

### from *Gulliver's Travels*

Fiction by  
Jonathan Swift



LA.1112.2.1.5,  
LA.1112.2.1.8

#### LITERARY ANALYSIS: FANTASY

**Fantasy** is literature in which the limits of reality are purposely disregarded. The writer's aim may be pure entertainment or to convey a serious message. In *Gulliver's Travels*, the narrator visits four imaginary lands. These settings serve as ideal vehicles for Swift's **satire**, allowing him to criticize human nature and European society by comparing them with the strange beings and societies Gulliver observes in his travels. As you read *Gulliver's Travels*, notice how Swift's fantasy worlds parallel and comment on ours.

#### READING SKILL: UNDERSTAND SATIRE IN HISTORICAL CONTEXT

You can clarify your understanding of a satire from an earlier period by focusing on the **historical context**—the conditions and events that inspired or influenced the work's creation. Swift participated on both sides in the struggle between England's two political parties, the Whigs and the Tories. As a clergyman, he was deeply concerned about religious differences that divided Europe. These conflicts inspired much of his satire in *Gulliver's Travels*. To familiarize yourself with the work's historical context, reread the author biography on page 608 and examine the background information on page 610. Then, as you read the selection, use footnotes to help you understand the specific context of Swift's satire.

#### VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT

Use the following sentences to help you figure out the meanings of the boldfaced words.

1. The detective's accusation was pure **conjecture**.
2. The servant bowed in a **submissive** manner.
3. Her hands moved with **dexterity** across the keyboard.
4. The **diminutive** dog was smaller than the cat it chased.
5. Judging from its huge footprints, the beast is **prodigious**.
6. The **animosities** between the clans led to a bloody feud.
7. Her lies and deceit seemed designed to **foment** mistrust.
8. In 100 years, how will **posterity** judge today's leaders?

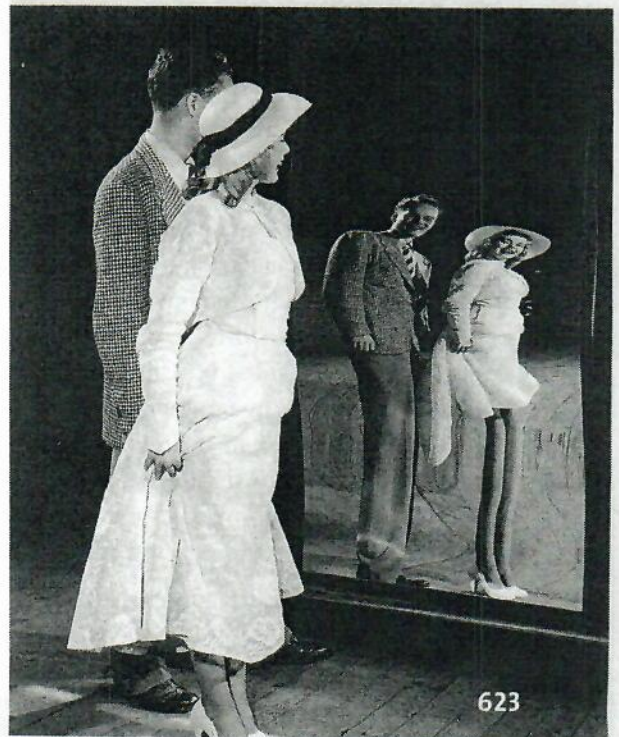
Explore the  
Key Idea

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### Can we trust our own PERCEPTIONS?

**KEY IDEA** Have you ever misjudged a situation or a person? Sometimes our **perceptions** are not as keen as we'd like them to be. In *Gulliver's Travels*, Jonathan Swift creates fantastic encounters that challenge both his hero's and his readers' perceptions of the world.

**QUICKWRITE** With a group of classmates, look through your textbook and choose an interesting picture of two or more people. Have each member of your group write a paragraph about the picture, describing the people and their relationship to each other. Share your paragraphs with one another and discuss the ways in which your perceptions of the picture differ.



