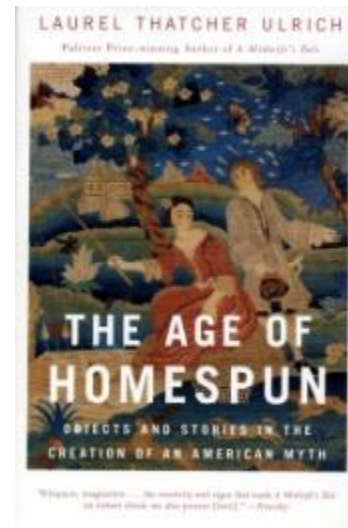


## Reading Guide:

### ***The Age of Homespun: Objects and Stories in the Creation of an American Myth***

Laurel Thatcher Ulrich (2001)



Please note: Our discussion will focus on Chapter 1 and Chapters 3-6.

#### Thought Questions:

1. Professor Ulrich covers a lot of ground in this book, from technical information about textile production to discussions of historiography (the way history is written). What did you think her goal was in writing the book when you began reading? After you were finished?
2. Each chapter begins with a focus on a particular historical object. Did any object in particular resonate with you? Was there an object that you found more compelling after the author's discussion?
3. What is the most important or memorable thing you will take away from having read this book? What do you wish the author had explored more deeply?
4. This is the first book we have read this year by a professional historian. Did you see that perspective in the book?
5. Were you glad you read this book? Would you recommend it to a friend? Do you want to read other works by this author? Are you inclined to read more books on this topic? Why or why not?
6. January and February's readings both addressed the history of women and textiles from very different perspectives. If you read both, did you see any common threads? Any points of contrast that made you reflect?
7. Are there related books, museum exhibitions, websites, or other resources that you would like to share with fellow readers of this book?

## **Author Biography**

Laurel Thatcher Ulrich is Phillips Professor of Early American History at Harvard University. Formerly a professor of American history at the University of New Hampshire, she is the author of **Good Wives** (1982) and numerous articles and essays on early American history. She won the Pulitzer Prize for History in 1991 for **A Midwife's Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard Based on Her Diary, 1785--1812**. Born and raised in the Rocky Mountain West, she has lived in New England since 1960. During her tenure as a MacArthur Fellow, she assisted in the production of a PBS documentary based on **A Midwife's Tale**. Her work is also featured on an award-winning Web site called dohistory.org. She and her husband, Gael Ulrich, are the parents of five grown children.

**If you liked *The Age of Homespun: Objects and Stories in the Creation of an American Myth*, you may enjoy these other books:**

### **Also by Laurel Thatcher Ulrich:**

#### ***Good Wives: Image and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England, 1650-1750* (1991)**

In these pages we encounter the New England housewife's domestic life and witness her occasional forays into the world of men. We see her borrowing from her neighbors, loving her husband, raising -- and, all too often, mourning -- her children, and even attaining fame as a heroine of frontier conflicts or notoriety as a murderess. Painstakingly researched, lively with scandal and homely detail, *Good Wives* is history at its best.

#### ***A Midwife's Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard, Based on Her Diary, 1785-1812* (1991)**

Drawing on the diaries of a midwife and healer in eighteenth-century Maine, this Pulitzer Prize-winning book illuminates the medical practices, household economies, religious rivalries, and sexual mores of the New England frontier.

### **Related Texts:**

#### ***In Small Things Forgotten: An Archaeology of Early American Life*, James Deetz (1996)**

According to Deetz, the past can be seen most fully by studying the small things; objects such as doorways, gravestones, musical instruments, and even shards of pottery fill in the cracks between large historical events and help us to understand the intricacies of daily life.

#### ***The Politics of Fashion in Eighteenth-Century America*, Kate Haulman (2011)**

Haulman explores how and why fashion--both as a concept and as the changing style of personal adornment--shaped the revolutionary-era struggles of the 1760s and 1770s, influenced national political debates, and helped to secure the exclusions of the new political order in eighteenth-century America.

#### ***The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities*, Richard Lyman Bushman (1993)**

Spanning the material world from mansions and silverware to etiquette books, city planning, and sentimental novels, Richard L. Bushman shows how a set of values originating in aristocratic court culture gradually permeated almost every stratum of American society and served to prevent the hardening of class consciousness.