



Touch

Francine Prose

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What *really* happened at the back of the bus?

Did they, or didn't they?

Did she, or didn't she?

Something happened to fourteen-year-old Maisie Willard—something involving her three friends, all boys. But their stories don't match, and the rumors spin out of control. Then other people get involved . . . the school, the parents, the lawyers. The incident at the back of the bus becomes the center of Maisie's life and the talk of the school, and, horribly, it becomes *news*. With just a few words and a touch, the kids and their community are changed forever.

From nationally acclaimed author Francine Prose comes an unforgettable story about the difficulties of telling the truth, the consequences of lying, and the most dangerous twist of all—the possibility that you yourself will come to believe something that you know isn't true.

Touch Details

Date : Published June 16th 2009 by HarperTeen (first published June 1st 2009)

ISBN : 9780061375170

Author : Francine Prose

Format : Hardcover 272 pages

Genre : Young Adult, High School, Teen, Fiction, Realistic Fiction

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From Reader Review Touch for online ebook

Katie says

Touch is a story about freshman Maisie who growing up has been friends with three boys Chris, Kevin and Shakes. They have been friends since diapers. Things change when Maisie moves to live with her mom, and comes back her freshman year. She grew up and the boys do not know how to handle the change. One morning, things take a turn on their friendship. Something happens on the bus that causes the friendships to be questioned and tested. Maisie struggles with what really happened and what she wanted others to hear. She deals with the torments of classmates and her own friends. She also tries to struggle with the personal gain of her own family members.

I enjoyed Touch. Sometimes you read so many different young adult books that it's nice to read a young adult story that touches on a difficult subject. You see how things in Maisie's world got turned upside down and how she struggled to come with the truth. Some points in the novel I wanted to throw something at kids in her school because of how cruel they were. Such a sad truth that teens act this way at times. I wanted to strangle Maisie's step mom. She was on her own crusade in making history with Maisie's case when Maisie just wanted things to go away and she can go back to her life.

I like that Maisie did get closure that she needed with Shakes. She realized what they had become and that things will never return to how they once were, but things were said that made their friendship close on a good note.

It was a quick read, but enjoyable.

Karen says

I read this book to see if it is appropriate to place on the shelf in a MS library. I think so, but some colleagues are reading it too so I will get other opinions. Another good read for middle school kids and how puberty, divorce, step-parents, and the media can affect teens lives.

Jackie says

Four friends...friends since preschool see their lives and relationship disintegrate as they reach their teens. Kevin, Chris, Shakes (Edward), and Maisie are dealing with hormonal angst when they start high school. Shakes and Maisie draw closer than friendship dictates and their relationship takes on a new level. Whether spurred on by jealousy, hormones, or peers, Chris and Kevin assault Maisie on the bus. They are enamored with her 'big boobs' as Maisie calls them, and they ask to touch them. Assuming that Shakes will come to her defense or at the very least that they are kidding her, she asks for 'a moment to think about it'. But, Shakes lets her down, and the groping begins. As with any traumatic experience... descriptions, timetables, and truth gets stretched or hazy. The versions of all the participants do not mesh. Of course, the incident gets back to the principal through the tattle-tale lips of Daria (Chris's girl friend). It becomes a classic tale of he-said, she-said, with seemingly non-caring lawyers and therapists licking their lips with potential fireworks in the

courtroom.

When Joan, Maisie's step-mom gets involved, it becomes a legal circus of sorts and meanwhile Maisie is shunned, avoided, and ostracized by her classmates. No one wants to come near her with a ten foot pole. She's lost everything...her friends, her Dad (as he is avoiding talking to her), but especially her special bond and friendship with Shakes.

The ending makes my back bristle and I am appalled by it. I am not sure that the scenario that truly played out was the right one for the story. This is a lot to talk about and think about in this book about self-acceptance and self-esteem.

Sierra says

This book was a very difficult one to get through emotionally. It's certainly not a happy contemporary. I really liked the way it was written. I enjoyed this book for the most part, but I'm not a fan of how it ended. First of all, Maisie didn't really get a happy ending, which sucks. Also, I don't like the fact that Shakes and Kevin completely left. I mean, I know it made things easier for her and everything. But it's one thing to just stop being friends, but it's a whole other thing when they completely leave where you are, because no matter how obvious it seems that the friendship is over, that's the real sign that nothing will ever be the same again. And I'm really sad that their friendship ended the way it did. People who have been friends for so long should treat each other better in the first place, and they should be able to get through anything together, including growing up. And I'm really sad for Maisie and Shakes, because I feel like they could have had something really special. So I don't want to say that I liked this book, because there was too much sadness for that, but I did enjoy reading it.