# GULLIVER'S TRAVELS

JONATHAN SWIFT

**BACKGROUND** In Swift's day, travel books, in which writers described their visits to foreign lands, had become a popular genre and a boon to the publishing business. Swift used the form for his four-part fantasy, which allowed him to comment freely on subjects like the 200-year-old religious divisions between Catholics and Protestants in England, as well as the rancorous political split between the Tories, who were obedient to the crown and the Church of England, and the Whigs, who wanted to limit the powers of both institutions.

## PART 1. A VOYAGE TO LILLIPUT

*The first part of Gulliver's Travels describes Gulliver's adventures in Lilliput. After going to sea as a ship's doctor, Gulliver faces disaster as his ship breaks apart in a storm. He swims toward land, reaches shore, and falls exhausted on the ground.*

I lay down on the grass, which was very short and soft, where I slept sounder than ever I remember to have done in my life, and as I reckoned, above nine hours; for when I awaked, it was just daylight. I attempted to rise, but was not able to stir: for as I happened to lie on my back, I found my arms and legs were strongly fastened on each side to the ground; and my hair, which was long and thick, tied down in the same manner. I likewise felt several slender ligatures<sup>1</sup> across my body, from my armpits to my thighs. I could only look upwards; the sun began to grow hot, and the light offended my eyes. I heard a confused noise about me, but in the posture I lay, could see nothing except the sky. In a little time I felt  
10 something alive moving on my left leg, which advancing gently forward over my

**ANALYZE VISUALS**  
How well does this illustration correspond to Swift's description of Gulliver's captivity? Explain your answer.

1. **ligatures** (lĭg'ə-chōōrz'): cords used to tie something up.

breast, came almost up to my chin; when bending my eyes downwards as much as I could, I perceived it to be a human creature not six inches high, with a bow and arrow in his hands, and a quiver<sup>2</sup> at his back. In the meantime, I felt at least forty more of the same kind (as I **conjectured**) following the first. I was in the utmost astonishment, and roared so loud, that they all ran back in a fright; and some of them, as I was afterwards told, were hurt with the falls they got by leaping from my sides upon the ground. However, they soon returned; and one of them, who ventured so far as to get a full sight of my face, lifting up his hands and eyes by way of admiration, cried out in a shrill, but distinct voice, *Hekinah Degul*: the others  
20 repeated the same words several times, but I then knew not what they meant.

**conjecture** (kən-jĕk'chər)  
v. to infer based on  
incomplete evidence;  
guess

I lay all this while, as the reader may believe, in great uneasiness; at length, struggling to get loose, I had the fortune to break the strings, and wrench out the pegs that fastened my left arm to the ground; for, by lifting it up to my face, I discovered the methods they had taken to bind me; and, at the same time, with a violent pull, which gave me excessive pain, I a little loosened the strings that tied down my hair on the left side; so that I was just able to turn my head about two inches. But the creatures ran off a second time, before I could seize them; whereupon there was a great shout in a very shrill accent; and after it ceased, I heard one of them cry aloud, *Tolgo phonac*; when in an instant I felt above an  
30 hundred arrows discharged on my left hand, which pricked me like so many needles; and besides they shot another flight into the air, as we do bombs in Europe, whereof many, I suppose, fell on my body (though I felt them not) and some on my face, which I immediately covered with my left hand. When this shower of arrows was over, I fell a groaning with grief and pain; and then striving again to get loose, they discharged another volley larger than the first, and some of them attempted with spears to stick me in the sides; but, by good luck, I had on me a buff jerkin,<sup>3</sup> which they could not pierce. I thought it the most prudent method to lie still; and my design was to continue so till night, when, my left hand being already loose, I could easily free myself: and as for the inhabitants, I  
40 had reason to believe I might be a match for the greatest armies they could bring against me, if they were all of the same size with him that I saw. But fortune disposed otherwise of me. **A**

When the people observed I was quiet, they discharged no more arrows: but by the noise increasing, I knew their numbers were greater; and about four yards from me, over-against my right ear, I heard a knocking for above an hour, like people at work; when turning my head that way, as well as the pegs and strings would permit me, I saw a stage erected about a foot and a half from the ground, capable of holding four of the inhabitants, with two or three ladders to mount it: from whence one of them, who seemed to be a person of quality,<sup>4</sup> made me a long  
50 speech, whereof I understood not one syllable. But I should have mentioned, that before the principal person began his oration, he cried out three times, *Langro Dehul san*: (these words and the former were afterwards repeated and explained

**A FANTASY**  
What details does Swift include in lines 21–42 to make this fantastic scene believable?

2. **quiver**: a case for carrying arrows.

