



Gulliver's Travels

JONATHAN SWIFT

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Gulliver's Travels



'Soon I felt something alive moving along my leg and up my body to my face, and when I looked down, I saw a very small human being, only fifteen centimetres tall . . . I was so surprised that I gave a great shout.'

But that is only the first of many surprises which Gulliver has on his travels. He visits a land of giants and a flying island, meets ghosts from the past and horses which talk . . .

(Word count 15,325)



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- ◀ STAGE 1
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GULLIVER'S TRAVELS

Gulliver begins his first journey in 1699 and, after a storm at sea, he finds himself in a country called Lilliput, where the people are only fifteen centimetres tall. He finally escapes and goes home, but soon leaves on another journey – to Brobdingnag, then to Laputa and Luggnagg, and last, to the even stranger country of the Houyhnhnms . . .

As a young man, Gulliver is proud of being human, and proud of his own country, England. When he travels through these strange lands, talking to giants, and magicians, and horses, at first he laughs at their extraordinary ideas and strange opinions. But as the years pass, he begins to wonder and to ask himself questions . . . 'Why do we human beings fight wars, lie, cheat, steal, and kill each other? Isn't there a better way to live?'

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CONTENTS

STORY INTRODUCTION	i
--------------------	---

LILLIPUT

1 A voyage to Lilliput	1
2 Life in Lilliput	9
3 Lilliput at war	16
4 Gulliver escapes from Lilliput	20

BROBDINGNAG

5 A voyage to Brobdingnag	25
6 Gulliver and his master	29
7 At the King's palace	33
8 More adventures in Brobdingnag	40
9 Gulliver escapes from Brobdingnag	48

LAPUTA, GLUBBDUBDRIB, LUGGNAGG

10 The flying island of Laputa	52
11 Glubbdubdrib and Luggnagg	58

THE COUNTRY OF THE HOUYHNNHNS

12 A voyage to the country of the Houyhnhnms	64
--	----

GLOSSARY	74
----------	----

ACTIVITIES: Before Reading	76
----------------------------	----

ACTIVITIES: While Reading	77
---------------------------	----

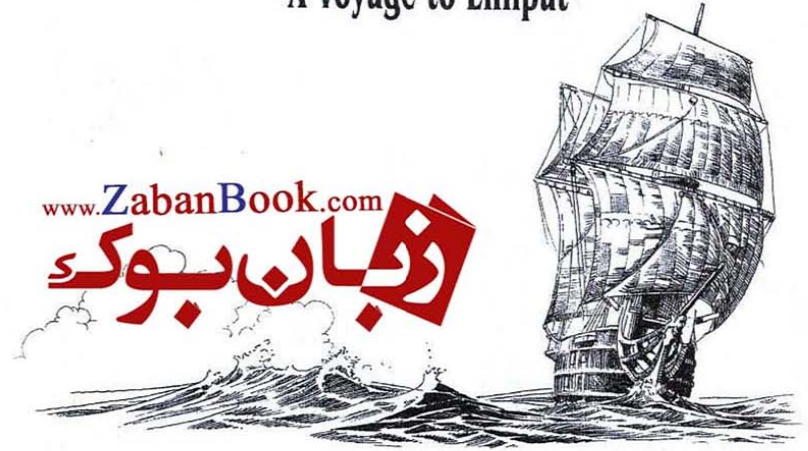
ACTIVITIES: After Reading	80
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR	84
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ABOUT THE BOOKWORMS LIBRARY	85
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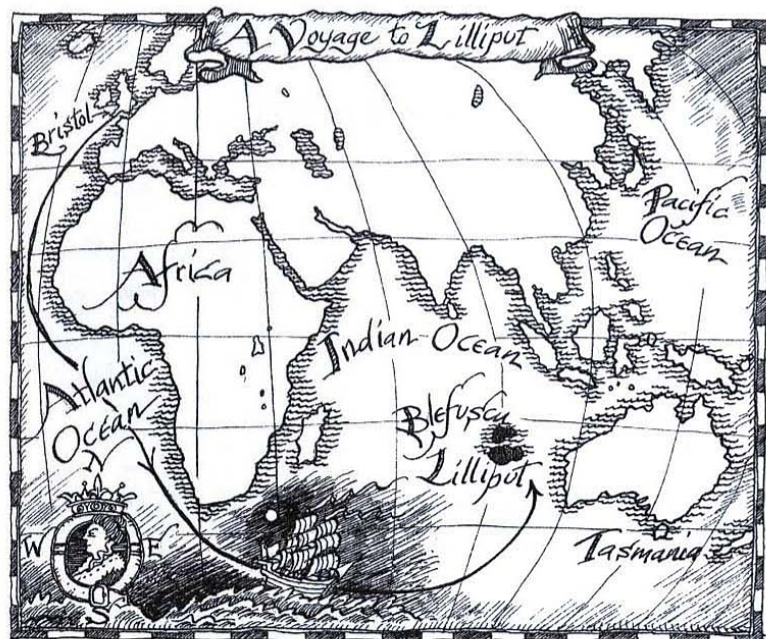
A voyage to Lilliput