Madeline says

I must be getting tired of YA literature, because this one just didn't do it for me. Or maybe I'm still recovering from the emotional slap in the face that was Speak. Either way, I just wasn't a fan.

It was mostly the main character - although unreliable narrators can be good in a story, I didn't feel that way about Maisie. She didn't just lie to the other characters in the book, she lied to the reader. She gives us her account of an event, spends the story vehemently insisting that it's true, and then at the end is like, "Nope, here's how it really went down." I realize that this was done on purpose, what with the book's repeating "what happened and what didn't, nature of truth etc etc" theme, but it was still annoying. And, I'll be honest: Maisie was kind of a bitch. She's mean to everyone, especially her stepmom Joan, who according to Maisie is a self-centered idiot who is evil personified. Had the story been told by someone other than a petulant teenager, we probably would have gotten to see Joan as she really was - a slightly dim but well-meaning individual who genuinely wants the best for her stepdaughter. But since Maisie's telling the story, Joan gets referred to repeatedly as "the Wicked Witch" and is constantly mocked for everything she says and does. I started feeling sorrier for her than I did for Maisie, and wished Joan would just haul off and smack Maisie in her smart mouth. I mean, for God's sake, she baked Maisie a cake and the girl's response is literally, "Cool. Can I go now?"

The other characters aren't much better. The core relationship, the one that sets up the story, is this lifelong

friendship Maisie's had with three boys: Shakes, Chris, and Kevin. Shakes gets the majority of the attention, by which I mean he gets to be two-dimensional on occasion. Chris and Kevin are barely even people - they're more like cardboard cutouts that the other characters have to be careful not to knock over. Know how much personality they get? One is classified by Maisie as "funny", and the other gets "nice." I honestly could not tell you which was which. I don't know about you, but when I think of friends I've had since childhood, a lot more adjectives come to mind than just "nice" or "funny." And that, I think, is the main problem I had with this book: we're supposed to believe that these four kids had a great, wonderful friendship that was rudely torn apart when the one girl in the group grew breasts. But I never really understood why these people were friends, or saw them doing anything that demonstrated this awesome bond they supposedly had. And Maisie repeating over and over that they were her best friends in the whole wide world didn't do much to convince me.

I'm sorry, Francine Prose. After your book, *Reading Like a Writer*, rocked my world, I expected so much from this story. Maybe too much. I still think you're awesome, though.

Read for: Social Justice in Young Adult Literature

Yan says

Touch by Francine Prose was one of those books that received so much attention before the release. I was super excited to begin the book because how can you not with that summary!?

First person view is the most unreliable source as Prose demonstrates. In this type of book she picked the right match. Both the reader and the narrator have trouble understanding what truly happened in the back of the bus, and somewhere in the multiple retellings Maisie lost the truth. In an ongoing therapy session we uncover Maisie's life before and after the incident. There is also, however, a downside to first person because of bias attitude particularly to the stepmother.

The theme is more cynical than the average "the wheels on the bus go round and round" childhood song. No in this back of the bus we break out the attorney. I kind of expected some gut wrenching emotions because of the serious topic but the narration kept it going from that path.

The characterizations for some were wonderful. I enjoyed the ironic nature of her mother's new husband to Maisie's character. While she grows, he reverts back to that of a child. I liked some, but didn't like others.

One thing that I disliked was how the story went back and forth. You were taking 2 steps forward then 1 step back, retelling the same thing over, and over again. Then the ending told the whole story again but in the truth. Left me a bit sad that in the end it was a hoax—that Maisie wasn't really the complete victim that she led along.

Overall: Disappointed

Zyra says

I feel bad for the main character Maisie. but i didn't like her at all. even before the incident happened to her,

she is always complaining about something or the other in her life. especially about her stepmother. her stepmother this, her stepmother that. half of the book is based on how pretentious her step mom is!!! & how horrible it is for her to deal with it!!

now about the incident that happens at the back of the bus. Maisie continuously lies about it, until in the very end of the book. because she is in denial of it. because at first she thinks, its her duty to protect these guys because they are her friends since nursery??