3. **buff jerkin**: a jacket of brownish-yellow leather.

4. **person of quality**: a high-ranking person.

to me). Whereupon immediately about fifty of the inhabitants came, and cut the strings that fastened the left side of my head, which gave me the liberty of turning it to the right, and of observing the person and gesture of him who was to speak. He appeared to be of a middle age, and taller than any of the other three who attended him; whereof one was a page<sup>5</sup> who held up his train,<sup>6</sup> and seemed to be somewhat longer than my middle finger; the other two stood one on each side to support him. He acted every part of an orator, and I could observe many  
60 periods of threatenings, and others of promises, pity and kindness. I answered in a few words, but in the most **submissive** manner, lifting up my left hand and both my eyes to the sun, as calling him for a witness; and being almost famished with hunger, having not eaten a morsel for some hours before I left the ship, I found the demands of nature so strong upon me, that I could not forbear showing my impatience (perhaps against the strict rules of decency) by putting my finger frequently on my mouth, to signify that I wanted food.

**submissive** (səb-mĭs'ĭv)  
*adj.* tending to yield to the will of others; docile; meek

The *Hurgo* (for so they call a great lord, as I afterwards learned) understood me very well. He descended from the stage, and commanded that several ladders should be applied to my sides, on which above an hundred of the inhabitants  
70 mounted, and walked towards my mouth, laden with baskets full of meat, which had been provided and sent thither by the King's orders upon the first intelligence<sup>7</sup> he received of me. I observed there was the flesh of several animals, but could not distinguish them by the taste. There were shoulders, legs, and loins shaped like those of mutton, and very well dressed, but smaller than the wings of a lark. I eat them by two or three at a mouthful, and took three loaves at a time, about the bigness of musket bullets. They supplied me as fast as they could, showing a thousand marks of wonder and astonishment at my bulk and appetite. I then made another sign that I wanted drink. They found by my eating that a small quantity would not suffice me; and being a most ingenious people,  
80 they slung up with great **dexterity** one of their largest hogsheads;<sup>8</sup> then rolled it towards my hand, and beat out the top; I drank it off at a draft,<sup>9</sup> which I might well do, for it hardly held half a pint, and tasted like a small wine of Burgundy, but much more delicious. They brought me a second hogshead, which I drank in the same manner, and made signs for more, but they had none to give me. When I had performed these wonders, they shouted for joy, and danced upon my breast, repeating several times as they did at first, *Hekinah Degul*. They made me a sign that I should throw down the two hogsheads, but first warned the people below to stand out of the way, crying aloud, *Borach Mivola*, and when they saw the vessels in the air, there was an universal shout of *Hekinah Degul*. **B**

**dexterity** (dək-stēr'ĭ-tē) *n.*  
skill in manipulating one's hands or body

90 I confess I was often tempted, while they were passing backwards and forwards on my body, to seize forty or fifty of the first that came in my reach, and dash them against the ground. But the remembrance of what I had felt, which probably

**B FANTASY**  
What details in lines 67–89 help you **visualize** the difference in size between Gulliver and the Lilliputians?

5. **page**: a youth serving as a personal attendant.

6. **train**: the trailing section of a garment.

7. **intelligence**: news; information.

8. **hogsheads**: large barrels used to store liquids such as wine or ale.

9. **at a draft**: in one gulp.

might not be the worst they could do; and the promise of honor I made them, for so I interpreted my submissive behavior, soon drove out those imaginations. Besides, I now considered myself as bound by the laws of hospitality to a people who had treated me with so much expense and magnificence. However, in my thoughts I could not sufficiently wonder at the intrepidity<sup>10</sup> of these **diminutive** mortals, who durst<sup>11</sup> venture to mount and walk on my body, while one of my hands was at liberty, without trembling at the very sight of so **prodigious** a creature as I must appear to them.

