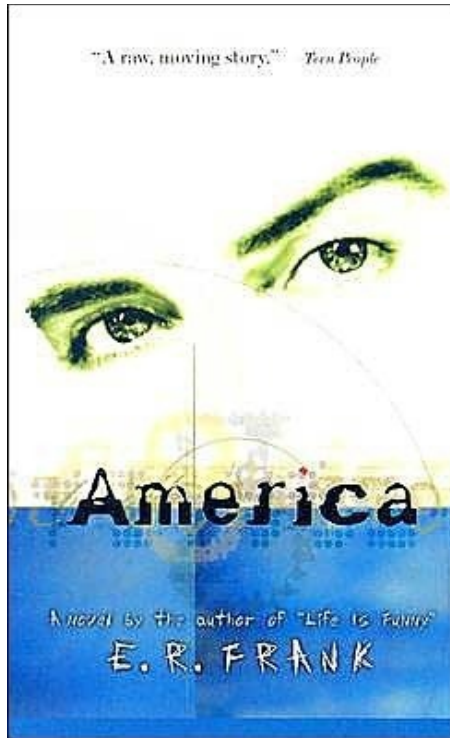


AMERICA



Young Adult

By E.R. Frank

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Book Summary:

After a failed suicide attempt, a young man begins to talk about his turbulent life involving molestation and foster care and other experiences.

Summary of Concerns:

This book contains explicit sexual activities; sexual assault of a minor; sexual nudity; excessive/frequent profanity; derogatory terms; violence; alcohol use involving a minor; alcohol abuse; illegal drug use; hate; references to suicide; controversial religious commentary; and alternate sexualities.

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/5

Minor Restricted
BookLooks Review Rating

Page	Content
2	<p>"Are you planning to kill yourself?"</p> <p>"That's not what I asked."</p> <p>"I know that's not what you asked"</p> <p>..."It's no big secret, doc," I go. "How the hell do you think I got here?"</p>
10	<p>It's got a building for if you're here because a judge made you, and it's got a building for if you're all messed up from drugs. The street kind, not their kind.</p> <p>Me. I was in emergency first, right after I tried to off myself back at Applegate.</p>
15	<p>It goes like this: America got born to a crack addict who didn't want him. Two days after that, America got with a rich white family, only they didn't want him after he started turning his color.</p>
17	<p>"So you're still thinking of killing yourself?"</p> <p>"I don't think, man. I keep telling you."</p>
33	<p>Brooklyn is the baddest seven-year-old you ever knew. Brooklyn smokes regular white cigarettes and watches the naked channel and MTV and the cartoon channel.</p>
44	<p>"What do you think they're on?"</p> <p>"How should I know?"</p> <p>"All right. Cocaine, crack, heroin, marijuana, alcohol, and various pill, tab, and inhalant versions of stimulants, depressants, and hallucinogens."</p>
45	<p>"You talk on the phone and drink beers and all that on the weekends."</p>
62	<p>Browning is fat, and he switched his drink from gin in root beer to regular beer and Jim Beam.</p>
66	<p>He uses other words, too, mixed in with the bad ones. Like our names, and the different names of his drinks. Malt, vodka, gin, beer, wine.</p>
69	<p>He gives me another lighter instead that has a naked lady on it.</p>
74	<p>"Make me some cookies," she says. "M&M chip."</p> <p>"Maybe," I tell her.</p> <p>"Just the green ones. The green ones make you horny."</p> <p>...I wonder what they would think of my naked lady lighter and Liza.</p> <p>...Me and her get into a fight when I start to catch up to her at reading, and she pins me down, but instead of smashing my nose, she kisses my mouth.</p>
75	<p>"I haven't had me any in forever."</p> <p>..."Yeah," I say.</p> <p>He laughs. "You don't even know what I'm talking about," he says.</p> <p>"Yes, I do," I tell him. "You're talking about sex."</p> <p>"What do you know about sex?" he tells me.</p> <p>"I've got a girlfriend," I tell him, thinking about Liza.</p> <p>"Oh, yeah?" he says. "You two getting it on already?" I shrug. I think about her lips on my lips</p>
76	<p>"Kiss me," she says, and she puts her mouth on mine.</p>
78	<p>He hands me a beer. "Try it," he says.</p> <p>...He pulls out his vodka from his special shelf, unscrews the cap, and hands the bottle to me. The little swallow I take burns my throat. I cough. Browning takes a bottle of Coke out of the refrigerator and mixes some of that in a glass with some vodka. "Try that."</p> <p>It mostly tastes like Coke. "That's okay," I say.</p>

