



The Bridges of Madison County

©2009 eNotes.com, Inc. or its Licensors. Please see [copyright information](#) at the end of this document.

At the center of this short novel is a love story of classic simplicity and familiarity. Francesca is forty-five, married with two teenaged children; Robert Kincaid is fifty-two, divorced, an artist, a traveling loner, calling himself “the last of the cowboys.” Meeting at the right time and place, they cautiously accept their love at first sight, and within the four days they are able to spend together, they fulfill each other spiritually and physically. They then sacrifice their physical intimacy, to preserve her family and, probably, their sanity, never meeting again. But what they have made together lives on, defining and directing their lives.

Set mainly in 1965 near Winterset, Iowa, the birthplace of John Wayne, the novel still is much like a western, with perhaps a touch of irony. The stranger comes to town, bringing with him values the town cannot appreciate but that are fundamental, and he wins the heart of the exotic woman whose true powers are unrealized in town or family. Though Francesca is a well-rounded character, Waller tends to focus more on Kincaid, on assignment from NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC to do a photo story about the covered bridges of Madison County. Kincaid is a mythic figure, the Camel-smoking shaman, peregrine, animal/man, but the gentleman, with his hormones under control, aware of himself as obsolete in a culture that requires conformity and distrusts magic and imagination.

Waller’s storytelling is multilayered and sophisticated, helping to make believable a tale in which people often talk as if they had composed their speeches in advance.

Copyright Notice

©2009 eNotes.com, Inc.

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

No part of this work covered by the copyright hereon may be reproduced or used in any form or by any means graphic, electronic, or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, taping, Web distribution or information storage retrieval systems without the written permission of the publisher.

For complete copyright information, please see the online version of this work:
<http://www.enotes.com/bridges-madison-salem>