

# GULLIVER'S TRAVELS

JONATHAN SWIFT

# LIVING LITERATURE SERIES

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TEACHER'S GUIDE

GUIDE WRITTEN BY MARY ELLEN SNODGRASS

## SYNOPSIS

Lemuel Gulliver, naive, inquisitive doctor from Nottinghamshire, England, marries Mary Burton and establishes a medical practice, but grows restless. In May, 1699, he sails on the *Antelope* from Bristol toward the East Indies. After a storm wrecks the ship, he struggles ashore and collapses. Later, he awakens and finds himself bound by slender threads. He is the prisoner of Lilliputians, a race of six-inch people. They regard Gulliver as an enemy, but the Emperor provides him with food, drink, clothing, bedding, and tutors.

Having gained the Emperor's trust, Gulliver learns to speak Lilliputian and soon gains limited freedom. He studies Lilliput, particularly the pettiness of its politically motivated: the rope dancers, high-heels, and low-heels. Because the nation is embroiled in war with the neighboring island of Blefuscu (over which end of an egg should be broken), Gulliver is obligated to fight. To halt the enemy fleet he drags fifty of their warships to Lilliput. The Emperor, fearful that Gulliver has drowned, is relieved and rewards him with the title of Nardac.

Gulliver studies the Lilliputian way of life extensively. Unfortunately, he earns the wrath of the Empress for extinguishing a palace fire by urinating on it. After he balks at a plan to destroy Blefuscu, Gulliver is charged with treason. The Emperor decides that, rather than kill the "man-mountain," whose massive body would be difficult to dispose of, he will blind him.

Gulliver leaves Lilliput and arrives in Blefuscu, where he locates an abandoned boat and stocks it with minuscule cattle, hay, and corn so that he can propagate the breed when he arrives home. He encounters an English merchant ship bound for London and is welcomed aboard. The captain fears that Gulliver is raving when he tells tales of Lilliput, but Gulliver proves his story by producing diminutive cattle from his pockets.

In 1702, after only two months with his family, Gulliver sets out again for the East Indies on the merchant-ship *Adventure*. A second mishap during a search for fresh water finds him separated from his shipmates on an island inhabited by sixty-foot giants. A farmer finds Gulliver hiding in a grain field and takes him home as a curiosity. Gulliver becomes the property of the farmer's nine-year-old daughter, Glumdalclitch, who fashions a bed, shirts, and bed linen for him, teaches him the language of Brobdingnag, and names him Grildrig. The farmer exploits Grildrig, displaying him as a sideshow freak on Market Day and tiring him with ten weeks of performances. Eventually, he is invited to perform for royalty.

The Queen of Brobdingnag rescues Gulliver and installs him at court, where he is well treated, except by the mischievous dwarf and immodest maids of honor. The King encourages Gulliver to describe England, its governmental system, laws, customs, and morals. The King concludes that the English are a "most pernicious race of little odious vermin." Two years after his arrival, Gulliver is picked up by an eagle and dropped into the ocean, where he is rescued and again returned to England.

Once more, Gulliver is enticed by double salary to leave home and sets sail in August of 1706 for Tonquin. During a brief sailing trip to trade with neighboring islands, pirates set Gulliver adrift near uninhabited islands. At a time of deep despondence, Gulliver spies a flying island hovering overhead. He signals that he wishes to be rescued and is pulled up on a seat let down by chains. The inhabitants, called Laputians, are strangely distorted, both physically and mentally, and dominate other islands by floating overhead, depriving the inhabitants of sun and rain, and bombarding them with stones.

Gulliver requests permission to visit Lagado, metropolis of Balnibarbi, a land of barren fields and starving people who waste their time experimenting on new and foolishly speculative ventures. From there he moves to Glubbudrib, a small island devoted to the occult where Gulliver talks to notable ghosts of ancient Greece and Rome. On a third island, Luggnagg, Gulliver encounters people who never die. Because Luggnagg has a trade agreement with Japan, Gulliver sails there, joins a Dutch crew, and proceeds to England.

Gulliver's last adventure occurs in September of 1710, when, leaving his wife "big with child," he sails as captain of his own ship, the *Adventure*. Because several of his crew die, Gulliver, is forced to recruit replacements in Barbados and the Leeward Islands. The new crewmen form a conspiracy, seize the ship, and abandon the captain in a longboat near an unknown land, home of the Yahoos and Houyhnhnms. The former—grotesque, naked, foul-smelling humanoids—live in trees like monkeys. The Houyhnhnms—clean, civilized horse-people with an abhorrence of falsehood—represent the height of philosophy and wisdom.

Gulliver, repulsed by the Yahoos, with whom he shares a physical likeness, resides with the Houyhnhnms for three pleasant years, serves a houyhnhnm master, and attempts to explain English customs and laws. The Houyhnhnm assembly, repulsed by his human likeness to Yahoos, forces Gulliver to live with Yahoos or leave. Unable to identify with Yahoos, Gulliver returns to England via Lisbon and withdraws to the stable to live with horses in order to avoid human contact.

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### BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Hailed in two capitals, Dublin and London, Jonathan Swift (1667-1745) was an unusual amalgam—poet, clergyman, satirist, and political pamphleteer. Born in Dublin to Abigail Erick Swift, widow of a ne'er-do-well lawyer, he showed great promise at the age of two, when he learned to read, but graduated from Trinity College without distinguishing himself. Depressed by his dependence upon the bounty of his uncle Godwin, he gave himself to carousing and bad company.

Swift and his mother fled Ireland in the political upheavals of 1688. He took a position as secretary to Sir William Temple, statesman and diplomat. His patron helped him complete an M. A. degree at Oxford. It was during this period of his life that Swift formed an unusual friendship with eight-year-old Esther Johnson, whom he taught to read and referred to in his writing as Stella.

Wearied by mindless work, Swift abandoned his job and entered the church. He was ordained an Anglican priest in January, 1694. However, after a short stint in Kilroot, near Belfast, Ireland, he returned to Moor Park to work for Temple in 1696 and remained with his patron until Temple's death three years later. A tireless reader and thinker, Swift abhorred idleness, partly because of a tendency toward giddiness, which caused bouts of restlessness. He searched for worthwhile employment and settled on a vicarage in Meath.

