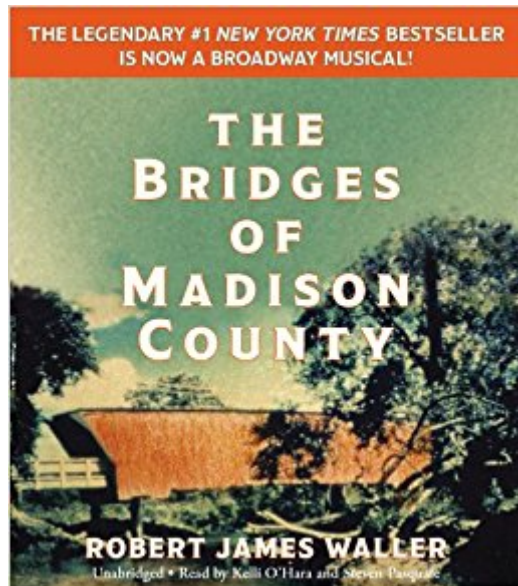




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# **The Bridges Of Madison County**



## Synopsis

If you've ever experienced the one true love of your life, a love that for some reason could never be, you will understand why readers all over the world were so moved by this small, unknown first novel that they made it a publishing phenomenon and #1 bestseller. The story of Robert Kincaid, the photographer and free spirit searching for the covered bridges of Madison County, and Francesca Johnson, the farm wife waiting for the fulfillment of a girlhood dream, *THE BRIDGES OF MADISON COUNTY* gives voice to the longings of men and women everywhere-and shows us what it is to love and be loved so intensely that life is never the same again.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

When Robert Kincaid drives through the heat and dust of an Iowa summer and turns into Francesca Johnson's farm lane looking for directions, the world-class photographer and the Iowa farm wife are joined in an experience of uncommon truth and stunning beauty that will haunt them forever. The romantic classic of the 1990's. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

Quietly powerful and thoroughly credible, Waller's first novel (he previously wrote two books of essays) describes the profound love between a photographer and an Iowa farmer's wife who, together for only four days, never lose their feelings for each other. In August 1965, 52-year-old divorcee Robert Kincaid packs his pickup truck and travels to Iowa's Madison County, the location of seven covered bridges he is to photograph for National Geographic. There, he asks directions of Francesca Johnson, alone at home while her husband and two children visit the Illinois State Fair.

Initially, neither Robert nor Francesca expects their random encounter to lead to seduction, yet their mutual desire is undeniable. Waller tells their story as though it were nonfiction, claiming to have heard about Francesca from her children after her death, read her journals, seen Robert's relics of those four days and interviewed a jazz musician who knew the photographer. Scenes between the lovers are movingly evoked and moments with Francesca, who celebrates her birthday 22 years later by reflecting on her brief time with Robert, are particularly poignant. An erotic, bittersweet tale of lingering memories and forsaken possibilities. Photos of covered bridges serve as illustrations. 35,000 first printing. Copyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

When a novel receives less than the full spectrum of star ratings - in this case - 60-70% five-star reviews and 30% one-stars - it's probably a remarkable read, one that has made the reader FEEL. I read *The Bridges of Madison County* when it first came out, while I was still a student, and this is my first re-read. I was curious as to if its impact on me would be the same as when I was young and impressionable. Since then, I've finished my linguistic and literary studies, I work at a college, and I write books myself. After I finished my re-read, I skimmed the reviews on . The negative reviews go in two main directions: 1) the story and the characters are not believable; 2) more specifically: how would any woman in a fabulous marriage like Francesca fall head over heels and make love to a man she'd only just met? To 1) my response would be to quote from *Los Angeles Times*, June 20th, 1995: "Susan Canby, the head librarian (of National Geographic, reviewer's insertion), went to her master index. The only Kincaid she found was a Don Kincaid who had done a story on ghost galleons in 1982. And never, since its founding in 1888 as a technical journal, had the National Geographic done a story on covered bridges--in Madison County, Iowa, or anywhere else. The sad truth was that the Geographic's most famous photographer, Robert Kincaid--the subject of Robert James Waller's book *"The Bridges of Madison County"* and the character played by Clint Eastwood in a movie of the same name--didn't exist. The truth was so crushing to Kincaid's followers that many chose not to believe it. 'I still have eight or nine people a day coming in wanting to buy the magazine with Kincaid's bridges story,'" said Pat Tobin, a receptionist at Geographic's Washington headquarters. "When I tell them this is fiction, a novel, they say, 'I understand that. But I'd still like to see some of the things he's done.' "This means that I'm not particularly gullible for having believed in these characters and their story while reading. They were so masterly executed that "everyone else" did too. Robert James Waller completed that feat with many techniques, but a few that stood out to me are as follows: On page 180, Nighthawk Cummings says, "Complex things are easy to do.

