



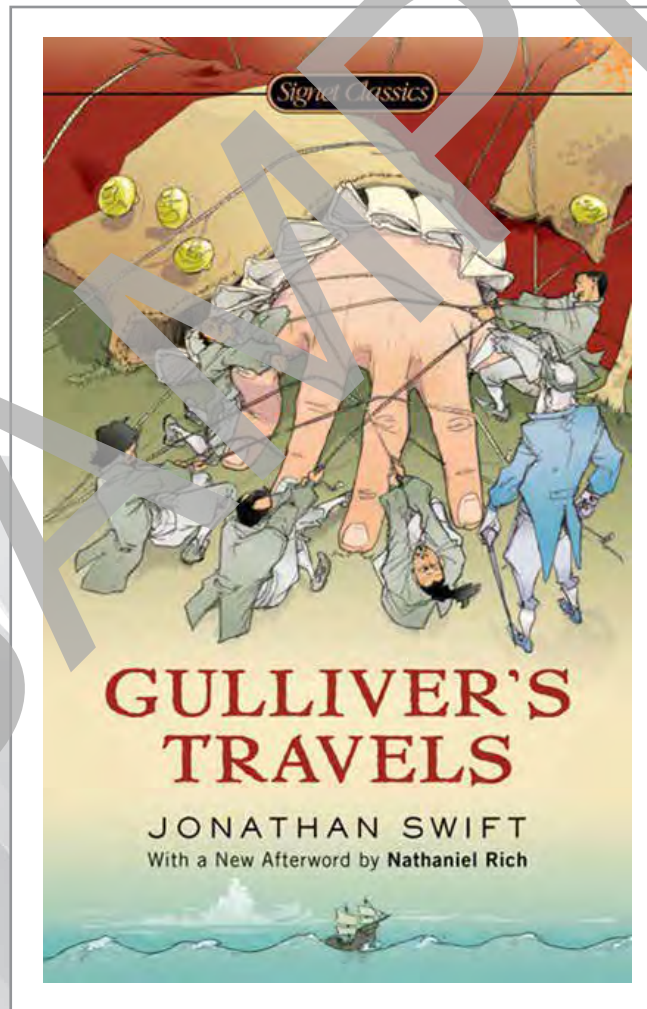
TEACHER GUIDE

GRADES 9-12

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

Gulliver's Travels

Jonathan Swift



READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT

Gulliver's Travels

Jonathan Swift

TEACHER GUIDE

NOTE:

The trade book edition of the novel used to prepare this guide is found in the Novel Units catalog and on the Novel Units website. Using other editions may have varied page references.

Please note: We have assigned Interest Levels based on our knowledge of the themes and ideas of the books included in the Novel Units sets, however, please assess the appropriateness of this novel or trade book for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading with them. You know your students best!

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Plot Summary

Part I details the experiences of Lemuel Gulliver, shipwrecked in the land of the pygmy Lilliputians. In **Part II** Gulliver journeys to **Brobdingnag**, and finds himself in a very different situation— dwarfed, this time, by everyone around him. **Part III** describes Gulliver’s third voyage—to **Laputa** (a flying island peopled by the king and various absent-minded scientists), **Balnibarbi** (a dilapidated kingdom with eccentric scholars and poverty-stricken citizens), **Luggnagg**, (the island home of the immortal Struldbruggs), Glubbdubdrib (an island of sorcerers whose Governor is able to summon the dead) and **Japan**. Finally, **Part IV** tells of Gulliver’s voyage to the **Land of the Houyhnhnms**, a place ruled by wise horses, where Yahoos, odious human-like creatures, are held in contempt. Gulliver is elevated by his stay with the Houyhnhnms and leaves them with great reluctance. He returns to England and struggles to overcome his distaste for all “Yahoos”—including his wife and son.

About the Author

Jonathan Swift was born in Dublin, Ireland, in 1667. When his family moved to England, he served as secretary to a retired diplomat/writer with an extensive library. Swift educated himself in political theory and modern history. He took orders as an Anglican priest and pursued a career in the church for a brief time, but soon discovered his true calling as a prose satirist. He wrote several pamphlets about the problems surrounding the respective powers of church and state and switched his allegiance from the Whigs to the Tories. (The Tories were traditional friends of the church and favored by Queen Anne). The Established Church and the Irish resistance to English oppression are two themes that run through his satire. Throughout his life he was as involved in social and political affairs as he was in the “world of letters.”

Two fascinating mysteries in Swift’s life concern his love life and his health. He met Esther Johnson (“Stella”) when she was eight and they became very close—“violent friends,” in Swift’s words, until the day she died—but they never married, for some reason. Instead, he married Vanessa, a woman whose passion for him was apparently unrequited.

Swift moved back to Dublin when Queen Anne died in 1714, bringing an end to Tory supremacy. He associated himself with Dublin charities and wrote many pamphlets advocating social and economic reform. He wrote *Gulliver’s Travels* when he was 59, nineteen years before his death. Some people feel that his eccentric behavior in later years bordered on insanity and that perhaps he suffered from Ménière’s disease (symptoms of which include dizziness and deafness). Nevertheless, it is important to realize that Swift’s view of human nature as revealed in *Gulliver’s Travels* was not

