EDUCATIONAL STUDY MATERIAL

Gulliver's Travels

Jonathan Swift

COMPANY	TNT Theatre Britain
DIRECTION & ADAPTATION	Paul Stebbings
ORIGINAL MUSIC	Paul Flush
PRODUCER	Grantly Marshall

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PART ONE

The Stage Production

TNT Theatre Britain's touring adaptation — author, cast, director's vision, themes and the script in performance.

SECTIONS 01 – 08

01

AUTHOR

Jonathan Swift

1667 – 1745
Dublin

Portrait by Charles Jervas, c.1718

Priest, secretary, poet, pamphleteer

— and the greatest satirist in the English language

Born in Dublin to English parents, Swift spent his life between Ireland and England, never quite belonging to either world. This outsider's perspective sharpened his eye for hypocrisy and injustice. He was ordained as a Church of England priest and eventually became Dean of St Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin, where he became a fierce champion of the Irish poor against English exploitation.

A life in key dates

- **1667** — **Born in Dublin, Ireland.** His father died before he was born — he grew up in modest, uncertain circumstances.
- **1686** — **Graduates from Trinity College Dublin.** Moves to England to work as secretary to the diplomat Sir William Temple.
- **1704** — Publishes *A Tale of a Tub* — his first major satirical work, attacking religious corruption and literary vanity.
- **1713** — **Appointed Dean of St Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin.** A bitter disappointment — he had hoped for a position in England.
- **1726** — Publishes *Gulliver's Travels* — anonymously, to avoid prosecution. An immediate bestseller, read as both adventure story and political satire.
- **1729** — Publishes *A Modest Proposal* — a darkly ironic essay suggesting the Irish poor should sell their children as food to the English rich.
- **1745** — Dies in Dublin, aged 77. Leaves his fortune to found a **hospital for the mentally ill.**

Key works

A Tale of a Tub

1704

Satirises religious divisions between Catholic, Anglican and Puritan churches through an absurd allegorical story.

Gulliver's Travels

1726

His masterpiece — a voyage narrative that dismantles politics, science, pride and humanity itself across four journeys.

A Modest Proposal

1729

A viciously ironic pamphlet exposing English cruelty toward the Irish poor, disguised as a practical suggestion.

> *Satire is a sort of glass, wherein beholders do generally discover everybody's face but their own.*
>
> JONATHAN SWIFT · PREFACE TO THE BATTLE OF THE BOOKS, 1704

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

Swift published *Gulliver's Travels* anonymously because he feared punishment for its political content. Three hundred years later, his targets — corrupt governments, reckless scientists, colonial exploitation — are still with us. Does that make his satire a success or a failure?

CAST & WORLDS

02 Characters

The five worlds of Gulliver

England
Home & the pirates

Lilliput
The tiny people

Brobdingnag
The giants

Laputa
The flying island

Houyhnhnms
The noble horses

Principal characters

LG

Lemuel Gulliver

Protagonist

Ship's captain & surgeon

An English sailor of restless, curious nature — never content with what he has, always drawn to the unknown. His voyages take him through five extraordinary worlds, each one changing him further. By the end, he has seen too much of humanity's folly to return to normal life comfortably.

The Showman

NARRATOR

Master of ceremonies

The theatrical ringmaster who presents Gulliver as a spectacle. He controls the story — until it goes further than he intended.

The Actors

ENSEMBLE

Multiple roles across all worlds

A small company plays Lilliputians, giants, scientists, pirates and horses — a physical, shape-shifting ensemble.

Characters by world

LILLIPUT

The Emperor — vain ruler who sees Gulliver as a weapon.

Minister of Defence — bumbling politician who decides nothing.

The Prime Minister — leads a cabinet that parodies government indecision.

BROBDINGNAG

The Farmer — exploits tiny Gulliver as a commercial attraction.

Glumdalclitch — the farmer's daughter who cares for Gulliver.

The Queen — purchases Gulliver and listens to his complaints.

