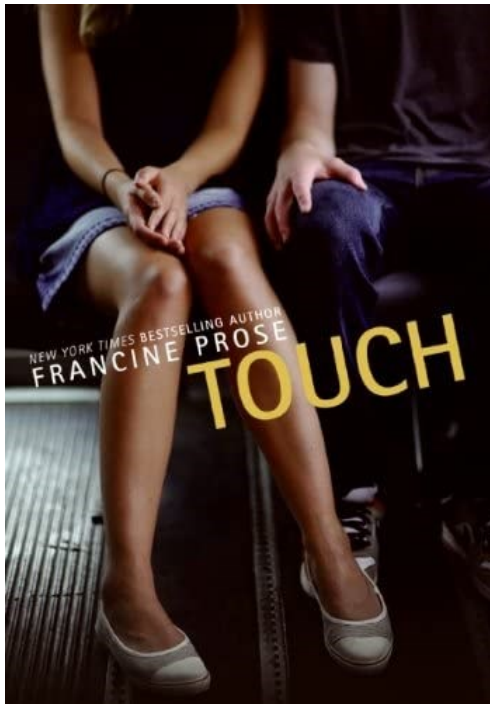


TOUCH



Young Adult

By Francine Prose

ISBN: 978-0-06-137517-0

Book Summary:

A fifth-grade girl learns a lesson about lying when the lies spin out of control about boys touching her breasts.

Summary of Concerns:

Inexplicit sexual activities; inexplicit sexual nudity; and mild/infrequent profanity.

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Teen Guidance
BookLooks Review Rating

Page	Content
1	<p>"Are the boys who assaulted you present in the courtroom?"</p> <p>"Your Honor, I object to counsel's use of the word assault."</p> <p>"Objection sustained."</p> <p>"Are the boys who molested you present in the courtroom?"</p> <p>"Objection. Your Honor. Molested is inflammatory."</p> <p>"Sustained."</p> <p>"Are the boys who touched you inappropriately on the school bus here today in the courtroom?"</p>
4	<p>My three best friends touched my breasts on the back of the school bus. Someone told the principal, and the whole thing kind of blew up. Now my family- my stepmother, Joan, mainly- is suing the school board for denying my right to an equal education. She wanted to charge my friends with sexual harassment or assault and battery or attempt to inflict emotional damage or whatever.</p>
48	<p>I heard, as if from a great distance, Joan yakking on and on about the success she was having with a woman who'd been bingeing and purging for years.</p>
52	<p>I'd gotten a whole new body during my year away. I'd grown breasts and a weird curvy ass.</p> <p>...She said, "Feel free to ask me anything. Maisie." I knew she meant "anything about sex." But if she couldn't even say sex, how could I feel free to ask her about it?</p>
53	<p>Me, on the other hand...I looked in the mirror and turned around, and by the time I turned back, I had these gigantic mega-boobs, the kind movie stars pay fortunes for. I'd gotten them practically overnight, for free.</p>
56	<p>Just before he did, I saw a flash of two blue dots dancing on the chest o a half-naked girl. The guys were watching one of those programs about college kids getting drunk in Mexico or Florida or some other frat-boy vacation hot spot.</p>
58	<p>"Holy shit, you grew up." Chris nodded like a maniac.</p> <p>I knew they were talking about my breasts, though they would never have admitted that.</p> <p>...For the first time in my life, I almost wished that my best friends had been girls. Then the same things would be happening to us all. Breasts, hips, getting our period- it would bring us closer together instead of forcing us apart.</p>
60	<p>They were giving me strange looks, and I wondered if they were thinking that maybe I'd been molested or something.</p> <p>...I read a novel for kids about that: My pervert stepdad groped me.</p>
62	<p>Maisie, their best friend from preschool. Only now their old pal has breasts.</p>
63	<p>Keven said, "Everyone saw them kissing in the hall outside the girl's bathroom."</p> <p>Chris said, "Kissing isn't sex."</p>
67	<p>I was the only girl. Since we seemed to have started thinking that way- who was a girl and who was a by- I figured I might as well take advantage of everything that made me a girl. That is, besides having big boobs.</p>
68	<p>I couldn't see how the boys thought she'd gotten so hot. She still looked chunky and snooty. Her breasts weren't nearly as big as mine.</p>
77	<p>Beef said, "Hey, listen to Little Miss D Cup."</p>

