

= The Time Traveler 's Wife =

The Time Traveler 's Wife is the debut novel of American author Audrey Niffenegger , published in 2003 . It is a love story about a man with a genetic disorder that causes him to time travel unpredictably , and about his wife , an artist , who has to cope with his frequent absences and dangerous experiences . Niffenegger , frustrated in love when she began the work , wrote the story as a metaphor for her failed relationships . The tale 's central relationship came to her suddenly and subsequently supplied the novel 's title . The novel , which has been classified as both science fiction and romance , examines issues of love , loss , and free will . In particular , it uses time travel to explore miscommunication and distance in relationships , while also investigating deeper existential questions .

As a first @-@ time novelist , Niffenegger had trouble finding a literary agent . She eventually sent the novel to MacAdam / Cage unsolicited and , after an auction took place for the rights , Niffenegger selected them as her publishers . The book became a bestseller after an endorsement from author and family friend Scott Turow on The Today Show , and as of March 2009 had sold nearly 2 @.@ 5 million copies in the United States and the United Kingdom . Many reviewers were impressed with Niffenegger 's unique perspectives on time travel . Some praised her characterization of the couple , applauding their emotional depth ; others criticized her writing style as melodramatic and the plot as emotionally trite . The novel won the Exclusive Books Boeke Prize and a British Book Award . A film version was released in August 2009 .

= = Plot summary = =

Using alternating first @-@ person perspectives , the novel tells the stories of Henry DeTamble (born 1963) , a librarian at the Newberry Library in Chicago , and his wife , Clare Anne Abshire (born 1971) , an artist who makes paper sculptures . Henry has a rare genetic disorder , which comes to be known as Chrono @-@ Impairment , that causes him to involuntarily travel through time . When 20 @-@ year @-@ old Clare meets 28 @-@ year @-@ old Henry at the Newberry Library in 1991 at the opening of the novel , he has never seen her before , although she has known him most of her life .

Henry begins time traveling at the age of five , jumping forward and backward relative to his own timeline . When he leaves , where he goes , or how long his trips will last are all beyond his control . His destinations are tied to his subconscious ? he most often travels to places and times related to his own history . Certain stimuli such as stress can trigger Henry 's time traveling ; he often goes jogging to keep calm and remain in the present . He also searches out pharmaceuticals in the future that may be able to help control his time traveling . He also seeks the advice of a geneticist , Dr. Kendrick . Henry cannot take anything with him into the future or the past ; he always arrives naked and then struggles to find clothing , shelter , and food . He amasses a number of survival skills including lock @-@ picking , self @-@ defense , and pickpocketing . Much of this he learns from older versions of himself .

Once their timelines converge " naturally " at the library ? their first meeting in his chronology ? Henry starts to travel to Clare 's childhood and adolescence in South Haven , Michigan , beginning in 1977 when she is six years old . On one of his early visits (from her perspective) , Henry gives her a list of the dates he will appear and she writes them in a diary so she will remember to provide him with clothes and food when he arrives . During another visit , he inadvertently reveals that they will be married in the future . Over time they develop a close relationship . At one point , Henry helps Clare frighten and humiliate a boy who abused her . Clare is last visited in her youth by Henry in 1989 , on her eighteenth birthday , during which they make love for the first time . They are then separated for two years until their meeting at the library .

Clare and Henry marry , but Clare has trouble bringing a pregnancy to term because of the genetic anomaly Henry may presumably be passing on to the fetus . After six miscarriages , Henry wishes to save Clare further pain and has a vasectomy . However a version of Henry from the past visits Clare one night and they make love ; she subsequently gives birth to a daughter , Alba . Alba is diagnosed

with Chrono @-@ Impairment as well but , unlike Henry , she has some control over her destinations when she time travels . Before she is born , Henry travels to the future and meets his ten @-@ year @-@ old daughter on a school field trip and learns that he dies when she is five years old .