& then later on she lies because she is angry with them, that they are spreading lies about her. umm hello?? these guys are jerks!!! stop feeling bad & stop with the sympathy because they definitely didn't deserve it! the only thing i liked in the book was that Maisie didn't want to run away or hide but face the situation as it was.

Kenya Liggins says

"Are the boys who assaulted you present in the courtroom?" "Your Honor, I object to counsel's use of the word assault." "Objection sustained." "Are the boys who molested you present in the courtroom?" "Objection, Your Honor. Molested is inflammatory." -Chapter one Page 1

This book was fascinating and unbelievable! I thought "Touch" was a great book. Teenage girl Massie is now a freshman in her school. She is a freshman along with three of her best friends, these best friends aren't girls, they are boys. Their names are Kevin, Chris, and Shakes. Massie is not the same Massie that she was when it was years ago when she was little. She has matured physically and mentally. Her breast have gotten larger, and her face has changed, she is still the same person, she is just maturing into a young lady. It was like morning time, and Massie and Shakes ended up kissing. This kissing wasn't just kissing they were like tonguing down each other (Making out). They have done this a couple more times, and the other two boys have caught them in the act. Their whole mood and attitude towards Massie has changed, because they are now jealous that it wasn't them. They ended up touching Massie, and Massie thought it was just all fun and games until Massie hears all these awful rumors. One of the rumors was that she paid them to touch her, because she was basically desperate for attention. Then they said she was also paying the other boys in the school to do it. Massie doesn't wanna get her friends in trouble, so she starts telling lie after lie, and it all becomes suspicious. Will the truth finally be revealed? When the truth is revealed, what is gonna happen to Massie?

First off, I just thought this book was great! I think Massie was my favorite until she started lieing.... Like what did she have to lie for ? She should have just told the truth, but I feel like if Massie kept up that animosity up for so long, it would be a great book and it was, it was a great book. I think this story has given me another reason to stay away from boys... I feel like even though they are your best friends, you shouldn't get too close with them.. What I didn't understand was, why she was making out with Shakes... What kind of name is shakes??? When I picture these boys, I picture them to have messed up hair cuts, and dirty baggy clothes. I think this book is appropriate for my age group, because it teaches a whole moral lesson, it teaches young girls and young boys what happens in the real world, and life is not about rainbows and stars.. I just think this got too out of hand, I think the whole situation was just blown out of proportion.... *Spoiler* "At first I was nervous about telling the truth, especially now that I finally knew what the truth was..... I still believe that there's such a thing as the truth, and I still never try to lie..... I was, every time I told and retold the story of how some boys, my former best friends, touched me on the bus. " I mean that ending was just excellent! I think the author did a great job, and I look forward to reading more of her books, because this has left me speechless. The one thing I had was so many questions, it was like every chapter was just leaving me

confused. I guess that's what the author wanted for her book. It was a great read, and I recommend this book to everyone that is becoming a young adult, it will teach a lot!

Nancy says

I felt like I was in stuck in some sort of time loop thing (like Sam and Dean were in a previous episode of *Supernatural*, if you know what I'm talking about) the entire time I was reading. The story jumps from all different points of time, back and forth, back again, and so forth. Maisie's recount of the "bus incident" is like a scratched DVD with a mind of its own: it plays the first scene, then replays itself, but with an added twist. So each time Maisie tells her story, it's another version of it. It gets confusing, and I don't know what to believe anymore. I guess that's the point: some lies are blurred into truths, and vice versa until we no longer can distinguish what is what anymore.

The way it's written just didn't work for me. Everything felt repetitive, starting from Maisie's dialogue, the actions she takes, and the way the bus story keeps getting retold. I didn't really like Maisie, who seemed so strong one minute, then completely a let down the next. Shakes was a disappointing character as well; all I felt was pity for him, and that was just because he had some kind of twitch disorder. I didn't see much of a personality from him. And don't even get me started on the other two guys: they were so flat they were practically transparent.

Kristin says

I'm really surprised at all the negative reviews of this book, so much so that it has a rating below 3 stars. If the concept didn't seem an important one, that would have probably kept me from getting it for my class library and reading it. I found the book to be a really important and well-told YA book. Teaching 9th-graders, I see the way so many girls are insecure in their new bodies and the attention that they receive. They don't feel like the young adults that their bodies suggest they are and feel more like the kids they so recently were. I think the narrator really captures that feeling. The friendship between her and Shakes feels real and touching, which makes it really heart-breaking, what happens. The way in which well-meaning (well, in this book, not so well-meaning) adults co-opt her story and try to turn her into a symbol or a crusader when that is not what she wants also feels really spot on. I found myself tearing up reading about her final bus trip. Overall, a well-written book that I have no doubt will really resonate with girls in my class when I bring it into my library next school year. Give this book a chance if you are a teen or are buying for teens.

