



First Edition of Gulliver's Travels

Gulliver's Travels (1726, amended 1735), officially *Travels into Several Remote Nations of the World, in Four Parts. By Lemuel Gulliver, First a Surgeon, and then a Captain of several Ships*, is a novel by Jonathan Swift that is both a satire on human nature and a parody of the "travellers' tales" literary sub-genre. It is Swift's best known full-length work, and a classic of English literature.

Part I: A Voyage to Lilliput



Mural depicting Gulliver surrounded by citizens of Lilliput

May 4, 1699 — April 13, 1702

The book begins with a short preamble in which Gulliver, in the style of books of the time, gives a brief outline of his life and history prior to his voyages. He enjoys travelling, all though it is that love of travel that is his downfall.

On his first voyage, Gulliver is washed ashore after a shipwreck and awakes to find himself a prisoner of a race of people one-twelfth the size of normal human beings (15cm tall), who are inhabitants of the neighbouring and rival countries of Lilliput and Blefuscu. After giving assurances of his good behaviour, he is given a residence in Lilliput and becomes a favourite of the court. From there, the book follows Gulliver's observations on the Court of Lilliput, which is intended to satirize the court of George I. Gulliver assists the Lilliputians. However, he is charged with treason and sentenced to be blinded. With the assistance of a kind friend, Gulliver escapes to Blefuscu, where he spots and retrieves an abandoned boat and sails out to be rescued by a passing ship which takes him back home.

Part II: A Voyage to Brobdingnag



Gulliver Exhibited to the Brobdingnag Farmer by Richard Redgrave

June 20, 1702 — June 3, 1706

When the sea vessel *Adventure*, which was an old wooden ship, is steered off course by storms and forced to go in to land for want of fresh water, Gulliver is abandoned by his companions and found by a farmer who is 18m. tall. He brings Gulliver home and his extremely smart and strong daughter cares for Gulliver. The farmer treats him as a curiosity and exhibits him for money. The queen wants to see the show. She loves Gulliver and he is then bought by the Queen of Brobdingnag and kept as a favorite at court.

Part III: A Voyage to Laputa, Balnibarbi, Glubbdubdrib, Luggnagg and Japan

August 5, 1706 — April 16, 1710

After Gulliver's ship is attacked by pirates, he is marooned near a desolate rocky island, near India. Fortunately he is rescued by the flying island of Laputa, a kingdom devoted to the arts of music and mathematics but utterly unable to use these for practical ends. Gulliver is then taken to Balnibarbi to await a Dutch trader who can take him on to Japan. He travels to a magician's dwelling and discusses history with the ghosts of historical figures, the most obvious restatement of the "ancients versus moderns" theme in the book. He also encounters the struldbrugs, unfortunates who are immortal and very, very old. The trip is otherwise reasonably free of incident and Gulliver returns home, determined to stay there for the rest of his days.

Part IV: A Voyage to the Country of the Houyhnhnms

September 7, 1710 – December 5, 1715

Despite his earlier intention of remaining at home, Gulliver returns to sea as a captain. On this voyage he is forced to find new additions to his crew who he believes to have turned the rest of the crew against him. His crew then mutiny and after keeping him contained for some time resolve to leave him on the first piece of land they come across and continue on as pirates. He is abandoned in a landing boat and comes first upon a race of (apparently) hideous deformed creatures to which he conceives a violent antipathy. Shortly thereafter he meets a horse and comes to understand that the horses (in their language Houyhnhnm or "the perfection of nature") are the rulers and the deformed creatures ("Yahoos") are human beings in their basest form. Gulliver becomes a member of the horse's household, and comes to both admire and emulate the Houyhnhnms and their lifestyle, rejecting humans as merely Yahoos endowed with some semblance of reason which they only use to exacerbate and add to the vices Nature gave them.

Major themes

Broadly, the book has three themes:

- a satirical view of the state of European government, and of petty differences between religions.
- an inquiry into whether men are inherently corrupt or whether they become corrupted.
- a restatement of the older "ancients versus moderns" controversy.

In terms of storytelling and construction the parts follow a pattern:

- The causes of Gulliver's misadventures become more malignant as time goes on - he is first shipwrecked, then abandoned, then attacked by strangers, then attacked by his own crew.
- Gulliver's attitude hardens as the book progresses — he is genuinely surprised by the viciousness and politicking of the Lilliputians but finds the behavior of the Yahoos in the fourth part reflective of the behavior of people.
- Each part is the reverse of the preceding part — Gulliver is big/small/sensible/ignorant, the countries are complex/simple/scientific/natural, forms of Government are worse/better/worse/better than England's.
- No form of government is ideal — the simplistic Brobdingnagians enjoy public executions and have streets infested with beggars, the honest and upright Houyhnhnms who have no word for lying are happy to suppress the true nature of Gulliver as a Yahoo and equally unconcerned about his reaction to being expelled.
- Specific individuals may be good even where the race is bad — Gulliver finds a friend in each of his travels and, despite Gulliver's rejection of and horror toward all Yahoos, is treated very well by the Portuguese captain, Don Pedro, who returns him to England at the novel's end.