**diminutive**  
(dĭ-mĭn'yə-tĭv) *adj.* very small

**prodigious** (prə-dĭj'əs)  
*adj.* of great size or power; huge; impressive

After some time, when they observed that I made no more demands for meat, there appeared before me a person of high rank from his Imperial Majesty. His Excellency, having mounted on the small of my right leg, advanced forwards up to my face, with about a dozen of his retinue. And producing his credentials under the Signet Royal,<sup>12</sup> which he applied close to my eyes, spoke about ten minutes, without any signs of anger, but with a kind of determinate resolution; often pointing forwards, which, as I afterwards found, was towards the capital city, about half a mile distant, whither it was agreed by his Majesty in council that I must be conveyed. I answered in a few words, but to no purpose, and made a sign with my hand that was loose, putting it to the other (but over his Excellency's head, for fear of hurting him or his train) and then to my own head and body, to signify that I desired my liberty. It appeared that he understood me well enough; for he shook his head by way of disapprobation,<sup>13</sup> and held his hand in a posture to show that I must be carried as a prisoner. However, he made other signs to let me understand that I should have meat and drink enough, and very good treatment. Whereupon I once more thought of attempting to break my bonds; but again, when I felt the smart of their arrows upon my face and hands, which were all in blisters, and many of the darts still sticking in them; and observing likewise that the number of my enemies increased; I gave tokens to let them know that they might do with me what they pleased. Upon this the *Hurgo* and his train withdrew, with much civility and cheerful countenances. Soon after I heard a general shout, with frequent repetitions of the words, *Peplom Selan*, and I felt great numbers of the people on my left side relaxing the cords to such a degree, that I was able to turn upon my right, and to ease myself. . . .

My gentleness and good behavior had gained so far on the Emperor and his court, and indeed upon the army and people in general, that I began to conceive hopes of getting my liberty in a short time. I took all possible methods to cultivate this favorable disposition. The natives came by degrees to be less apprehensive of any danger from me. I would sometimes lie down, and let five or six of them dance on my hand. And at last the boys and girls would venture to come and play at hide-and-seek in my hair. I had now made a good progress in understanding and speaking their language. The Emperor had a mind one day to entertain me with several of the country shows; wherein they exceed all nations I have known,

10. **intrepidity** (ĭn'-trə-pĭd'ĭ-tē): boldness; courage.

11. **durst**: dared.

12. **Signet Royal**: the official seal of a king or a queen.

13. **disapprobation** (dĭs-ăp'rə-bā'shən): disapproval.

both for dexterity and magnificence. I was diverted with none so much as that of the rope-dancers,<sup>14</sup> performed upon a slender white thread, extended about two foot, and twelve inches from the ground. Upon which I shall desire liberty, with the reader's patience, to enlarge a little.

This diversion is only practiced by those persons who are candidates for great employments, and high favor, at court. They are trained in this art from their youth, and are not always of noble birth, or liberal education. When a great office is vacant either by death or disgrace (which often happens) five or six of those candidates petition the Emperor to entertain his Majesty and the court with a dance on the rope; and whoever jumps the highest without falling, succeeds in the office. Very often the chief ministers themselves are commanded to show their skill, and to convince the Emperor that they have not lost their faculty. Flimnap, the Treasurer,<sup>15</sup> is allowed to cut a caper<sup>16</sup> on the strait rope, at least an inch higher than any other lord in the whole empire. I have seen him do the summerset several times together upon a trencher<sup>17</sup> fixed on the rope, which is no thicker than a common packthread<sup>18</sup> in England. My friend Reldresal, Principal Secretary for Private Affairs, is, in my opinion, if I am not partial, the second after the Treasurer; the rest of the great officers are much upon a par. **C**

These diversions are often attended with fatal accidents, whereof great numbers are on record. I myself have seen two or three candidates break a limb. But the danger is much greater when the ministers themselves are commanded to show their dexterity; for, by contending to excel themselves and their fellows, they strain so far, that there is hardly one of them who hath not received a fall; and some of them two or three. I was assured, that a year or two before my arrival, Flimnap would have infallibly broke his neck, if one of the King's cushions, that accidentally lay on the ground, had not weakened the force of his fall.

