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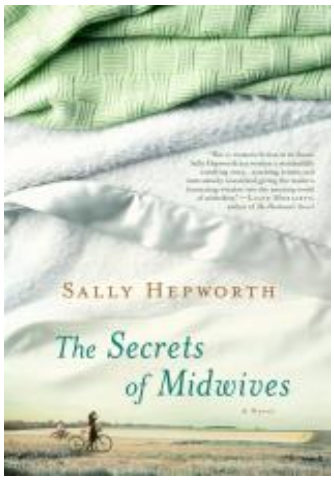
The Secrets of Midwives

by Sally Hepworth



About the Book

"With empathy and keen insight, Sally Hepworth delivers a page-turning novel about the complex, lovely, and even heartbreaking relationships between mothers and daughters."

--- Emily Giffin

Three generations of women. Secrets in the present and from the past. A captivating tale of life, loss and love...

Neva Bradley, a third-generation midwife, is determined to keep the details surrounding her own pregnancy --- including the identity of the baby?s father --- hidden from her family and co-workers for as long as possible. Her mother, Grace, finds it impossible to let this secret rest. The more Grace prods, the tighter Neva holds to her story, and the more the lifelong differences between private, quiet Neva and open, gregarious Grace strain their relationship. For Floss, Neva?s grandmother and a retired midwife, Neva?s situation thrusts her back 60 years in time to a secret that eerily mirrors her granddaughter?s --- one which, if revealed, will have life-changing consequences for them all.

As Neva?s pregnancy progresses and speculation makes it harder and harder to conceal the truth, Floss wonders if hiding her own truth is ultimately more harmful than telling it. Will these women reveal their secrets and deal with the inevitable consequences? Or are some secrets best kept hidden?

Discussion Guide

1. Grace?s response to Neva?s refusal to reveal the identity of her baby?s father is complex: ?Despite my shock and frustration, a pleasant surge of adrenaline rushed through me? Neva was rebelling. And despite my desperation to know the parentage of my grandchild-to-be, I was excited.? What does Grace mean by this? Why does she feel this way? How do we see the relationship between Grace and Neva change as the story progresses?

2. As Floss tells the story that she has been hiding bit by bit throughout the novel, did you have any guesses as to what the secret would ultimately be? How did your predictions change as the story was revealed? Did the truth surprise you, or were you able to figure it out?

3. Did you have any guesses as to who the father of Neva?s baby was? Were you surprised when he was finally revealed?

4. Reflect on the structure of the novel. How does having all three women?s viewpoints give us a complex, richer picture of the women?s individual stories? How do Floss?s flashbacks to her past give us insight into their present situation?

5. We are able to observe Grace as weights her options for how to proceed during the homebirth that results in her suspension. Do you think she did the right thing during the birth? What would you have done in her position? Did your opinion of what she did remain the same or change after the conversation she has with the investigator from the Board of Nursing?

6. What did you think of Grace?s decision to continue to deliver babies secretly during her suspension? What was your response to Robert?s reaction when he found out?

7. Grace expresses strong views on the differences between delivering a baby in a hospital versus in a birthing center versus at home. What are the differences? What are her arguments for homebirth? Do you agree or disagree with her?

8. Did you learn anything new about midwifery, birthing or pregnancy in general while reading this novel? What surprised you the most about the birthing scenes?

9. When Neva watches Grace hold Mietta as they are about to leave the hospital, she observes that, ?They were connected by so much more than a gaze. I would have said it was a biological pull, but now, thinking of Gran, I wasn?t so sure.? In your opinion, what is that defines a family? What creates a familial bond?

10. Throughout the novel we see characters forced to confront unexpected situations and grapple with how to handle and react to them, knowing that their reactions will not only greatly affect themselves but the other people involved. Put yourself in the position of different characters such as Mark, Imogen, Patrick, Sean, Floss and Neva. How would you react if you were faced with their situations? Were there certain characters that you felt especially sympathetic towards? Were there others with whom you disagreed?

Author Bio

Sally Hepworth is the *New York Times* bestselling author of 10 novels, most recently MAD MABEL. Sally?s novels have been called ?darkly charming? and praised by au

Sally's novels have sold millions of copies worldwide and been translated into over 30 languages.

Sally lives in Melbourne, Australia, with her family.

Critical Praise

?THE SECRETS OF MIDWIVES is women's fiction at its finest. Sally Hepworth has written a wonderfully satisfying story about three generations of midwives. It's touching, tender and obviously meticulously researched, giving the reader a fascinating window into the amazing world of midwifery. A delightful read.?

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