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	<p>...He gives me a vodka and Coke every night. After dinner I feel warm and lazy. It's nice. It's relaxing.</p>
84	<p>"Listen," Browning says after he pours me my vodka and Coke.</p>
86	<p>Browning sets a vodka and Coke on the table next to my bed before we get started. "What's that for?" I ask. "A special treat," Browning says. He lights up a cigarette. "Sometimes a man likes to drink before bed." I take a sip. It tastes more like vodka than like Coke. "It's strong," I say. "My point exactly," Browning says. He squeezes in next to me and tosses a magazine in my lap. "No more kiddie reading," he says. "We're over that." He puts his arm around my shoulder and pulls the chain on the lamp next to my bed. There's pictures of naked ladies all over the magazine, and some naked men, too. I think of Brooklyn and his TV channels, and I start to laugh. "What's so funny?" Browning asks. "This is dirty," I tell him. "Now that's a shame," Browning says, inhaling. "It's not dirty. Who said it was dirty?" "Liza," I tell him. "She showed me in the 7-Eleven." "Well, Liza's got it all wrong," Browning says. "These are just pictures of people. And bodies. Nothing wrong with the naked body. You were born naked weren't you?" "I guess," I say. I take another sip of my vodka Coke. "No guessing about it," Browning says. "Every single one of us was born naked. Liza included." "Yeah, but it's sex," I tell Browning. "Nothing wrong with sex, either," Browning says. "Sex is a beautiful thing. Now are you going to be a baby, or are you going to practice your reading?" It's a story about a man who meets a woman at a party. The woman is pretty, and she has sex with a man while the first man watches, and then the first man has sex with the woman, and he likes it. I keep laughing while I'm reading because the story and words are funny and nasty and embarrassing, like the taste of your own breath first thing in the morning. ..."Read regular," he tells me, crushing his cigarette on the side of my glass and smacking the side of my head. He hasn't smacked my head in a long time, so I put my glass on the floor and try to read regular, but it's hard. I can't help laughing. Finally Browning pulls the magazine out of my hand. "I give up," he goes, all disappointed. "You're too young for this." ..."Don't give up," I tell him. "I'm not too young." He shakes his head. "Yeah." He sighs. "Nine years old. I guess you are." "No, I'm not," I tell him.</p>
88	<p>I drink my vodka and Coke every night in bed with Browning, and I get careful not to laugh. All the stories are sex stories, and I learn of new words. ...It's real hard not to picture what people do and how it feels, and it makes me get all warm, the way it is at night, reading the stories with Browning. Plus, it's real hard not to think a lot about Liza and how her body feels when she squeezes me. I try not to think about it, but I can't help it, and sometimes I touch myself the way the stories say people touch, and it feels just as good as in the stories, except sort of dirty, too, even though Browning says it isn't.</p>
98	<p>We don't read stories too much anymore. Sometimes it starts out like that, but mostly Browning just begins by touching. At first, I believe him that it's cool, because it feels real</p>

