

Discussion questions for *A Midwife's Tale*

Chapter 6 – Once all of her children are on their own, Ballard struggles to balance home and midwifery. Why does she become frustrated with her duties as a housewife at this point? Ulrich takes care to note that Ballard's husband is ten years her senior and still able to carry out his responsibilities as a surveyor; why do you think this is so?

Chapter 7 – What does Ballard's diary tell the reader about the community's response to Dr. Vaughan and the new therapies he used in treating patients? How does Ulrich use this struggle between science and "approved" therapies to parallel the struggle over gender roles in New England at that time?

Chapter 8 – Ulrich notes in this chapter that Ballard's "troubles" seemed to stem from both "the physical processes of growing old... [and] the subtle passing of authority from one generation to another." How does she use Ballard's diary to demonstrate this?

Chapter 9 – How does the community respond to the Purrinton murders? How did this incident challenge or change the religious nature of the Kennebec region?

Chapter 10 – What did Ballard focus her productive energy on in the last years of her diary's entries? In what ways does this chapter inform the reader about the lives of post-Revolutionary New England women?