HOUYHNHNMS

The Horse Judge — presides over a rational society that decides the fate of the Yahoos.

The Yahoos — filthy, brutish beings who are, Swift implies, a mirror of humanity.

SWIFT'S SATIRE

Every character Gulliver meets is a distorted reflection of someone in our own world — politicians, scientists, soldiers, merchants. The question Swift always asks is: are we any better?

IN THE REHEARSAL ROOM

03 Director's Notes

> *George Orwell described Gulliver's Travels as one of the ten best books ever written. It is easy to agree with his opinion.*
>
> PAUL STEBBINGS, DIRECTOR

What makes this book so powerful?

Satire that attacks everyone

Most satire takes easy targets. Swift goes further — he attacks himself, his nation and all of humanity. *Gulliver's Travels* is a mirror, and the reflection is not flattering.

A book misunderstood for centuries

Swift's sharp adult satire has been watered down into children's stories. We see this as an irony Swift himself would have hated — we keep the adventure and dodge the uncomfortable truth.

What Swift attacks

War · Colonisation · Corruption · Selfishness · Pomposity · Financial greed

What Swift advocates

Freedom · Education for women · Responsible science · Respect for others

Swift's targets — then and now

SWIFT'S ERA (1726)		OUR ERA (2026)
Corrupt parliament — tiny politicians arguing over nothing		**Political paralysis** — governments unable to act on urgent problems
Absurd scientists — the flying island and its useless experiments	→	**Technology without wisdom** — innovation racing ahead of ethics
Colonial exploitation — Gulliver used as an object and a spectacle		**Economic inequality** — wealth concentrated in very few hands
War between nations — Lilliput at war over which end to crack an egg		**Irrational conflict** — wars begun and prolonged by pride, not reason

The stage adaptation

Updated satire

Swift satirised his day — we satirise ours

Original music

Composed by Paul Flush, integral to storytelling

Small ensemble

Few actors, dozens of roles — physical theatre

Dark humour

From Chaucer to Monty Python — Britain's comic tradition

THE DIRECTOR'S CHALLENGE

Swift's book grows more philosophical as it progresses. The early journeys are rich in physical comedy. The later ones demand we sit with uncomfortable ideas. The production must hold both: the entertainment and the darkness.

READING THE SATIRE

04 Themes

THEME 1

Power & politics

Swift shows that those in power are often petty, corrupt and self-serving. Governments argue endlessly about trivial things while ordinary people suffer.

IN THE PLAY

The Lilliputian cabinet cannot agree on whether to kill the giant — a parody of parliamentary deadlock that feels entirely modern.

THEN & NOW

Today we might think of political polarisation and governments unable to address climate change or inequality.

THEME 2

Human nature & pride

Swift's darkest question: are humans naturally good or naturally bad? Each voyage strips away another layer of Gulliver's pride in his species.

IN THE PLAY

The Yahoos — filthy, violent, irrational — are recognisably human. Gulliver's horror at them is horror at a mirror.

KEY QUESTION

Is Gulliver right to despair of humanity — or has he simply lost perspective?

THEME 3

Science & reason

The flying island of Laputa is full of scientists — yet their society is badly built and deeply impractical. Intelligence without wisdom produces absurdity.

IN THE PLAY

Laputan scientists attempt to extract sunbeams from cucumbers — brilliant minds producing nothing useful.

THEN & NOW

Today we might think of technology developed faster than our ethics can keep up with.

THEME 4

Colonialism & exploitation

Wherever Gulliver travels, someone is being exploited. Swift — writing from colonised Ireland — understood exploitation from the inside.

IN THE PLAY

The Farmer charges admission to see Gulliver across eighteen towns — treating a human being as property to be monetised.

THEN & NOW

The theme resonates today in debates about global inequality and economic power.

Discussion questions

1. **Lilliput:** The politicians argue endlessly without deciding anything. Can you think of a real-world situation where this happens today?
2. **Brobdingnag:** When Gulliver is small he is exploited; when he is large he is feared. What does Swift suggest about the relationship between size and power?
3. **The Yahoos:** Swift suggests humans are the worst animals of all. Do you agree — or do you think he is being too pessimistic?
4. **Across the story:** By the end, Gulliver cannot bear to be around people. Is his disgust with humanity a sign of wisdom — or madness?