When he is 43 , during what is to be his last year of life , Henry time travels to a Chicago parking garage on a frigid winter night where he is unable to find shelter . As a result of the hypothermia and frostbite he suffers , his feet are amputated when he returns to the present . Henry and Clare both know that without the ability to escape when he time travels , Henry will certainly die within his next few jumps . On New Year 's Eve 2006 Henry time travels into the middle of the Michigan woods in 1984 and is accidentally shot by Clare 's brother , a scene foreshadowed earlier in the novel . Henry returns to the present and dies in Clare 's arms .

Clare is devastated by Henry 's death . She later finds a letter from Henry asking her to " stop waiting " for him , but which describes a moment in her future when she will see him again . The last scene in the book takes place when Clare is 82 years old and Henry is 43 . She is waiting for Henry , as she has done most of her life .

= = Composition and publication = =

Niffenegger is an artist who teaches at the Center for Book and Paper Arts at Columbia College Chicago , where she prepares editions of handpainted books . She produced some of her earlier works in editions of ten copies , which were sold in art galleries . However , she decided that *The Time Traveler 's Wife* would have to be a novel : " I got the idea for the title , and when I draw I have this big drawing table covered with brown paper , and I write ideas down on the paper . So I wrote down this title and after a while I started to think about it . I couldn 't think of a way to make it a picture book because still pictures don 't represent time very well , so I decided to write a novel . " She was intrigued by the title because " it immediately defined two people and their relationship to each other " . Niffenegger said that its source was an epigraph to J. B. Priestley 's 1964 novel *Man and Time* : " Clock time is our bank manager , tax collector , police inspector ; this inner time is our wife . " Drawing her central theme from this image , she says , " Henry is not only married to Clare ; he 's also married to time . " Other authors whom Niffenegger has cited as influencing the book include Richard Powers , David Foster Wallace , Henry James , and Dorothy Sayers .

She has said the story is a metaphor for her own failed love affairs and that " I had kind of got the idea that there 's not going to be some fabulous perfect soulmate out there for me , so I 'll just make him up . " She also drew on her parents ' marriage for inspiration ? her father spent the bulk of each week traveling . Despite the story 's analogies to her own life , Niffenegger has forcefully stated that Clare is not a self @-@ portrait ; " She 's radically different . I am much more willful and headstrong I don 't think I could go through a lifetime waiting for someone to appear , no matter how fascinating he was . "

Niffenegger began writing the novel in 1997 ; the last scene , in which an aged Clare is waiting for Henry , was written first , because it is the story 's focal point . The narrative was originally structured thematically . Responding to comments from readers of early drafts of the manuscript , Niffenegger reorganized the narrative so that it largely followed Clare 's timeline . The work was finished in 2001 . With no history of commercial publication , Niffenegger had trouble finding interested literary agents ? 25 rejected the manuscript . In 2002 , she sent it unsolicited to the small , San Francisco @-@ based publisher MacAdam / Cage , where it reached Anika Streitfeld . Streitfeld , who became Niffenegger 's editor , " thought it was incredible . Right from the very beginning you feel like you are in capable hands , that this is someone who has a story to tell and who knows how to tell it . " She gave it to David Poindexter , the founder of the publishing firm , " who read it overnight and decided to buy the book " . However , Niffenegger had acquired an agent by this time , and several publishing houses in New York City were interested in the novel . The manuscript was put up for auction and MacAdam / Cage bid US \$ 100 @,@ 000 , by far the largest sum it had ever offered for a book . Although another publisher outbid them , Niffenegger selected MacAdam / Cage because they were so dedicated to her work . Also , Niffenegger explains that her " own natural

inclination is to go small . My background is in punk music ? I 'd always pick the indie company over the giant corporation . "

= = Genre = =

Reviewers have found *The Time Traveler 's Wife* difficult to classify generically : some categorize it as science fiction , others as a romance . Niffenegger herself is reluctant to label the novel , saying she " never thought of it as science fiction , even though it has a science @-@ fiction premise " . In Niffenegger 's view , the story is primarily about Henry and Clare 's relationship and the struggles they endure . She has said that she based Clare and Henry 's romance on the " cerebral coupling " of Dorothy Sayers 's characters Lord Peter Wimsey and Harriet Vane .