His writing career began inauspiciously with several poor specimens of Pindaric odes. After Dryden's scathing criticisms, Swift turned from classic forms to humorous verse and eventually to prose. His first efforts, *The Battle of the Books* (1696) and *A Tale of a Tub* (1696) went unpublished for eight years. Yet, their peculiar mixture of wit, irony, and burlesque presaged a brilliant career for England's greatest satirist.

In 1701, Swift published his first political tract, "The Dissensions in Athens and in Rome." His reputation as a wit peaked with the publication of the *Bickerstaff Pamphlets* (1709-1710). For a time he flirted with Whig politics, but settled on the Tory side in 1710 and poured himself into the production of political commentary. Still, he found time to contribute pieces to the *Tatler* and the *Spectator*, forerunners of the modern magazine.

As a reward for his diligence, Swift was appointed dean of St. Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin in 1713. Busying himself with his work and his relationship with Stella, whom he may have married, he wrote fewer articles and championed the cause of Ireland against English neglect and abuse. In 1720, he reverted to his old restlessness and began some of his best writing, particularly "A Modest Proposal for Preventing the Children of Poor People in Ireland from being a Burden to their Parents or Country and for Making them Beneficial to the Public" (1728). His masterpiece, *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), was published anonymously and achieved instant success.

Swift's last years were marred by ill health, necessitating his permanent residence in Ireland. In 1742, he went completely mad. At his death, he was buried in the

cathedral next to his beloved Stella. He composed his own epitaph: "Savage indignation no longer tears his heart."

### CRITIC'S CORNER

Swift holds a distinguished place among England's notables as one of its most intellectual and influential writers and its greatest satirist. A prodigious wordsmith known for vivid, masculine style and distinctive ingenuity, he completed over 230 prose pieces, 300 poems, and 500 letters, although some of his earlier works have not survived. Even though his skill and wit receive highest praise, critics tend to pass over his great charm, exuberance, and amiability and concentrate on his tendency toward crude, scatological language and implacable attacks on Ireland's foes.

Published under the title *Travels into Several Remote Nations of the World, Gulliver's Travels*, a classic panegyric assigned by the Scriblerus Club (to which Swift, Alexander Pope, John Gay, John Arbuthnot, and other noted literati belonged), was Swift's attempt "to vex the world rather than divert it," as he explained in a letter to Pope. Replete with incisive and, at times, grotesque detail, the book combats the hypocrisy and absurdity of human nature through inescapable ironies.

### GENERAL OBJECTIVES

1. To differentiate between real and imaginary settings
2. To discuss the theme of perseverance under traumatic circumstances
3. To characterize satire as a literary style and to contrast it with other types of humor
4. To contrast variations in tone throughout the text
5. To note characters and events which suggest real situations
6. To account for the main character's misanthropy
7. To characterize life in each land that Gulliver visits
8. To explain how background material from the author's life helps explain his methods and attitudes
9. To narrate examples of kindness and generosity throughout Gulliver's life
10. To outline the various voyages and place them in a time frame
11. To discuss Swift's handling of point of view

### SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1. To analyze Swift's comments on human foibles
2. To consider the significance of religion and philosophy as they apply to the Lilliputians and the Houyhnhnms
3. To contrast treatment that Gulliver receives from

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Glumdalclitch, her father, the Queen of Brobdingnag, her maids of honor, and the dwarf

4. To contrast the four nations satirized in Book III
5. To account for Gulliver's continued fascination with sea travel
6. To describe Gulliver's battles with natural forces, including birds, animals, and the sea
7. To discuss examples of scatological humor and their place in satire
8. To project how Gulliver will cope with family and friends after his return from living among Yahoos and Houyhnhnms
9. To chart each voyage on a map and estimate the location of each fictional setting
10. To comment on the hazards of life at sea

### MEANING STUDY

Below are words, phrases, or sentences that have a particular meaning in the story. Explain the meaning each has in this book.

1. Soon after my return from Leyden, I was recommended, by my good master Mr. Bates, to be surgeon to the *Swallow*, Captain Abraham Pannell commander; with whom I continued three years and a half, making a voyage or two into the Levant, and some other parts. (Part I, Chapter I)

*(Swift's narrative is filled with a mixture of real and imaginary geographical references. The areas mentioned in this line, however, are both real. Leyden, a city in Holland, is the location of the medical school which Gulliver attends. The Levant is an old name for the countries bordering on the Eastern Mediterranean, particularly Turkey and Palestine.)*

2. All crimes against the state are punished here with the utmost severity; but if the person accused maketh his innocence plainly to appear upon his trial, the accuser is immediately put to an ignominious death; and out of his goods or lands, the innocent person is quadruply recompensed for the loss of his time, for the danger he underwent, for the hardship of his imprisonment, and for all the charges he hath been at in making his defence. (Part I, Chapter VI)

*(Gulliver makes an intense study of justice and morals in the countries he visits. While in Lilliput, he is amazed at the detailed laws that assure citizens' rights, particularly the punishment of informers. The Lilliputians delight in discrediting a false witness by swiftly executing him and awarding four times the compensation the victim deserves. In summary, Gulliver notes, "Although we usually call reward and punishment the two hinges upon which all government*

*turns, yet I could never observe this maxim to be put in practice by any nation except that of Lilliput.")*

3. However, I made a shift to go forward till I came to a part of the field where the corn had been laid by the rain and wind. (Part II, Chapter I)

*(At times, Swift uses terminology that is unfamiliar to American readers, such as the word corn to mean grain. Subsequent statements make it clear that Gulliver is not hiding among cornstalks: "Here it was impossible for me to advance a step; for the stalks were so interwoven that I could not creep through, and the beards of the fallen ears so strong and pointed that they pierced through my clothes into my flesh. At the same time I heard the reapers not above an hundred yards behind me. . . . With the next step I should be squashed to death under his foot, or cut in two with his reaping-hook.")*