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I was born in Nottinghamshire and was the third of five sons. My father was not a rich man, but he was able to send me to Cambridge University, where I studied for three years. When I left college, I continued my studies and became a doctor. But I always wanted to travel, and so I made several voyages as a ship's doctor. When I married my wife Mary, however, I planned to stay at home for a while. But after a few years I discovered I was not earning enough money from my patients. I decided to go to sea again, and this time I joined a ship sailing to the islands in the South Pacific Ocean. We started our journey from Bristol on May 4th, 1699.

At first our voyage went well. We sailed across the Atlantic, round the coast of Africa and into the Indian



Ocean. But before we could reach the Pacific, a violent storm hit us and drove us to the north-west of Tasmania. The wind drove our ship on to a rock, which broke the ship in half. Some of the sailors and I managed to get a boat into the water, and we rowed away to look for land. But when we were too tired to row any more, a great wave hit our small boat, and we all fell into the sea. I do not know what happened to my companions, but I suppose they were all drowned.

The wind and waves pushed me along as I struggled to keep my head above water. I became very tired and soon felt I could not swim any more. Luckily, just then my feet

touched the ground. I walked out of the sea and on to a beach, where there was no sign of any people or houses. I was so exhausted that I lay down and went to sleep.

When I woke up next morning, and tried to get up, I could not move. I was lying on my back and my whole body, my arms and legs were strongly fastened to the ground. Even my hair, which was long and thick, was tied to the ground. The sun began to grow hot, and I was very uncomfortable. Soon I felt something alive moving along my leg and up my body to my face, and when I looked down, I saw a very small human being, only fifteen centimetres tall. He had a bow and arrow in his hands, and there were forty more of these little men following him. I was so surprised that I gave a great shout. They all jumped back, very frightened, and some hurt themselves by falling off my body. Meanwhile, I was struggling to unfasten myself, but just as I managed to pull my left arm free of the ropes, I felt a hundred arrows land on my free hand, and more arrows on my face and body. This was very painful, and made me cry aloud. I lay quietly, to see what would happen next.

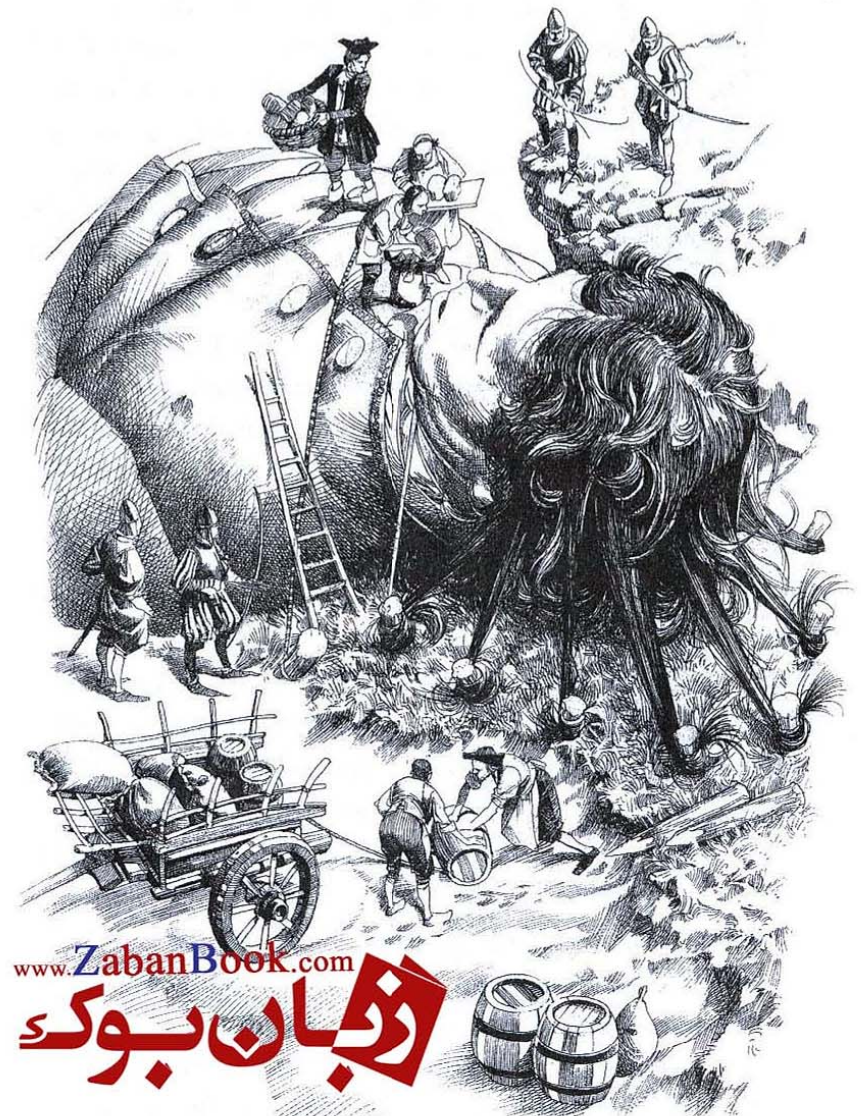
When they saw I was no longer struggling, they quickly built a platform next to my head, and an official climbed up there to speak to me. Although I could not understand his language, I understood that they would be friendly towards me – if I did not try to harm them. By now I was extremely hungry, so I used sign language to beg the official for food. He seemed to understand me, because immediately ladders

