

# Jonathan Franzen

## Quotes

*Writing, Book, People, Thinking, Self, Fiction, Reading, World, Real, Years,  
Heart, Way, Stories, Kind, Struggle, Children, Littles, Pain, Running, Men*

I guess my life hasn't always been happy, or easy, or exactly what I want. At a certain point, I just have to try not to think too much about certain things, or else they'll break my heart.

~Jonathan Franzen

Fiction is a solution, the best solution, to the problem of existential solitude.

~Jonathan Franzen

It's doubtful that anyone with an internet connection at his workplace is writing good fiction.

~Jonathan Franzen

Integrity's a neutral value. Hyenas have integrity, too. They're pure hyena.

~Jonathan Franzen

Nice people don't necessarily fall in love with nice people.

~Jonathan Franzen

The personality susceptible to the dream of limitless freedom is a personality also prone, should the dream ever sour, to misanthropy and rage.

~Jonathan Franzen

The Mekons were kind of like the background music of my life.

~Jonathan Franzen

Depression presents itself as a realism regarding the rottenness of the world in general and the rottenness of your life in particular.

~Jonathan Franzen

Fiction is a particularly effective way for strangers to connect across time and distance

~Jonathan Franzen

Reading enables me to maintain a sense of something substantive- my ethical integrity, my intellectual integrity.

~Jonathan Franzen

What you discovered about yourself in raising children wasn't always agreeable or attractive.

~Jonathan Franzen

And meanwhile the sad truth was that not everyone could be extraordinary, not everyone could be extremely cool; because whom would this leave to be ordinary?

~Jonathan Franzen

Being dead's only a problem if you know you're dead, which you never do because you're dead!

~Jonathan Franzen

If you want to have friends, you have to remember that nobody's perfect.

~Jonathan Franzen

Imagine that human existence is defined by an Ache: the Ache of our not being, each of us, the center of the universe; of our desires forever outnumbering our means of satisfying them.

~Jonathan Franzen

We may freak out globally, but we suffer locally.

~Jonathan Franzen

It was a way of recognizing places of enchantment: people falling asleep like this.

~Jonathan Franzen

Nothing got inside the head without becoming pictures.

~Jonathan Franzen

she was so much a personality and so little anything else that even staring straight at her he had no idea what she really looked like.

~Jonathan Franzen

Good novels are produced by people who voluntarily isolate themselves and go deep, and report from the depths on what they find.

~Jonathan Franzen

His tiredness hurt so much it kept him awake.

~Jonathan Franzen

Readers and writers are united in their need for solitude, in their pursuit of substance in a time of ever-increasing evanescence: in their reach inward, via print, for a way out of loneliness.

~Jonathan Franzen

And *Silence of the Lambs* is a really smart book.

~Jonathan Franzen

I hate that word dysfunction.

~Jonathan Franzen

I voluntarily inflicted a certain level of insanity on myself.

~Jonathan Franzen

He couldn't figure out if she was immensely well adjusted or seriously messed up.

~Jonathan Franzen

There is, after all, a kind of happiness in unhappiness, if it's the right unhappiness.

~Jonathan Franzen

Without privacy there was no point in being an individual.

~Jonathan Franzen

I used to think it was hard to write, and I still find the process more or less unpleasant, but if I know what I'm doing it rattles along, then the rewrite whips it into shape rather quickly.

~Jonathan Franzen

When I finally gave up any hope of doing anything representative of the American family, I actually seemed to have tapped into other people's weirdness in that way.

~Jonathan Franzen

It's very liberating for me to realize that I don't have to step up to the plate with a plot that involves the U.N. Security Council.

~Jonathan Franzen

It's just a matter of writing the kind of book I enjoy reading. Something better be happening at the beginning, and then on every page after, or I get irritated.

~Jonathan Franzen

I really enjoy doing both, but I didn't write nonfiction until 1994.

~Jonathan Franzen

But as far as being popular, yeah, I think Dave Barry is really funny.

~Jonathan Franzen

How wrong to have been so negative, how wrong to have been so gloomy, how wrong to have run away from life, how wrong to have said no, again and again, instead of yes.

~Jonathan Franzen

...She felt that nothing could kill her hope now, nothing. She was seventy-five and she was going to make some changes in her life.

~Jonathan Franzen

He had a happy canine way of seeking approval without seeming insecure.

~Jonathan Franzen

To me, the point of a novel is to take you to a still place. You can multitask with a lot of things, but you can't really multitask reading a book.

~Jonathan Franzen

You're either reading a book or you're not.

~Jonathan Franzen

There's a hazardous sadness to the first sounds of someone else's work in the morning; it's as if stillness experiences pain in being broken.

~Jonathan Franzen

Brooklyn was like Philadelphia made better by its proximity to Manhattan.

~Jonathan Franzen

But the first lesson reading teaches is how to be alone.

~Jonathan Franzen

I had a Viking sense of entitlement to whatever provisions I could plunder.

~Jonathan Franzen

The world was ending then, it's ending still, and I'm happy to belong to it again.

~Jonathan Franzen

You see more sitting still than chasing after.

~Jonathan Franzen

It's the fate of most Ping-Pong tables in home basements eventually to serve the ends of other, more desperate games.

~Jonathan Franzen

Deploing other people--their lack of perfection--had always been our sport.

~Jonathan Franzen

I feel as if I'm clearly part of a trend among writers who take themselves seriously - and I confess to taking myself as seriously as the next writer.

