



museum**kids**

THE
"MIXED-UP FILES"
ISSUE

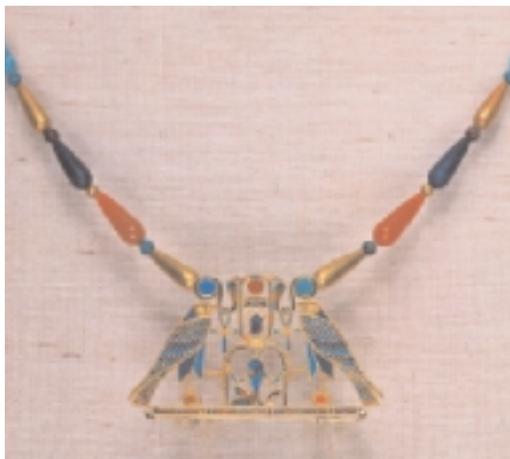
The Metropolitan Museum of Art

A “MIXED-UP” JOURNEY

Here at the Museum, we get questions about all sorts of things. Some of the most frequently asked questions are about the book *From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler*, by E. L. Konigsburg. In fact, we get so many questions about this book that we decided to devote a whole issue of *Museum Kids* to it. The book is about a sister and brother named Claudia and Jamie Kincaid, who run away and camp out in The Metropolitan Museum of Art. You can't, of course, camp out here, but you can have an adventure each time you visit (and at least rest your feet if you get tired).

We took the kids you see in some of these pictures on a journey through the Museum to find out what they liked and what they thought you would like. We came up with objects that are similar to ones that the Kincaids encountered on their trip, but we hope that you'll also enjoy them because they're wonderful works of art.

And if you haven't read the book, don't worry. You can still have a great time when you visit the Museum, no matter when you come or what you see.



See jewelry fit for a princess in the Egyptian galleries.

Pectoral with the Name of Senwosret II
Egyptian, Dynasty 12, reign of Senwosret II, ca. 1897–1878 B.C.
Gold, amethyst, turquoise, feldspar, carnelian, lapis lazuli, and garnet
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund and Henry Walters Gift, 1916 (16.1.3)

Claudia and Jamie spent much of their time in the Egyptian galleries—and so do many of our visitors. These galleries are among the most popular in the whole Museum, especially with kids. When Claudia was in the galleries, she admired some beautiful jewelry that was owned by a princess. The **jewelry of Princess Sit Hathor Yunet** can be found in gallery 8 of the Egyptian galleries. Look at the jewelry in the long glass case. The pectoral, or chest plate, in the middle was worn on a necklace of beads, around the princess's neck, and the amethyst and gold girdle would have been worn like a belt, around her hips. (Neat trick: If you stand in front of the wig, you can see your reflection in the glass, so it almost looks like you're wearing the wig!)



While you're still in the Egyptian galleries, find something else that caught Claudia's fancy. She especially liked a beautiful bronze **sculpture of a cat**, which can be found in the left-hand corridor as you walk back from the Tomb of Perneb at the entrance to the galleries.

Can you guess what this statue was used for? It's actually a coffin and would have held a mummified cat. Cats were the sacred animals of Bastet, goddess of the household, and cat mummies were donated to temples dedicated to the goddess and buried nearby.

Now let's move on to the Charles Engelhard Court in the American Wing. (It's easy to get to from the Egyptian galleries—walk through the Temple of Dendur, down the corridor with all the clocks, and right into the courtyard.) If you've read the book, do you remember where Claudia and Jamie bathed and collected coins? Although the Fountain of the Muses is no longer on display, you can see many other beautiful fountains and pools throughout the Museum. A very pretty fountain can be seen in the Engelhard Court. If you need a rest, this is a good place to sit down and take a break before you continue on your journey.