There is likewise another diversion, which is only shown before the Emperor and Empress, and first minister, upon particular occasions. The Emperor lays on a table three fine silken threads of six inches long. One is blue, the other red, and the third green.<sup>19</sup> These threads are proposed as prizes for those persons whom the Emperor hath a mind to distinguish by a peculiar mark of his favor. The ceremony is performed in his Majesty's great chamber of state; where the candidates are to undergo a trial of dexterity very different from the former, and such as I have not observed the least resemblance of in any other country of the old or the new world. The Emperor holds a stick in his hands, both ends parallel to the horizon, while the candidates, advancing one by one, sometimes leap

**C HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

Reread lines 138–151 and the accompanying footnotes. What do you conclude is Swift's attitude toward the politicians he alludes to in this description? Explain.

14. **rope-dancers**: acrobats who perform on a tightrope. Here the rope-dancers represent Whig Party politicians at the court of George I, whose "acrobatics"—political maneuverings—were intended to increase their power. (Swift supported the opposing party, the Tories.)

15. **Flimnap, the Treasurer**: a character representing the Whig leader and statesman Sir Robert Walpole, who served as first lord of the Treasury from 1715 to 1717 and from 1721 to 1742.

16. **allowed . . . caper**: acknowledged to leap.

17. **summerset . . . trencher**: several somersaults on a wooden serving tray or platter.

18. **packthread**: a strong twine for tying packages.

19. **One is blue . . . green**: The threads represent the Order of the Garter, the Order of the Bath, and the Order of the Thistle, medieval orders of knighthood revived by Walpole as honors for the king to bestow.

170 over the stick, sometimes creep under it backwards and forwards several times, according as the stick is advanced or depressed. Sometimes the Emperor holds one end of the stick, and his first minister the other; sometimes the minister has it entirely to himself. Whoever performs his part with most agility, and holds out the longest in *leaping* and *creeping*, is rewarded with the blue-colored silk; the red is given to the next, and the green to the third, which they all wear girt<sup>20</sup> twice round about the middle; and you see few great persons about this court who are not adorned with one of these girdles. . . . **D**

**D HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

Reread footnote 19. Why might Walpole's revival of the orders of knighthood have inspired Swift's description of the ceremony in lines 165–177?

I had sent so many memorials and petitions for my liberty, that his Majesty at length mentioned the matter first in the cabinet, and then in a full council; 180 where it was opposed by none, except Skyresh Bolgolam,<sup>21</sup> who was pleased, without any provocation, to be my mortal enemy. But it was carried against him by the whole board, and confirmed by the Emperor. That minister was *Galbet*, or Admiral of the Realm; very much in his master's confidence, and a person well versed in affairs, but of a morose and sour complexion. However, he was at length persuaded to comply; but prevailed that the articles and conditions upon which I should be set free, and to which I must swear, should be drawn up by himself. These articles were brought to me by Skyresh Bolgolam in person, attended by two under-secretaries, and several persons of distinction. After they were read, I was demanded to swear to the performance of them; first in the manner of my 190 own country, and afterwards in the method prescribed by their laws; which was to hold my right foot in my left hand, to place the middle finger of my right hand on the crown of my head, and my thumb on the tip of my right ear. But because the reader may perhaps be curious to have some idea of the style and manner of expression peculiar to that people, as well as to know the articles upon which I recovered my liberty, I have made a translation of the whole instrument, word for word, as near as I was able; which I here offer to the public. **E**

**E FANTASY**

Gulliver performs a strange ritual in lines 188–192 as part of the signing of his freedom agreement. What might Swift be poking fun at?

GOLBASTO MOMAREN EVLAME GURDILO SHEFIN MULLY ULLY GUE, most mighty Emperor of Lilliput, delight and terror of the universe, whose dominions extend five thousand blustrugs (about twelve miles in circumference) to the extremities 200 of the globe; Monarch of all Monarchs; taller than the sons of men; whose feet press down to the center, and whose head strikes against the sun; at whose nod the princes of the earth shake their knees; pleasant as the spring, comfortable as the summer, fruitful as autumn, dreadful as winter. His most sublime Majesty proposeth to the Man-Mountain, lately arrived at our celestial dominions, the following articles, which by a solemn oath he shall be obliged to perform. **F**

**F FANTASY**

What is *ironic* about the praise of the Emperor in lines 197–203?

