

Discussion Questions for *A Midwife's Tale*

Chapter 1: Describe Ballard's job as a midwife. What kinds of expertise did it require? In what ways did it allow her to interact with the men and women of the Kennebec River?

Chapter 2: Describe the economy that Ballard ran and maintained in her home. How did it differ from the economy of her husband, Ephraim? How specifically did her role as a housewife differ from her role as a midwife?

Chapter 3: What does the story of Mrs. Foster's rape tell the reader about the religious complexities of Hallowell? What can be learned from Ballard's response to the trial?

Chapter 4: What do Ballard's entries tell the reader about marriage customs in eighteenth century New England? How did marriage and marriage customs reinforce gender roles at this time?

Chapter 5: 1793 was a successful year for Ballard's practice. What do that year's records tell the reader about the changes within the community and within the practice of midwifery?