Summaries • Vocabulary Discussion Questions • Writing Ideas Activities

Part I, Chapters 1-4

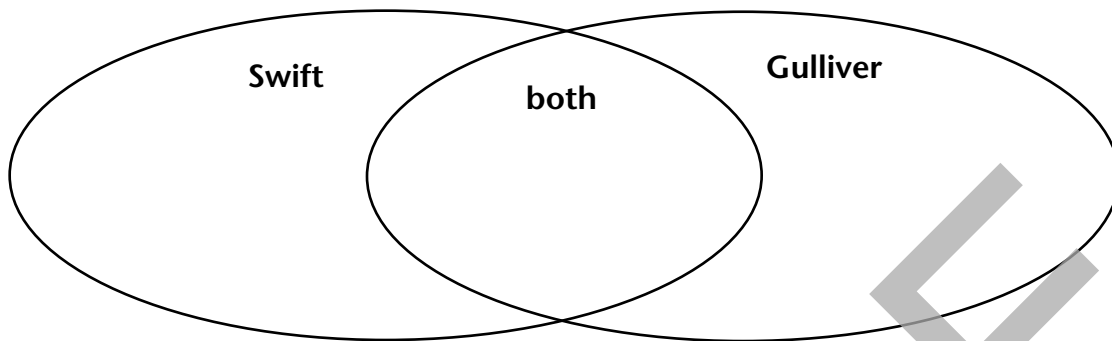
Summary: Gulliver, a physician, leaves his wife behind in London and sets out as a ship's surgeon. On the way to the East Indies, the ship is wrecked in a storm and Gulliver alone swims safely to shore. He awakens to find himself taken prisoner—tied down by tiny ropes in Lilliput, where everything and everyone are one-twelfth the customary size. Confined to a temple, he is visited by the Emperor of Lilliput. Citizens flock to see him and he meets with general approval. Lilliputians are assigned to feed and clothe Gulliver—and even to teach him the Lilliputian tongue—but he is treated as a prisoner, nonetheless. Finally, after signing an agreement with the Lilliputians, Gulliver is released and offers to serve the Emperor in his war against Blefuscu.

Vocabulary

censure 25	degenerate 26	equivocating 26	apprentice 35
ligatures 38	volley 39	jerkin 39	submissive 40
hogsheads 40	draught 41	prodigious 41	retinue 41
tokens 42	daubed 42	victuals 42	soporiferous 43
pike 43	profane 44	edifice 44	smiths 44
expedient 45	maligners 45	deportment 46	clemency 47
enured 48	beeves 48	demesnes 48	subsidies 48
discreet 49	inventory 49	palisados 50	oracle 51
scimitar 52	yeomen 52	draymen 52	dexterity 53
caper 54	trencher 54	courser 55	skirmishes 55
metropolis 57	colossus 57	morose 57	circumference 58
quadrant 59	garret 60	solicitations 61	edict 62
schism 63			

Discussion Questions

1. Who is the supposed author of this account? (Gulliver) Who is the actual author? (Swift) What do you learn about the "author" from the title page, from his letter to his cousin, and from his cousin's letter to the reader? From what you know of Swift's life, how was he like/unlike Lemuel Gulliver?



2. What sort of education did Gulliver receive? (trained in medicine and navigation) Why do you think he didn't settle down at home with his wife? How do you imagine their relationship?
3. How did Gulliver meet the Lilliputians and what was their first encounter like? (Gulliver was shipwrecked, swam to the Lilliputian shore and woke up to find himself tied down, a prisoner.) How else might the Lilliputians have treated Gulliver? Why didn't Gulliver just use all his might to break free? (He was fascinated, and also a little afraid that the Lilliputians' arrows might be poisoned.)
4. As you "see" the Lilliputian world through Gulliver's eyes, which images strike you most?
5. What problems did Gulliver run into? (need for food and shelter; imprisonment; ill-wishers) If you were the author, what other problems might you have introduced?
6. Why was Gulliver searched? (The Emperor worried about whether he carried huge weapons.) What was taken? (his scimitar, pistols, powder and bullets) What is being satirized here? (Committee of Secrecy)
7. How was Gulliver entertained? (by the rope dancers) How did he entertain the Lilliputians? (by letting the soldiers walk their horses between his legs, picking them up to exercise them, etc.) What is Swift mocking, here? (how positions in government are filled; military drills)
8. What were the conditions like under which Gulliver was finally set free? (He agreed to several articles, including one that said he wouldn't leave Lilliput without permission and another that he would ally himself with Lilliput against Blefuscu.) Which of these nine points do you suppose he resented most?
9. What does Swift seem to be satirizing in this section? How is he poking fun at the nobility?
10. **Prediction:** Why will Gulliver leave Lilliput?

Supplementary Activities

Literary Analysis: Satire

Satire is the use of irony to ridicule some form of vice or stupidity. Swift is considered by many to be the greatest of English prose satirists. Have students begin to list the people, situations, and institutions Swift makes fun of in *Gulliver's Travels*. (Refer students to the note at the bottom of page 46, which explains that Book I is generally satirical of the period in English history between 1708 and 1715 when Queen Anne had just died and George I ascended the throne.)

Writing Ideas

1. You are a Lilliputian adviser to the Emperor. Add one more point to the conditions under which Gulliver will be set free.
2. Suppose that the Lilliputians do an inventory of your pockets (or purse). List the results (from the Lilliputians' perspective).

Research

1. Research the Civil Wars in England during the 1640's to better understand what Swift was lampooning in his description of Big Endians (Catholics) and Little Endians (Protestants).
2. Find out more about the Committee of Secrecy of 1715, the Whig group satirized by the description of the search of Gulliver's pockets (p. 50).
3. Find out more about Lingua Franca, one of the languages in which Gulliver first tried to communicate with the Lilliputians.
4. Find out more about 18th-century London and see how it compares with Swift's description of Mildendo.
5. Learn all you can about the political climate of England during 1708-1715, the period satirized in this section.