

## GULLIVER'S FURTHER TRAVELS

Although each of Gulliver's travels features an exotic, far-off land, Jonathan Swift's true point is always to highlight the shortcomings of his home country: England. As you read about Gulliver's further travels, think about what comment Swift is trying to make about his own society. What does he want his countrymen to change about themselves? After all, change is the heart of true satire.

After returning home from his adventure among the Lilliputians, Gulliver is home for only two months when he sets sail again—this time with the crew of the *Adventure*, bound for Surat (a city in India). A storm blows their ship far off course—far to the east—possibly to the western edge of North America. When they finally sight land, the captain sends a crew, including Gulliver, to explore. While the crew looks for drinking water, Gulliver explores another part of the island. Suddenly, the crewmen are set upon by "a huge creature" that chases them into the ocean and back to their ship. The ship departs without Gulliver, who was elsewhere investigating the shore of the new country. Eventually, Gulliver is discovered by several of these huge creatures that are, in reality, very large (giant-like) human beings. These giants prove to be friendly and curious, and eventually one of the giants, a farmer, takes Gulliver to his farmhouse where the farmer's friendly family receives him.

Of all the family, the farmer's daughter is the most fascinated by Gulliver. He seems like a walking, talking doll to her. She enjoys caring for him and even gives him a new name: Grildrig. She takes such good care of Gulliver that he calls her his *glumdalclitch* (nurse). News of Gulliver's living at the farmer's house spreads quickly, and several visitors come to see him. At the urging of one particular gentleman, the farmer decides to take Gulliver to the market place and to put him on display for others to see (for a price). This being successful, the farmer decides to take Gulliver on tour throughout the kingdom, including visiting the kingdom's metropolis, *Lorbrulgrud*. There Gulliver performs ten times a day for all who wish to see him. By this time, though, Gulliver has presented far too many performances; he is almost dead with fatigue.

The Queen asks for an audience with the farmer and Gulliver, and Gulliver performs admirably and respectfully for her. The Queen, being attracted to the novelty of this tiny man, buys Gulliver from the farmer. Included in this arrangement is the farmer's daughter, Glumdalclitch, who becomes a member of the Queen's court as Gulliver's nurse. Conversing with the King, Gulliver tells him about English customs and politics. The King is amused; he laughs at the fierceness of such tiny "insects." The King does not view Gulliver as a creature



similar to himself; he sees Gulliver as a vermin or pest. He calls him a *splacknuck*, which we can assume is some type of rodent. Gulliver dares not refute the King's opinion; indeed, before long, he adopts his host's point of view and begins to view himself (and the whole human race) as pests.

While the giants are kind to Gulliver, he is repulsed by their appearance. Since they are so much larger than he is, he can see every little freckle, hair, pimple, and mole on their skin. Even their most beautiful women seem ugly to him. Gulliver can also see that the flies that land on the giants' food are defecating on it, but the giants cannot see what he sees.

The King and Queen are happy with Gulliver, but there is one member of the royal entourage who is *not* happy: the Queen's dwarf, who is jealous because Gulliver has replaced him in the Queen's affection.

When the King and Queen go traveling about the country, they decide to take Gulliver along. Gulliver describes the island, the sea around the island, the city of Lorbrulgrud, the King's palace, Gulliver's method of travel on the island, several of the island's inhabitants, and some of the sights to see on the island. In describing the inhabitants of the island, Gulliver focuses on their illnesses and diseases. He mentions, for instance, giant beggars, horribly deformed, with lice crawling all over them. Gulliver compares the sights to similar sights in his homeland.

Gulliver's mishaps in the land of the giants continue. The Queen's dwarf drops barrel-sized apples on him; hailstones as big as tennis balls batter and bruise him; a bird of prey nearly grabs him; and a spaniel picks him up in his mouth and carries him to the royal gardener. Gulliver is insulted to be coddled and played with by the royal ladies of the court. To them, Gulliver is a toy, not a man, so they undress in front of him without a thought of modesty. He is particularly annoyed when they titillate themselves with his naked self—laying him on their bare skin. He feels like less of a man because they are not attracted to him at all.

