



Birthing from Within

Reading List for Birth as a Heroic Journey

The following reading list for the doula and childbirth educator training program, Birth As a Heroic Journey, is divided into three parts.

Part 1 consists of books that are required because they are integrated into the training modules and/or are central to your work as a BfW practitioner.

Part 2 consists of twelve categories with suggested titles. For certification, you are required to read at least one book in each of these categories, but you do *not* have to stick to the suggested titles -- those are just there to inspire you. We invite you to search out titles that excite you and are relevant to your work, identity, and community. You can start by searching online for one suggested title or author and see what else comes up; you can ask your friends, colleagues, and families for recommendations; you can get lost in a bookstore or library and see what finds you. You are also welcome to count books that you have *already read*. Record the titles of the books you choose on the [Required Reading Checklist](#).

Part 3 consists of suggestions for continued study. These are not required; they're books that have inspired and deepened our practices as birth workers, thinkers, and human beings. We hope that they inspire you to keep learning, thinking, building your library, and sharing with your community!

Some general notes:

- You do *not* need to obtain all of these books at once. The modules will indicate when you need a certain book; you may read the ones that don't appear in the modules at your own pace. The first readings will be from *Ancient Map for Modern Birth*, *Heart Centered Pregnancy Journal*, and *Inanna, Queen of Heaven and*



Earth, so you should obtain those three books first. And don't forget, for Part 2 of the list, you can count books that you have *already read*.

- We acknowledge that assuming the financial and practical ease of procuring and reading this many books is a perspective of privilege. We encourage you to use libraries, borrow from peers, buy used, and join our [Facebook group devoted to book-sourcing and book-trading](#). E-books and audiobooks are of course completely acceptable options. Take your time; do what you can.
- If you would like to read *Birthing Justice*, which is a relatively costly academic book, we have a deal with the publisher that gives us 30% off the print version and free standard shipping, if [ordered directly from them](#) using the promo/discount code SS213.
- Generally speaking, it is ideal to read the most recent editions of books, particularly with those that contain factual information.
- Many of the books on this list use cis-normative/non-inclusive language. This includes *Birthing from Within* (1998) and *Ancient Map for Modern Birth* (2017), which were written by BfW founder Pam England. While we cannot change the language in those books, all of BfW's current training materials use gender-neutral, inclusive language, as do post-2017 publications written by current and former members of the BfW leadership team.
- An asterisk (*) indicates that the book was written by a current or former member of the BfW leadership team.
- If you are in the U.S. and wish to support BfW through the use of an affiliate link at Bookshop.org where your purchases support local bookstores, many titles are available [here](#).
- This list is a working document: we revisit it frequently to ensure that it remains current, relevant, and useful. Let us know if there are titles that you think might be helpful additions by using [this form](#).

Part 1: Required Books

- Pam England, *Birthing from Within: An Extra-Ordinary Guide to Childbirth Preparation**
- Pam England, *Ancient Map for Modern Birth**



- Thich Nhat Hanh, *The Miracle of Mindfulness: An Introduction to the Practice of Meditation*
 - Nikki Shaheed, *Heart Centered Pregnancy Journal: Cultivating Intuition, Connection, and Resilience for Pregnancy, Birth, and Postpartum**
 - Penny Simkin, *The Birth Partner: A Complete Guide to Childbirth for Dads, Partners, Doulas, and All Other Labor Companions* (2018 edition or later)
 - Diane Wolkstein and Samuel Noah Kramer, *Inanna, Queen of Heaven and Earth: Her Stories and Hymns from Sumer*, pp. ix-xix; 51-89; 115-173
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Part 2: Required Categories with Book Suggestions

General Pregnancy/Birth

- Erica Chidi Cohen, *Nurture: A Modern Guide to Pregnancy, Birth, Early Motherhood and Trusting Yourself and Your Body*
- Sheila Kitzinger, *The New Pregnancy and Childbirth: Choices and Challenges*
- Penny Simkin, April Bolding, Ann Keppler, and Janelle Durham, *Pregnancy, Childbirth and the Newborn: the Complete Guide* (2018 edition or later)

Breastfeeding/Bodyfeeding/Chestfeeding

- Kathleen Huggins, *The Nursing Mother's Companion* (2015 edition or later)
- Jack Newman and Teresa Pitman, *Dr. Jack Newman's Guide to Breastfeeding* (2015 edition or later)
- Diana West and Lisa Marasco, *The Breastfeeding Mothers' Guide to Making More Milk*
- Diane Wiessinger, Diana West, and Teresa Pitman, *The Womanly Art of Breastfeeding* (2010 edition or later)