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	<p>nice. He talks to me soft, and his voice gets low, and he pats me all light, the way a father would take care of his baby, and it feels good. He tells me how what we're doing is a special secret, and how he wouldn't get with just anybody this way, and how he's helping me learn how to be a man, and how I'm such a good learner.</p> <p>The nice part used to make me forget that it's dirty, but lately Browning's stopped talking to me. Lately, he gets quiet and goes far away while it's happening, and even though he looks at my face, he doesn't see me. Then it still feels good in my body, but it feels bad everywhere else, especially when after it's over, he starts snoring without getting into his own bed, and he's real heavy and makes my arm or my leg fall asleep, and he doesn't even say good night.</p>
100	<p>Now he makes me touch him. And other stuff. I tell him I don't want to, but he says you can't start a secret like we have and then stop it. He thinks it's important I learn about it with someone who cares. He's all how I'm ungrateful and selfish to tell him to stop. He tells me he knows I like it, so I may as well stop pretending.</p> <p>I don't know too much else about it, though, because there's this thing you can do. You can make yourself fly up past the ceiling. You can make yourself stay up there, high and far away from everything.</p> <p>...You have to be careful not to look down and see what all's going on, because that's worse than anything and can make an avalanche crush you, but if you stay flying high looking up and out, you can freeze yourself and glide all the way through until the cold gets so cold, you just go numb all over, and it's like you're the last drip of an icicle that never got to drop but just froze instead.</p>
101	<p>"I'm going to kill myself," I tell her.</p>
102	<p>"Why do you want to kill yourself, America?" Mrs. Evans says.</p>
104	<p>He'd poured more vodka into my coke.</p>
107	<p>He says we have to take a nap before dinner. We never take naps.</p> <p>"I'm not tired," I tell him.</p> <p>"Yes, you are," he tells me.</p> <p>...We get into the bed, and I fly right up to Mount Everest. Only this time, something different happens. Something that yanks at me like a rope and pulls me hard, so I'm halfway up and halfway down, stuck, and it hurts. It hurts worse than anything. It hurts worse than Brooklyn and Lyle and the people beating you down all at the same time. It hurts as much as Liza said she would hate me if I kill myself. It hurts, and it won't let me fly up, it pulls me down below with him, and it hurts.</p> <p>Browning doesn't fall asleep after.</p> <p>"We should get dinner going," he says, pulling up his pants.</p> <p>...He points to the chair across from him for me to sit in, so I do. It hurts.</p>
114	<p>America's mother left him twice.</p> <p>...America's mother left him to run all kinds of errands and take all kinds of drugs and have sex with all kinds of men.</p>
120	<p>He hides his books under his bed. Sometimes he has sex in there with his friends.</p>
126	<p>"How much time is he going to do for weed?" the White one asks.</p> <p>"You sold weed?" the Puerto Rican goes. "That's all you did? Sold some weed?"</p>
131	<p>America's mother was a real easy woman. Plus, America's mother was proud she had sex with so many different kinds of people. By the time America's mother gave birth to America, she knew his father could be just about any man in the entire country. She knew America</p>

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	might look like just about any kind of man she ever met. That's how America's mother thought up the name America.
132	Like if he drinks, or if he's some kid crackhead. Like if he got arrested anytime, and if he gets flashes when he's high. Or does drinking a whole lot of beers or Jim Beam, or something, keep his flashes all sealed out?
143	I see them kissing, and then Tom catches them and sends them back to their cottages.
145	"And sometimes it's difficult to trust someone who is of a different ethnicity."
158	"You're stoned," I tell him. "I know," he says. "It was just this little pill."
159	"She's probably sucking him off," Marshall says. Something about that and the fire makes me sweat. It makes my dick move around in my pants. I want to touch it, but my hands are full. I get this feeling that I know, that I hate, that makes me want to be dead.
160	"She couldn't get enough of it, man. She was so hot." "How many times?" ..."Three times," Wick says. "No. Four." "Did you use a condom?" Ernie asks. Everybody looks at him. ..."Well, did you? She could get pregnant if you didn't. Then you'd be a father, and you'd have this baby, and you might have to marry her." ..."How were her tits?" Marshall says. "How do you think?" Wick says. "Man," Marshall says. "That's right," Wick says. "I'm getting a hard-on just thinking about them." ...My dick is hard, only I'm not just seeing Shiri's tits. I'm seeing Wick's dick, too, and I hate myself.
161	BC7 gets a black kid. Some other kid calls him a nigger, and the black kid knocks out three of the first kid's teeth before they get him to the cool down room. ..."The Muppet's right this time," Wick says. "Shoelace isn't black. He's Arab. You know. From camel land."
162	"Eat me," I tell him. I hate lights out now because my dick has a mind of its own and my brain has a mind of its own. My dick gets hard and my brain thinks about tits and dicks, and I don't want to touch it, but then I do, anyway, and then I'm hotter than anything, burning up, and I hate myself and I wish I was dead. "Finally," Wick says, before visiting hours. "Finally what?" Marshall asks. "Shoelace is finally chocking his chicken," Wick says. "His name's America," Ernie mutters. "Whatever," Wick says. "You saw him? Marshall asks. ..."Didn't see him," Wick goes. "Heard him." "When?" Marshall goes. "Last night," Wick goes. "Couldn't you hear his bed? Squeaks like a motherfucker." "Was it good, Shoelace?" Wick asks me. "Did you mess up your sheets?" ..."Shower's the best place," Marshall tells me. "More private. It all goes down the drain. No mess, no fuss. Right, Ernie?"