Because Gulliver is a sailor, the Queen has a toy boat made for him and a trough in which to sail. The royal ladies also take part in the game and make a brisk breeze with their fans. Disaster strikes when a frog hops into the trough and nearly swamps Gulliver's boat, but Gulliver bravely drives the monster off with an oar. One day a monkey seizes Gulliver and carries him to the top of the palace. Gulliver is finally rescued and, when he recovers, is summoned by the King, who is curious to know whether Gulliver was afraid. Gulliver boasts that he could have protected himself with his sword. The King guffaws at the little *splacknuck's* pride.

Gulliver entertains himself and demonstrates his ingenuity by using the King's beard stubble to make a comb and by using strands of the Queen's hair to make several chairs and a purse. In addition, Gulliver plays the spinet (piano) for the King and Queen by using sticks formed as cudgels to bang on the keys as he runs up and down a piano bench. The King also holds several audiences with Gulliver to discuss the culture of Gulliver's home country, England. In these audiences, as requested by the King, Gulliver explains the role of the people in the operation of the government, in religion, and in the legal system, among other topics.

Gulliver decides that the King's lack of enthusiasm for England springs from his ignorance of the country. To remedy this, Gulliver offers to teach the King about England's magnificence. The first lesson concerns one of England's most valuable assets: gunpowder. Describing its effects graphically and at great length, Gulliver tells the King that gunpowder would be a great

boon for him; with it, the King could reduce all his subjects to slavery. The King is horrified by the suggestion. He rejects such a bloodthirsty and inhumane proposal, warning the "impotent and groveling insect" (Gulliver) that he will be executed if he ever mentions gunpowder again. Gulliver can't understand why the giant king would not want such a weapon at his disposal.

Gulliver drops the subject of gunpowder and gives us an account of the customs and government of his hosts. The Brobdingnagian army is a national guard or militia; there are no professional soldiers. As for government, it is extremely simple. There are no refinements, mysteries, intrigues, or state secrets. Government depends upon common sense, mercy, and swift justice. Brobdingnagian learning consists only of morality, history, poetry, and practical mathematics. The Brobdingnagians cannot understand abstract reasoning or ideas. Their laws must contain only twenty-two words and must be absolutely clear. Their libraries are small, and their books are written in a clear style.

Gulliver spends two years in Brobdingnag, but he is not happy despite the royal family's pampering. He is afraid that he will never escape and will turn into a sort of domestic, albeit royal, pet. Escape seems impossible; chance, however, intervenes: On a trip to the seashore, an eagle swoops down, snatches up the box Gulliver travels in, and drops it into the sea. The box is driven by the wind close to an English ship and is spied by some sailors, who retrieve Gulliver and his possessions. Gulliver does not adjust easily to his fellow Englishmen. After living two years in a land of giants, he has convinced himself that all Englishmen are midgets. Everything looks tiny back home, and he feels like a giant. In time Gulliver's sense of perspective heals.

## READING QUESTIONS

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1. What can you tell about Gulliver since he is so eager to begin a second voyage so soon after returning from his first one? Explain.
2. How does this part of *Gulliver's Travels* compare and contrast with his voyage to Lilliput?
3. In this second part of *Gulliver's Travels*, Swift turns the tables on Gulliver. In Lilliput Gulliver was a giant, but here he is tiny. There is another interesting shift, too. Even though they were tiny, Gulliver viewed the Lilliputians as little humans. The giant Brobdingnagians, however, never view Gulliver as a smaller version of a creature like themselves. They refuse to see his "humanity" and treat him like a weasel, an insect, or other pest-like animal. In Swift's time (or your own time) are there any groups of people who are treated as less-than-human? Explain.
4. As far as physical appearance, Gulliver is repulsed by the giants because he can see all their faults that they do not notice. How is this symbolic?
5. The Brobdingnagians treatment of Gulliver makes him feel insignificant, so he tries to impress their king with stories of his people's accomplishments. Ironically, this makes them think even less of Gulliver's race until the King declares that humans must be the "most pernicious race of odious little vermin that nature ever suffered to crawl upon the surface of the earth," which is the most critical comment ever made about mankind in literature. Do you agree with it?
6. How could the land of the giant Brobdingnagians be viewed as a utopia?

7. What connection does Swift make between the size of his imaginary races—the Lilliputians and the Brobdingnagians—and their morality? How is their size symbolic?
8. Jonathan Swift has been accused of being a *misanthrope*, a hater of mankind. Do you agree?
9. Do Swift's criticisms of mankind label us as hopeless or does he see hope for us? Explain.