Postpartum

- Kimberly Ann Johnson, *The Fourth Trimester: A Postpartum Guide to Healing Your Body, Balancing Your Emotions, and Restoring Your Vitality*
- Kathleen A. Kendall-Tackett, *The Hidden Feelings of Motherhood: Coping with Mothering Stress, Depression, and Burnout*



- Karen Kleiman and Valerie Davis Raskin, *This Isn't What I Expected: Overcoming Postpartum Depression*
- Karen Kleiman and Amy Wenzel et al, *Dropping the Baby and other Scary Thoughts: Breaking the Cycle of Unwanted Thoughts in Parenthood*
- Walker Ladd and Sarah Brumpton et al, *Transformed by Postpartum Depression: Women's Stories of Trauma and Growth*
- Pacific Post Partum Support Society, *Postpartum Depression and Anxiety: A Self-Help Guide for Mothers*
- Sally Placksin, *Mothering the New Mother: Women's Feelings and Needs After Childbirth: A Support and Resource Guide*
- Joyce A. Venis and Suzanne McCloskey, *Postpartum Depression Demystified: An Essential Guide for Understanding and Overcoming the Most Common Complication after Childbirth*

Perinatal Nutrition

- Lily Nichols, *Real Food for Pregnancy: The Science and Wisdom of Optimal Prenatal Nutrition*
- Lily Nichols, *Real Food for Gestational Diabetes: An Effective Alternative to the Conventional Nutrition Approach*
- Heng Ou and Amely Greeven, *The First Forty Days: The Essential Art of Nourishing the New Mother*
- Nina Planck, *Real Food for Mother and Baby: The Fertility Diet, Eating for Two, and Baby's First Foods*

Race/Racism and Birth/Reproductive Justice

- Julia Chinyere Oparah et al, *Battling Over Birth: Black Women and the Maternal Health Care Crisis*
- Julia Chinyere Oparah and Alicia Bonaparte, *Birthing Justice: Black Women, Pregnancy, and Childbirth*
- Dorothy Roberts, *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty*
- Loretta Ross et al, *Radical Reproductive Justice: Foundation, Theory, Practice, Critique*
- Loretta Ross and Rickie Solinger, *Reproductive Justice: An Introduction*



General Race/Racism

- James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time*
- Ta-Nahisi Coates, *Between the World and Me*
- Angela Davis, *Women, Race, and Class*
- Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*
- Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*
- Edward Said, *Orientalism*
- Cornel West, *Race Matters*

LGBTQ+ Issues and Birth/Parenthood

- Harlyn Aizley, *Confessions of the Other Mother: Non-Biological Lesbian Moms Tell All*
- Trystan Reese, *How We Do Family: From Adoption to Trans Pregnancy, What We Learned about Love and LGBTQ Parenthood*
- Eric Rosswood, *Journey to Parenthood: The Ultimate Guide for Same-Sex Couples (Adoption, Surrogacy, Co-Parenting)*
- A. K. Summers, *Pregnant Butch: Nine Long Months Spent in Drag*

History of Birth/Midwifery in the U.S.

- Barbara Ehrenreich, *Witches, Midwives, and Nurses: A History of Women Healers*
- Eloise Greenfield and Daniel Minter, *The Women Who Caught The Babies: A Story of African American Midwives*
- Valerie Lee, *Granny Midwives and Black Women Writers: Double-Dutched Readings*
- Jenny M. Luke, *Delivered by Midwives: African American Midwifery in the Twentieth-Century South*
- Deborah Kuhn McGregor, *From Midwives to Medicine: The Birth of American Gynecology*
- Margaret Charles Smith, *Listen to Me Good: The Story of an Alabama Midwife*
- Susan L. Smith, *Japanese American Midwives: Culture, Community, and Health Politics, 1880-1950*
- Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *A Midwife's Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard, Based on Her Diary, 1785-1812*



Process Art and Creativity

- Pat B. Allen, *Art as a Way of Knowing: A Guide to Self-Knowledge and Spiritual Fulfillment through Creativity*
- Michele Cassou, *Point Zero: Creativity without Limits*
- Carol J. Levow, *Dare to Paint: Using Creativity for Self-Exploration*

Storytelling, Archetypes, Initiation, Ritual, Metaphor

- Jean Shinoda Bolen, *Close to the Bone: Life-Threatening Illness as a Soul Journey*
- Britta Bushnell, *Transformed by Birth: Cultivating Openness, Resilience, and Strength for the Life Changing Journey from Pregnancy to Parenthood**
- Pam England, *Labyrinth of Birth: Creating a Map, Meditations and Rituals for your Childbearing Year**
- Michael Meade, *The Water of Life: Initiation and the Tempering of the Soul*
- Lewis Mehl-Madrona, *Narrative Medicine: The Use of History and Story in the Healing Process*
- Carol S. Pearson, *Awakening the Heroes Within: Twelve Archetypes to Help Us Find Ourselves and Transform Our World*
- Maria Tatar, *The Heroine with 1001 Faces*

