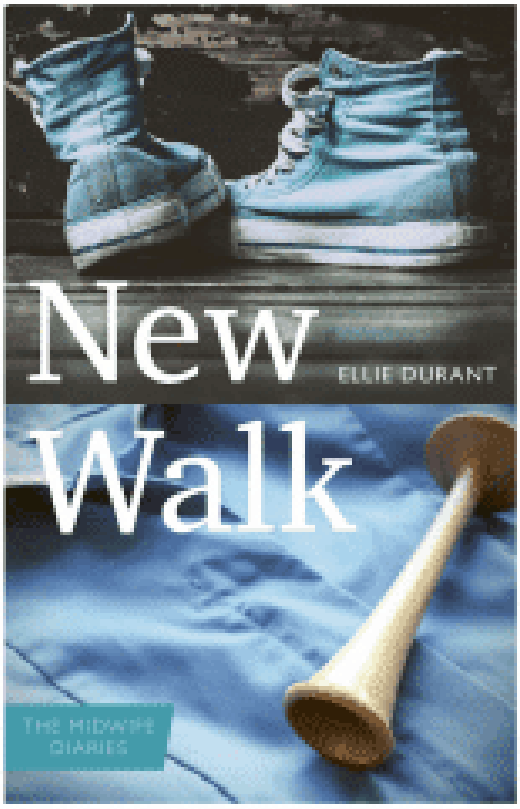



## Description




Ordinarily, I avoid e-books. I love escaping into a ‘real’ book with a spine to crack and pages to turn. However, there was such a lot of anticipation around Ellie Durant’s first novel that I bit the bullet and downloaded it to my e-reader on its release date so I could get started.

I don't regret doing that as, despite a 13-hour placement shift in the middle, I devoured the book in just two days. It's one of those books where you decide to read 'just one more chapter' and find, an hour later, that you've read five! It's compelling with a deceptively deft, light touch. I say 'deceptively' because the subject matter isn't always easy. Thereare some meaty themes in this novel about women, their relationships, their autonomy, their rights, their caring responsibilities and the choices they make – in all areas of life, not just birth.

Chloe, the main character, is an engaging narrator. She's young, but feels like an old soul, and she's earnestly passionate about her chosen career.

I found the sections of the book about her progress through the first year of her midwifery degree particularly readable. I'm a student midwife, albeit a mature one, and I found Chloe's university experiences chimed with my own. I loved the astute, humorous observations about suddenly becoming immersed in such an intense, responsible role and I enjoyed seeing Chloe navigate all the complex joys (and politics) of placement.

I tried to step outside myself and assess whether these sections would appeal to somebody without a connection to the world of midwifery and I think they would. I revisited some of these chapters and saw that aspects of Chloe's training were often cleverly and subtly explained within the narrative so these portions of the novel could be enjoyed without specialist knowledge of the profession.

The parts of the novel which explored Chloe's private life were interesting and tackled some big topics skilfully but felt, in places, a little less assuredly written. I wasn't completely convinced by the characterisation of Chloe's partner, Christopher, who got substantially more page time than other people in Chloe's life but still felt quite sketchy to me by the end.

In contrast, I really enjoyed meeting the large cast of well-drawn, supporting characters and was frustrated when I felt that an interesting and appealing character was introduced to serve a purpose in advancing Chloe's story but was not revisited later in the story.

I understand that there might be a sequel and I'm delighted by this as I really want to read about Chloe's progression as a student midwife and see what happens in the aftermath of the turbulent events at the end of this novel. Moreover, I'm nosey and I want to know more about the some of the supporting characters whose fascinating stories were interwoven with Chloe's plot.

Overall, this novel is a delight and I think most readers will find something within it to capture their attention and draw them into the plot.

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**Victoria Jones (Student Midwife at UCLAN)**

New walk is a novel about Chole, a teenager from Leicester who is following in her late mother's footsteps to become a midwife by commencing an undergraduate degree in midwifery. The story begins with Chole's journey through the application process and her first year of training. Chole is a passionate, strong, resilient character with the utmost integrity.

Since her mother passed away Chole takes the role of responsible adult in the household, her father's grief causing a downward spiral leading to substance addiction. Chole also juggles a difficult love life and the challenges of a sister who is often absent, this results in many highs and lows as she navigates her studentship.

During placement Chole experiences a variety of difficult situations; understanding substance abuse in pregnancy and the impacts on baby, supporting women who choose not to have certain interventions and a difficult relationship with her sign off mentor. Although challenging at times, Chole always has women at the centre of her care.

As a student midwife myself I found the book relatable and often comforting as the course can be difficult. As a student midwife you learn how to juggle; writing assignments, revising for exams, university lectures and placement…. It's no easy ride and I haven't even mentioned home life.

It is comforting to know that it is normal to feel overwhelmed at times, indeed this could be mistaken for feelings offailure or that the course is beyond your capabilities. New Walk reflects this perfectly, making the story feel so realistic.

At times I found the book emotional especially when challenging topics such as termination of pregnancy, but Ellie captures it perfectly, discussing it in detail, both medically and psychologically.

This quote captures the essence of these situations perfectly:

> '***Everyone you meet is fighting a battle you know nothing about. Be kind. Always'***

To me, being a midwife means being '*with women'*, whether that women is pregnant, a colleague or friend. New Walk highlighted the importance of looking after each other and empowering all women.

New walk is a fabulous read which I highly recommend for anyone especially for midwives, student midwives and aspiring midwives. I can't wait for the next book to see where Choles journey takes her in the next year of her training.

https://youtu.be/Pn4Wz-DTX3E

Link to Ellie Durant's website Midwifediaries.com

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