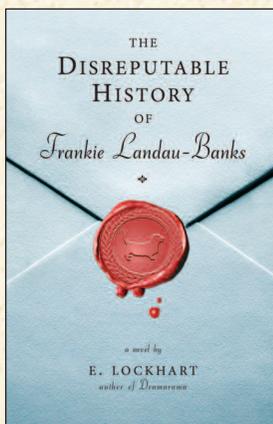
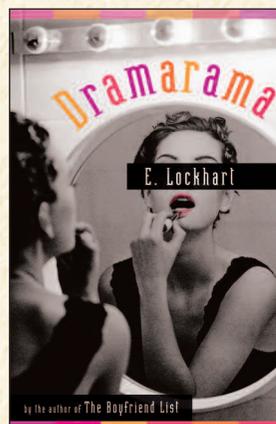


This guide was created by Tracie Vaughn Zimmer, a reading specialist and children's author. Visit her Web site at www.tracievaughnzimmer.com to find hundreds of other guides to children's and young adult literature.

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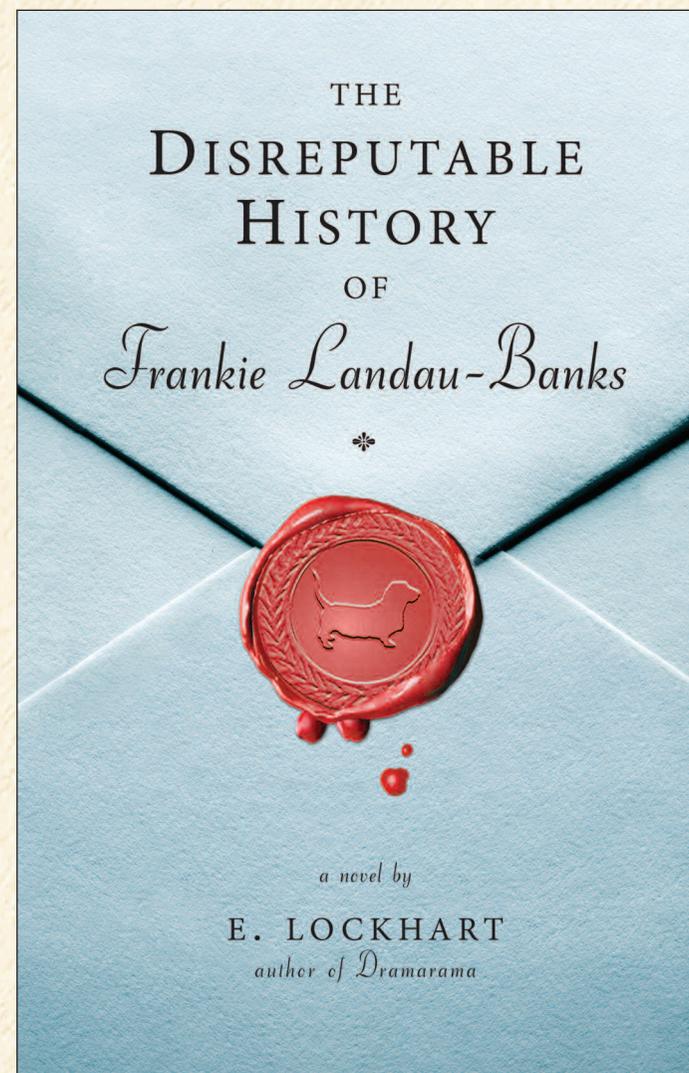
*The Disreputable History of
Frankie Landau-Banks*
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DISCUSSION GUIDE
HYPERION

Frankie Landau-Banks at age 14:

Debate Club.

Her father's "Bunny Rabbit."

A mildly geeky girl attending a highly competitive boarding school.

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.

About this Guide

This guide includes discussion questions intended to provoke thought and insight into the themes of the book, which include school life, feminism, friendship, gender roles, acceptance, humor, and intellectualism.

Pre-reading

Read Frankie's opening letter to the administration. Make predictions about how this letter became necessary.

Discuss what kind of character you think Frankie will be.

Discussion 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, overprivileged 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?



About the Author

E. LOCKHART is the author of *Dramarama*, *The Boyfriend List*, *Fly on the Wall*, and *The Boy Book*. She has never been a member of a secret society. Not that she'd tell you, anyway.

Visit her on the web at www.theboyfriendlist.com.



Author Interview

1 ARE YOU A PRANKSTER? COULD YOU HAVE PULLED OFF FRANKIE'S PRANKS?

I am not and have never been much of a prankster, though in college I was a big sneaker-arounder. (That is not a word, I know, but *The Disreputable History* is partly a book about making up words, so I'm using it anyway. It's my prerogative as an author.)

Okay, back to college. My friends and I snuck into the chapel late at night, got on the roof of the film center (for romance) and the dance studio (for tanning)—and yes, we had parties on the golf course. There was a fair amount of streaking as well! But we weren't engaging in social or institutional critique in any systematic way, the way Frankie is. To write Frankie's pranks I had to do some significant research and really push my imagination.

2 DID YOU, LIKE FRANKIE, STRUGGLE WITH OTHER PEOPLE'S ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT YOUR SKILLS OR ABILITIES?

I certainly did as a teenager and young adult. I think a big part of why I got a doctorate in English literature was that I wanted concrete evidence of my intellectual worth. I often felt that neither my boyfriends nor my professors really saw me as serious, and that my boyfriends didn't see me as equal.

That's not to say I had a whole slew of sexist boyfriends who wanted me to stay home and cook (which I quite enjoy doing, actually) rather than work or study. Not at all: they were nice guys and all for equal opportunity and equal pay. It's to say that they did not really rate me as a contender for the kinds of aspirations they themselves had. They did not seek to learn anything from me, but rather to have me learn from them—to share in their interests. And the professors? One of my professors in grad school used to pat me on the head. That university English department was definitely an Old Boys Club, and it was hard for the women there to break through and succeed.

This feeling of being underestimated was really the start of *The Disreputable History*. I try to begin a book by considering what I am angry about. And I am still angry about that—and angry when it happens to me today. Although it happens much less often. Now I am comfortable enough with my place in the world and my relationships to write comedies instead of dissertations.

3 WHAT'S THE BEST PART OF WRITING FOR YOUNG ADULTS? WHAT'S THE MOST DIFFICULT?

The best part of writing for young adults, in terms of my daily life, is the community of fellow writers. When I have written for adults or very young children, I haven't had a supportive community, but the YA writers in New York convene together for writing days, talk shop, share advice (and horror stories) and generally support one another. Sometimes, we even make dance videos. Much of *The Disreputable History* was written in a coffee shop alongside the three authors who have been my most regular writing companions—Scott Westerfeld, John Green, and Maureen Johnson—and I've learned so much from just seeing their discipline, listening to their jokes, and watching them procrastinate.