DISCUSSION GUIDE

05 Before & After the Show

Before the show

Think about these before you see the performance

1. What is satire? Can you think of a TV show, film or book that mocks something real by exaggerating it?

2. Power and size: If you suddenly became ten times bigger than everyone, how do you think people would treat you?

3. Human nature: Do you think humans are basically good, basically bad, or somewhere in between?

4. Science & progress: Can you think of an invention meant to help people that caused problems instead?

5. A small cast: A handful of actors play dozens of characters. How might they show the difference between a giant and a tiny person on stage?

After the show

Reflect on what you saw and heard

1. The Showman: Why does the production begin with a ringmaster showing Gulliver as a spectacle? What does this frame add?

2. Lilliput: The politicians could not make a decision. Did they remind you of anything real? Was it funny — or uncomfortable?

3. The Yahoos: When Gulliver sees them, he is horrified — but they look like us. Is Swift being fair to humanity, or too harsh?

4. The Horses: Perfectly rational — yet they decide to exterminate the Yahoos. What is Swift saying about reason without compassion?

5. The ending: Gulliver cannot bear to be with people. Did you feel sympathy for him — or do you think he has gone mad?

Classroom activities

Write Gulliver's journal

Choose one of the four worlds. Write a journal entry as Gulliver — what did he see, feel and learn?

Debate: is Gulliver right?

One group argues Gulliver is correct to despair of humanity. The other argues he has lost perspective. Use evidence from the play.

Design a fifth world

Invent a fifth voyage. What would Gulliver find — and what aspect of today's society would it satirise?

Write a Lilliputian newspaper

Report the arrival of the giant Gulliver from the perspective of a Lilliputian journalist.

Hot-seat a character

One student plays Gulliver, the Showman or the Horse Judge. The class asks questions — the character must stay in role.

Write a review

What worked? What surprised you? Would you recommend it — and to whom? Give the production a star rating.

The mirror exercise

"Satire is a sort of glass, wherein beholders do generally discover everybody's face but their own."

- Each student writes one thing in *Gulliver's Travels* that felt like a comment on the world today.
- Share in pairs — did you choose the same thing, or different things?
- Discuss as a class: which of Swift's targets is most urgent in 2026?
- Finally: would Swift be surprised — or unsurprised — by the world we live in today?

SCRIPT IN PERFORMANCE

06 The Opening & Lilliput

> *You are a mirror — and when I look at you I sink into a deep hatred not only of you — but an even deeper hatred and horror of myself.*
>
> GULLIVER, TO THE AUDIENCE · OPENING SCENE

OPENING

Roll up! Roll up!

A cart is wheeled onstage. The Showman presents Gulliver to the audience as a travelling spectacle. Gulliver is chained inside.

Showman *Roll up! Roll up! For the travelling show! Adventure, surprises, instructive entertainment. Oh what a world of delight! What stories, what yarns we will spin.*

Gulliver *No, no. It is all true!*

Showman *(Under breath) Silence, beast! (Pokes cart with stick)*

Gulliver *Ah! Humans they stink! Stinking humans! Pull back the curtains; hide the monsters from my sight! I hate you, disgusting beasts!*

Showman *I am terribly sorry, ladies and gentlemen — his adventures have not improved his manners.*

WHY IT MATTERS

The very first exchange sets up the central tension: the Showman wants to sell a comfortable entertainment; Gulliver insists on uncomfortable truth. The whole play lives in that gap — between what we want a story to be and what it actually shows us.

LILLIPUT

The cabinet cannot decide

The Lilliputian government discovers the giant Gulliver. Ministers argue over what to do.

