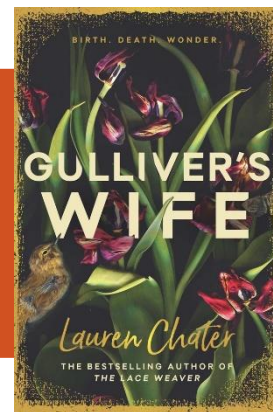




# Gulliver's Wife

Lauren Chater



## Author Background

Lauren Chater is the author of the bestselling historical novel *The Lace Weaver* and the baking compendium *Well Read Cookies: Beautiful Biscuits Inspired by Great Literature*. She is currently working on her third novel, *The Winter Dress* (Publication Due November 2021), inspired by a real 17<sup>th</sup> century gown found off the Dutch coast in 2014. In her spare time, she loves baking and listening to her children tell their own stories. She lives in Sydney with her husband and two children.

## Book Summary

**Birth. Death. Wonder ... One woman's journey to the edge of love and loyalty from the bestselling author of *The Lace Weaver***

*London, 1702.* When her husband is lost at sea, Mary Burton Gulliver, midwife and herbalist, is forced to rebuild her life without him. But three years later when Lemuel Gulliver is brought home, fevered and communicating only in riddles, her ordered world is turned upside down.

In a climate of desperate poverty and violence, Mary is caught in a crossfire of suspicion and fear driven by her husband's outlandish claims, and it is up to her to navigate a passage to safety for herself and her daughter, and the vulnerable women in her care.

When a fellow sailor, a dangerous man with nothing to lose, appears to hold sway over her husband, Mary's world descends deeper into chaos, and she must set out on her own journey to discover the truth of Gulliver's travels . . . and the landscape of her own heart.

## Discussion 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 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?

## References

- ❖ Simon & Schuster: <https://www.simonandschuster.com.au/books/Gullivers-Wife/Lauren-Chater/9781925596380>
- ❖ Goodreads: <https://www.goodreads.com/en/book/show/48908816-gulliver-s-wife>
- ❖ The Newton Review of Books: <https://newtownreviewofbooks.com.au/lauren-chater-gullivers-wife-reviewed-by-sally-nimon/>
- ❖ Booktopia Guest Blogs Lauren Chater <https://www.booktopia.com.au/blog/2020/03/30/gullivers-wife-lauren-chater-on-re-imagining-a-classic/>
- ❖ Lauren Chater: [www.laurenchater.com](http://www.laurenchater.com)