Time travel stories to which the novel has been compared include Jack Finney 's *Time and Again* (1970) F.M. Busby 's short story " If This Is Winnetka , You Must Be Judy " and the film *Somewhere in Time* (1980) . Henry has been compared to Billy Pilgrim of Kurt Vonnegut 's *Slaughterhouse @-@ Five* (1969) . Science fiction writer Terence M. Green calls the novel a " timeslip romance " . *The Time Traveler 's Wife* is not as concerned with the paradoxes of time travel as is traditional science fiction . Instead , as critic Marc Mohan describes , the novel " uses time travel as a metaphor to explain how two people can feel as if they 've known each other their entire lives " . Robert Nathan 's *Portrait of Jennie* , as novel , or film , is another obvious comparison , although Jennie , as a ghost , travels time in one direction , not randomly .

= = Themes = =

Niffenegger identifies the themes of the novel as " mutants , love , death , amputation , sex , and time " . Reviewers have focused on love , loss , and time . As Charlie Lee @-@ Potter writes in *The Independent* , the novel is " an elegy to love and loss " . The love between Henry and Clare is expressed in a variety of ways , including through an analysis and history of the couple 's sex life .

While much of the novel shows Henry and Clare falling in love , the end is darker and " time travel becomes a means for representing arbitrariness , transience , [and] plain bad luck " , according to *The Boston Globe* 's Judith Maas . As Andrew Billen argues in *The Times* , " The book may even serve as a feminist analysis of marriage as a partnership in which only the male is conceded the privilege of absence . " Several reviewers noted that time travel represents relationships in which couples cannot quite communicate with each other . Natasha Walter of *The Guardian* describes the story 's attention to " the sense of slippage that you get in any relationship ? that you could be living through a slightly different love story from the one your partner is experiencing . " She points , for example , to the section of the book which describes the first time Clare and Henry make love . She is 18 and he is 41 , already married to her in his present . After this interlude , he returns to his own time and his own Clare , who says ,

Henry 's been gone for almost twenty @-@ four hours now , and as usual I 'm torn between thinking obsessively about when and where he might be and being pissed at him for not being here ... I hear Henry whistling as he comes up the path through the garden , into the studio . He stomps the snow off his boots and shrugs off his coat . He 's looking marvelous , really happy . My heart is racing and I take a wild guess : " May 24 , 1989 ? " " Yes , oh , yes ! " Henry scoops me up ... and swings me around . Now I 'm laughing , we 're both laughing .

The novel raises questions about determinism and free will . For example , critic Dan Falk asks , " Given that [Henry 's] journey has ' already happened , ' should he not simply be compelled to act precisely as he remembers seeing himself act ? (Or perhaps he is compelled , and merely feels he has a choice ... ?) . " Although Henry seemingly cannot alter the future , the characters do not become " cynical " and , according to Lee @-@ Potter , the novel demonstrates that people can be changed through love . Walter notes that there is a " quasi @-@ religious sense " to the inevitability of Henry 's and Clare 's lives and deaths . Niffenegger , however , believes that the novel does not depict destiny but rather " randomness and meaninglessness " .

= = Reception = =

The hardback edition of *The Time Traveler's Wife* was published in the United States in September 2003 by MacAdam / Cage and in the United Kingdom by Random House on 1 January 2004 . MacAdam / Cage initiated an " extensive marketing drive " , including advertising in *The New York Times* and *The New Yorker* and a promotional book tour by Niffenegger . As a result , the novel debuted at number nine on the *New York Times* bestseller list . After popular crime writer Scott Turow , whose wife is a friend of Niffenegger , endorsed it on *The Today Show* , the first print run of 15 @, @ 000 sold out and 100 @, @ 000 more copies were printed . In Britain , the book received a boost from its choice as a Richard & Judy book club recommendation ? nearly 45 @, @ 000 copies were sold in one week . It was named the 2003 Amazon.com Book of the Year . A December 2003 article in *The Observer* reported that although " a tiny minority of American reviewers " felt that the novel was " gimmicky " , it was still " a publishing sensation " . At that point , the novel had been sold to publishers in 15 countries . As of March 2009 , it had sold almost 1 @. @ 5 million copies in the United States and 1 million in the United Kingdom . The success of *The Time Traveler's Wife* prompted almost every major publishing firm to attempt to acquire Niffenegger 's second novel , *Her Fearful Symmetry* , which has been called " one of the most eagerly sought @-@ after works in recent publishing history " . It garnered her an advance of US \$ 5 million from Scribner 's .