Min. of Defence *I have consulted the experts and I can assure you that giants do not exist.*

Soldier *Honourable Minister, sir. What shall we do about the giant that does not exist?*

Min. of Defence *Giants do not exist, but this giant does exist and I have protected you from it.*

Prime Min. *He might be an enemy egg eater from the evil kingdom of Brobdingnag. We kill him!*

Prime Min. *I don't remember voting for that. It might be dangerous to attack the giant.*

Min. of Defence *Very well — I move a compromise vote: someone else kills him.*

Min. of Health *This is a parliamentary democracy — they vote for us then we decide what they must do — the people deciding things — whatever next!*

WHY IT MATTERS

Swift's satire of parliamentary paralysis becomes sharply comic on stage. The politicians contradict themselves within seconds — they deny the giant exists, then argue about killing him, then pass the decision to someone else. A joke that has grown more relevant every decade since 1726.

06

SCRIPT IN PERFORMANCE

Brobdingnag & Laputa

BROBDINGNAG

Shown across eighteen towns

Here Gulliver is tiny. He is bought and sold, displayed and pitied — a reversal that forces him to see the world from below.

The Farmer has discovered tiny Gulliver in his fields. He resolves to tour him across the kingdom for profit. Gulliver's complaint to the Queen is drawn directly from Swift's novel.

Gulliver *I owed no other obligation to my late master than his not dashing out the brains of a poor harmless creature found by chance in his fields — which obligation was amply recompensed by the gain he had made in showing me through half the kingdom.*

Gulliver *The life I had since led was laborious enough to kill an animal of ten times my strength. My health was much impaired by the continual drudgery of entertaining the rabble every hour of the day.*

WHY IT MATTERS

Gulliver is now the tiny one — used, displayed and condescended to. Swift makes us feel, through Gulliver's humiliation, exactly what it is to be treated as property. The Farmer is not cruel by nature; he is simply following commercial logic.

LAPUTA

The paralysed thinkers

A floating island of thinkers so absorbed in theory they cannot function in practice.

Gulliver arrives on the flying island and encounters its inhabitants — brilliant scientists who are entirely unable to manage ordinary life. From Swift's original text, adapted for the stage.

Gulliver *The minds of these people are so taken up with intense speculations that they neither can speak, nor attend to the discourses of others, without being roused by some external blow upon the organs of speech and hearing.*

Gulliver *Their houses are very ill built, the walls bend, without one right angle in any apartment — this defect arises from the contempt they bear to practical geometry, which they despise as vulgar and mechanic.*

Gulliver *I have not seen a more clumsy, awkward people, nor so slow and perplexed in their conceptions upon all other subjects, except those of mathematics and music. They are very bad reasoners, and violently given to conflict.*

WHY IT MATTERS

Swift's warning about intelligence without practical wisdom feels more urgent every decade. The Laputans are brilliant — and utterly useless. They represent every era's version of experts who cannot see what is in front of them.

In their own words

"Most of them, and especially those who deal in the astronomical part, have great faith in astrology, although they are ashamed to admit it publicly."

Gulliver, on the Laputan scientists

"My master's design was to show me in all the towns by the way — to any village, or person of quality's house, where he might expect custom."

Gulliver, on the Farmer

SCRIPT IN PERFORMANCE

06 The Houyhnhnms & the Ending

LAND OF THE HORSES

Gulliver confesses to being human

Swift's darkest world: a society of perfect reason that nonetheless decides to exterminate the Yahoos.

Gulliver is put on trial before the Horse Judge. He is asked to deny his connection to the Yahoos — the filthy human-like creatures. Instead he confesses everything.

Gulliver *I confess, I confess to being no better than a human, which is to say the worst of animals. I confess to creating societies that only exist for the benefit of those in power. I confess to lust, greed, pride, jealousy, lies, betrayals.*

Gulliver *Humanity, of which I am a representative, has invented the very idea of evil. There is no evil in nature. I confess to each and every crime you may imagine and many you cannot imagine.*

Gulliver *Destroy me, I beg you, I am not worthy to lie under your hooves.*

WHY IT MATTERS

This is Gulliver at his most broken — and Swift at his most savage. Gulliver does not defend humanity; he pleads guilty on its behalf. The audience is implicated too: we are the Yahoos he cannot bear to look at.