4. The Captain understood my raillery very well, and merrily replied with the old English proverb, that he doubted my eyes were bigger than my belly, for he did not observe my stomach so good, although I had fasted all day; and continuing in his mirth, protested he would have gladly given an hundred pounds to have seen my closet in the eagle's bill, and afterwards in its fall from so great an height into the sea; which would certainly have been a most astonishing object, worthy to have the description of it transmitted to future ages: and the comparison of Phaeton was so obvious, that he could not forbear applying it, although I did not much admire the conceit. (Part II, Chapter VIII)

*(This sentence illustrates the style of the Neo-Classical Era or Age of Reason. The extensive appending of clauses requires intense attention to cause and effect. In addition, Swift salts the line heavily with wit and scholarship. For example, the witticism that turns on a knowledge of the English proverb illustrates the captain's sense of humor in dealing with Gulliver's shock upon his return to people his own size. Likewise, the allusion to the Greek myth of Phaeton, son of Helios, rounds out the picture of Gulliver tumbling into the sea after a harrowing ride in the eagle's claws.)*

5. From thence we went to Tonquin, where the Captain resolved to continue some time, because many of the goods he intended to buy were not ready, nor could he expect to be dispatched in some months. (Part III, Chapter I)

*(Tonquin is an old spelling of Tonkin, the northern portion of Vietnam. Gulliver's ten-day sail, beginning with an uneventful three days ending with a five-day drift to the north-northeast and then to the east might leave him in the Philippine region, although he does not identify much except the language of the Laputians, which is "not unlike sound to the Italian.")*

6. Upon the top of each tower, as well as upon the rock, they fixed a great loadstone, and in case their design

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should fail, they had provided a vast quantity of the most combustible fuel, hoping to burst therewith the adamant bottom of the island, if the loadstone project should miscarry. (Part III, Chapter III)

*(Lindalino, the second city in the kingdom, which rebels against the tyranny of Laputa, has few choices to avoid being stoned, deprived of sun and rain, or crushed by the descent of Laputa. The most obvious method of self-defense is to break the rock-hard underside of the floating island by drawing the island down on pointed towers by means of loadstones [Loadstone, a variation of lodestone, refers to magnetic rock] If that method fails, an alternative is the application of intense heat to burst the underside of the island "as the backs both of iron and stone will often do in our chimneys.")*

7. He ordered many packthreads to be let down, yet not a person offered to send up a petition, but instead thereof very bold demands, the redress of all their grievances, great immunities, the choice of their own governor, and other the like exorbitances. (Part III, Chapter III)

*(The King, who fails to notice the Lindalinian rebellion for eight months, makes a show of fairness by letting down threads in order to receive Lindalino's complaints against oppression. The citizens choose to make demands that he correct all wrongs, relieve them of stringent laws, and allow them self-rule, which Gulliver refers to as "exorbitances.")*

*The King orders retaliation in the form of crushing, but is forced to forego this method when he realizes the strength of the magnets. Consequently, the Lindalinians gain their rights. Had the island descended far enough to be rendered immobile, the Lindalinians were prepared to "fix it for ever, to kill the King and all his servants, and entirely change the government.")*

8. Whence it came what Polydore Virgil says of a certain house, *Nec vir fortis, nec femina casta*. (Part III, Chapter VIII)

*(In his assessment of the genealogies he constructs from his visit with the dead, Gulliver is dismayed with the blending of pure lines with knaves, fools, sharpers and crack-brains. He quotes Polydore Vergil [(?1470-?1555), Vatican collector of benevolences] who wrote a 26-volume history of England: "Neither a strong man, nor a chaste woman." Gulliver continues: "Neither could I wonder at all this, when I saw such an interruption of lineages by pages, lackeys, valets, coachmen, gamesters, captains and pickpockets.")*

*From this premise, Gulliver launches a full-fledged hyperbolic tirade against human foibles as revealed in the pageant of history. From interviews with ancient rulers, he learns, "that the royal throne could not be supported without corruption, because that positive, confident, restive temper, which virtue infused into man, was a perpetual clog to public*

*business. . . . Perjury, oppression, subornation, fraud, panderism, and the like infirmities, were amongst the most excusable arts they had to mention, and for these I gave, as it was reasonable, great allowance. But when some confessed they owed their greatness and wealth to sodomy or incest, others to the prostituting of their own wives and daughters; others to the betraying of their country or their prince; some of poisoning, more to the perverting of justice in order to destroy the innocent; I hope I may be pardoned if these discoveries inclined me a little to abate of that profound veneration which I am naturally apt to pay to persons of high rank, who ought to be treated with the utmost respect due to their sublime dignity, by us their inferiors.")*

9. They forced me into the long-boat, letting me put on my best suit of clothes, which were as good as new, and a small bundle of linen, but no arms except my hanger; and they were so civil as not to search my pockets into which I conveyed what money I had, with some other necessaries. (Part IV, Chapter I)

*(Like other passages in the book, this line contains unfamiliar British terms, such as linen for shirts and underwear, hanger for short sword, and civil for polite.)*

10. Temperance, industry, exercise and cleanliness, are the lessons equally enjoined to the young ones of both sexes; and my master thought it monstrous in us to give the females a different kind of education from the males, except in some articles of domestic management; whereby, as he truly observed, one half of our natives were good for nothing but bringing children into the world; and to trust the care of our children to such useless animals, he said, was yet a greater instance of brutality. (Part IV, Chapter VIII)

*(Swift is surprisingly modern in his attitude toward education for women. As he points out, when women are undereducated, they fail to take an equal place in the world. Even more dangerous, however, is the fact that poorly educated people make poor models for growing children.)*

### COMPREHENSION STUDY

Answer the following questions in your own words. There is not always a right answer. Your judgment is important and you should be ready to defend your answers by referring to passages in the book.