First, the Man-Mountain shall not depart from our dominions, without our license under our great seal.

Secondly, He shall not presume to come into our metropolis, without our express order; at which time the inhabitants shall have two hours warning, to keep 210 within their doors.

Thirdly, The said Man-Mountain shall confine his walks to our principal high roads; and not offer to walk or lie down in a meadow, or field of corn.

20. girt: wrapped.

21. Skyresh Bolgolam: probably the Earl of Nottingham, a Tory extremist who was an enemy of Swift's.

Fourthly, As he walks the said roads, he shall take the utmost care not to trample upon the bodies of any of our loving subjects, their horses, or carriages, nor take any of our said subjects into his hands, without their own consent.

Fifthly, If an express require extraordinary dispatch, the Man-Mountain shall be obliged to carry in his pocket the messenger and horse, a six days' journey once in every moon, and return the said messenger back (if so required) safe to our Imperial Presence.

220 Sixthly, He shall be our ally against our enemies in the island of Blefuscu,<sup>22</sup> and do his utmost to destroy their fleet, which is now preparing to invade us.

Seventhly, That the said Man-Mountain shall, at his times of leisure, be aiding and assisting to our workmen, in helping to raise certain great stones, towards covering the wall of the principal park, and other our royal buildings.

Eighthly, That the said Man-Mountain shall, in two moons' time, deliver in an exact survey of the circumference of our dominions by a computation of his own paces round the coast.

230 Lastly, That upon his solemn oath to observe all the above articles, the said Man-Mountain shall have a daily allowance of meat and drink sufficient for the support of 1,728 of our subjects; with free access to our Royal Person, and other marks of our favor. Given at our palace at Belfaborac the twelfth day of the ninety-first moon of our reign.

I swore and subscribed to these articles with great cheerfulness and content . . . whereupon my chains were immediately unlocked, and I was at full liberty: the Emperor himself in person did me the honor to be by at the whole ceremony. I made my acknowledgements by prostrating myself at his Majesty's feet: but he commanded me to rise; and after many gracious expressions, which, to avoid the censure of vanity, I shall not repeat, he added, that he hoped I should prove a useful servant, and well deserve all the favors he had already conferred upon me,  
240 or might do for the future.

The reader may please to observe, that in the last article for the recovery of my liberty, the Emperor stipulates to allow me a quantity of meat and drink, sufficient for the support of 1,728 Lilliputians. Some time after, asking a friend at court how they came to fix on that determinate number, he told me, that his Majesty's mathematicians, having taken the height of my body by the help of a quadrant,<sup>23</sup> and finding it to exceed theirs in the proportion of twelve to one, they concluded from the similarity of their bodies, that mine must contain at least 1,728 of theirs, and consequently would require as much food as was necessary to support that number of Lilliputians. By which, the reader may conceive an idea of the ingenuity  
250 of that people, as well as the prudent and exact economy of so great a prince. ©

One morning, about a fortnight after I had obtained my liberty, Reldresal, Principal Secretary (as they style him) of Private Affairs, came to my house, attended only by one servant. He ordered his coach to wait at a distance, and desired I would give him an hour's audience; which I readily consented to, on

22. **Blefuscu:** This imaginary country represents France, England's chief rival in Swift's day and a primarily Catholic country.

23. **quadrant** (kwŏd'rĕnt): an instrument for measuring altitude.

© **FANTASY**  
Reread lines 241–250.  
Why might Swift have included these exact calculations in his narrative?



account of his quality, and personal merits, as well as of the many good offices he had done me during my solicitations at court.<sup>24</sup> I offered to lie down, that he might the more conveniently reach my ear; but he chose rather to let me hold him in my hand during our conversation. He began with compliments on my liberty, said he might pretend to<sup>25</sup> some merit in it; but, however, added, that if it  
 260 had not been for the present situation of things at court, perhaps I might not have obtained it so soon. For, said he, as flourishing a condition as we appear to be in to foreigners, we labor under two mighty evils; a violent faction at home, and the danger of an invasion by a most potent enemy from abroad. As to the first, you are to understand, that for above seventy moons past, there have been two struggling parties in the empire, under the names of *Tramecksan*, and *Slamecksan*, from the high and low heels on their shoes,<sup>26</sup> by which they distinguish themselves.

