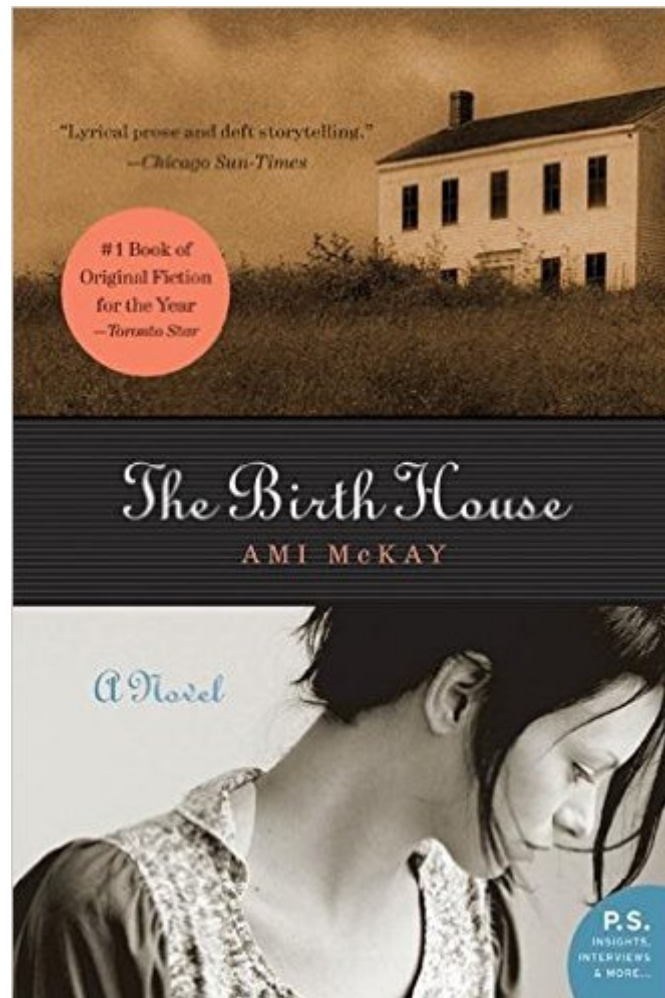


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# The Birth House: A Novel (P.S.)



## Synopsis

An arresting portrait of the struggles that women faced for control of their own bodies, *The Birth House* is the story of Dora Rare—the first daughter in five generations of Rares. As apprentice to the outspoken Acadian midwife Miss Babineau, Dora learns to assist the women of an isolated Nova Scotian village through infertility, difficult labors, breech births, unwanted pregnancies, and unfulfilling sex lives. During the turbulent World War I era, uncertainty and upheaval accompany the arrival of a brash new medical doctor and his promises of progress and fast, painless childbirth. In a clash between tradition and science, Dora finds herself fighting to protect the rights of women as well as the wisdom that has been put into her care.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

*The Birth House* follows the life of Dora Rare, who lives in a small and slightly isolated village off the coast of Nova Scotia, around the time of World War I. Dora, a young adolescent, is the first girl to be born in many generations of the Rare family genealogy. This alone gives the town enough rumors to spread about her and her family. But when family circumstances force her to choose between staying with her "proper" aunt Fran or the local midwife Miss Babineau for the winter, she chooses to stay with the midwife. Rumors and stories abound. Many of the local townspeople view Miss Babineau, and now Dora, as witches or something of the like, and most keep their distance from the both of them; that is until a child is sick, a woman has gynecological concerns, or a baby is being born into the world. In all of those instances the townspeople come running to Miss Babineau for

help, and soon to Dora as well. The Art of Midwifery The Birth House gives an enchanting example of how the practices of traditional midwifery were passed on from generation to generation. Being a midwife, which means "with woman", was not and is not just about catching babies. In this story, traditional midwifery takes on a role for women that meets their needs and far exceeds the medical model of care. Miss Babineau does much more for the community than attend labors. Her wisdom abounds in many areas such as mixing up syrups and herbs for the sick that bring down fevers and soothe sore throats and coughs. Politics and Society Through this story we also see a political attack against midwifery and a societal misunderstanding of this traditional art. Gilbert Thomas, a medical doctor from a nearby town, continually threatens Dora and Miss Babineau with prosecution.

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