#### Questions 1-5 Literal Level

1. Discuss Gulliver's education, business ventures, and family ties.

*(Lemuel Gulliver, a surgeon, the third of five sons, was born about 1661. His father, an estate owner in Nottinghamshire, sent him to Emanuel College in Cambridge at the age of fourteen. Three years later, the boy is apprenticed to Mr. James Bates, a London surgeon, and remains with him for four years. From his*

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teen years, Gulliver studies navigation with the intent of traveling. At twenty-one, Gulliver procures forty pounds and the promise of thirty more per year from his father, uncle John, and other relatives to underwrite his advanced training. For two years and seven months, he studies "physic" at Leyden.

Around the age of 24, Gulliver travels to the eastern Mediterranean aboard the *Swallow*. At 27, he returns, opens a practice at Old Jury, London, and marries Mary Burton, "second daughter to Mr. Edmund Burton, hosier." Two years later, Bates dies. Gulliver's practice sours; with his wife's blessing, he sets out on a six-year voyage to the East and West Indies. His fortune increases, and he advances his knowledge by reading a "good number of books" and by "observing the manners and dispositions of the people, as well as learning their language."

Around the age of 35, Gulliver tires of life at sea and moves his family first to Fetter-Lane and then to Wapping. After three unprosperous years, he takes passage to the South-Sea on the *Antelope* on May 4, 1699. He returns from the voyage to Lilliput on April 13, 1702, spends two months with his family, leaves his wife a sum of money and a house at Redriff, and departs on the *Adventure*, a merchant ship.

At this point, Gulliver notes that his uncle John has left him an estate near Epping at thirty pounds per year and that he has a long lease on the *Black Bull* in Fetter Lane. Reassured that his finances are stable, he bids farewell to Johnny, who is grammar-school age, and Betty, presumably younger, and departs once more on June 20, 1702.

Four years later, in June of 1706, Gulliver comes home visibly shaken by his long stay with the giant Brobdingnagians. Mary and Betty run to greet him. Mary "protested I should never go to sea any more," but, within ten days, Captain William Robinson extends a tempting offer at twice Gulliver's former salary. Once more, he leaves his family and, on August 5, 1706, sets out on a voyage as head surgeon with a staff of three. At this time, Gulliver is approximately 45 years old.

Arriving home on April 16, 1710, he goes directly to Redriff and finds his family in good health. After five months [in reality, only four, since he leaves on August 7, 1710] Gulliver accepts the job of Captain of the *Adventure* and sails for Teneriffe. He is absent from home until December 5, 1715. By this time, Gulliver, around 54 years of age, has been given up for dead. Unable to accept his family because of their similarity to yahoos, he withdraws to the stable and keeps his wife at a respectable distance.)

2. How does Gulliver come to be rescued by the Laputians? (In the fourth book, Gulliver sails from Fort St. George to Tonquin, "where the Captain resolved to continue some time." He puts Gulliver in charge of a trading sloop to procure goods from neighboring islands. Three days into the trip, a storm carries the ship off

course. Fifteen days later, Gulliver and his fourteen-man crew are overtaken by two pirate gangs and bound with ropes.

Noticing that one of the brigands is a Dutchman, Gulliver employs religious sentiments to persuade the man to intercede with his captain. His attempt proves unsuccessful, however, a Japanese captain promises mercy. The vindictive Dutchman arranges for Gulliver's men to be divided equally between the two pirate ships and Gulliver set adrift in a canoe loaded with four days' provisions. Gulliver sails to a nearby rocky island. For four more days, he sails about the other islands of the group.

At the last island, Gulliver settles in a cave, gathers eggs and seaweed, and attempts to stretch his provisions. As he says of his new location, "I considered how impossible it was to preserve my life in so desolate a place, and how miserable my end must be." Realizing that he is being shaded from the sun, he looks up and spies a flying island. He waves his cap and handkerchief and is soon rescued via a seat let down on pulleys.)

3. Describe how the Lilliputians outfit Gulliver with clothing. (Gulliver "diverts" the reader with an account of how he is outfitted for clothes in Lilliput. Being around eleven times the height of the average Lilliputian, Gulliver presents a problem in logistics. The two hundred seamstresses who attend to his clothing needs measure him as he lies on the ground, "one standing at my neck, and another at my mid-leg, with a strong cord extended, that each held by the end, while the third measured the length of the cord with a rule of an inch long." They complete the computation by applying proportions based on the girth of his thumb. Using Gulliver's old shirt as a pattern, the seamstresses fit him exactly.  
Likewise, three hundred tailors make Gulliver's outerwear. They have him kneel while they raise a ladder to his neck and drop a plumb-line to the floor to determine the length of his coat. Gulliver measures his own waist and arm lengths. The completed garments resemble the "patch-work made by the ladies in England, only . . . all of a colour.")

4. Explain why Gulliver has difficulty explaining English lifestyle and laws to houyhnhnms. (During an unsettling explanation of the position of horses in English society, Gulliver is put to "pains of many circumlocutions to give my master a right idea of what I spoke; for their language doth not abound in variety of words." From this topic Gulliver moves to autobiography and narrates his adventures as ship's captain. The houyhnhnm, unable to conceive of a sensible person setting out on a life-threatening venture, asks "how I could persuade strangers out of different countries to venture with me, after the losses I had sustained, and the hazards I had run.")

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Gulliver replies that the sailors are criminals and riff-raff. It takes several days of explanation before Gulliver makes his point.

The conversation turns to the question of money, "lust, intemperance, malice and envy." The horse, "like one whose imagination was struck with something never seen or heard of before," widens his eyes in amazement and indignation. In the houyhnhnm language, there is no occasion for words like "power, government, war, law, punishment, and a thousand other things."

Gulliver continues his discourse with a description of religious wars, famine, pestilence, mercenaries, weaponry, law, and poverty, from which state it is necessary for people to "seek their livelihood by begging, robbing, stealing, cheating, pimping, forswearing, flattering, suborning, forging, gaming, lying, fawning, hectoring, voting, scribbling, star-gazing, poisoning, whoring, canting, libelling, freethinking, and the like occupations."

