

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## *F L-B Food for Thought*

**Discussion/ Journal Prompts**– *Be sure to support your answers with text examples and full, clear analysis. If a numbered prompt below poses more than one question, be sure to answer all parts fully and with support.*

### **Text Analysis (character, setting, theme)**

1. Do you think Frankie, Matthew, Alpha, and/or Trish are *realistic* teenagers?
2. Is there any evidence that Frankie deserves anyone’s friendship?
3. What does Frankie want? What is (are) her goal(s)?
4. Over the course of the novel Frankie expresses her frustration about how other people perceive her. Is Frankie’s anger justified? Does Frankie ever show who she really is?
5. Who is in control in this book: Frankie, Matthew, or Alpha?
6. Consider the similarities and differences between Alabaster and Strath Haven? Why do you think the author set the book in a private boarding school? How does it help plot, conflicts, or character?

### **Moving beyond Frankie to your personal connections/ values:**

7. Especially with Matthew, Frankie weighs everything before she says it and considers her options before she speaks. Is this a good thing to do? Is Frankie’s behavior “fake” or just being “realistic”?
8. Do females **compete** in the same way that men do?
9. Read the attached information on secret societies. Why do you think secret societies exist? What's the point? Would you join one? Why/ why not? Even if you wouldn't, explain and identify the appeal of secret or exclusionary groups.
10. Frankie mocks the Bassett Hounds and yet seems to want to be accepted by them. Do we often attack people/ groups when there is a danger that we will not be accepted by them? Why?
11. (Before answering this question, read “The Importance of Being Beautiful” by Sidney Katz.) How does a person’s physical appearance (“gorgeous”/ “ordinary”/ “ugly”) affect the attitudes of other people toward that person? Identify and explain the ways physical beauty can help and/or hinder a person. Consider your own experiences, things you have observed from the media, Frankie’s fictional experiences, and the information in the Katz article. Does it matter if the good-looking person is male or female? (Does it help/ hinder one gender more than another?)

12. Frankie complains about 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 school, in your social group, or in American society? Which ones annoy *you*?
13. 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?
14. 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 it is even possible in relationships—friendship or romantic—to love/ like someone for being superior to us?
15. Frankie also is angered by people's expectations. (See prompt #4, above.) How have expectations of your family or your friends affected you? (Identify at least one expectation and explain if it frustrates you or energizes you or at least how it affects you and why.)

## Secret Societies – What Non-Secret Info Exists

As Frankie points out, "secret" societies usually are not *completely* secret, at least in the fact of their existence. What is usually secret are the specific criteria for admission and the goals/ activities of the society. In our country, secret societies range from the benign (college fraternities and sororities) to the heinous (the Ku Klux Klan).

Secret societies have common characteristics aside from simply being at least semi-secret in term of existence. Alan Axelrod, author of the *International Encyclopedia of Secret Societies and Fraternal Orders*, argues that all secret societies are

- ❑ **exclusive** (no one *applies*; membership is by *invitation* of the existing members)
- ❑ inclined to encourage members to "favor their own" (encourage **nepotism**) in all business and personal dealings

David V. Barrett, author of *Secret Societies: From the Ancient and Arcane to the Modern and Clandestine*, also argues that "a further characteristic common to most of them is the **practice of rituals** which non-members are not permitted to observe, or even to know the existence of." Many organizations also require members to take an **oath at membership** to keep all things about the organization secret.

One of the most famous secret college societies is the **Skull and Bones** at Yale University. Membership is said to be based on a person's potential to become a member of the national "power elite." Members (so much for secrecy!) include Former presidents George W. and George H.W. Bush, and John Kerry, the Democratic party's candidate for President in 2004. (If you watch *The Simpsons*, Montgomery Burns is supposed to be a member of Skull and Bones.) Skull and Bones did not admit women until 1991.

Many universities, including Princeton University, have banned secret societies, but, obviously, because secret societies are by definition not public, it is not certain if such bans are completely effective.

**Additional questions:**

A. Frankie learns about the theory of a panopticon. Do you agree with the theory that most people today have *a sense of being monitored*? Do you think this sense makes people behave better? (If this is the case, why aren't the stars of Jersey Shore—who actually are being watched—role models of good behavior?)

**B. Play list: What song would you pick to be a background theme?** The following tunes were hand-picked by the author to accompany her book. Don't pick one of these, but can you think of others?

“Blister in the Sun” by the Violent Femmes

“I Fought the Law” by Green Day

“Polyester Bride” by Liz Phair

“All Hail Me” by Veruca Salt

“Rebel Rebel” by David Bowie