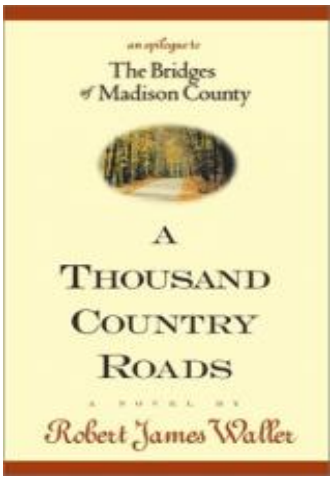
A Thousand Country Roads

by Robert James Waller



About the Book

With simple yet moving prose, Robert James Waller weaves together a touching story that tells readers what happened to Robert Kincaid and Francesca Johnson after their passionate, yet ill-fated affair in **The Bridges of Madison County**. In **A Thousand Country Roads** Kincaid initially finds himself with little but memories -- memories of a lonely existence lived mostly on the road and memories of Francesca Johnson, the woman whose passion he stirred so briefly and with such power. So, with his memories pushing him, searching for something undefined, something to give meaning to the rest of his life, Kincaid takes to the road again in what becomes a journey of discovery and surprise. **A Thousand Country Roads** explores the struggles of love, hope, disappointment, and loneliness ? everyday issues, which touch us all. The discussion questions included in this guide will encourage readers to explore both the literary elements and the complex issues in this compelling new book.

Discussion Guide

1. Was Robert Kincaid clinically depressed at the beginning of the novel? If so, how had his state of mind changed toward the end of the story?

2. Robert Kincaid essentially lived a life alone, sacrificing family and relationships. Why do you think he chose this kind of existence? Was his choice a good one or a bad one?

3. When Kincaid returned to Roseman Bridge, he did not try to contact Francesca, but merely chose to "stand in her space again." Were his reasons for not looking her up admirable or cowardly? Realistic and honorable, or demonstrating denial and avoidance?

4. Given what we know about the states of mind of Francesca and Robert 16 years after their four-day affair, had their relationship truly been the "defining moment" for each--the "one great love" of a lifetime?or a simply a comfortable

illusion/delusion?

5. What drove Robert Kincaid, on his return trip, to seek the woman he had earlier seen at the photography gallery in Mendocino?

6. How do you explain Carlisle McMillan's apparent maturity, self-possession, and goodness, given his atypical, fatherless upbringing?

7. Are people in their fifties, sixties and beyond capable of passion?

8. If Francesca had had her life to live over again, would she have gone with Robert in the earlier novel? If so, how would the lovers' lives have been different?

9. Who was the hero/heroine of this novel? Why?

Author Bio

Robert James Waller grew up in Rockford, Iowa, a midwestern town of 900 people, where his mother was a housewife and his father operated a small produce business. He was educated at the University of Northern Iowa and Indiana University where he received his doctorate. As a professor, Waller taught management, economics, and applied mathematics courses at the University of Northern Iowa (UNI) from 1968 to 1991, except for one year (1975-76) that he spent on leave at the Battelle Memorial Institute in Columbus, Ohio. From 1979 to 1986 he also served as dean of UNI's College of Business.

He has lectured and published widely in the fields of problem-solving and decision making and has worked as a consultant to business corporations and government institutions throughout the United States and around the world. An all-conference basketball player in college, Waller also worked for over twenty years as a musician (guitar, flute, singer/songwriter) playing nightclubs and concerts, and is a serious photographer who travels the world for his images.

Among his many academic and general publications is the best-selling novel, **The Bridges of Madison County**, which has gone to press 64 times, has 12 million hardcover copies in print, is published in 36 languages, spent 164 weeks (over 3 years) on *The New York Times* bestseller list, and is the #1 selling hardcover novel of all time.

Robert lives quietly on a remote ranch in the high-desert mountains of west Texas, with his friend, Linda, along with 4 dogs, 2 horses, and 2 cats. As the spirit moves him, he pursues his interests in music, photography, writing, economics, and applied mathematics.

Critical Praise

"Passing years make crossing these **Bridges** sweeter...Waller is a serious writer who wrestles with the big issues. Death. Aging. Loneliness. The inevitable humiliations that physical frailty brings. And the fact that choosing one road in life

means you sacrifice the pleasures and satisfactions that another path would have brought..now I understand why all those millions of people loved Waller's **The Bridges of Madison County** and probably will find pleasure in **A Thousand County Roads**."

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