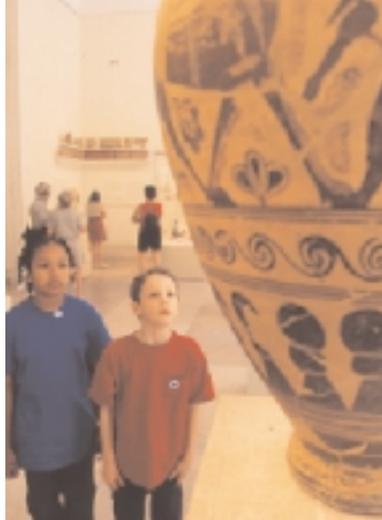
This fancy and beautiful bed was made for the friend of a king.

State Bed
English, ca. 1698
Oak, silk damask
The Metropolitan Museum of Art,
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. William
Randolph Hearst Jr., 1968
(68.217.1)



Find this mysterious feline in the galleries, and gaze upon an object more than 2,000 years old.

Cat
Egyptian, Macedonian (332–305 B.C.) and Ptolemaic (305–330 B.C.) periods
Bronze
The Metropolitan Museum of Art,
Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1956 (56.16.1)



Never forget to look up when you're in the Museum—you never know what you might see.

Neck-Amphora (Storage Jar)
Greek, Attic, second quarter of the 7th century B.C.
Terracotta
The Metropolitan Museum of Art,
Rogers Fund, 1911 (11.210.1)

Speaking of taking a rest, the Kincaids needed a place to sleep while they were here. They chose a very fancy, elegant bed. Once again, that bed isn't on display, but plenty of beds fit for royalty are. In fact, an especially gorgeous one is nearby. Look for the **state bed** hung with blue silk curtains. It was made in England more than three hundred years ago, for Thomas, Baron Coningsby, who was a friend of King William III. (From the Great Hall, walk back until you are in a gallery with "Arts of Northern Europe" written on the wall to your left. Walk to your right, into the Annie Laurie Aitken Galleries. Go past a staircase, and make another right. You can also ask a guard for directions to get there from the Engelhard Court.) If you could design a bed for yourself, would it look like this?

Let's make one final stop on our journey. Claudia and Jamie hid some of their belongings in a huge urn. You can find urns—something like big vases or jars—in many different galleries, especially the Greek galleries. Let's walk over there and find one.

On the first floor, look for a **large storage jar** in The Robert and Renee Belfer Court. (From the Great Hall, walk left, and enter the first gallery to your left after you enter

the Greek and Roman galleries.) One side of this jar shows a Greek myth: Herakles (or Hercules) is grabbing a centaur who has tried to steal his wife. Can you find other kinds of decorations on the jar as well? While you're in these galleries, look at some of the other jars, or vases. Many of them show pictures that tell wonderful stories.

Telling stories is, in fact, one of the things that works of art—like books—do best. Now that you've come to the end of our little journey, you can read how the author of *The Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler* came to write the story in the first place. You'll also find an activity that lets you tell your own story about a special place.

If you've read the book, you probably saw that much has changed since Claudia and Jamie camped out here, but many wonderful works of art can always be seen. Even though we can't invite you to spend the night (and please don't try on your own!), you can still have a great time during regular Museum hours. With approximately three million works of art, you will certainly find objects that you will love, objects that will make you look at the world in a new way, and objects that will make you go home, as Claudia said, "different."

A Note from the Museum Kids Folks

What other objects can you find that resemble those mentioned in the book? What else has changed? What is the same? The space containing the small chapel referred to in the book has undergone a renovation to house part of the new Byzantine galleries. Other changes occur all the time as well, since the Museum is constantly being transformed.

At-Home Activity: Designing Kids

People love to find places and objects that make them feel happy and comfortable, like Claudia and Jamie did in the Museum. Pretend for a minute that you are designing a room that no one knows about but you (well, maybe your best friend). It should be the kind of place that you could escape to, where you would feel happy and safe. Draw a picture of

the place. Show us what would be in it, where you would relax, and what you would do. Write a short story (or a diary entry, a play, anything you like) about something that happens in that space. Drop it off at one of the Information Desks in the Museum, or send it to:

"Mixed-Up" Museum Kids
Education/Student-Teacher Programs
The Metropolitan Museum of Art
1000 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10028-0198

We'll send everyone who sends us something a Museum goodie, so be sure to include your name, age, and address.