Gulliver is confronted with a polite but incredulous audience. His master, like all his race, is "endowed by nature with a general disposition to all virtues, and [has] no conceptions or ideas of what is evil in a rational creature. . . ." When the assembly votes to oust Gulliver because of his resemblance to yahoos, Gulliver's master regrets losing him. He concludes "that for his own part he could have been content to keep me in his service as long as I lived; because he found I had cured my self of some bad habits and dispositions, by endeavoring, as far as my inferior nature was capable, to imitate the Houyhnhnms.")

5. Describe Don Pedro's attempts to help Gulliver.

(After Gulliver's harrowing experience with the yahoos, he turns his canoe to the south and waits for a distant ship. The Portuguese sailors recognize that Gulliver is European. Yet, they are at a loss to explain his odd dress, obsession with yahoos and houyhnhnms, and attempts to emulate the houyhnhnms, with whom he identifies. Before Pedro De Mendez, the captain, Gulliver is treated fairly, but chooses to remain "silent and sullen.")

Having been chained to his cabin for attempting to jump overboard, Gulliver explains the disconcerting situation which caused him to identify with the rational houyhnhnms and to scorn the foul-smelling, savage yahoos, even though he was forced to leave the horse-people and return to his own kind. Captain Mendez considers Gulliver's account a "dream or a vision."

The captain, a wise man who has heard another account of the land of houyhnhnms and yahoos, treats Gulliver kindly, offers him his best suit of clothing, and invites him to his house upon their landing at Lisbon. Gradually, the captain lures Gulliver from his extreme antisocialism, even so far as to walk in the street. He convinces Gulliver to return to his family and locates an

English vessel that will take him home. On his departure, Don Pedro lends Gulliver twenty pounds and embraces him as they part.)

### Questions 6-8 Interpretive Level

6. Explain why the Queen's dwarf despises Gulliver.

(In a land of giants, the dwarf holds a special place for his diminutive size. Yet, a thirty-foot dwarf in comparison to Gulliver is less of a curiosity. Consequently, the dwarf overcomes his rival by mean tricks. Their spiteful exchange degenerates into cruelty when the dwarf drops Gulliver into a bowl of cream. The dwarf is severely punished by being whipped, forced to drink the cream, and dropped from his position as court favorite. The Queen gives him to a "lady of high quality, so that I saw him no more, to my very great satisfaction.")

7. Explain the role of the flappers in the satire of Book III.

(To poke fun at the contemplative nature of the Laputians, Swift creates a special class of servants, equipped with balloon-like bladders containing pebbles or dried peas, blown up with air, and "fastened like a flail to the end of a short stick." At first, Gulliver puzzles over their purpose, but eventually figures out their place. Because "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 taction upon the organs of speech and hearing," the flappers strike the participants in a conversation so that they can engage in a proper exchange.

Another, more urgent use of the flapper is as a warning of impending danger. When a Laputian is "so wrapped up in cogitation, that he is in manifest danger of falling down every precipice, and bouncing his head against every post, and in the streets, of justling others, or being justled himself into the kennel," the flapper administers a soft tap to redirect his master's steps. Gulliver learns that this system is necessary during the course of his stay. As he comments, "they forgot several times what they were about, and left me to myself, till their memories were again roused by the flappers. . . .")

8. How does Swift poke fun at philosophers?

(Among the ghosts of the ancients that Gulliver summons while visiting Glubbudrib is Aristotle. The old man is aged and somewhat feeble; "his visage was meagre, his hair lank and thin, and his voice hollow." Surprisingly, Gulliver realizes that the rest of the learned company does not know either Aristotle or Homer, even those scholars who translated their works. Aristotle is "out of all patience" with Gulliver's description of Scotus and Ramus and asks "whether the rest of the tribe were as great dunces as themselves.")



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Aristotle gamely engages in dialect with Descartes and Gassendi and enjoys exploding their theories. "He said that new systems of nature were but new fashions, which would vary in every age; and even those who pretend to demonstrate them from mathematical principles, would flourish but a short period of time, and be out of vogue when that was determined.")

### Questions 9 and 10 Critical Level

9. Describe the effect of Jonathan Swift's satire.

*(By setting up a rather naive, but intelligent character who likes travel, languages, and human encounters, Swift opens his narrative to many possibilities. Gulliver's constant travels lead him to various lands, the first two being diametrically opposite in character and allowing Swift to observe both the pettiness and the grossness of humankind. The third book, which introduces Gulliver to four different environments, results in a broader type of satire which jabs at contrasting utopias.*

*The final voyage, the most heavily satiric of the lot, hones Swift's theme to a sharp point. Gulliver, who has observed little people, big people, savants, ghosts from the past, immortals, rationalists, and experimenters, faces the most devastating of all his trials—a mirror image. Shattered by his rejection from a benevolent, rational horse society, Gulliver cannot cope with the grossness and savagery of yahoos.*

*When he returns, he is pathetic and demented rather than comic. Swift, by manipulating the satire from surface detail to an overall condemnation of human foibles, leaves no out for Gulliver. Reduced to a wretched existence in the stable, Gulliver is totally unfit for human society, which he scorns as the most base of any he has experienced.)*

10. Explain why Swift holds a revered place among English authors.

*(Noted for his skill in turning various levels of humor into a viable tool for human betterment, Swift is the high point in the development of English satire. His book, which has been enjoyed and studied on many levels, is a major work of children's literature. The picture of Lemuel Gulliver tied down by myriad pygmies belongs in the same league as Lewis Carroll's Alice, wandering friendless and confused in Wonderland or J. R. R. Tolkien's Bilbo Baggins on a hobbit adventure.*

*From another point of view, the severe criticism of war, corruption, greed, duplicity, and a whole catalog of lesser human vices provokes the reader to deep contemplation of history and the future of a race that has learned little from its contemptible past. By tickling the funny bone, Swift lures the reader farther down the path of realization that humor itself is a mirror in which to see the incongruities of*

*humanity. A religious man, dedicated to the betterment of life for the Irish and, ultimately, all humankind, Swift harnesses a powerful talent, one capable of joining laughter with a redemptive flash of insight.)*

### Questions 11 and 12 Creative Level

11. Make a list of people you would summon on Glubbudbrib, such as famous warriors, royalty, artists, villains, and people from your own family's past. Write out questions you would ask about great moments in their lives and mistakes they would correct if they could live again.
12. Compose a persuasive essay in which you lure Gulliver from his despair into the flow of life again. Point out weakness in the houyhnhnms he may have overlooked. Enumerate strengths of character and stirring events in human history that he failed to mention to his houyhnhnm master.

