

# Gullivers travels literature review example

[War](#), [Intelligence](#)



Gulliver's Travels is a book written by Jonathan Swift in the 18th century. It was a very popular book then and is still as popular today. It has never been out of print since it was first published. "It is universally read, from the cabinet council to the nursery". (John Gay wrote in a letter to Jonathan Swift in 1726). It was a very advanced book for its time when people were less travelled than they are today and foreign countries were as yet unknown. People were afraid of what they did not know and therefore these tales gave them an insight into what the rest of the world could be like. Swift sets out to illustrate that although other people might not resemble us in appearance, in character they all resemble each and every one of us and that there is no reason to fear the unknown.

At the beginning of the tale, we can already see that Swift is introducing us to different people and different cultures and Gulliver's Travels tells us about Lemuel Gulliver who enjoys travelling. His first voyage recounts how he was washed ashore after being shipwrecked on an island. The island's inhabitants were less than six inches tall. The fact that Gulliver is a giant when compared to them does nothing to deter them whatsoever. On the contrary, they take the upper hand and imprison Gulliver only allowing him to go free once they have seen that he is on his best behavior and once he has promised not to hurt the Lilliputians. One example of the leadership of the Lilliputians (who are less than six inches tall) is when the king orders Gulliver (a giant in comparison) to be tied down and makes a deal with him that he will not harm his people knowing full well that if he wanted to Gulliver could trample the whole race of Lilliputians just by stepping on them. Gulliver is called upon to help the people of Lilliput against the neighbouring Blefuscu.

However, when he refuses to steal their fleet, he loses grace in front of the king and eventually escapes to Blefuscu.

Here we see that although the Lilliputians were in a way at a disadvantage (they were less than six inches tall) when compared to Gulliver, they were in no way intimidated by him and took the upper hand, laying the law as they saw fit. In fact, notwithstanding the difference in their height, Gulliver was captured by them and made to obey their rules which proves that in this case might is not right. The king bossed Gulliver around and made him do what he wanted to although he knew that Gulliver could turn against him and kill him at any time. However, the fact that he was a king made him feel superior to anything and anybody. We can see these traits in people today. Rich and powerful people can be bossy and order people around whenever they like because they have a superior complex.

He then went on to another island where the people were seventy two feet tall and Gulliver is treated like a toy doll. He is carried around in their hands and is put on show for money. Although he is small, he is a valuable commodity to the king because he can discuss the state of matters in Europe with the king. The king is far from pleased with the state of affairs. When we compare it to modern day society, Swift seems to be telling us here that it does not matter how powerful and big we are if we do not have any sense, we have nothing to contribute to society. He gives us an example of Gulliver (who is now small when compared to the people there) who although small in stature is big in intelligence. So what is really important? Being powerful or being intelligent?

Since Jonathan Swift is a man of the cloth, we can see that he likes to make

comparisons where he brings out the morality of human nature. In this instance, we see that he seems to be indicating that the small man (Gulliver) is a giant morally in comparison to the king (although he towers over Gulliver). Eventually, Gulliver finds himself in the sea where he is then returned to England by some sailors. We can compare this tale to the story of David and Goliath in the Bible. It was David who slew the giant Goliath and who then went on to become king. Although Goliath was mighty and powerful, it was the little man with intelligence who won over the mighty Goliath.

Gulliver then goes on to Laputa, a flying island of music and mathematics where the Laputians throw rocks at other cities. Jonathan Swift was way ahead of his time because the way he describes these attacks from the air is the way we imagine an air strike two centuries later! Although they value their scientific methods, they do not put them to good use and therefore have no practical use for the results.

In Luggnagg, Gulliver comes across struldbrugs - people who are immortal. Unfortunately, although these people are immortal, they are not young but they are over eighty years old and we ask ourselves - who would want to be immortal at eighty when youth has passed us by? Here we can see the satire in Gulliver's Travels and also the author's dark sense of humour where he seems to be mocking the human race.

In Balnibarbi, Gulliver meets ghosts of historical figures with whom he discusses history. This is another twist because history is discussed with people who have already died and although their recounts are history to Gulliver, they are not history to them because they are not Gulliver's

contemporaries.

Gulliver then decides to take a break from his travels and tries to stay at home. However, he is bored and puts together a crew and embarks on a new adventure. Unfortunately, however, he has not chosen his crew diligently and they turn into pirates and abandon him on an island where he meets perfect horses, Houyhnhnms, and not so perfect humans, Yahoos. Gulliver tries to endear himself to the Houyhnhnms, having taken a dislike to the Yahoos, only to be rejected by the Houyhnhnms as he resembles more the Yahoos in stature.

He is then rescued by a Yahoo who is kind and generous. He is Portugese and his name is Captain Pedro de Mendez. Gulliver sees him as the only Yahoo of his kind “ an animal which had some little portion of reason”.

Gulliver returns home to England where he can now not bear to live among Yahoos and chooses instead to live and talk to the horses in his stables. He eventually goes insane. The level of imagination in Gulliver’s Travels is considerable and reminds us that Jonathan Swift was ahead of his time in certain aspects. The Christian aspect of the book is apparent since it demonstrates that good will win against evil in the end and that might is not right. Christ preaches forgiveness and not ‘ an eye for an eye’.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the earth. Blessed are they who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for justice, for they shall be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God. Blessed are

they who suffer persecution for justice' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when men reproach you, and persecute you, and speaking falsely, say all manner of evil against you, for My sake. (The Beatitudes by Jesus Christ)

## **References:**

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