Michelangelo Buonarroti
(Italian, 1475–1564)
Studies for the Libyan Sibyl, 1508–1512
Red chalk on paper
The Metropolitan Museum of Art,
Purchase, Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, 1924
(24.197.2)

More on Michelangelo

In the book, Claudia and Jamie spend much of their time trying to figure out if a statue of an angel that is on display in the Museum was created by the great artist Michelangelo. Although the Museum doesn't actually own any sculptures by Michelangelo, it does own a drawing by him called *Studies for the Libyan Sibyl*. He drew it in preparation for painting the Sistine Chapel in Rome. The drawing isn't on view very often because, over time, light will actually darken the paper and you wouldn't be able to see the red chalk that the artist used to draw the picture. The drawing is kept in a black box that keeps out moisture, dust, and air. When the drawing is on display, you can find it in the Drawings and Prints Galleries on the second floor.

Early in his career, Michelangelo did carve a small statue of an angel holding a candelabrum (a large candle holder). It was made for the tomb of Saint Dominic, in the church of San Domenico, in Bologna, Italy, which had been left incomplete by the sculptor Niccolo dell'Arca. But amazingly enough, a mystery involving a possible Michelangelo sculpture does exist.

In the beginning of the twentieth century, a picture of a marble sculpture appeared in an auction catalogue. The figure of a curly-haired boy, the sculpture had been damaged and was missing both its arms and its legs below the knees. It didn't sell, and after the auction in 1902 the sculpture disappeared for many years.

In 1968, the photograph was published again. This time, it was suggested that the work might actually be an Apollo statue by a young Michelangelo. A curator here at the Met saw the 1902 photograph and realized that it was actually a statue that now stands in a mansion on Fifth Avenue—as it turns out, across the street from the Museum. (Today that building houses the Services Culturels of the French Embassy.)

Is the statue really by Michelangelo? Some scholars and art historians say yes—they argue that it shows many of the same techniques used by Michelangelo. Others say no—they feel that there aren't enough similarities at all.

The discussion continues.

A MESSAGE FROM THE AUTHOR

The following is a true account of how I, E. L. Konigsburg, came to write *From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler* and what has happened since.



A discovery in this room in the Museum eventually led E. L. Konigsburg to write *From the Mixed-Up Files*

Room from the Hôtel de Varengeville, 217 Boulevard Saint-Germain, Paris, ca. 1736–1752
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Purchase, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Wrightsman Gift, 1963 (63.228.1)

Two of E. L. Konigsburg's books, *From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler* and *The View From Saturday*, have been honored with the prestigious Newbery Medal, an award given annually by the American Library Association to the most distinguished contribution to literature for children in a given year. Her latest novel, *Silent to the Bone*, was published in October 2000.

The beginnings of the idea for the book started with a piece of popcorn on a blue silk chair.

My three children and I were visiting the Museum, wandering through the period rooms on the first floor when I spotted a single piece of popcorn on the seat of a blue silk chair. There was a velvet rope across the doorway of the room. How had that lonely piece of popcorn arrived on the seat of that blue silk chair? Had someone sneaked in one night—it could not have happened during the day—slipped behind the barrier, sat in that chair, and snacked on popcorn? For a long time after leaving the Museum that day, I thought about that piece of popcorn on the blue silk chair and how it got there.

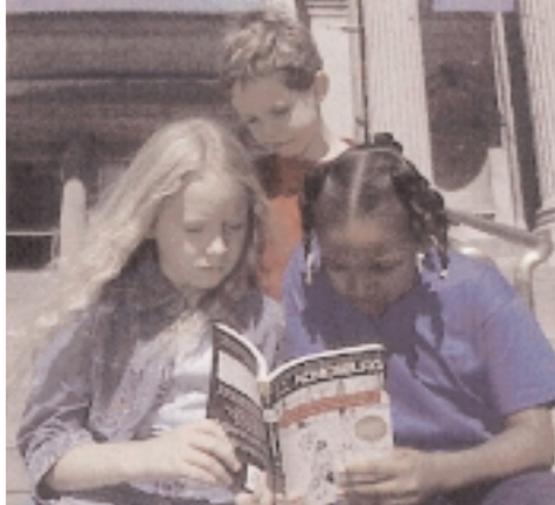
In October of that same year, I read in *The New York Times* that The Metropolitan Museum of Art had purchased at auction a statue for \$225. The statue had come from the estate of Mrs. A. Hamilton Rice (not Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler). The newspaper reported that Museum officials were not certain what they had bought, but they knew they had a bargain.

