

A Fugitive Truth

Introduction and inspirations:

Let's face it, there's not a lot of activities I can send you to do in libraries, other than to encourage you to use them and to support your public library. You'd be amazed at what resources you can find there, even if you're not looking for books. What I can tell you to do is check out [Shakespeare & Company](#). It's in Lenox, in western Massachusetts, and it's brilliant.

Emma is given a bottle of [The Macallan](#) by her good friends. I confess, I drink some bourbon and much more whisky, and have developed a nasty jones for single malts from [Speyside and Islay](#). When we went to Edinburgh, we spent several happy hours at the [Scotch Whisky Experience](#). There's nothing like a good whisky, a fire, and a book. A tolerable second is tea: I get mine from [Tealuxe](#).

One of the historians who really inspired me in both my professional careers is [Laurel Thatcher Ulrich](#). The books I thought about when writing AFT were *Good Wives: Image and Reality in the Lives of Women in Early New England, 1650-1750* (1982) and *A Midwife's Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard Based on Her Diary, 1785-1812* (which won the Pulitzer!). Go out. Find them. Read them now.

Questions:

1. Several different images of Faith are presented by the scholars and members of the staff at Shrewsbury, and Emma herself is never quite sure what she could believe from her conversation with her. Why?
2. The director of Shrewsbury told Emma that he wanted to build the library into a world class institution by consolidating the collections. This means he would sell off what he perceived to be less important materials (like the Chandler diary) to raise funds to preserve and buy other materials. Do you agree that not all historical data are equally important? Why or why not?
3. Michael is one odd guy. Did you find him:
 - a.) sexy and enigmatic?
 - b.) an arrogant jerk with boundary issues?
 - c.) a misunderstood genius?
4. Emma discussed the idea of the truth being more than a sum of facts. Doesn't "truth" and "fact" mean the same thing? If not, what's the difference?
5. Margaret Chandler's journal is a goldmine of information about ordinary life—and the lives of women and others—that Emma couldn't have learned from public documents. What would researchers 200 years from now be able to tell about you from the contents of your wallet and your trash?

6. Emma and Harry discuss the idea of bibliomania, or an extreme desire to collect and own books. Have you ever been so bewitched by a book—or something else—that you were tempted to do something crazy to get it?