

Title: Under the Egg

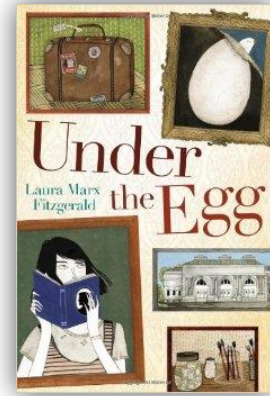
Author: Laura Marx Fitzgerald

Grade Level: 4th Grade

SUMMARY

After the sudden death of her beloved grandfather, a former security guard at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Theodora uncovers what appears to be a Renaissance masterpiece buried under her grandfather's painting of an egg. Was it a stolen painting? To add to her stress, Theodora is juggling the household responsibilities and budget of the home she shares with her mother – with only a few hundred dollars in her pocket.

Will she and her mother be able to survive in the only house she has ever known? Was her grandfather a thief? Will this all be too much for a young girl who seemingly has no one in the world to help her? This modern mystery, full of intrigue, is a perfect read-aloud for families with 4th grade children, as well as an independent read for 4th graders. Your whole family will want more!



QUESTIONS TO TALK ABOUT WHILE READING

VOCABULARY

It's important to make sure that your child has an understanding of key words in the book. Talking about words while reading is a great way for your child to learn new words.

In this book, you might talk about these words:

- illegible (pg. 19)
- eccentric (pg. 39)
- less-discerning (pg. 70)
- idealized (pg. 113)
- sympathetic (pg. 156)
- refugee (pg. 241)

You might use a question like:

Based on the book, what does illegible mean? What other words did the author use (context clues) to help you understand what it means?

KEY IDEAS and THEMES

In addition to words, it's important to talk about key ideas and themes and how they develop over the course of the book. Here are some examples to get you started:

- 1) What is the significance of the title, *Under the Egg*? What does the title mean *literally*? How about figuratively – what does it mean *figuratively*?
- 2) This book is a mystery that focuses on the discovered painting, how it came to be painted over, and why it is now sitting on the mantle in Theodora's house. There are other smaller mysteries found in this story. Ask your child what they are. Why might the



author weave more than one mystery within the plot? Remember to explain where you found your ideas from the text.

- 3) Bird imagery is found throughout the story. Why does the author use this imagery in the text? With your child, you might make a chart to record the imagery found in each chapter. This will help you talk about how birds are used in the book.
- 4) How does the author weave facts into this fictional story? What are these facts? How can you tell the facts from the realistic fictional moments? What is the overall effect of mixing facts with fiction? How does it affect you as a reader?
- 5) On the last page of the book, Jack, Theo's grandfather, writes her one final letter. In it he states, "Now I know you are the one I was waiting for." What do you think this statement means? Why is she the one her grandfather is waiting for? How do you think this final letter represents a main idea from the text?

EXTRA ACTIVITIES

- 1) Enjoy a visit to a local art museum with your family. If available, focus on the collection of Renaissance art. Discuss the style of art from this period and compare it to the descriptions written by author Laura Marx Fitzgerald. Discuss what role you think visiting an art museum could have played in her writing of the story.
- 2) If you do not have an art museum in your area, you can visit many of the art museums online. Google Cultural Institute (you can search for it on Google) curates digital images from hundreds of art collections from around the world. Look up some pieces of art and talk about how the author might have done the same thing. What details do you notice about the artwork? How does this help you understand more of the mystery? To start your thinking, go back to some examples from the book that shows how the author includes information on artwork.
- 3) If you liked *Under the Egg*, check out the Newbery Award-winning *From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler*, another great art mystery that will have your family hooked on mysteries.