The following summer, I read *High Wind in Jamaica* by Richard Hughes. It relates the adventures of some children who, while being transported from their island home to England, are captured by pirates. On the open seas in the company of those pirates, the children lose their thin veneer of civilization and become piratical themselves.

Shortly after reading that novel, my family went on vacation to Yellowstone National Park. One day we went on a picnic. After buying salami and bread, chocolate milk and paper cups, paper plates and napkins, and potato chips and pickles, we got into the car and drove and drove but could not find a picnic table. So when we came to a clearing in the woods, I suggested that we eat there. We all crouched slightly above the ground and spread out our meal. Then the complaints began. The chocolate milk was getting warm, and there were ants all over everything, and the sun was melting the icing on the cupcakes. This was hardly roughing it, and yet my small group could think of nothing but the discomfort.

Unlike the children in the novel I had read, my children could never become barbarians even if they were captured by pirates. Civilization was not a veneer to them; it was a crust. If they ever wanted to run away, where would they go? Certainly, they would never consider a place less civilized than their suburban home. They would want all those conveniences plus a few extra dashes of luxury. Probably, they wouldn't consider a place even a smidgen less elegant than The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

That is when I started thinking about hiding in the Museum. They could hide there if they found a way to escape the guards and left no traces—no popcorn on chairs—no traces at all.



The Museum had everything.

How wonderful it would be! Fit for a king! Fit for a queen!

They could sleep in the bed where Amy Robsart died, and if they made the bed in the morning, made it thoroughly and neatly, no one need ever know that they had slept there. It even had a fountain in the restaurant in which they could take a bath.

And while they were there—while they were “insiders” in every sense of the word—they could discover the secret of the mysterious statue that the Museum had bought for \$225. And then, I thought, while away from home, they could also learn a much more important secret: how to be different inside their suburban crust—that is, different on the inside, where it counts.

Once all the parts of the idea crystallized in my mind, my children and I did research. We made many trips to the Museum. Many, many trips. And we took pictures. We were allowed to use a Polaroid camera, but we were not allowed to use a flash. Laurie and Ross posed in front of the various objects that we could get close to. However, they did not take a bath in the fountain. I took pictures of the restaurant fountain and pictures of my children at home and combined them in the drawing.

Since *From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler* was written, the mystery of the bargain statue has been solved. Curators believe that it is a very old cast of a sculpture in Florence, Italy called *The Lady with the Primroses*. It is plaster, not marble. It was not sculpted by Michelangelo.

The state bed, scene of the alleged murder of Amy Robsart, the bed in which Claudia and Jamie slept, has been dismantled and taken away.

The water sprites of the Fountain of the Muses no longer live in the Museum restaurant. They now live out of doors at Brookgreen Gardens in Murrels Inlet, South Carolina. (The directors of Brookgreen do not allow taking baths in their pool any more than do the directors of the Metropolitan Museum.)

The sarcophagus where Claudia hid her clothes is still there and so is the urn where Jamie hid his trumpet. The small chapel where they said their Sunday prayers is closed, but the Egyptian Wing still has its mummy.

The bathroom stations on the first floor are there, and so is the room from the Hôtel de Varengeville. Visit it. Do you see a beautiful blue silk chair? If you do happen to spot a single piece of popcorn on that chair, I, E. L. Konigsburg, want you to know that neither Claudia nor Jamie left it there. For the past thirty-three years that their spirits have been inhabiting The Metropolitan Museum of Art, they have never been that careless. Never!



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The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Education

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