Traditional Stories, Folklore, Songs

- John Bierhorst, *History and Mythology of the Aztecs: The Codex Chimalpopoca*
- Italo Calvino, *Italian Folktales*
- Rafaela G. Castro, *Chicano Folklore: A Guide to the Folktales, Traditions, Rituals and Religious Practices of Mexican Americans*
- Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Maria Tatar, *The Annotated African-American Folktales*
- The Brothers Grimm collections of folk and fairy tales
- Edith Hamilton, *Mythology: Timeless Tales of Gods and Heroes*
- Zora Neale Hurston, *Every Tongue Got to Confess: Negro Folk-Tales from the Gulf States*
- Nelson Mandela, ed., *Favorite African Folktales*
- Yei Theodora Ozaki and Lucy Fraser, *Japanese Folktales*
- Jean Ritchie, *Folk Songs of the Southern Appalachians*
- Zitkala-Sa, *American Indian Stories, Legends, and Other Writings*



Mindful Communication, Solution-Focused Dialogue, Mentoring Skills

- Insoo Kim Berg and Peter Szabo, *Brief Coaching for Lasting Solutions*
- Steve de Shazer, *Words Were Originally Magic*
- Steven Heller, *Monsters and Magical Sticks: There's No Such Thing as Hypnosis?*
- Chungliang Al Huang and Jerry Lynch, *Tao Mentoring: Cultivate Collaborative Relationships in All Areas of Your Life*
- Johnny Kim, *Solution-Focused Brief Therapy: A Multicultural Approach*
- George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*
- James Lawley and Penny Tompkins, *Metaphors in Mind: Transformation through Symbolic Modeling*
- Sidney Rosen, *My Voice Will Go with You: The Teaching Tales of Milton H. Erickson*
- W. Brad Johnson and Charles R. Ridley, *The Elements of Mentoring: 75 Practices of Master Mentors*

Trauma

- Kimberly Ann Johnson, *Call of the Wild: How We Heal Trauma, Awaken Our Power, and Use it for Good*
- Peter Levine and Gabor Mate, *In an Unspoken Voice: How the Body Releases Trauma and Restores Goodness*
- Peter Levine and Ann Frederick, *Waking the Tiger: Healing Trauma*
- Resmaa Menakem, *My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies*
- David A. Treleaven and Willoughby Britton, *Trauma-Sensitive Mindfulness: Practices for Safe and Transformative Healing*
- Bessel van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma*
- Laura Van Dernoot Lipsky and Connie Burk, *Trauma Stewardship: An Everyday Guide to Caring for Self While Caring for Others*

Part 3: Inspiration for Continued Learning

- Kimberly Seals Allers, *The Big Letdown: How Medicine, Big Business, and Feminism Undermine Breastfeeding*



- Silvia Federici, *Revolution at Point Zero: Housework, Reproduction, and Feminist Struggle*
- Angela Garbes, *Like a Mother: A Feminist Journey through the Science and Culture of Pregnancy*
- Alexis Pauline Gumbs, China Martens, and Mai'a Williams, *Revolutionary Mothering: Love on the Front Lines*
- Sarah Blaffer Hrdy, *Mother Nature: Maternal Instincts and How They Shape the Human Species*
- Sarah Blaffer Hrdy, *Mothers and Others: The Evolutionary Origins of Mutual Understanding*
- Courtney Key Jarecki, *Homebirth Cesarean: Stories and Support for Families and Healthcare Providers*
- Marshall Klaus, John Kennell, and Phyllis Klaus, *The Doula Book: How a Trained Labor Companion Can Help You Have a Shorter, Easier and Healthier Birth*
- Jenny Lesley, *Birth after Cesarean*
- Jen McClellan, *My Plus Size Pregnancy Guide*
- Nicole Morales and Jamie Mossay, *The Breech Release: Opening Pathways for Midwifery and Prenatal Bodywork**
- Christine H. Morton and Elaine G. Clift, *Birth Ambassadors: Doulas and the Re-Emergence of Woman-Supported Birth in America*
- Nicola Salmon, *Fat and Fertile: How to Get Pregnant in a Bigger Body*
- Meredith Small, *Our Babies, Ourselves: How Biology and Culture Shape the Way We Parent*
- Adela Stockton, *Gentle Birth Companions: A Handbook for Doulas and Parents*
- Helene Vadeboncoeur, *Birthing Normally After a Cesarean or Two: A Guide for Pregnant Women: Exploring Reasons and Practicalities for VBAC*