It is alleged indeed, that the high heels are most agreeable to our ancient constitution: but however this be, his Majesty hath determined to make use of only low heels in the administration of the government and all offices in the  
 270 gift of the crown; as you cannot but observe; and particularly, that his Majesty's imperial heels are lower at least by a *drurr* than any of his court; (*drurr* is a measure about the fourteenth part of an inch). The **animosities** between these two parties run so high, that they will neither eat nor drink, nor talk with each other. We compute the *Tramecksan*, or High-Heels, to exceed us in number, but the power is wholly on our side. We apprehend his Imperial Highness, the heir to the crown, to have some tendency towards the High-Heels; at least we can plainly discover one of his heels higher than the other, which gives him a hobble in his gait.<sup>27</sup> Now, in the midst of these intestine disquiets,<sup>28</sup> we are threatened with an invasion from the island of Blefuscu, which is the other great empire of  
 280 the universe, almost as large and powerful as this of his Majesty. For as to what we have heard you affirm, that there are other kingdoms and states in the world, inhabited by human creatures as large as yourself, our philosophers are in much doubt; and would rather conjecture that you dropped from the moon, or one of the stars; because it is certain, that an hundred mortals of your bulk would, in a short time, destroy all the fruits and cattle of his Majesty's dominions. Besides, our histories of six thousand moons make no mention of any other regions, than the two great empires of Lilliput and Blefuscu. Which two mighty powers have, as I was going to tell you, been engaged in a most obstinate war<sup>29</sup> for six and thirty moons past. It began upon the following occasion. **H**

**animosity** (än'ə-mös'Y-tē)  
*n.* ill feeling; hostility

#### **H** HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Reread footnotes 26 and 27. How does the historical context help you understand the underlying meaning of Swift's description of the Lilliputian prince in lines 275–277?

24. **good offices . . . solicitations at court:** helpful services he had done for me during my pleadings or requests made at court.

25. **pretend to:** lay claim to.

26. **two struggling parties . . . shoes:** The “high heel” party corresponds to the Tories, who promoted the High Church (Catholic) aspects of the Church of England; the “low heel” party corresponds to the Whigs, who promoted the Low Church (Protestant) aspects. George I turned the Tories out when he came to the throne, since most of them had not supported his succession.

27. **his Imperial Highness . . . gait:** The Prince of Wales, who later reigned as George II, had both Tory and Whig friends.

28. **these intestine** (in-tēs'tin) **disquiets:** this internal unrest.

29. **most obstinate war:** The war corresponds to the War of the Spanish Succession (1702–1713), in which England and France were the chief opponents.

290 It is allowed on all hands, that the primitive way of breaking eggs before we eat them, was upon the larger end: but his present Majesty's grandfather, while he was a boy, going to eat an egg, and breaking it according to the ancient practice, happened to cut one of his fingers. Whereupon the Emperor his father published an edict, commanding all his subjects, upon great penalties, to break the smaller end of their eggs.<sup>30</sup> The people so highly resented this law, that our histories tell us there have been six rebellions raised on that account; wherein one emperor lost his life, and another his crown.<sup>31</sup> These civil commotions were constantly **fomented** by the monarchs of Blefuscu; and when they were quelled, the exiles always fled for refuge to that empire. It is computed, that eleven thousand persons have, at several

300 times, suffered death, rather than submit to break their eggs at the smaller end. Many hundred large volumes have been published upon this controversy: but the books of the Big-Endians have been long forbidden, and the whole party rendered incapable by law of holding employments.<sup>32</sup> During the course of these troubles, the emperors of Blefuscu did frequently expostulate by their ambassadors, accusing us of making a schism in religion, by offending against a fundamental doctrine of our great prophet Lustrog, in the fifty-fourth chapter of the *Brundecral* (which is their Alcoran). This, however, is thought to be a mere strain upon the text: for the words are these; *That all true believers shall break their eggs at the convenient end:* and which is the convenient end, seems, in my humble opinion, to be left to every man's

