

*the*

*MIDWIFE*

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## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. One of *The Midwife's* main themes is learning to trust God, even after our worst fears come true. How does Rhoda's spiritual journey progress throughout the story? At what point does it falter? Does this remind you of your own spiritual journey? Why or why not?
2. *The Midwife* is told mainly through two viewpoints: Beth's and Rhoda's. Though they are actually one and the same, what differences do you see in their responses to hardship? What caused the change?
3. Rhoda loves her estranged mother almost to the same extent that she despises her. Have you ever had a family member who incites this kind of response in your heart? If so, how do you work through those feelings?
4. Have you ever had a family member or friend pass away before significant issues between you could be reconciled? How would you feel if you received a letter from them like the one that Rhoda receives from her

deceased mother? Would you welcome such a letter or not? Why?

5. Though Rhoda is a responsible head midwife, she rejects any medical advancement because she fears that modern technology, such as electricity, will illuminate the secrets of her past. In what ways does your past thwart your ability to move forward? Is there ever a time when it's okay not to "move on"? If so, how can you discern and identify such times?
6. Hopen Haus's derelict state could be seen as a symbol of Rhoda's and Amelia's broken spirits: their facades don't look as bad as their lives' crumbling foundations. In what ways do we portray that we have everything together? In what ways do cultural forms, such as social media, encourage this facade?
7. *The Midwife* is filled with relationships between mothers and daughters, both through birth and through circumstance. In a way, the midwife Fannie Graber is a surrogate mother to Beth, just as Beth is a surrogate mother to Amelia. Who has been like a mother to you? Do you feel like this relationship adds or detracts from the one with your birth mother? Why?
8. Could you see yourself serving as a gestational surrogate like Beth (no genetic connection), or a traditional surrogate like Mary Beth Whitehead (the child genetically half yours)? How do you think the

challenges—physical, emotional, and otherwise—would be different for surrogates in each of these methods?

9. Do you think that surrogacy should be legal? If so, do you think a surrogate should get paid for her services? Why or why not?
10. If you were a gestational surrogate like Beth, and the parents were contemplating terminating the pregnancy, how would you respond? Would you also run with the child, or do you believe that the parents retain the rights since you have no genetic connection? What rights should a surrogate have in such a scenario?
11. Do you think it is morally wrong for Beth to accept Thomas Fitzpatrick's money when she knows she isn't going to keep her promise to terminate the pregnancy? Do two wrongs ever make a right? Why or why not?
12. Do you think it's safe for midwives to deliver babies at a facility like Hopen Haus without a doctor presiding over them? Why or why not? In "real life," do you think Hopen Haus would be shut down for its primitive conditions?