~Jonathan Franzen

Everything he did was at least partial and often total bullshitâ€• (402).

~Jonathan Franzen

I've moved away from that sort of deep-ecological extremism. I started to think: what can we do for wild birds right now? I don't want these particular species to disappear.

~Jonathan Franzen

I think the mission for the writer is to tell stories in a compelling way about the stuff that cannot be talked about, that cannot be gotten at with shallow media.

~Jonathan Franzen

Just as the camera draws a stake through the heart of serious portraiture, television has killed the novel of social reportage.

~Jonathan Franzen

I find it a huge strain to be responsible for my tastes and be known and defined by them.

~Jonathan Franzen

I don't personally like the e-readers they've come up with so far. I don't fetishize books, but I do like that they're solid and unchanging.

~Jonathan Franzen

I admire your capacity for admiring.

~Jonathan Franzen

The most purely autobiographical fiction requires pure invention. Nobody ever wrote a more autobiographical story than "The Meta-morphosis".

~Jonathan Franzen

Elective ignorance was a great survival skill, perhaps the greatest.

~Jonathan Franzen

The reader is a friend, not an adversary, not a spectator.

~Jonathan Franzen

[T]o love a specific person, and to identify with his or her struggles and joys as if they were your own, you have to surrender some of your self.

~Jonathan Franzen

An ink bottle, which now seems impossibly quaint, was still thinkable as a symbol in 1970.

~Jonathan Franzen

The writer's life is a life of revisions.

~Jonathan Franzen

This evening I begin a notebook. If anyone reads this, I trust they will



forgive my overuse of "I". I can't stop it. I'm writing this.

~Jonathan Franzen

For every reader who dies today, a viewer is born, and we seem to be witnessing . . . the final tipping balance.

~Jonathan Franzen

Seriously, the world is changing so quickly that if you had any more than 80 years of change I don't see how you could stand it psychologically.

~Jonathan Franzen

Fiction that isn't an author's personal adventure into the frightening or the unknown isn't worth writing for anything but money.

~Jonathan Franzen

But nothing disturbs the feeling of specialness like the presence of other human beings feeling identically special.

~Jonathan Franzen

The figure of my father looms large in my imagination.

~Jonathan Franzen

I was a late child from my parents, so I grew up surrounded by people a lot older than me. I think even when I was 21, I felt like I was a 70-year-old man.

~Jonathan Franzen

Today's Baudelaires are hip-hop artists.

~Jonathan Franzen

He wanted this someone to see how much he hurt.

~Jonathan Franzen

I'm not too concerned what happens to my books after I'm dead. But I am very concerned by what's going on with the culture of reading and writing nowadays.

~Jonathan Franzen

Fiction, I believed, was the transmutation of experiential dross into linguistic gold. Fiction meant taking up whatever the world had abandoned by the road and making something beautiful out of it.

~Jonathan Franzen

Robin turned and looked straight into her. "What's life for?" "I don't know." "I don't either. But I don't think it's about winning.

~Jonathan Franzen

Interesting verbs are seldom very interesting.

~Jonathan Franzen

It's healthy to say uncle when your bone's about to break.

~Jonathan Franzen

So, what, you got cigarette burns, too?" Gitanes said. Chip showed his palm, "It's nothing." "Self-inflicted. You pathetic American." "Different kind of prison" Chip said.

~Jonathan Franzen

But she was seventeen now and not actually dumb. She knew that you could love somebody more than anything and still not love the person all that much, if you were busy with other things.

~Jonathan Franzen

[T]hat I could find company and consolation and hope in an object pulled almost at random from a bookshelf--felt akin to an instance of religious grace.

~Jonathan Franzen

Twitter is unspeakably irritating. Twitter stands for everything I oppose.

~Jonathan Franzen

The pain was quite extraordinary. And yet also weirdly welcome and restorative, bringing him news of his aliveness and his caughtness in a story larger than himself.

~Jonathan Franzen

It seems to me self-evident that if you have a life, things happen in it, and certain things do change; certain things end. People you know die.

~Jonathan Franzen

I can't stomach any kind of notion that serious fiction is good for us, because I don't believe that everything that's wrong with the world has a cure.

~Jonathan Franzen

Use well thy freedom.

~Jonathan Franzen

It took hours to turn the clock back 30 seconds.

~Jonathan Franzen

Once there are good sentences on the page, I can feel a loyalty to them and start following their logic, and take refuge from myself.

~Jonathan Franzen

I was about 13, in some ways, when I wrote the first book. Approximately 18 when I wrote the second.

~Jonathan Franzen

Popularity has become its own justification.

~Jonathan Franzen

I feel that working environmentalists are, in the main, happier than armchair environmentalists.

~Jonathan Franzen

When I was younger, the main struggle was to be a 'good writer.' Now I more or less take my writing abilities for granted, although this doesn't mean I always write well.

~Jonathan Franzen

Nell Zink is a writer of extraordinary talent and range. Her work insistently raises the possibility that the world is larger and stranger than the world you think you know.

~Jonathan Franzen

Birds were like dinosaurs' better selves. They had short lives and long summers. We all should be so lucky as to leave behind such heirs.

~Jonathan Franzen

I wanted all of her and resented other boys for wanting any part of her.

~Jonathan Franzen

As with all forms of liberation, of which the liberation of women is only one example, it is easy to suppose in a time of freedom that the darker days of repression can never come again.

~Jonathan Franzen

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