Briana says

Original/full review here: <http://thebookpixie.blogspot.com/2009...>

Review

Touch had a very edgy and gripping premise that really made me want to pick it up and read it. However, I find this totally irrelevant as I felt the actual story carried it out very inadequately, failing to meet its potential.

Maisie, though she could at times be funny, was not a very likable character and I felt totally detached from

her and her story. I hated the fact that she didn't try to take more control over her life and what was happening to her. And yes, her step mom was a pain, but she still could have tried to make things work between the two of them a little better. Also, the way she kept changing her story was annoying. I can understand how at first she wanted to say nothing happened. What I didn't understand was why she didn't just tell the truth after that. She only caused herself a whole lot more trouble by lying and making things out to be worse than they were. Another thing, why did she just let the guys touch her like that when she knew she didn't like it? She didn't even bother saying no. Maisie should have had more respect for herself than that and as a result, I found it hard to feel any kind of sympathy towards her.

I feel the story would have been a lot more believable if the three guys hadn't been her best friends. Maybe it is just me but it seems hard to believe that four kids would grow up together, having always been best friends, and then as soon as the girl of the group grows boobs, things change SO dramatically. I can understand her and Shakes getting kind of romantic, I actually liked that. However the whole part of where her other two guy 'best friends' get jealous, grab and fondle her boobs while Shakes sits by and does nothing, and then spread nasty rumors about her is so unrealistic. Not saying it could never happen, because after all, stranger things have. I'm just saying that it seems so forced and very improbable. Touch did atleast have a good overall message about lying, why some people do it, and what happens as a result.

Then there were the flashbacks. At times I felt like I'd read the same thing three times because of them, being more disruptive than anything. And speaking of disruptive, the poor syntax and numerous typos made this book even harder to get into. I am fully aware that the copy I read was an ARC, however it read more like a rough draft then something that was only one step away from being a finished copy.

In my honest opinion, the ending was the redeeming quality of this book for two reasons. One, because I actually liked the overall ending, including the fact that Maisie finally realized and told the truth. And two, for lack of a better way of phrasing it, because it was over and I could move onto something else.

So as you've probably already figured out, this is not a book I liked or will be re-reading. Would I recommend it? Uh, no. If Touch had been written for me I would say it was a waste of time and paper. However, it wasn't written for me and so long as there is atleast one person out there who enjoys Touch, or any other book, it was anything BUT a waste.

So it wasn't for me but who knows, maybe you'll be one of the people who likes it.

PinkAmy loves \u26a9; books\ud83d\udc4d; cats\ud83d\udc3b; and naps\ud83d\udc6f; says

Grade: C+

Something happened in the back of the bus between Maisie and her former three best friends. Or did it? At first she denies being assaulted, but then the boys admit to fondling her and what happened or didn't happen spins out of control.

Maisie is an angry, uncooperative narrator with plenty of reason. Abandoned by her mother her lives with her workaholic father and stepmother who's more concerned with appearances and her personal agenda than looking out for Maisie's feelings and her best interest. After spending 8th grade with her hapless mother and angry stepfather, she returns to Pennsylvania to start high school with a set of Hollywood breasts. Her best

friends since preschool take have entered adolescence as well and everything has changed. I had a lot of empathy for Maisie even when she didn't make the best decisions, because she had no where to turn. Neither her mother nor stepmother taught her to respect her body and herself.

I hated the ending of **TOUCH** but I can't say much more without spoiling. Francine Prose's readable prose kept me interested, though early on I predicted the resolution to the story. Maisie was a complex character, her friend Shakes had some depth, but the other characters felt one dimensional and stereotypical.

THEMES: friendship, family, stepfamilies, adolescence, divorce, sexual abuse.

Some readers will identify with **TOUCH** and with Maisie, but others may not like her character.

Stacey says

Maisie, Shakes, Kevin, and Chris have been best friends since they were in diapers. In eighth grade Maisie moves to live with her mother. When she moves back at the beginning of her freshman year of high school, things have changed. She in particular has matured and the boys aren't looking at her in the same way. One fateful day in the back of the bus on the way to school, a line has been crossed that can't be undone. This is a must read YA novel for teens. This story rings true about the traumatic repercussions of unwanted advances.

