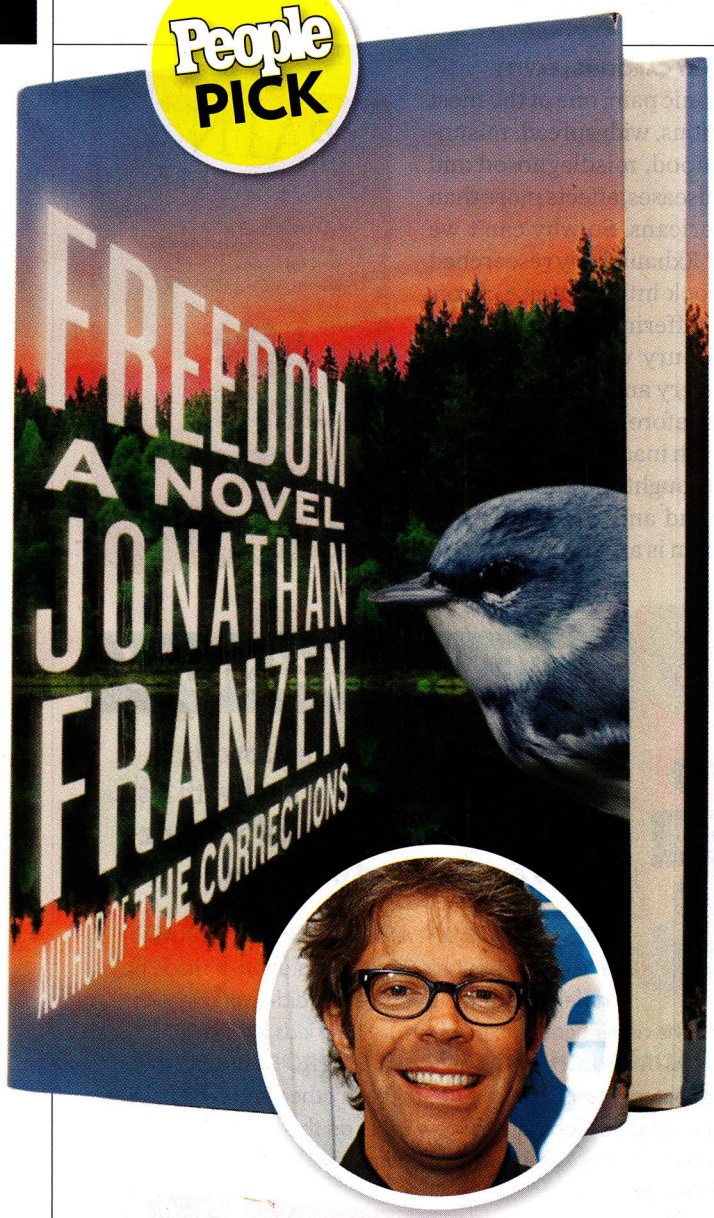
Books



Freedom

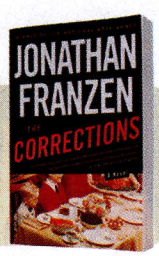
by Jonathan Franzen | ★★★★

REVIEWED BY KYLE SMITH

NOVEL

Industrious, sober, honorable and devoted, Walter Berglund may be the perfect husband. But sexy he is not. His best friend, a rocker named Richard Katz—coolly inscrutable and bewitchingly attractive—gives him someone to compare himself to and compete with. But Walter never fully understands that the two are competing for the attentions of Walter's wife, Patty.

In this epic tale of a marriage that begins in the '70s and continues until today, you will come to know Patty Berglund—a standout athlete in Minnesota who settles uneasily into a suburban homemaker's life—as well as your own family. As Walter becomes increasingly devoted to the public good, Patty's eye is trained on her secret longings and her frighteningly independent children. She's funny, smart, often depressed and heartbreakingly real, as is this novel, which explores how its characters collide with American notions of freedom (political, economic, sexual). It's the first novel from Franzen in nearly a decade. In its humanity, depth, dry comic observations and *World According to Garp*-like evoking of unspeakable sorrows and indelible bonds, it proves well worth the wait.

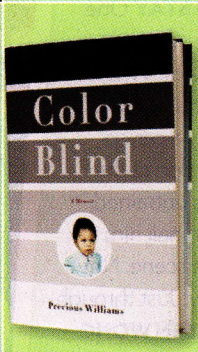


FRANZEN FACTS The Oprah dustup: After Franzen expressed dismay that Oprah had chosen his '01 novel *The Corrections* for her book club, she rescinded his invite to be on her show.

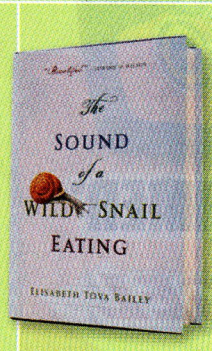
GREAT READS

WHAT WE HAVE *by Amy Boesky*
Ovarian cancer stalks her family, but this college professor and mom of two has refused to live in fear. Her journey inspires.

NEW MEMOIRS



COLOR BLIND *by Precious Williams*
The daughter of a Nigerian princess recalls her confusing upbringing as a foster child in all-white rural England.



THE SOUND OF A WILD SNAIL EATING *by Elisabeth Tova Bailey*
Sick in bed, the author found solace—and good material—in watching a snail.

By Meredith Maran

JOE KOHEN/GETTY IMAGES