel that supports these descriptions of the children. Ask students to make a list of words that best describe themselves and another list that describes one of their siblings or a close friend. Then, ask them to write a paragraph contrasting their personality with that of their brother or sister or friend.

6. Claudia says that she didn't "run away to come home the same" (page 98). How does the week in the museum change Claudia? What does Mrs. Frankweiler have to do with helping Claudia go home "different on the inside"?