

## Mary Roach

*“I will say that the morning commute can be livened up significantly.”*



▶ What do you get when you combine an inquisitive journalist with her inner 12-year-old? You get funny, informative books about dead bodies, sex, ghosts, and space travel. Add catchy titles—*Stiff*, *Bonk*, *Spook*, and *Packing for Mars*—and some great writing and research, and the result is Mary Roach’s series of bestsellers. Her newest volume, *Gulp*, is about the journey taken by that piece of steak or cake after you swallow it—from start to finish.

“Nobody really wants to consider what happens after food leaves your plate,” Roach says. No adult, that is. But our inner 12-year-old is dying to follow the trip from palate to—well, bottom. Imagine all the fascinating yucky processes that occur. And all the taboo words involved: bile, rectum, anal sphincter, to name but a few.

Now, imagine those words in an audiobook. Roach laughs, “I will say that the morning commute can be livened up significantly.” She reads aloud an email that has just come in from a reader. “There is something to be said for auditory reading. A good book makes me smile, giggle, even laugh. That was me today listening to *Gulp* on the bus.” Even in apparently private situations, warns Roach, “You have to plan your listening carefully with these books. A reader once told me about listening to *Bonk* in the car with the windows rolled down. They stopped at a light just when the topic involved some explicit description of sexual anatomy. The look they got from the person in the next vehicle!”

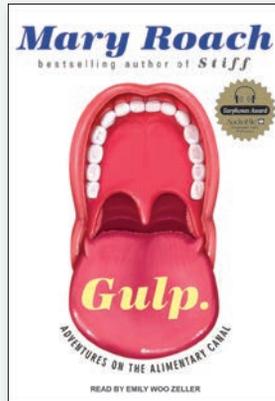
Roach has never actually heard one of her audiobooks all the way through. “It’s funny to hear someone else read what I wrote, so I just listen to snippets.”



**GULP: Adventures on the Alimentary Canal**  
 Mary Roach  
 Read by Emily Woo Zeller

What an amazing science writer and explorer Mary Roach, the author of *Stiff*, has become! Here she fearlessly delves into more taboo terrain, turning the topics of chewing, swallowing, digestion, and elimination into a fascinating biological adventure. Narrator Emily Woo Zeller complements Roach's bizarre details, witty style, and humorous attitude word by word. Zeller is undeterred by the detailed account of the alimentary canal—including its ins and outs—embracing the subject with aplomb and audible appreciation of the author's puns and jests. This appealing nonfiction work yields as much intrigue as any fictional thriller, all amid a foundation of well-researched medical facts. The listener continually learns how little we know about our bodies, nutrition, and the customs and biases of food consumption—global and historical. A. W.

Tantor Media 8.5 hrs. Unabridged  
 Trade Ed.: **CD** ISBN 9781452613420 \$44.99 (also **MP3, DD**)  
 Library Ed.: **CD** ISBN 9781452643427 \$95.99



*Zeller complements Roach's bizarre details, witty style, and humorous attitude.*

She previews the narrators by listening to them read other writers' work. And she applauds their skills. "There are definitely people who prefer to listen rather than to read. I hear from them all the time, so I know how important it is to get a good narrator. And the audiobook professionals who read my books have it right—the voice, stamina, everything. I can't really imagine how hard it must be."

One of the most challenging parts of her job is to find a unique narrative for each stand-alone chapter. "Then I have to find a place to go and a person to follow around. A lot of times I don't know what I'm going to discover until I get there. For *Gulp*, I was very lucky to stumble on people like Erika Silletti, the saliva researcher, and Richard Tracy, who set up an experiment to follow a mealworm into a stomach and observe it.

For the rectum chapter, I needed to think abstractly about the healthy rectum and imagine what would be the appropriate setting for the processes involved." Roach smiles as she adds, "I realized that a rectal contraband smuggler would have the perfect perspective." She called a prison warden and got her man.

Roach admits that while writing this book she was concerned about the level of detail she was adding "below the waist." "But when I submitted the manuscript, all the changes my editor wanted were above the waist. There were no edits from the stomach down. I was shocked!" she says in mock horror.

Research and writing consume much of Roach's time. But when not working, two of her favorite pastimes are perusing small-town thrift stores and visiting overseas supermarkets. "It's the storytelling part of me. In thrift stores, you find a wonderful random jumble of things that paint a picture of the people. It's the same with foreign supermarkets. They're a window into a culture. Oh yes, and I love to look at product names," she chortles. "In Iran, there's a dish-washing detergent called Barf. And Sweden has a candy bar called Plop."—Aurelia C. Scott

## More Listening

### BONK: THE CURIOUS COUPLING OF SCIENCE AND SEX

Mary Roach, read by Sandra Burr

Brilliance Audio Unabridged  
 Trade Ed.: **CD, MP3, DD**  
 Library Ed.: **CD, MP3, DD, PRE**

### PACKING FOR MARS: THE CURIOUS SCIENCE OF LIFE IN THE VOID

Mary Roach, read by Sandra Burr

Brilliance Audio Unabridged  
 Trade Ed.: **CD, MP3, DD**  
 Library Ed.: **CD, MP3, DD, PRE**

### SPOOK: SCIENCE TACKLES THE AFTERLIFE

Mary Roach, read by Bernadette Quigley

Brilliance Audio Unabridged  
 Trade Ed.: **CD, MP3, DD**  
 Library Ed.: **CD, MP3, DD, PRE**

### STIFF: THE CURIOUS LIVES OF HUMAN CADAVERS

Mary Roach, read by Shelly Frasier

Tantor Media Unabridged  
 Trade Ed.: **CD, MP3, DD**  
 Library Ed.: **CD, MP3**