LAND OF THE HORSES

The final solution

The Horse Judge pronounces sentence on the Yahoos. The language is deliberate — Swift's rational horses use the vocabulary of totalitarianism.

Horse Judge *We will be pure, we will not tolerate differences; we will be ethnically clean. One race. One stable. Hooves Before Hands.*

All Horses *One race, one stable, Hooves Before Hands!*

Horse Judge *That is our final solution. Kill them. Exterminate the Yahoos.*

Horse Judge *Pity is a weakness. You know that.*

WHY IT MATTERS

The horses are perfectly rational — and they choose genocide. Stebbings' adaptation makes Swift's point with brutal clarity: reason without compassion is not civilisation. It is something far more dangerous. The language of racial purity is no accident.

FINAL SCENE

The Showman's last defence

Gulliver has returned from the horses and cannot bear to look at the audience. The Actors rebel against the Showman and lead Gulliver offstage. The Showman is left alone.

Gulliver *There they are! Yahoos! And I am doomed, doomed forever to live with you! Ghosts! Where are the noble horses?*

Actress *Gulliver is not a slave or a spectacle. Leave him in peace.*

Actor *It's finished. Come on, Gulliver.*

Showman *(Alone, to the audience) There was no satire, no offence — it all meant nothing, it's just a children's story. It was not about your governments, your scientists, the money in your pocket… I'm finished, ruined. Go home. The end.*

WHY IT MATTERS

The Showman's final desperate denial — "it all meant nothing" — is the play's darkest joke. He is trying to reassure an audience that has just watched something deeply unsettling. The fact that he fails is the point. Swift would have approved entirely.

07

COLLECTED FROM THE FULL SCRIPT

Key Quotes Across the Play

On power and government

"This is a parliamentary democracy — they vote for us then we decide what they must do — the people deciding things — whatever next!"

Prime Minister of Lilliput · Lilliput

"I move a compromise vote: someone else kills him."

Minister of Defence · Lilliput

"I was the Captain — second only to God and the Queen on this ship — you rebel against both if you rebel against me!"

Gulliver, to the mutineers · The voyage out

"God sod the Queen and her Captain."

The Bad Sailors · The mutiny

On humanity and self-knowledge

"You are a mirror — and when I look at you I sink into a deep hatred not only of you — but an even deeper hatred and horror of myself."

Gulliver, to the audience · Opening scene

"Humanity, of which I am a representative, has invented the very idea of evil. There is no evil in nature."

Gulliver, at his trial · Land of the Horses

"I am a horse; I am as noble as a horse! I am a Houyhnhnm!"

Gulliver, in his final breakdown · The ending

"Fellow humans — see yourselves in me! Have you no pity — no humanity?"

Gulliver, before being thrown overboard · The mutiny

On reason, science and cruelty

"We will not tolerate differences; we will be ethnically clean. One race. One stable. Hooves Before Hands."

The Horse Judge · Land of the Horses

"Pity is a weakness. You know that."

The Horse Judge, to Gulliver · Land of the Horses

"No Yahoo, however reasonable, can become a Horsey Houyhnhnm. This is a biological, racial truth."

The Horse Judge · Land of the Horses

"They are very bad reasoners, and violently given to conflict, unless when they happen to be of the right opinion, which is seldom their case."

Gulliver, on the Laputans · Laputa

Satire is a sort of glass, wherein beholders do generally discover everybody's face but their own; which is the chief reason for that kind of reception it meets in the world, and that so very few are offended with it.

JONATHAN SWIFT · THE PREFACE OF THE AUTHOR, FROM THE ORIGINAL PROGRAMME

ON STAGE

08 Production Gallery

A selection of images from TNT Theatre Britain's touring production — costume, scale and physical theatre, built from simple materials and live performance.

Gulliver, on stilts, towers over the Lilliputian court.

Gulliver before the Horse Judge.

