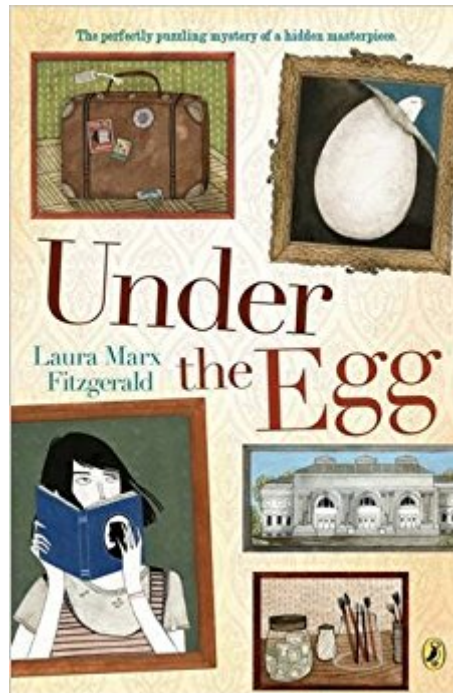




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Under The Egg



Synopsis

From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler meets Chasing Vermeer in this clever middle grade debut When Theodora Tenpenny spills a bottle of rubbing alcohol on her late grandfather's painting, she discovers what seems to be an old Renaissance masterpiece underneath. That's great news for Theo, who's struggling to hang onto her family's two-hundred-year-old townhouse and support her unstable mother on her grandfather's legacy of \$463. There's just one problem: Theo's grandfather was a security guard at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and she worries the painting may be stolen. With the help of some unusual new friends, Theo's search for answers takes her all around Manhattan, and introduces her to a side of the city and her grandfather that she never knew. To solve the mystery, she'll have to abandon her hard-won self-reliance and build a community, one serendipitous friendship at a time. "Uniquely readable, entirely charming, and a pleasure from start to finish. Debuts this good are meant to be discovered." SLJ Fuse 8 Blog "Riveting from start to finish." BookPage

Book Information

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Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 3 - 7

Customer Reviews

Gr 4 Before dying, Jack, Theodora's grandfather, whispers, "There's a

letter "A" And a treasure" hidden "under the egg." After his passing, Theo could certainly use a treasure; her absentminded mother hides herself away on the top floor of their dilapidated Greenwich Village townhouse while the 13-year-old struggles to make ends meet with the \$463 that Jack left. Hanging above the mantelpiece is one of her late grandfather's paintings which depicts a large egg. Could a treasure be hiding underneath? An accident with a bottle of rubbing alcohol reveals an unusual image that sets the teen off on an art history adventure taking her from New York Public Library's Jefferson Market branch to a fancy Upper East Side auction house and to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Along the way, she befriends Bodhi, the jet-setting, paparazzi-hounded daughter of two celebrities; Reverend Cecily from Grace Church; and a punk-rock librarian named Eddie. Fitzgerald gets the Manhattan setting pitch-perfect; from the rich aroma of a roasted nut stand to the hushed hallways of the Met. While the mystery unwinds at an even pace through most of the book, the last few chapters conclude too quickly and readers may be disappointed in the all-too-convenient ending. Still, fans of Blue Balliett's *Chasing Vermeer* (Scholastic, 2004) and Elise Broach's *Masterpiece* (Holt, 2008) will enjoy this art caper.

—Kiera Parrott, School Library Journal

--This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Starred Review Following her grandfather's death, 13-year-old Theo shoulders the responsibility of looking after her mentally unfocused mother and keeping their Greenwich Village household running with no income. When Theo uncovers an old painting, possibly an original Raphael, she hopes to save their home. But is it a Raphael? Why was it hidden under a layer of paint? Was it stolen? By her beloved grandfather?! Theo and her friend Bodhi begin investigations that lead them to a church, an auction house, the public library, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Center for Jewish History, and two Holocaust survivors. Theo's household is vividly portrayed, from her grandfather's creative ingenuity to her mother's tenuous hold on reality. Smart and determined, down-to-earth and insightful, Theo makes an engaging narrator as she follows a winding trail of discovery. Along the way, Fitzgerald includes a good bit of art history, which becomes as interesting as the interplay between the two friends. In the end, the mystery's solution depends a bit too much on adult intervention, coincidence, and even amnesia to be wholly satisfying. Still, it's a riveting narrative. Readers who loved E. L. Konigsburg's *From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler* (1967) and Blue Balliett's *Chasing Vermeer* (2004) won't want to put this one down. Grades 4-7.