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90	<p>We were all scrunched up against each other, and I guess it must have looked as if we were really making out, our limbs all twisted together in some supertight clinch.</p> <p>...From the way everyone was acting, you'd have thought they'd caught us having sex in the backseat of the bus.</p>
92	<p>"So...are you two, like...hooking up?" Kevin asked me and Shakes.</p> <p>..."Don't lie. Everybody saw the two of you making out in the back of the bus."</p>
94	<p>Nothing was ever the same after Kevin and Chris saw me and Shakes sleeping- or making out or whatever they thought we were doing- on the bus.</p>
97	<p>On the morning when he first brushed my chest- when, for the first time, the tips of his knuckles just lightly grazed the side of my breast- he pretended he'd had a spasm.</p> <p>He said, "I'm sorry, Maisie. Sometimes it's like, I don't know, my hands do what they want without asking me."</p> <p>...I like him touching me. It had felt really good. I knew it was sort of retarded. I mean, lots of kids my age had sex- on TV, and in my school- and here I was going nuts about some guy pretending not to know he was ever so lightly touching one of my boobs. Still, that first time, each of Shake's knuckles felt like separate electric shocks running down through my whole body. We were still pretending it was an accident, that we didn't know what we were doing.</p> <p>The second time, he let his hand linger and slightly rotated his wrist so that now it wasn't his knuckles but rather the base of his palm touching my breast. It still could have been accidental.</p> <p>...That light touch, that brief contact- who knew? And yet that touch, if it was a touch, felt as if it were magically rearranging the molecules, the flow of atoms and particles between his hand and my skin.</p> <p>Pretty soon, there was no way of even pretending that it was accidental. We were kissing and making out for real, and Shakes was touching my breasts. All that time that he and I were making out in the back of the bus.</p>
100	<p>One of her kids had been born handicapped, too, so maybe she secretly liked to see Shakes getting some low-level action.</p> <p>...I was glad to be his friend, and glade we made out on the bus, and glad for how good it felt when he touched my breasts and we stopped pretending it was accidental.</p>
101	<p>A frozen mist rose off the dirty snow, but it was jungly and hot on the bus. Shakes and I dozed off and kissed, dozed off and kissed some more.</p>
108	<p>"I think they wanted to touch my boobs."</p>
109	<p>"And then what happened?"</p> <p>"They looked at each other again. They had it all planned out. Shakes grabbed my wrists and held them down in my lap. Kevin and Chris kind of pawed at my boobs."</p> <p>"Simultaneously?" asks Doctor Atwood.</p> <p>"No. First Kevin, then Chris. I think. Or maybe it was the other way around."</p> <p>"And what were you thinking about while this was happening?"</p> <p>"I was telling myself, 'It's just your breasts. It doesn't mean anything really. It's no</p>