### STUDENT INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES

1. Divide the class into small groups to study some of Swift's other work's, such as "A Modest Proposal," "A City Shower," "Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift," "Prayers for Stella," "The Progress of a Beauty," "Resolutions When I Come to Be Old," and Swift's contributions to the *Tatler* and *Spectator*. Discuss the tone and style that dominates each piece.
2. Prepare a dialogue dramatizing Gulliver's arrival home after a visit to a foreign land, such as Lilliput or Balnibarbi. Stress the questions that his family asks about the journey. Include their news from England. Look up information about the early eighteenth century which Mary Gulliver would want to share.
3. Discuss the current use of satire in journalism, movies, literature, theatre, and art. Define the place of satire in civilized society. Explain why satire is one of the most sophisticated types of expression.
4. Lead a debate about Lemuel Gulliver's criticisms of humanity. Decide whether his misanthropy in Book IV is a reasonable response to the world he returns to. Cite examples to support your arguments.
5. Make a timeline of political, religious, and current events of Swift's era which figure in his satires, such as clashes between Protestants and Catholics, the snobbery of English landlords in Ireland, debate between Whigs and Tories, philosophical dissension among members of the Royal Society, and scandals involving members of the royal family. Coordinate significant dates and events from Swift's life.
6. Prepare a bulletin board of witty political cartoons or caricatures which reveal human foibles, such as deception, snobbery, vanity, greed, conceit, or ignorance. Add original drawings of famous people from

## GULLIVER'S TRAVELS

this century whom you think deserve satiric representation.

7. Write an essay in which you define the following terms: humor, comedy, wit, burlesque, incongruity, invective, pun, parody, bathos, mock heroic, and satire. Cite examples of classic works that fit each category. For a definitive discussion of each, refer to Hugh Holman's *A Handbook to Literature*, Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1980.
8. Make an oral report on the Age of Reason. Discuss the time frame over which it extends. Compare the great spokesmen of the period, particularly Alexander Pope, Daniel Defoe, Samuel Richardson, Henry Fielding, Oliver Goldsmith, Samuel Johnson, Thomas Jefferson, Noah Webster, and Thomas Paine.
9. Compose a first person account of your journey to Lilliput and describe some aspect of the miniature nation that you would investigate. Explain how you would assist that Lilliputians in a war against Blefuscu. Describe how you would escape from captivity.
10. Compose your own explanation of your country and its customs and mores as though you were talking to an alien who knows nothing about it.
11. Draw a diagram of Laputa and show how Laputians lower a chair by pulleys and how they shade and bombard other nations.
12. Write a news release about tiny cattle, hair and fingernail clippings, and other proofs of Gulliver's first two voyages.

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### TEACHING NOTES



## GULLIVER'S TRAVELS

### VOCABULARY TEST

Fill the blanks in the passage below with words from the list that follows. You will have words left over when you finish.

The Queen, who often used to hear me talk of my sea-voyages, and took all occasions to (1) \_\_\_\_\_ me when I was (2) \_\_\_\_\_, asked me whether I understood how to handle a sail or an oar, and whether a little exercise of rowing might not be convenient for my health. I answered that I understood both very well. For although my proper employment had been to be surgeon or doctor to the ship, yet often, upon a pinch, I was forced to work like a common (3) \_\_\_\_\_. But I could not see how this could be done in their country, where the smallest (4) \_\_\_\_\_ was equal to a first-rate (5) \_\_\_\_\_ among us, and such a boat as I could manage would never live in any of their rivers. Her Majesty said, if I would (6) \_\_\_\_\_ a boat, her own (7) \_\_\_\_\_ should make it, and she would provide a place for me to sail in. The fellow was an (8) \_\_\_\_\_ workman, and by my instructions in ten days finished a pleasure-boat with all its tackling, able conveniently to hold eight Europeans. When it was finished, the Queen was so delighted, that she ran with it in her lap to the King, who ordered it to be put in a (9) \_\_\_\_\_ full of water, with me in it, by way of trial; where I could not manage my two (10) \_\_\_\_\_, or little oars, for want of room. But the queen had before contrived another project. She ordered the joiner to make a wooden trough of three hundred foot long, fifty broad and eight deep; which being well (11) \_\_\_\_\_ to prevent leaking, was placed on the floor along the wall, in an outer room of the palace. It had a (12) \_\_\_\_\_ near the bottom to let out the water when it began to grow stale, and two servants could easily fill it in half an hour. Here I often used to row for my own (13) \_\_\_\_\_, as well as that of the Queen and her ladies, who thought themselves well entertained with my skill and (14) \_\_\_\_\_. Sometimes I would put up my sail, and then my business was only to steer, while the ladies gave me a (15) \_\_\_\_\_ with their fans; and when they were weary, some of the pages would blow my sail forward with their breath, while I showed my art by steering starboard or larboard as I pleased. When I had done, Glumdalclitch always carried my boat into her closet, and hung it on a nail to dry.

abominable    agility    censure    cistern    cock    contrive    countenance  
counterpoise    diversion    divert    encompassed    flints    gale    ingenious  
joiner    lineaments    man-of-war    mariner    melancholy    necromancy    piecemeal  
pitched    prodigious    provisions    scanty    sculls    stomacher    treachery    wherry

