



## ***Under Threat***

Robin Stevenson

Reading level: 4.2

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### **Book Summary**

Franny loves her parents and respects them a great deal for their commitment to women who are in need of an abortion. Equally important, Franny's parents respect her choice to openly express her love for her girlfriend, Leah. However, not everyone in their small community agrees with Franny's and her parents' choices. Leah's brother openly shows his hostility toward Franny, and when Franny tells Leah's brother and mother that her parents perform abortions, the hostility intensifies. Add to that, a stranger calls Franny's home and threatens the safety of her family. Franny's world is coming apart at the seams, and it seems no one can stop the threats and hostility toward Franny and her family.

### **Prereading Idea**

Ask students to research violence against abortion clinics and doctors who perform abortions. In general, who are the protestors? How do the protestors justify their actions? Ask students to form small groups and to find a specific incident on the Internet to share with the class.

### Connecting to the World—Writing and Research Ideas

- With a partner, ask students to create a “poem for two voices” between any two of the characters in the book. Students can use a particular scene in the book or create a conversation that could have taken place. Have students practice and perform their poems for the class.
- Ask students to select one of the major characters and, assuming the voice of that character, to write a letter to the editor of the local newspaper stating his or her reaction to the threats received by Franny’s family. Students should state the reasons for their opinion and offer a possible solution to the problem.
- Abortion is a hot topic in society; most everyone has a strong opinion. Ask students to identify the laws that are in place in at least five countries around the world, and to answer the question, “How do the abortion laws reflect the culture of the country?”

### Connecting to the Text—Elements of the Novel

#### *Character*

Franny’s parents hold values markedly different than those of Leah’s mother. While neither of their views is wrong, chances are that most students hold views similar to one or the other. After investigating the views, ask students to select one parent and to create a biography of that parent using information from the text, including personality traits, past experiences that might have contributed to their values, and the choices they made regarding family and religion. Students can share their biographies with the class.

#### *Conflict*

All of the main characters in *Under Threat* deal with both internal and external conflicts. Ask students to select one character and to create a chart identifying the different conflicts the character faces, the emotional impact on the character, and how the conflicts are resolved. Then, ask students to share their charts with other students who selected the same character.

#### *Theme*

The theme is the main idea of the story; it is not the subject of the work, but, instead, it is an insight about life or human nature. Based on this definition of theme, ask students to write a one-sentence theme for *Under Threat* and to find a quote that exemplifies the theme. Students can go to one of the following websites for quotes:

[www.quotationspage.com](http://www.quotationspage.com)

[www.brainyquote.com](http://www.brainyquote.com)

<http://quotationsbook.com>

Have students write their one sentence theme and quote on 8 ½ x 11 poster board, include an illustration, and display the themes in the classroom.

**Connecting to the Students—Discussion Questions**

1. Why does Franny's father continue performing abortions even though his health is not good? Why is he so committed?
2. What is Franny's biggest fear about her parents performing abortions? Is her fear rational? Why or why not?
3. What was Leah's mother's reaction when Leah told her she is gay? How does Leah's brother, Jake, respond?
4. Why doesn't Leah want to tell her mother that Franny's parents perform abortions? What is her mother's reaction to the news?
5. How does Franny feel about the work her parents do? How does her attitude change after she becomes involved with Leah?
6. What happens that allows Jake to understand why Franny tells the police about his actions? What is his response to Franny?
7. Why does Franny apologize to Jake? How does Franny's apology help heal the hurt between her and Leah?

**Writer's Craft***Foreshadowing*

The author uses foreshadowing in chapter 1 to allow the reader to imagine what could be "starting all over again." Again at the end of chapter 9, when Franny questions Jake's decision to use the term "Baby Killers," she asks herself "What if it isn't just a coincidence?" Ask students to define foreshadowing and to explain the author's purpose in using this device.

**Author Biography**

Former counselor and social worker, **Robin Stevenson** loves to read, write and travel. While she has always loved to write, her publishing career began after her son was born. Ms. Stevenson has since published twelve novels for children and teens. A world traveler, Ms. Stevenson spent a year sailing to the Bahamas and has also lived in Japan, Australia and England. She currently lives in Victoria, British Columbia with her partner and son.