Simplicity's the real challenge." His statement describes Waller's writing style to a T. This novel could have been double its length, as thick and rich as the love between the main characters themselves. Instead, Waller narrowed the pages down to the most minimalistic style he could, and he still chocked it full of nostalgia, tragedy, and heart-wrenching, eternal love. His style is non-fiction-like, similar to old-fashioned travel literature. At the same time, it's cleverly broken up with flashes of poetic brushstrokes, both from Francesca and from Robert even when neither character is your run-of-the-mill romance novel protagonist. Another stroke of genius is the black-and-white pictures of the bridges throughout the book. It adds to the realistic style. In the "About the Author" paragraph, he seals our belief in the story and the characters by saying about himself that "He is the author of 'A Thousand Country Roads, the epilogue to 'The Bridges of Madison County' (...)" By omission, he again uses his sparse style: by saying he wrote the epilogue, he leaves it to the reader to decide what they want to believe: either the story wrote itself - or the characters did. All in all, the style and the characters applied to a simple storyline is what sets Bridges in Madison County apart from the genre I generally write: romance. It's the reason why Bridges of Madison County is literary fiction, a category breaker, and an international bestseller. To reason 2) for giving Bridges of Madison County 1-star reviews, let's just agree that adultery happens. Sometimes, it's the man. Other times, it's the woman. I don't by any means condone infidelity, but as a reader, it enthralls me when an author makes me experience the pull the characters' feel. Not all characters are written to be adored by the readers, and I enjoy getting mad, even sad sometimes. Such stories, like Bridges of Madison County, are written to show facets of human nature that aren't purely good. I'm also grateful when a writer doesn't insult my intelligence by over explaining things. I want to approach my literary fiction with both brain and senses alert and at the ready: Robert James Waller did not hammer in the fact that Francesca was unhappy in her marriage. But between the lines, if you keep your eyes open, it's easy to read how unfulfilled she was. This is a short, quick read. So worth the few hours. Once finished, you won't put it down and go, "Meh." You'll have opinions. Good and bad. And what else can an author wish for? And personally, I have stilled my curiosity: even after all this time, thousands of books later, I was still touched to tears.

I wanted to read this book since The Bridges of Madison County is coming out on Broadway and I had never seen the movie. I was expecting a gripping love story. It was sweet but it was so overly descriptive of everything (mostly landscape and wildlife) that I lost interest. I finished it but left feeling a bit let down. I've heard the movie is great though.

Book was a gift. Person receiving appeared to like reading it.

Definitely a five star . Fantastic read, keeps you tied to the story until the end. What a great great love story. I'm only an occasional reader but I finished this in one day. Impressive!

A classic and such a beautiful story!

4 stars for the story one of my favorite. It's a shame this new hard bound book arrived with the lower ft corners bent. This was a gift for someone in conflict about love,family,longing and family duty. A love affair can be wonderful but if you said your vows....I would have run to his truck. Never say never or till death do we part. Life is changes. If I give my word I follow it. The movie couldn't have been more wrongly cast.

This is a superb book based on a true story which shows that there are people who can maintain their integrity in the most trying of circumstances. As reader you feel for the main couple and their having to deny themselves in favour of the family that was completely unaware of their anguish. However, in the end the truth was revealed and their honourable behaviour was appreciated and the family had a new dimension to their lives. Possibly a soppy for some but a heart warming tale for me.

This book is a masterpiece - even though it's about a 4 day affair. It's so much more than that, and is so well-written. I didn't have to see the movie to picture these two people. I read it in one day, took it back to the woman who loaned it to me, and I had tears in my eyes. She thought I didn't like it so was bringing it back before reading all of it. But, I had stopped everything, and read it in just a few hours, and I have now done it again on my Kindle. I know he wrote other books, but this man was a one-book writer.

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