The Lilliputian court, mid-scene.

Commercial exploitation, staged literally.

Financial satire, updated: a "VISO" card parody.

A single painted map backdrop conjures all five worlds.

The Land of the Horses, built from candlelight.

PART TWO

The Novel

A book study reference — Swift's life and times, the plot in full, and classroom activities based on the original 1726 text.

SECTIONS 09 – 12

09

THE BOOK, IN CONTEXT

Swift & His Times

Swift's life and literary career unfolded during the Augustan Age — a turbulent, transformative period of political polarisation and religious friction in Britain, in which satire became a powerful public weapon.

Early life & literary beginnings

Born and educated in Dublin to English parents, Swift moved to England in 1688 — the exact year of the **Glorious Revolution**, which replaced the Catholic King James II with the Protestant monarchs William and Mary. There he became secretary to the statesman Sir William Temple, a post that introduced him to high politics and encouraged his first major satires: *The Battle of the Books* and *A Tale of a Tub* (both 1704), mocking academic arrogance and post-Reformation religious division.

The Irish context & political activism

In 1694 Swift returned to Ireland to be ordained, becoming Dean of St Patrick's Cathedral in 1713 — a period shadowed by the **1707 Act of Union** and the **Penal Laws**, harsh restrictions that crippled Ireland's Catholic majority. Though a member of the ruling Protestant Ascendancy, Swift spent thirty years in fierce opposition to London's exploitation of Ireland, giving a third of his income to the Catholic poor. Writing as "M.B. Drapier," he published *The Drapier's Letters* (1724–25), pamphlets that successfully defeated a damaging British currency scheme.

HIS CONTROVERSIES

One of the most disputed writers in English — some read him as a misanthrope with a morbid, monstrous view of humanity; others as a genuine lover of mankind. All agree he rejected the era's optimism, believing reason was easily misused: "an animal capable of reason" could still reason its way into unreasonable error.

HIS STYLE

Regarded as the English language's greatest ironist. Swift used Gulliver's voyages allegorically to comment on 18th-century England, pairing ironic intent with matter-of-fact simplicity — forcing the reader to recognise unexpected meaning and, ultimately, to see themselves.

Masterpieces & later years

In 1726 Swift published his masterpiece, *Gulliver's Travels*, a universal critique of human nature and political corruption. As Irish poverty deepened under British trade restrictions, he published his darkest irony in 1729: *A Modest Proposal*, suggesting the poor sell their children as food for the rich. His final years were marked by severe mental decline; he died in 1745 and was buried at St Patrick's Cathedral.

EXPLAIN IN YOUR OWN WORDS

1. How is Swift regarded, as a writer and as a man?
2. What was his attitude to the society of his time?
3. How did he view the use of reason?
4. What were his favourite means of literary expression?

10

PLOT SUMMARY

The Four Voyages

Gulliver's Travels unfolds in four parts, each a separate voyage of the ship's surgeon Lemuel Gulliver — every world a distorted mirror of the one he left behind.

PART I · 1699

Lilliput

Gulliver sets sail from Bristol on 4 May 1699. Shipwrecked in the South Pacific, he wakes ashore in Lilliput among six-inch-tall people, who house his huge body in an unused temple. He learns their language and customs, wins the king's favour, and — after many comic misadventures — returns to England.

PART II · 1702

Brobdingnag

Sailing for India on 20 June 1702, Gulliver instead finds Brobdingnag, land of giants twelve times his size. Escaping rats as big as lions, he is taken in by a farmer, sold to the queen, and becomes the king's pet — until his cage is snatched by a bird and dropped in the ocean. He is rescued and sails home.

PART III

Laputa & Lagado

Set adrift by pirates, Gulliver reaches the flying island of Laputa, home to absent-minded astronomers and philosophers. At its academy in Lagado, scientists run absurd experiments — extracting sunbeams from cucumbers. The unhappiest people he meets are the immortal, who still grow old. The island eventually drops him in Japan, and he returns to England.