## GULLIVER'S TRAVELS

### COMPREHENSION TEST A

#### Part I: Quotation Completion (20 points)

Match parts of each of the following quotations. Place the letter of your response in the blank provided at left.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. I dwell the longer upon this subject from the desire I have to make the society of an English Yahoo by any means not insupportable;
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. If they would, for example, praise the beauty of a woman, or any other animal,
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Being quite dispirited with toil, and wholly overcome by grief and despair,
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. It seems that upon the first moment I was discovered sleeping on the ground after my landing,
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. But his Imperial Majesty, fully determined against capital punishment, was graciously pleased to say,
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. This flapper is likewise employed diligently to attend his master on his walks, and upon occasion to give him a soft flap on his eyes,
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. They knew the seal perfectly well . . .
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. I answered as loud as I could in several languages, and he often laid his ear within two yards of me, but all in vain, for
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. I gave him two purses of two hundred *sprugs* each, and promised,
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. I spoke Dutch tolerably well; I told him who we were, and begged him in consideration of our being Christians and Protestants,

- A. that since the Council thought the loss of your eyes too easy a censure, some other may be inflicted hereafter.
- B. they describe it by rhombs, circles, parallelograms, ellipses, and other geometrical terms, or by words of art drawn from music, needless here to repeat.
- C. *a King lifting up a lame beggar from the earth.*
- D. and therefore I here entreat those who have any tincture of this absurd vice, that they will not presume to come in my sight.
- E. where the whole praise as well as pillage hath been engrossed by the chief commander, who perhaps had the last title to either.
- F. upon a project for extracting sun-beams out of cucumbers, which were to be put into vials hermetically sealed, and let out to warm the air in raw inclement summers.
- G. and therefore continued always in the condition of servants, without ever aspiring to match out of their own race, which in that country would be reckoned monstrous and unnatural.
- H. of neighbouring countries, in strict alliance, that he would move the Captains to take some pity on us.
- I. that those who are condemned without any fault of their own to a perpetual continuance in the world, should not have their misery doubled by the load of a wife.
- J. the Emperor . . . determined in council that I should be tied in the manner I have related . . . .
- K. when we arrived in England, to make him a present of a cow and a sheep big with young.
- L. because he is always so wrapped up in cogitation, that he is in manifest danger of falling down every precipice . . . .
- M. I lay down between two ridges, and heartily wished I might there end my days.
- N. we were wholly unintelligible to each other.

## GULLIVER'S TRAVELS

### Part II: Matching (20 points)

Complete each of the following descriptions with a name from the list that follows. Place the letter of your answer in the blank provided at left. Some of the answers will be used more than once and some not at all.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. sits at the far end of the dinner table from Gulliver and is allowed to answer his questions "with the utmost brevity."
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. "little nurse" who names Gulliver *Grildrig*
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. eminent London surgeon to whom Gulliver is apprenticed.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. counselor to the Emperor of Lilliput.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. smelly tree-dwelling creature that resembles a human being.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Man-Mountain.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. wedges Gulliver into a hollow bone.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. gives Gulliver £200 and a letter of recommendation.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. despises Gulliver for urinating on the palace.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. is awarded the title of Nardac.

- |                     |                        |
|---------------------|------------------------|
| A. Mr. James Bates  | F. Glumdalclitch       |
| B. King of Laputa   | G. Lemuel Gulliver     |
| C. Mary             | H. Skyresh Bolgolam    |
| D. Golbasto Momaren | I. yahoo               |
| E. Queen's dwarf    | J. Empress of Lilliput |

### Part III: True/False (30 points)

Mark the following statements either **T** for true or **F** if any part is false.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Gulliver finds the race of Struldbruggs attractive and envies their immortality.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. To escape the life of a pampered pet of the Brobingnagians, Gulliver carefully plots his eventual escape.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. The Lilliputians are outraged that Gulliver has taken refuge in Blefuscu and demand his return.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. As ship's doctor, Gulliver is privy to privileged information and supervises all side trips involving trade with natives.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Mary Burton demands that Gulliver halt his wanderings and come back to London and marry her.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. The ghosts of Aristotle and Homer are snobbish and rude toward Gulliver and refuse to answer his questions about their translators.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. At times, Glumdalclitch causes Gulliver embarrassment by reporting his misadventures to the Queen.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. The houyhnhnms are perplexed that Gulliver resembles a yahoo but demonstrates rationality and intelligence.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Subjects out of favor in Luggnagg die from poison which is sprinkled on the floor that they are forced to lick.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. A friend urges the farmer who finds Gulliver to exhibit him on Market Day.



## GULLIVER'S TRAVELS

### COMPREHENSION TEST B

#### Part I: Identifying Locations (20 points)

Name the place which is described in the following quotations. Choose your answers from the list that follows. Place them in the blanks provided at left.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. I swept over the great Western Gate, and passed very gently, and sideling through the two principal streets, only in my short waistcoat, for fear of damaging the roofs and eaves of the houses with the skirts of my coat.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. I saw Caesar and Pompey at the head of their troops, just ready to engage.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. . . . the bulk of the people consist in a manner wholly of discoverers, witnesses, informers, accusers, prosecutors, evidences, swearers, together with their several subservient and subaltern instruments, all under the colours and conduct of ministers of state and their deputies.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. . . . it appeared to be a firm substance, the bottom flat, smooth, and shining very bright from the reflection of the sea below.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. I had several men die in my ship of calentures, so that I was forced to get recruits . . . .
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. The kingdom is a peninsula, terminated to the north-east by a ridge of mountains thirty miles high, which are altogether impassable by reason of the volcanoes upon the tops.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. . . . walking out of curiosity to the north-east coast of the island, I observed, about half a league off, in the sea, somewhat that looked like a boat overturned.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. The people in the streets walked fast, looked wild, their eyes fixed, and were generally in rags.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. In a week's time he seduced me down to the door. I found my terror gradually lessened, but my hatred and contempt seemed to increase. I was at last bold enough to walk the street in his company, but kept my nose well stopped with rue, or sometimes with tobacco.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. He sent me to Emanuel College at fourteen years old, where I resided three years, and applied myself to my studies . . . .

Balnibarbi	Barbadoes	Blefuscus	Brobdingnag	Cambridge	Downs
Glubbudrib	Japan	Laputa	Leyden	Lisbon	Madagascar
Mildendo	Nottinghamshire		Tenerife	Tonquin	Tribnia

#### Part II: Short Answer (20 points)

Supply a word or phrase in answer to each of the following questions. Place your response in the blank provided at left.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. What is Glumdalclitch's name for Gulliver?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. What do the Lilliputians call Gulliver?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. What does Gulliver attempt to learn as soon as he arrives in a new country?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Which Lilliputian is the most skilled rope-dancer?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. What bombards Gulliver with giant apples?