Reviewers praised Niffenegger 's characterization of Henry and Clare , particularly their emotional depth . Michelle Griffin of *The Age* noted that although Henry " is custom @-@ designed for the fantasy lives of bookish ladies " , his flaws , particularly his " violent , argumentative , depressive " nature , make him a strong , well @-@ rounded character . Charles DeLint wrote in *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* that one of Niffenegger 's " greatest accomplishments " in the novel was her ability to convey the emotional growth of Clare and Henry in character arcs while at the same time alternating their perspectives . Stephen Amidon of *The Times* , however , questioned the selfishness of the central characters .

Most reviewers were impressed with the premise of the novel , but critical of its melodramatic style . While Griffin praised the plot and concept as " clever " , she complained that Niffenegger 's writing is usually " pedestrian " and the story at times contrived . Heidi Darroch of the *National Post* agreed , contending that the story has an excess of overwrought emotional moments " which never quite add up to a fully developed plot " . Writing in *The Chicago Tribune* , Carey Harrison praised the originality of the novel , specifically the intersection of child @-@ bearing and time travel . Despite appreciating the novel 's premise , Amidon complained that the implications of Henry 's time @-@ traveling were poorly thought out . For example , Henry has foreknowledge of the September 11 attacks but does nothing to try to prevent them . Instead , on 11 September 2001 , he gets up early " to listen to the world being normal for a little while longer " . Amidon also criticized the novel 's " overall clumsiness " , writing that Niffenegger is " a ham @-@ fisted stylist , long @-@ winded and given to sudden eruptions of cliché " . Miriam Shaviv agreed to an extent , writing in *The Jerusalem Post* , " There are no original or even non @-@ clichéd messages here . True love , Niffenegger seems to be telling us , is timeless , and can survive even the worst circumstances And yet , the book is a page @-@ turner , delicately crafted and psychologically sound . " *The Library Journal* described the novel as " skillfully written with a blend of distinct characters and heartfelt emotions " ; it recommended that public libraries purchase multiple copies of the book .

= = Sequel = =

On September 23 , 2013 it was announced that a sequel to the novel is in the works . The sequel will focus on Henry and Clare 's daughter Alba as an adult . She finds herself in love with two different men : Zach , a normal man , and Oliver , a musician and fellow time @-@ traveler . The first 25 pages are currently available with the purchase of *The Time Traveler's Wife* eBook . In February 2014 , Niffenegger estimated that the book " should be ready in 2018 or so " .

= = Awards and nominations = =

= = Adaptations = =

= = = Audio book = = =

BBC Audio published an audio book of *The Time Traveler 's Wife* that was narrated by William Hope and Laurel Lefkow , described as " feisty readers " in one review .

HighBridge also produced an unabridged version in 2003 , which is twelve hours long and narrated by Maggi @-@ Meg Reed and Christopher Burns ; their performance has been described as " sincere and passionate " .

The 2006 Audible / HighBridge version is narrated by Fred Berman and Phoebe Strole and is 17 : 43 in length .

Audible.co.uk produced an unabridged version in 2008 , also narrated by Hope and Lefkow .

= = = Film = = =

The film rights for *The Time Traveler 's Wife* were optioned by Brad Pitt 's production company Plan B Entertainment , in association with New Line Cinema , before the novel was even published . The adaptation was written by Bruce Joel Rubin and directed by Robert Schwentke , and stars Rachel McAdams and Eric Bana . Filming began in September 2007 and the movie was released by Warner Bros. on 14 August 2009 . When asked about the prospect of her novel being turned into a film , Niffenegger said , " I 've got my little movie that runs in my head . And I 'm kind of afraid that will be changed or wiped out by what somebody else might do with it . And it is sort of thrilling and creepy , because now the characters have an existence apart from me . " In general , the film received mixed @-@ to @-@ negative reviews . For example , The New York Times wrote that the film was an " often ridiculous , awkward , unsatisfying and dour melodramatic adaptation " .