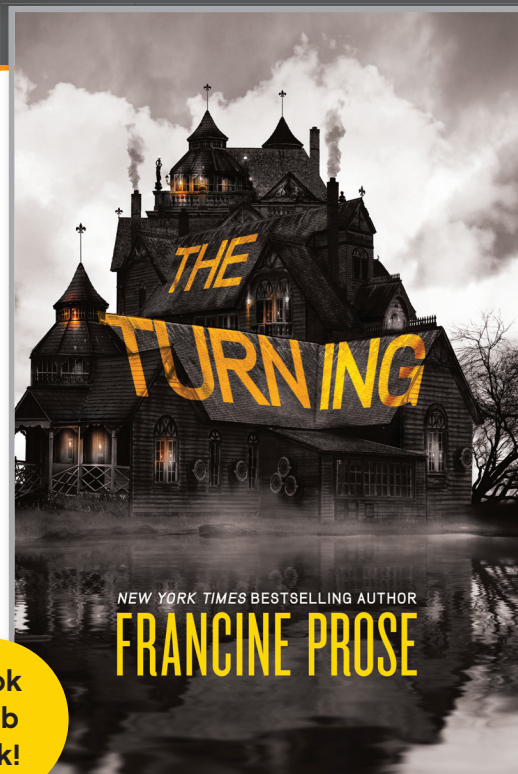




THE TURNING by FRANCINE PROSE

ABOUT THE BOOK

Jack is spending the summer on a private island far from modern conveniences. No internet, no cell service, no one else on the island but a housekeeper and two very peculiar children in his care. Soon Jack feels isolated and alone. But he's not alone. The house has visitors, peering in the windows and staring from across the shore—but why doesn't anyone else see them . . . and what do they want? As secrets are revealed and dark truths surface, Jack struggles to maintain his grip on reality. He knows what he sees, and he isn't crazy . . . or is he? National Book Award finalist Francine Prose presents a mind-bending story about the subtle lines that separate reality, imagination, and insanity.



Book
Club
Pick!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In recounting the screaming seagull episode, Jack asks, “How nuts is that?” (p. 9). Does Jack’s belief that the seagull spoke to him make you think that he’s nuts? Or is something else going on? What might the seagull symbolize?
2. During Jack’s interview with Jim Crackstone, what things should have warned him that something wasn’t quite right? How can the lure of easy money cause you to disregard your better judgment?
3. Linda warns Jack: “Don’t believe everything you hear” (p. 39). Why shouldn’t you believe everything you hear—or read? Do you believe everything that Jack says because he’s the narrator? How might Jack not be the most reliable person to relate the story?
4. How are Miles and Flora “unusual”? Would you be weirded out if they were your charges? Why or why not? How does Linda’s story about Norris and Lucy alter Jack’s view of the children?
5. How does Jack become suspicious, paranoid, and ultimately manipulative when it comes to Sophie?
6. Why do you think Jack falls for Lucy? Why does he break up with Sophie?
7. How do you think the story would be different if told from another character’s perspective? What might change if Linda, Sophie, Miles, or Flora was the primary narrator?
8. After everything that happens, do you think that Jack is crazy? Does he hallucinate the ghosts? If yes, why? If no, what do you think is really happening?
9. Do you believe in ghosts? Do you think Crackstone’s Landing is haunted? Explain.
10. How does Jack change on the island? Is it possible that he doesn’t change but that you just see more of his true self? Why or why not?
11. How does the novel’s mostly one-sided epistolary structure affect your interpretation of what happens? What do you make of the brief, rare letters from Sophie and Jack’s dad?
12. How are secrets powerful things? How do they bind people together? How do they tear them apart?
13. Think about Francine Prose’s novel in relation to Henry James’s *The Turn of the Screw*. How are they similar? In what ways do they differ?
14. What does the title *The Turning* mean? Who or what “turns” in the novel?