## GULLIVER'S TRAVELS

- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. What carries Gulliver away from Brobdingnag?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Who captures Gulliver's sloop as he sails east from Tonquin?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. What institution is erected in Lagado by royal patent?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. What is a simple translation of Struldbrugs?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Which character receives the title of Nardac?

### Part III: Fill-in (30 points)

Supply a word or phrase from the list below to complete each of the following statements.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. He desired I would stand like a \_\_\_\_\_, with my legs as far asunder as I conveniently could.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. You are very sensible that \_\_\_\_\_ (*Galbet*, or High Admiral) hath been your mortal enemy almost ever since your arrival.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. And I was privately assured, that \_\_\_\_\_, conceiving the greatest abhorrence of what I had done, removed to the most distant side of the court, firmly resolved that those buildings should never be repaired for her use: and, in the presence of her chief confidants could not forbear vowing revenge.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. A coach was allowed to \_\_\_\_\_ and me, wherein her governess frequently took her out to see the town, or go among the shops; and I was always of the party, carried in my box . . . .
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. By means of this \_\_\_\_\_, the island is made to rise and fall, and move from one place to another.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. I then desired the Governor to call up Descartes and Gassendi, with whom I prevailed to explain their systems to \_\_\_\_\_.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. The continent . . . passes under the general name of \_\_\_\_\_, and the metropolis, as I said before, is called *Lagado*.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. The fore-feet of the \_\_\_\_\_ differed from my hands in nothing else but the length of the nails, the coarseness and brownness of the palms, and the hairiness on the backs.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. My \_\_\_\_\_ and his friends continued on the shore till I was almost out of sight; and I often heard the sorrel nag . . . crying out . . . Take care of thyself, gentle Yahoo.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. The short time I continued in \_\_\_\_\_, I made a considerable profit by showing my cattle to many persons of quality, and others . . . .
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. I told \_\_\_\_\_, she had been too thrifty, for I found she had starved herself and her daughter to nothing.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. And the business of this officer is, when two or more persons are in company, gently to strike with his \_\_\_\_\_ the mouth of him who is to speak, and the right ear of him or them to whom the speaker addresseth himself.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. Nothing angered and mortified me so much as the Queen's \_\_\_\_\_, who being of the lowest stature that was ever in that country . . . became insolent at seeing a creature so much beneath him.

**GULLIVER'S TRAVELS**

\_\_\_\_\_ 14. The word \_\_\_\_\_, in their tongue, signifies a *horse*, and in its etymology, *the perfection of nature*.

\_\_\_\_\_ 15. My \_\_\_\_\_ understand me tolerably well; I converse with them at least four hours every day.

Aristotle    Balnibarbi    bladder    Colossus    crewmen    dwarf    the Empress    England  
Glumdalclitch    horses    Houyhnhnm    Laputa    loadstone    master  
my wife    pulleys    Skyresh Bolgolam    Yahoo

Part IV: Essay Questions (30 points)

1. Describe aspects of English life which the houyhnhnms disapprove of.

2. Explain how Gulliver passes out of the farmer's hands to the Queen.

3. List and describe the lands that Gulliver visits in Book III.



## GULLIVER'S TRAVELS

### VOCABULARY TEST ANSWER KEY

- |               |               |
|---------------|---------------|
| 1. divert     | 9. cistern    |
| 2. melancholy | 10. sculls    |
| 3. mariner    | 11. pitched   |
| 4. wherry     | 12. cock      |
| 5. man-of-war | 13. diversion |
| 6. contrive   | 14. agility   |
| 7. joiner     | 15. gale      |
| 8. ingenious  |               |

### COMPREHENSION TEST A ANSWER KEY

#### Part I: Quotation Completion (20 points)

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. D | 6. L  |
| 2. B | 7. C  |
| 3. M | 8. N  |
| 4. J | 9. K  |
| 5. A | 10. H |

#### Part II: Matching (20 points)

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. C | 6. G  |
| 2. F | 7. E  |
| 3. A | 8. B  |
| 4. H | 9. J  |
| 5. I | 10. G |

#### Part III: True/False (30 points)

- |      |       |       |
|------|-------|-------|
| 1. T | 6. F  | 11. F |
| 2. F | 7. T  | 12. F |
| 3. T | 8. T  | 13. T |
| 4. F | 9. T  | 14. F |
| 5. F | 10. T | 15. T |

#### Part IV: Essay Questions (30 points) Answers will vary.

### COMPREHENSION TEST B ANSWER KEY

#### Part I: Identifying Quotations (20 points)

- |                |                |
|----------------|----------------|
| 1. Mildendo    | 6. Brobdingnag |
| 2. Glubbudbrib | 7. Blefuscu    |
| 3. Tribnia     | 8. Balnibarbi  |
| 4. Laputa      | 9. Lisbon      |
| 5. Barbadoes   | 10. Cambridge  |

#### Part II: Short Answer (20 points)

- |                 |              |
|-----------------|--------------|
| 1. Grildrig     | 6. eagle     |
| 2. Man-Mountain | 7. pirates   |
| 3. language     | 8. Academy   |
| 4. Flimnap      | 9. Immortals |
| 5. monkey       | 10. Gulliver |

#### Part III: Fill-in (30 points)

- |                     |               |
|---------------------|---------------|
| 1. Colossus         | 9. master     |
| 2. Skyresh Bolgolam | 10. England   |
| 3. the Empress      | 11. my wife   |
| 4. Glumdalclitch    | 12. bladder   |
| 5. loadstone        | 13. dwarf     |
| 6. Aristotle        | 14. Houyhnhnm |
| 7. Balnibarbi       | 15. horses    |
| 8. Yahoo            |               |

#### Part IV: Essay Questions (30 points)

Answers will vary.



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