



Book club questions

1. *Gulliver's Travels* is a classic work of fiction which has inspired countless movies and books. How much did you know (or remember) about the original story before you read *Gulliver's Wife* and did this knowledge affect your reading experience? Why or why not?
2. Mary Burton is an absent character in *Gulliver's Travels* but the events of *Gulliver's Wife* are told predominantly through her eyes. How does this change in perspective affect your opinion of Mary and her husband, Lemuel Gulliver? How would you have responded to Gulliver's remarkable return?
3. How does Mary's profession as a midwife affect her relationship with her Wapping neighbours? How has the role of midwives changed between the time the book is set and the present?
4. When the book opens, Bess Gulliver still clings to the impossible fantasy of becoming a sailor like her father. Who is more responsible for indulging this fantasy – Mary

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- or Gulliver? Does withholding the realities of life damage our children or set them free?
5. How is the idea of power and big people versus small people explored through the novel? Who has power over whom? How has this changed by the end of the story?
 6. Contrast Bess's budding romance with Casper with Mary and Richard's relationship. How are they similar or different?
 7. The tagline of *Gulliver's Wife* is 'Birth, death, wonder.' How are these themes woven through the story?
 8. *Gulliver's Travels* was intended to be read as a parody of adventure tales like Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. Although Mary never actually leaves England, are the adventures we experience through her (and Bess's) eyes less engaging than those of Lemuel Gulliver or Robinson Crusoe? Why or why not?
 9. Which of the women in Mary's history have had the most influence on her decisions about family and career? Do the women in the community support each other?
 10. We know from *Gulliver's Travels* that Lemuel goes back to sea at the end of his first voyage and returns home again at least twice more with equally wild stories. Did you find the ending of *Gulliver's Wife* satisfying? How do you think Mary will react to Gulliver's return?