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	<p>..."Nothing to be ashamed of," Marshall says. "Only means you're a man. Right, Shoelace?"</p> <p>..."Who do you picture, man?" Wick says, "Shiri?"</p> <p>"We know she's off-limits, man," Marshall says to Wick. "Even for jerking off."</p> <p>"You can't put limits on imagination," Ernie goes. Wick and Marshall smack him across the top of the head.</p> <p>"So who are you giving it to?" Wick asks me. He leans in close and grabs his pants. "Who do you picture, man?"</p> <p>Tits and dicks, you son-of-a-bitch motherfucker, I think. I picture tits and dicks, and then I hit him as hard as any goddamn thing I ever hit in my life.</p> <p>I hate the cool down room. I hate the way you can hear people coming from a mile away, so you know you can touch yourself all you want without anybody walking in on you. I hate how it's so boring and quiet that when your dick has a mind of its own and your brain has a mind of its own, all you end up doing in there is grabbing yourself and thinking about tits and dicks until you're too tired to do it anymore and then all you picture is Mrs. Harper turning her back on you, and you hate yourself and want to die.</p>
167	<p>My dick is too tired and my brain is too tired.</p> <p>"He doesn't even jerk off anymore," Wick says.</p>
170	<p>"Then I wake up, and it's dark and way quiet except for Ernie. He's making some messed-up whistling sound, and I've got this hard-on and dicks are flashing through my head. Man hands and a man mouth and a man's body is all over my brain and on my dick and everywhere and I don't want to touch myself because I'm some goddamn motherfucking freak murder and I'm so tired of that feeling good and that feeling bad like some kind of crazy trip Marshall had on some shit he got from the tie man and I just don't want it anymore and if you kill you should die because you're worse than bad and you're bad, anyway, for liking it before it hurt and you take the shoelaces you've been collecting for fucking ever and you think they won't work but then you think they might because there's so damn many and you can braid them together and make you up a rope the way those dudes do in prison, so I take the flashlight off the common shelf and I go quiet behind the cool down room to the tree in that field, and I climb it and work on the rope while the sun comes up, and I work on it fast and good, and figure out the slipknot and how to twist off this branch, and I'm thinking, I'll never see Mrs. Harper again and Liza will hate me worse than she ever hated anything before, but the fuck cares because I won't be around to care and that's the fucking point, and then you want to cry like a mother-fucking baby, but you can't because you can't even breathe, and you think, Real meaning is in the smaller things, and then you're done."</p>
174	<p>"Fuck you straight up the ass."</p>
180	<p>"I know this kid who used to jerk off all the time."</p> <p>"Hmm."</p> <p>"What, hmm? I just told you I know this kid who used to jerk off all the time."</p> <p>..."People masturbate. It's natural. I'm not sure what you're getting at."</p> <p>"Yeah, well. The way this kid did it, it wasn't anything natural."</p> <p>..."What was unnatural about it?"</p> <p>"What he thought about, man. You wouldn't believe the shit he thought about."</p> <p>..."Dicks. Dicks and tits. At the same time."</p> <p>..."He's a fag, right?"</p> <p>..."What do you mean you don't know? He thought about dicks, man!"</p> <p>"People think about all kinds of things while they masturbate. It doesn't necessarily define</p>

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	<p>their sexual identity.” “He’s a fag, man. I’m telling you.” ...”What if he is gay? What does that mean, exactly?” “That shit is wrong.” “Being gay is wrong?” “Faggots.” ...”You say this boy thought about girls, too?” “Yup.” “Maybe this boy is confused about what arouses him. Maybe sometimes something about boys arouses him, and other times something about girls does.” “Can you stop with that arouse shit?” I go. “That word creeps me out, man.” ...”Sometimes when kids have had sexual experiences while they were still very young, it affects what turns them on. And that’s confusing and upsetting for them. Maybe if you ever talked to this kid again, you could let him know that you heard it’s okay to have different kinds of things that turn him on. As long s nobody is engaging in sexual activity with a child or forcing sexual activity on anyone else and as long as nobody’s getting hurt, it’s okay. It’s okay to think different things and it’s okay to do different things.”</p>
182	<p>“He was an alcoholic?” ...”I hate that shit.” “What?” “Alcohol.” “Hmm.” “Browning used to give it to me.” “Your uncle.” “He used to tell me it helped me relax.” “Did it?” “It make you all warm.” “How did you feel about that?” “I liked it at first. Just like I liked the other stuff.” “He made you feel special.” “Whatever.” “You were a little boy, and all kids need to feel special, and he made you feel special.” “Whatever.” “It’s okay for kids to like things that make them feel special.” “Time up?” “It’s not okay for adults to break the rules.”</p>
183	<p>Tell Wick Shiri was over here sucking everybody off al over the place.</p>
189	<p>“God,” I say after a while, “God can kiss my ass.” ...He’s smoking a blunt. “Where’d you get that?” I go. “Why? You want some?” “I thought you were getting clean over there in J building.” “I am. Haven’t had a drink in four months, three days, twelve hours, and forty-two minutes.”</p>
190	<p>“You tripping?” He says it, holding all that weed in. ...He walks away with that blunt, and the fountain comes on real strong, real fast and</p>

