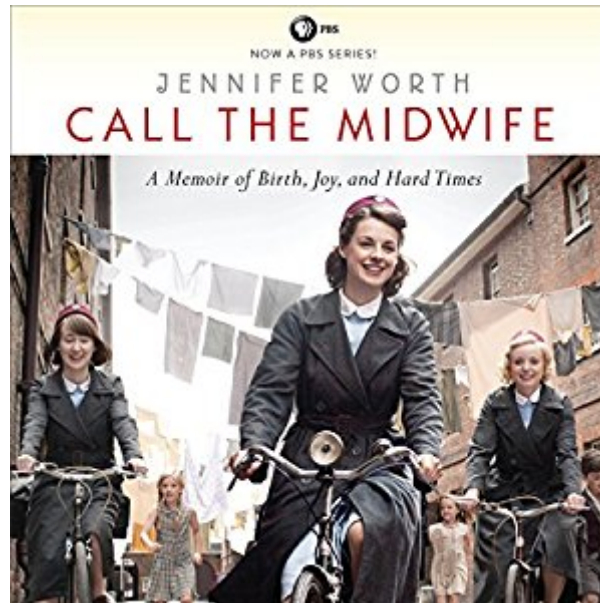


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# Call The Midwife: A Memoir Of Birth, Joy, And Hard Times



## Synopsis

Audie Award Nominee, Solo Narration - Female, 2013 At the age of 22, Jennifer Worth left her comfortable home to move into a convent and become a midwife in postwar London's East End slums. The colorful characters she met while delivering babies all over London - from the plucky, warm-hearted nuns with whom she lived to the woman with 24 children who couldn't speak English to the prostitutes and dockers of the city's seedier side - illuminate a fascinating time in history. Beautifully written and utterly moving, *Call the Midwife* will touch the hearts of anyone who is, and everyone who has, a mother.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

When I first heard about the book *THE MIDWIFE: A Memoir of Birth, Joy, and Hard Times* by Jennifer Worth, I just knew I wanted to read it. I have always been fascinated by the role of midwives in our history, and I thought the idea of the author living in a convent would be interesting. While I was thinking that I'd probably like this book, I can definitely say that *THE MIDWIFE* far exceeded my expectations! This is a major aside, but it might help explain my interest in the profession of midwifery. I think women who choose midwives for their birthing option have amazing experiences. However, I have to admit that I didn't choose to go that route -- mainly because I am a major chicken and wanted an epidural. (In fact, when I was admitted to the hospital to deliver my first daughter and was asked about my pain plan, I told them DRUGS - early and often.) I find it very ironic that my daughter was actually delivered by a midwife because the doctor never made it to the

delivery room in time! My husband and I agreed that the woman who delivered my daughter was a very supportive and inspirational person who made my delivery extra-special. Since THE MIDWIFE is a memoir, I was expecting it to be all about the author Jennifer Worth. I figured that this book would include information about how the author became a midwife -- the reason behind her decision as well as lots of information on her training, etc. However, much to my surprise, this book wasn't really all about Ms. Worth. Rather, the "memoir" was filled with amazing stories about the mothers (and others) that she encountered during her years as a midwife. In addition, I was surprised by how readable this book was -- there were so many touching stories as well as humorous ones that existed within the pages of this book.

Jennifer Worth's tale of her time as a midwife in the Docklands of London's East End in the 1950's reads more like a Dickensian novel from the 1850's. She explains that by the early 1960's, the East-ender Cockney culture and dockworker-dominated economy in this part of London came quietly to an end. This culture had sustained itself for more than 100 years with little change, highly insulated from outside influences. "The Midwife: A Memoir of Birth, Joy and Hard Times" is more than a tale of delivering babies. It is a work of history and anthropology as well as a personal memoir. The chapter-by-chapter blend of all these elements is told by a woman with a keen eye to all that she saw and experienced. No detail escapes her sharp eye. Each chapter is a story unto itself. The chapters roll up to an epic tale. Why did this culture end in the early 1960's? Worth offers up three reasons for this: loss of dockyard jobs; demolition of the tenements; and arrival of the pill resulting in much smaller family size. Huge families were still the norm in the Docklands of the East End in the 1950's as they had been for many decades. Families typically lived in two or three-room tenements, some without running water and most without a bathroom. No one practiced birth control. Young people married young. Many of the tenement blocks were built in the 1840's and 1850's. Those that survived World War II bombing had undergone little structural alteration in the years since. This type of living would support a modest working-class family that allowed a measure of dignity in an era still largely missing the social support systems and welfare in Britain today.

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