--Carolyn Phelan

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It's been a long time since I've sat down and read a book in one day. I was so pleased with this book. It was thoughtful and smart. I taught 8th grade Language Arts for fourteen years and it was always difficult to find novels for that age group that had an age appropriate story line and tone, but also a vocabulary that was challenging and not at all dumbed down. Under the Egg is just about perfect. Yes the ending might be too neat and tidy, but it was also a satisfying surprise. And yes there are loose ends never addressed. I was left still worrying for Theo's mother. But there are also many positive adult role models. I was very happy to see the inclusion of a female Episcopal priest. If I were still in the classroom, I would choose this for a class read. It has a fast paced central mystery and presents a side to the Holocaust that doesn't get the attention it should in the middle school classroom. A great book.

The other reviewer gave so much info about the book so I'll be brief and just say that this is one of my newest favorite books and I cannot wait to recommend it to the students that I work with! I can see this one becoming a 'classic' along with 'From the Mixed up Files of Mrs. basil E. frankwiler'. If you know any 8-12 year olds this would be perfect for them...especially if they like mysteries :)

I read this with my 6th grade daughter who is not that interested in Renaissance painting or mystery novels. It was engaging, relatable, and very interesting. We liked the main character and her new friend. We wondered a lot about what would happen next. This would make a great book club book because there will be a lot of things you can talk about. It made my daughter very interested in Renaissance art, technologies to authenticate art, and WWII history of the Jews. It was a kind story where, in the end, you are left feeling good about humanity in general, despite the challenges and difficulties people have. Strongly recommend for homeschooled kids, too (since one of the character is an unschooled girl).

I was considering getting this book for friends' children and wanted to read it first. Loved it! I had to re-read the first few pages a couple of times to make sure I understood, but after that, I was sucked into the book. Lovely book, lovely characters. Very different from what I remember reading when I was the age of the intended audience. The kids in this book are mature and street smart, not just book smart, and are the type of good people you would hope your own kids would be friends with. I had read a couple of reviews that suggested that there was too much dependence on adults to get to the end, but I didn't find that to be the case unless you live in a world like Peanuts where no adults ever seem to be present. More of a sign that the girls did as much as they possibly could on

their own, knew who and where to go to for help, and did seek out help, just like any person, child or adult, would and should do. They also did their share of helping adults along the way. Fitzgerald's book is straight talk to her audience but also age appropriate. I think that kids will appreciate the way that several "grown up" topics are presented and not babied but addressed straightforward for what they are and were. Fitzgerald is saying to her audience, you are old enough to thoughtfully consider these issues and form your own judgments. Meanwhile, I managed to learn a lot about art history that I knew nothing about, and it was certainly worth the time I spent reading it to walk away with a great storyline, memorable and strong characters, and beautifully worded descriptions. A pleasure to read and I highly recommend. I am back to buy additional copies now for friends.

3-1/2 STARS. Under the Egg is an enjoyable read. As a museum mystery, you could call it a stepchild of From the Mixed Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler, which technically is better written, better plotted and better paced. However, Under the Egg's heroine Theodora, due to her unprivileged life circumstances, is self-reliant, mature and more likeable than Mixed Up File's heroine Claudia, who I felt was a bit of a priss. Theodora's pluck and determination drive the story (for me) in spite of the aforementioned weaknesses. Kids will be entertained by the story and adults won't feel the time spent reading it was wasted.

So glad to have been recommended this book by my young cousin. I plan on ordering a class set to read with y 7th grade classes next school year. It's a good story with interesting characters, great connections to other areas (art, history, family relationships), and a satisfying ending. Especially good for reluctant readers, as it gets right into the action of the story and doesn't stall out at any point.

Purchased this for 12 year old niece who will be taking an art history class this summer. I read it in one sitting and loved it. Extra benefit was the "back story" on WWII. Her great-grandfather was involved in the Liberation of France so the story became personal. Only down-side is the ease and safety that the girls have being alone in the city. I think this book may inspire talks regarding mental health among parents and kids. I am considering adding museum tickets to the gift.

Excellent mystery for middle age students. The story moved along very quickly and yet a young person can keep track of the story. Wonderful history of WWII prisoners and the concentration

camp and life that prisoners dealt with. Book cover says that this book is the author's middle school debut. Excellent writing, easy for the tween to understand and relate to. Looking for more from Laura Marx Fitzgerald (my guess from German heritage herself)

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