were put against my sides and little men climbed up with baskets of food and drink. They were surprised at how much I could eat and drink. In just one mouthful I ate three of their meat dishes and three of their loaves of bread. I drank two of their barrels of wine, and was still thirsty, because that was only half a litre. While they were bringing me food, I wondered whether to pick up a handful of the little men and throw them to their death. But I was afraid they would shoot at me again, and anyway I was grateful for their kindness in giving me food and drink, so I did not move.

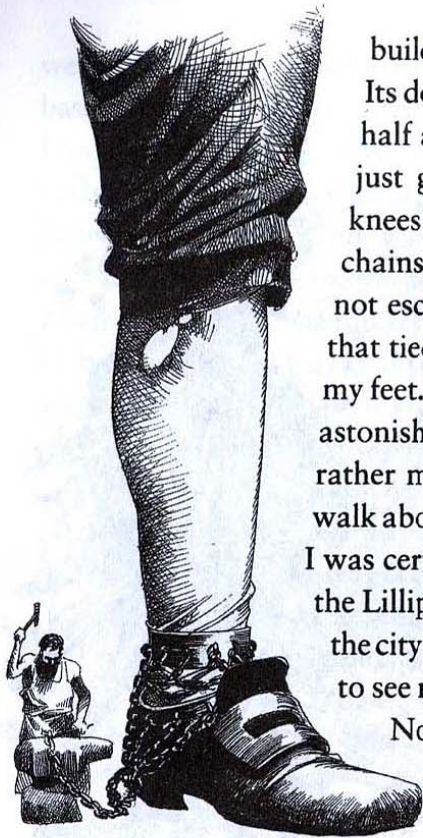
After some time, another official climbed up to the platform and spoke to me. From his signs I understood that they were going to move me. The King of this country (which was called Lilliput) had ordered his people to carry me to the capital city, about a kilometre away. I made signs to ask whether I could be untied, but the official politely refused.

While I was eating, a platform had been prepared to carry me. The people of Lilliput, known as the Lilliputians, are very intelligent and clever with their hands. For me, five hundred men built a special wooden platform with twenty-two wheels. Nine hundred of the strongest men worked for about three hours to lift me on to the platform, and one thousand five hundred of the King's largest horses (each eleven and a half centimetres high) pulled me to the capital. I did not know about any of this, because they had put a sleeping powder in my wine, and I was in a deep sleep.

The King had decided I would stay in the largest available



Little men climbed up with baskets of food and drink.



My guards put chains on my left leg.

building, just outside the city gates. Its door was only a metre high and half a metre wide, so I could only just get inside on my hands and knees. My guards put ninety-one chains on my left leg, so that I could not escape. Then they cut the ropes that tied me and I was able to get to my feet. As I stood up, I heard cries of astonishment all around me. I felt rather miserable, but at least I could walk about now, in a two-metre circle. I was certainly an interesting sight for the Lilliputians, who had come out of the city in crowds of several thousand to see me.

Now I had a good view of the countryside. The fields looked like flowerbeds in a garden, and even the tallest trees were only two metres high.

I was soon visited by the King himself. He has a strong, handsome face, and is very popular among his people. He arrived with his Queen, his children, and his lords and ladies, all dressed in beautiful gold and silver clothes. In order to make conversation easier, I lay on my side so that my face was close to him. I spoke to him in all the languages

I knew, but we still could not understand each other.

The King ordered his people to make me a bed, using six hundred Lilliputian beds. It was not very comfortable, but it was better than sleeping on the stone floor. He ordered the crowds of sightseers to go back to their homes, so that the work of the country could continue and I would not be annoyed. For a long time he discussed with his lords in private what should be done with me. I was told all this later by a good friend of mine. Clearly, such a large person could be a danger to his small people. At last it was decided that, as I had behaved so well up to now, I would be kept alive. Food and drink would be brought to me every day from all the villages, six hundred people would be my servants, three hundred men would make me a new suit, and six teachers would teach me their language.