PART IV

The Houyhnhnms

Gulliver's final voyage brings him to the Houyhnhnms — horses endowed with reason who rule over the Yahoos, a vile species resembling humans. Admiring the horses and ashamed of his likeness to the Yahoos, he is eventually banished. Back in England, he cannot bear his own family's smell of humanity, and goes to live among horses in his stable instead.

GULLIVER'S TRANSFORMATION

Gulliver begins as a sensible, middle-aged professional who fully supports the culture that produced him. Voyage by voyage, circumstance forces him to think, and a critical awareness of European values' limits deepens — until, by the fourth voyage, his transformation is complete: he can no longer take part in European society at all, not even with his own family.

TEACHER'S ACTIVITIES

11 Reading Comprehension & Activities

1 · DISCUSS

In *Gulliver's Travels*, Swift examines the essence of human nature. Do you think humans are basically rational and good beings, or impulsive and cruel beasts?

2 · MATCH THE PART TO THE PLACE, THEN DESCRIBE WHO GULLIVER MEETS THERE

(A) Laputa (B) Brobdingnag (C) Land of the Houyhnhnms (D) Lilliput

I Part I _____

II Part II _____

III Part III _____

IV Part IV _____

3 · TRUE, FALSE, OR NOT GIVEN?

Gulliver spent exactly six months in Lilliput before returning to England.	T	F	NG
The King of Brobdingnag was fascinated by European and English politics.	T	F	NG
The immortal people in Part III are the happiest citizens of Laputa.	T	F	NG
The Yahoos are intelligent horses that rule over a vile species of humans.	T	F	NG
Gulliver prefers the company of horses over his own family at the end.	T	F	NG

4 · ANSWER IN 2–3 SENTENCES

The satire of science: what point is Swift making about the scientists and philosophers of Laputa?

The psychological shift: Gulliver ends Part IV living in a stable, unable to stand the "smell of humanity." How has his view of people changed since Part I?

5 · MATCH TRAIT OR SITUATION TO ITS PART

A. Fighting rats the size of lions B. Escaping by building a canoe C. Scientists turning cucumbers into sunbeams D. Housed in a giant, empty temple E. Meeting people who live forever, yet still age

I Lilliput _____

II Brobdingnag _____

III Laputa / Lagado _____

IV Houyhnhnms _____

LITERARY ANALYSIS

12 Style, Satire & Interpretation

Narrative style

Gulliver is not Swift — he is an invented character, as much an object as an instrument of satire. Each voyage sits in sharp contrast with the last: he is always displaced, first among little people, then giants, and finally forced into comparison not with people at all, but with animals. He narrates in the first person, in a matter-of-fact prose that records the fantastic with scientific precision.

The mechanics of satire

Satire depends on distortion and exaggeration: the reader sees something familiar made ridiculous, even disgusting. Swift's core technique is the oldest trick in speculative fiction — an average man voyages to an unknown land and returns home — which lets him play three perspectives against each other, constantly shifting the frame on human conduct to sharpen the comedy of what we already know.

Four ways to read the novel

A children's tale
Adventure and wonder, stripped of politics

A political allegory
Swift's own time, mapped onto fantasy

A parody of voyage literature
Sending up the era's travel writing

A study in misanthropy
Human reason, and its aberrations

Early critics read Swift as a conservative pessimist ridiculing European pretensions to rationality, or dismissed him as mentally unbalanced so the ending needn't be taken seriously. Twentieth-century criticism took a sharper view: Gulliver himself becomes the target of the satire in the end. He no longer speaks for the author — his hatred of the Yahoos is a warning *to* us, not a lesson from a trustworthy narrator. This reading treats Swift as fully in control of his craft, right to the novel's unsettling close.

READ & ANSWER

1. What is Gulliver like at the beginning of the novel?
2. How has he changed by the end?
3. What sort of character is he — and what is his function in the text?
4. What is Gulliver's constant condition throughout the novel?
5. What are the ingredients of Swift's satire?
6. How can the novel be interpreted?

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