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	unexpected, the water gushing up from all those little places, and Brooklyn jumps, and I laugh at his back, because why did he show up if we ain't shit?
192	She steps up real close to me and kisses my mouth. She presses up against me, and she has tits now, and they're soft. She lets me put my hands on them, and it feels good. She doesn't hate me, and she is soft and good. My shorts are wet. There weren't any dicks. There was just Liza.
193	We're on the whale, and Liza's hot, and nice and good, and then she lets me get in her pants, and she's got a dick, and at first it's cool, it's normal, and it's hot, and then real quick she turns into Browning and the whale starts diving under water, and I'm drowning, and then Browning turns back into Liza with a dick, and it's good again and she hugs me real nice, the way a mother would, and it's all okay, and it doesn't matter. My shorts are wet. It was Liza and a dick. Man. That is some weird shit.
196	"Where's your blunt?" I ask him. ... I'm on the whale, and Browning's there, with a baseball, and we're throwing, and it's slippery on the whale's back; and we're throwing, and the ball turns into a dick, and it's safe, and it's good, and he's smiling, and the dick gets bigger, and then it's not safe, but it's hot, but it's bad and not safe, but it's hot, and my dick is hard, and then he stops smiling, and the dick gets bigger, and then his face turns into Liza's, and she's smiling, and then it turns into Dr. B's, and he's not smiling, but he's safe, and the dick gets smaller, and my dick gets smaller, and then the face turns into Liza's, and she's got a dick, and it's hot, and I want to fuck her with the dick and all, and then she turns into Dr. B., and he's reading Ernie's letter, and he reads, I know you're a good person, and then he turns into Liza without a dick, and it's not hot, and I don't want to fuck, and she's hugging me, and then we're not on the whale, but we're at Everest, and it's cold and clean and white and bright, and Liza and Dr. B. and Ernie and Brooklyn and Ty and Fish are all there and they're smiling, and it's safe, and it's good, and they're pointing at some shit, and it's Mrs. Harper in an ice wheelchair, and she's smiling and she's going, America America.
199	"Couple of beers. A blunt."
200	"So why do you do it?" "Make you get away from shit." He says it mumbled, the way you have to when you've got a fresh-lit smoke in your mouth, and you don't want it getting wet with your spit, and shit. "Huh?" "You high, you fly, you in the sky." That cigarette moves up and down the way they do. ...You can float up with your brain, or you can go find stupid Laura Ingalls, or smoke a blunt or drink beers, but somehow, you have to go far for a while.
214	He's at the desk, checking out porn on-line. ...He thought I was going to say I'd tell Phillip about the porn. I can tell because he starts closing out his windows. ...When I get there, he's grinning, and when he passes by me on the way back to porn, he grabs his dick.
215	"You know what they say about guys with big hands, right?" she goes, and then she laughs, and we walk around and around and around until it gets dark, and we can hear Phillip yelling, "Ten minutes to curfew!"
220	I kiss her for a while, and she kisses back. It's not a dream this time, and when I get my hands in her pants, there's no dick, either.

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225	Was he drunk or high, or something, so his hand went weak?
226	I'm real careful to knock her to the side where she can't smush any plants, but then I get her down under me, and she lets us for a while. I like the way she's so round and soft and tastes like a leaf. I like how she lets me touch her all everywhere. ..."I don't think we should be fooling around." ..."Huh?" I go. Then I crawl up closer to her and pull her back down. She lets me kiss her again for a minute, and then she pulls away. ...I kiss her again and she lets me again. Then she pushes me away. My dick is going crazy.
237	Me and Liza always end up fooling around after messing with the vegetable garden, and she always lets me get pretty far and then starts with all that bull bout how it's going to mess up if we keep on.

Profanity/Derogatory Term	Count
Ass	37
Bitch	6
Dick	16
Fag/Faggot	3
Fuck	68
Goddamn	17
Nigger	1
Piss	9
Pussy	11
Shit	106
Tit	7