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Book Club Kit Discussion Guide

The Disreputable History of Frankie Landau-Banks
by
Emily Lockhart
(New York: Disney-Hyperion, 2009)

Author:

E. Lockhart is the author of *Dramarama*, *The Boyfriend List*, *Fly on the Wall*, *The Boy Book* and *The Disreputable History of Frankie Landau-Banks*. She once portrayed both Peter Quince and a tree in a drama school production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, wearing an electric-blue unitard. Her theatrical career ended soon after.



In the Q&A at her website she explains that the E. stands for Emily. She uses it on her teen books "because I write other kinds of books using my whole, legal name. My dad calls me E., and I always liked it." [From Bookbrowse.com]

Summary:

Frankie Landau-Banks at age 14: Debate Club. Her father's "bunny rabbit." A mildly geeky girl attending a highly competitive boarding school.

Frankie Landau-Banks at age 15: A knockout figure. A sharp tongue. A chip on her shoulder. And a gorgeous new senior boyfriend: the supremely goofy, word-obsessed Matthew Livingston.

Frankie Landau-Banks. No longer the kind of girl to take "no" for an answer. Especially when "no" means she's excluded from her boyfriend's all-male secret society. Not when her ex-boyfriend shows up in the strangest of places. Not when she knows she's smarter than any of them. When she knows Matthew's lying to her. And when there are so many, many pranks to be done.

Frankie Landau-Banks, at age 16: Possibly a criminal mastermind.

This is the story of how she got that way. [From Bookbrowse.com]

Questions:

1. Frankie undergoes both a physical and an emotional transformation in the book. Why do you think people only recognize one of them? Is it difficult for women who are beautiful to be taken seriously? Why?
2. How does Frankie first meet Alpha? Why doesn't he acknowledge their chance encounter? Matthew, too, has no memory of having met Frankie. How does this make her feel? Would you have handled this situation similarly, or not? Why?
3. Why do you think the author chose a boarding school as the setting for the novel "that patriarchal establishment, the insular, over-privileged life"? How does the setting add to the conflicts and development of Frankie's story? What is the most interesting thing about Alabaster?
4. Discuss Frankie's romance with Porter. Do you think this contributed to what happens with Matthew?
5. Frankie gains not only a boyfriend but a whole posse of charming boys to hang out with, too. Why is this group so much fun for her to hang around with? Why does she find it a bit scary to invest so much of her energy into this group?
6. Frankie learns about the theory of a panopticon in her favorite class. Do you agree with the theory that most people behave because they have this sense of being monitored? Do you think this sense prevails in modern life even more than in previous times? How? Why? Does it influence your own behavior? How?
7. Why do you think secret societies exist at all? What does Frankie learn about the Bassets as the novel progresses? Why do you think she's unable to just let it go?
8. Frankie weighs everything before she says it and considers her options before she speaks. Are you able to do this? Do you wish you could? Do you think most people consider their words before speaking? Are you clever or funny like Frankie? How do people develop wit?
9. Over the course of the novel Frankie seems to get more and more angry about how other people perceive her. She's tired of pretending to be just one thing. Have you ever felt this rage against expectations? What did you do about it? What does Frankie do?
10. Which of the pranks did you find the most compelling? Have you ever been a prankster? What does Frankie learn about herself as she plans and executes the pranks? How does it change everyone's perception of her?

11. Frankie also rails against the unwritten codes of her school, such as who gets to sit at the senior table. What are the unwritten codes and rules at your own school? Has anyone ever tried to defy them? What were the consequences?
12. Describe Frankie's romance with Matthew. Who would you say is in control of the relationship? Why? How does it end between them? Do you think Matthew is justified in his feelings? Do you think he was ever really in love with Frankie to begin with? Why?
13. Frankie wants Matthew to “. . . admire her cleverness, her ambition, her vision. That he would admit her as his equal, or even as his superior, and love her for what she was capable of.” Do you think this is even possible in teen relationships? Is it possible in life? How many marriages that you know operate under this banner?
14. How do the others react when they learn she was the mastermind behind the pranks? Why were they it considered “brilliant” when the Bassets thought Alpha was in charge, but “psychotic” when Frankie is revealed as the perpetrator?
15. In the end, Frankie concludes, “It is better to be alone, than to be with someone who can't see who you are.” Do you agree with her? Do your friends and romantic partners see who you really are or only who they expect and want you to be? What don't you reveal to your friends and family? Do you think men or women share their true selves more with others? Why?

[From Hyperion.com]