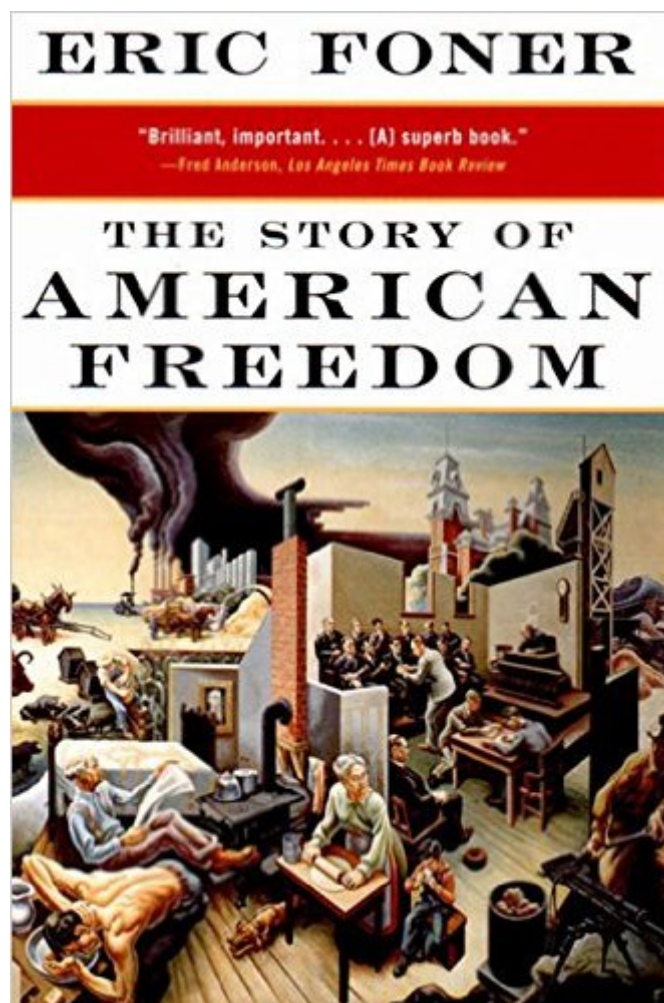


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The Story Of American Freedom (Norton Paperback)



Synopsis

A stirring history of America focused on its animating impulse: freedom. From the Revolution to our own time, freedom has been America's strongest cultural bond and its most perilous fault line, a birthright for some Americans and a cruel mockery for others. Eric Foner takes freedom not as a timeless truth but as a value whose meaning and scope have been contested throughout American history. His sweeping narrative shows freedom to have been shaped not only in congressional debates and political treatises but also on plantations and picket lines, in parlors and bedrooms, by our acknowledged leaders and by former slaves, union organizers, freedom riders, and women's rights activists.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

American's military forces are currently being placed in harm's way in Iraq, we are told, "to defend our freedoms." It is good at such times to place in perspective the freedoms for which Americans are dying. The burden of Eric Foner in this work is to chronicle the changing face of the words "liberty" and "freedom" in various periods of American history. Foner's work is a largely dispassionate chronicle of the meaning of liberty from the nation's founding to the present. His work sketches not only the idealistic glory, but also the self-serving and even chicanery associated with the concept throughout the unfolding of America's story. The framework of organization which Foner has chosen to house his story is chronological, using a chapter to cover each major epoch of

American history. The choice of eras is traditional, beginning with the founding and moving through the Jacksonian development, the Civil War, Reconstruction, the Gilded and Progressive eras, World War I, the New Deal, World War II, the Cold War, the Sixties developments and the rebirth of conservatism a generation later. Within each chapter he uses three themes to guide his examination. First is that of how Americans have understood the idea of freedom. He looks at responses from political, economic, personal and Christian perspectives. Secondly he looks at the social conditions of freedom. Is it delimited by governmental authority, social pressure, or economic power? Under what conditions does it seem to prosper or suffer restriction? Thirdly he looks at who the people are who are entitled to enjoy the blessings of American freedom. Or, as he says, "Who is an American?" In my mind, the work suffers from one massive exception. Foner has no treatment of the period preceding the Revolutionary era.

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