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	different than if they were touching your arm. Go ahead, touch my arm if you want."
116	<p>"Did anyone...touch your breasts?"</p> <p>"Somebody's making it up," I said. "To make me look like a ho."</p> <p>"Why would anyone want to do that?"</p> <p>"Boys are always trying to do that. To spread rumors and tell lies and make girls look like hos."</p>
119	<p>The kids were looking straight at me as they did it. They were sending me a message. Plus, in case I didn't get the point, some really classy guy would shake his pocket and grab between his legs or make believe that he had breasts growing out of his chest, and he'd squeeze his imaginary breasts as if they were those clown balloons that squirt water.</p> <p>One guy hissed at me as I passed him in the hall.</p> <p>"Okay," he said. "How much?"</p> <p>Were the kids saying that I was a whore who had let the other guys touch me for money?</p>
124	I had to remind myself that no one had been hurt or killed, that all these adults had gotten together and were looking tragic just because some guys supposedly touched my breasts on the back of the bus- which I was going to deny, anyway.
128	And at that point I still had the fantasy that if I covered for Shakes and Kevin and Chris, they'd apologize for asking to touch my breasts and would tell me they still cared about me.
130	I said, "You mean the border around my boobs?"
134	Miss Notley said, almost in a whisper, "Apparently, some students have been claiming that after Maisie let the boys touch her, after she basically asked them to touch her, she said that it had felt really good, and she asked if they knew who would pay her to fondle her breasts."
141	<p>I could tell she was being patient until I got to the good part- the part about touching and boobs.</p> <p>"At first I thought they were just kidding around. And I kind of went along, even though it wasn't exactly my favorite subject."</p> <p>"What wasn't your favorite subject?" said Joan.</p> <p>"My breasts and the guys touching them," I said.</p> <p>"Had this gone on before? The boys asking to touch your breasts?"</p> <p>I took a deep breath. If I said yes, it would be the first big lie. They'd only asked that one day.</p> <p>"Yes, they had," I said, and waited for the lightning to strike, or the sky to fall.</p>
143	<p>She let three guys on her bus touch her boobs. And she'll do it again for money.</p> <p>...The voice in my head spoke up again: Maisie asked her friends to find guys- like, customers!- who would pay to grope her!</p> <p>I said, "They all three asked me at once. They all three asked to touch me."</p>
144	"And then suddenly. Shakes pinned down my hands. He kind of leaned into me and held me so I couldn't move. I struggled a little, but I couldn't do anything. I couldn't defend myself or fight back. And the other two kind of pawed and mashed my breasts all the way to school. It hurt."

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145	They did touch my boobs, and I did zone out.
147	It was hard enough for him to accept the fact that I had breasts, let alone breasts that boys would want to touch.
152	"...The parents of a fifth-grade girl, in the South somewhere, brought a case against a fifth-grade boy who'd been...well, actually, he'd been touching her breasts."
154	"Are the boys who molested you present in the courtroom?" ..."Are the boys who touched you inappropriately here today in the courtroom?"
156	I don't look in the mirror as I get dressed. The last thing I want to see is my bare chest, the breasts that caused all this trouble.
167	Bathroom graffiti is sort of like the school newspaper, except that more kids read it than read the school paper, and the only stories that get reported are about which girl is a ho and what couple had sex at which party.
175	It feels weird to be carrying an envelope in which there's a cartoon of me, done by someone who hate me, showing me as a tiny head with stick arms and legs and a giant pair of boobs.
188	Those two things have one thing in common, the one fact that no one's denying. And it's this: Chris and Kevin and Shakes all touched my boobs in the back of the school bus.
189	I can't blame Josh for not answering. On screen, a blond girl is pouring a whole pitcher of beer down the front of her T-shirt. "Weird," Josh says. "I don't get it. I mean, what's the big deal about boobs? Why isn't it sort of the same as letting somebody touch your arm?"
190	My breasts are the newest and tenderest part of me. ...And it hadn't felt the same when Shakes touched my arm as when he touched my breast.
194	It's probably tough for fathers to think about their daughters kissing some guy. Let alone about some guy touching her breasts. Let alone three guys touching her breasts.
208	Joan claps her hand over her mouth and wheels on Josh. I can see her wondering: Does Josh Darling know what a rape is? I want to tell Joan that Darling Josh knows the fine points of how you get a girl to take off her T-shirt in front of two hundred sweaty, screaming frat boys.
224	"...Like I've made the whole thing up just to get attention or maybe because I am some kind of sexually weird hysteric, which mean I probably did ask them to find someone who'd pay to touch my boobs."
233	Human beings were being bought and sold and whipped and separated from their families, and you're worried about riding a bus you haven't been on since some kids touched your boobs?
238	I took a deep breath and say, "You should have thought about that before you told everybody that I asked you if there were guys who would pay to touch my boobs."
242	Maybe it had nothing, or hardly anything, to do with the fact that I have breasts.

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254	<p>I thought, Fine. Who cares? Go ahead and touch my boobs, if that's all this is about.</p> <p>...But if it was all about my breasts, I didn't care about any of it. Let them touch my boobs if that was all they really wanted. Why should I care?</p> <p>...When they asked if they could touch me, I asked for some time to think it over, and then I said, "Okay. Fine. Have fun. Go ahead, touch them as much as you want."</p>

Profanity	Count
Ass	1
Shit	1