And so in about three weeks I began to speak the language of Lilliput. The King often visited me, and every time he came, I asked him to take off my chains. He explained that first I must promise not to fight against Lilliput or hurt Lilliputians, and that I must be searched for weapons. I agreed to both these things and carefully picked up two of his officers in my hands. I put them first in one pocket, then moved them to all my other pockets, except two which I kept secret. As they searched, they wrote down in a notebook details of all the things they found.

Afterwards I read some of their report:

'In the second coat pocket we found two very large pieces of wood, and inside them were great pieces of metal,

very sharp. In another pocket there was a most wonderful engine, at the end of a long chain. The engine was inside a huge round container, which was made half of silver and half of another metal. This second metal was very strange as we could see through it to some mysterious writing and pictures. The engine made a continuous loud noise.'

The officers could not guess what these things were, but they were, of course, my two pocket knives and my watch. They also found my comb, a purse with several gold and silver coins, my gun and bullets.

The King wanted to know what the gun was used for.

'Bring it out,' he ordered me, 'and show me how it works.'

I took the gun out and put a bullet into it.

'Don't be afraid,' I warned the King. Then I fired the gun into the air.

It was the loudest noise the Lilliputians had ever heard. Hundreds of them thought they were dead, and fell down. The King himself was very frightened. As I gave my gun to the officials to keep, I warned them to be careful with it. They allowed me to keep all my other things, and I hoped that one day soon I would be free.

Life in Lilliput

I was careful to behave as well as possible, to persuade the King to give me my freedom. Lilliputians soon began to lose their fear of me. They called me the Man-Mountain. Sometimes I lay down and let them dance on my hand, and from time to time children came to play games in my hair. By now I was able to speak their language well.

One day the King invited me to watch the regular entertainments, which are greatly enjoyed by him, his family, and his lords and ladies. I was most interested in the rope-dancing. A very thin rope is fixed thirty centimetres above the ground. People who want to become the King's most important officials jump and dance on this rope, and whoever jumps highest without falling gets the best job. Sometimes the King orders his lords to dance on the rope, to show that they can still do it. This sport is, of course, rather dangerous, and there are occasional deaths as a result. It seems a strange way of choosing officials.

There was another interesting entertainment. The King holds a stick in front of him, and sometimes moves it up and down. One by one, people come up to him and jump over the stick or crawl under it. They go on jumping and crawling as the King moves the stick. The winner is the one who jumps and crawls for the longest time, and he receives a blue ribbon to wear round his waist. The second best

ACTIVITIES

Before Reading

- 1 Read the story introduction on the first page of the book, and the back cover. What do you know now about Gulliver and his travels? Choose words to complete this passage (one word for each gap).

Gulliver visits some very _____ places. In a country called Lilliput the human beings are much _____ than he is, and in another country they are much, much _____. He meets _____ from the past, visits a _____ island and goes to a land where _____ can talk. And during his travels he begins to _____ his opinions about human beings and the _____ they live.

- 2 How do you think Gulliver will be changed by his travels? Choose Y (yes) or N (no) for each of these ideas.

When Gulliver finally returns to England, . . .

- 1 he will still think England is the best country in the world.
Y/N
- 2 he will still be proud of being human. Y/N
- 3 he will hate human beings and their ideas. Y/N
- 4 many of his own opinions will be different. Y/N
- 5 he will wish he could go back and live for ever in one of the countries he has visited. Y/N
- 6 he will live happily with his family and his friends. Y/N
- 7 he will try to persuade people at home to live in a different way. Y/N

ACTIVITIES

While Reading

Read Chapters 1 to 3. Choose the best question-word for these questions, and then answer them.

How / What

- 1 . . . did Gulliver arrive in Lilliput?
- 2 . . . was Gulliver's first experience of the Lilliputians?
- 3 . . . did the Lilliputians take Gulliver to their capital?
- 4 . . . did the King's officers find in Gulliver's pockets?
- 5 . . . did the King choose his officials?
- 6 . . . was the strange black thing found on the beach?
- 7 . . . was the difference between the Big-Endians and the Small-Endians?
- 8 . . . did Gulliver help Lilliput in the war with Blefuscu?
- 9 . . . did Gulliver protect his eyes from the Blefuscans' arrows?
- 10 . . . did the King want Gulliver to do next?
- 11 . . . did Gulliver put out the fire in the palace?

Before you read Chapter 4 (*Gulliver escapes from Lilliput*), can you guess the answers to these questions?

- 1 What punishment does the King decide on for Gulliver?
- 2 Do any of Gulliver's friends warn him of the danger?
- 3 Does Gulliver kill any Lilliputians during his escape?
- 4 How does he escape, and which country does he go to?
- 5 Where does he go next, and what does he take with him?