Jennifer Wardrip says

Reviewed by Sally Kruger aka "Readingjunk" for TeensReadToo.com

Sorry, there's no cover art available yet for **TOUCH** by Francine Prose, but I recommend it as a good read no matter what they decide to do with the cover. Prose is the author of such YA titles as **AFTER** and **BULLYVILLE**, and **TOUCH** is sure to please her previous fans and help create new ones.

TOUCH is the story of trauma and its ability to manipulate the truth. Maisie has three very good friends - Shakes, Chris, and Kevin. They've been friends since preschool, and even though this friendship between one girl and three guys may seem strange to some, it totally works for them. That is, it works until the year Maisie goes to live with her mom and stepdad.

After a bitter divorce that started with Maisie's mother leaving her husband to find a different life, Maisie has lived with her dad and Joan, his new wife. Uncomfortable with her stepmother, Maisie decides to spend her 8th-grade year living with her mother in Wisconsin. As with many such experiments, Maisie learns the grass is not always greener on the other side, and she returns to live with her father when the school year is over.

Things would probably have just gone back to normal, except while living in Wisconsin, Maisie has blossomed as a young woman. She returns feeling the same but looking a bit different. She has boobs. Her three childhood friends have changed a bit, as well. They now have a young man's appreciation for things like boobs. Although they try to resume their friendship as before, it is strained at best.

Maisie and Shakes have always had a special bond. When school starts in the fall, they find themselves boarding the bus first. As the only two people riding for a good twenty minutes, they head to the back seat.

Amazingly, they are able to remain seated there even when the seniors climb aboard.

As the weeks pass, Maisie and Shakes stumble across a way to pass the time before the other students are picked up. It begins with experimental kissing and soon turns into twenty-minute make out sessions. They are very careful to time their groping to end just before others begin to board the bus, but one day they are caught. It is quite a shock for everyone, but especially for Chris and Kevin, who never thought about Maisie as girlfriend material.

Once the secret is out, the friendship takes a turn that shocks the entire school community. Maisie has become the subject of cruel gossip and speculation because she seems to have allowed the three boys to stray beyond the bounds of decency. What really happened in the backseat of the bus? Can Maisie really remember things objectively, and can her life ever return to normal?

Francine Prose takes readers into the mind of a confused young girl. Maisie is trying to justify her actions and the decisions that led to those actions. She battles with her angry feelings toward her friends, her parents and stepparents, her fellow classmates, and herself.

Coping with trauma and moving on are the central issues of *TOUCH*. Teens will no doubt see a bit of themselves and also their peers when they read about Maisie's ordeal.

Tonya says

This was a hard book to read. I forced myself to finish it, hoping it would somehow get better. It never did. I couldn't connect with Maisie at all. She was just so whiney, which seeing how her mother and stepmother behave and how her father seems to completely ignore their ridiculous behavior, I guess she was doomed.

The ending was horrible. Even after Maisie came clean about what really happened, assuming she told the truth that last time, what those boys did was inappropriate. Writing essays? Seriously? That is NOT a punishment. Those boys got off too easy. They should have been punished when the incident occurred. Then at the end when Maisie had to ride the bus, it says that she sat directly behind the bus driver...and Shakes sat with her! Again, SERIOUSLY?! The bus driver had to have known about the incident because I'm sure she was questioned at some point by the principal, and she still allowed one of the boys accused of sexually assaulting Maisie to sit with her?! Despite the fact that Maisie lied repeatedly, I feel like all of the adults in this story failed her. The school brushed off the incident, her stepmother seemed more interested in being involved in that type of court case than how the incident really emotionally affected Maisie, her dad didn't seem to care at all, and her mother seemed more upset about left out. Her lawyer didn't care about her. Her therapist seemed to only ask the same questions over and over, instead of trying to draw Maisie out in different ways. All of this bothers me because the ending doesn't solve any of these issues. Pretty much the boys, as well as Maisie, have to write essays and then everyone moves on like nothing happened. For the boys, I'm sure they will be fine. Maisie, on the other hand, has A LOT of issues that just got swept under the rug like it was no big deal.

I think this book shows a good example of how things can get way out of hand with one small lie, and how one wrong word or accusation can hurt a lot of people. However, I don't feel like this was the best situation to use for that example, especially for the younger teen readers that may pick up this book.