310 conscience, or at least in the power of the chief magistrate to determine. Now the Big-Indian exiles have found so much credit in the Emperor of Blefuscu's court, and so much private assistance and encouragement from their party here at home, that a bloody war hath been carried on between the two empires for six and thirty moons with various success; during which time we have lost forty capital ships, and a much greater number of smaller vessels, together with thirty thousand of our best seamen and soldiers; and the damage received by the enemy is reckoned to be somewhat greater than ours. However, they have now equipped a numerous fleet, and are just preparing to make a descent upon us; and his Imperial Majesty, placing great confidence in your valor and strength, hath commanded me to lay this account of

320 his affairs before you. **I**

I desired the Secretary to present my humble duty to the Emperor, and to let him know, that I thought it would not become me, who was a foreigner, to interfere with parties;<sup>33</sup> but I was ready, with the hazard of my life, to defend his person and state against all invaders.

**foment** (fō-mənt') v. to stir up trouble; to incite

**I HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

Reread lines 290–314 and the accompanying footnotes. What does Swift's account of Blefuscu suggest about France's role in England's religious conflicts?

30. **the Emperor his father . . . end of their eggs:** a reference to Henry VIII, who in 1533 split from the Roman Catholic Church (because it would not grant him a divorce from his wife) and founded the Church of England.

31. **six rebellions . . . his crown:** The dispute over egg breaking represents the conflict between Roman Catholics and Protestants in 17th-century England. The "emperor" who lost his life in the conflict was King Charles I; the one who lost his crown was King James II, who fled into exile.

32. **employments:** political offices.

33. **parties:** political parties; internal politics.

## PART 2. A VOYAGE TO BROBDINGNAG

*The second part of Gulliver's Travels describes Gulliver's adventures in Brobdingnag. As the story opens, Gulliver has again gone to sea as a ship's doctor. The ship has been blown off course by a storm. When the ship comes in sight of land, the captain sends ashore a boatload of men (including Gulliver) to look for drinking water. While exploring the island, Gulliver is separated from the others, and when he returns to the boat he sees his shipmates rowing in a panic back to the ship, in flight from a huge monster who is chasing them. Gulliver turns back into the interior to hide from the giant.*

I fell into a highroad, for so I took it to be, although it served to the inhabitants only as a footpath through a field of barley. Here I walked on for some time, but could see little on either side, it being now near harvest, and the corn rising at least forty foot. I was an hour walking to the end of this field, which was fenced in with a hedge of at least one hundred and twenty foot high, and the trees so  
330 lofty that I could make no computation of their altitude. There was a stile<sup>34</sup> to pass from this field into the next: it had four steps, and a stone to cross over when you came to the utmost. It was impossible for me to climb this stile, because every step was six foot high, and the upper stone above twenty. I was endeavoring to find some gap in the hedge when I discovered one of the inhabitants in the next field advancing towards the stile, of the same size with him whom I saw in the sea pursuing our boat. He appeared as tall as an ordinary spire-steeple, and took  
about ten yards at every stride, as near as I could guess. I was struck with the utmost fear and astonishment, and ran to hide myself in the corn, from whence I saw him at the top of the stile, looking back into the next field on the right hand;  
340 and heard him call in a voice many degrees louder than a speaking trumpeter; but the noise was so high in the air that at first I certainly thought it was thunder. Whereupon seven monsters like himself came towards him with reaping hooks in their hands, each hook about the largeness of six scythes. These people were not so well clad as the first, whose servants or laborers they seemed to be. For, upon some words he spoke, they went to reap the corn in the field where I lay. I kept from them at as great a distance as I could, but was forced to move with extreme difficulty, for the stalks of the corn were sometimes not above a foot distant, so that I could hardly squeeze my body betwixt them. However, I made a shift to go forward till I came to a part of the field where the corn had been laid<sup>35</sup> by the  
350 rain and wind; 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. Being quite dispirited with toil, and wholly overcome by grief and despair, I lay down between two ridges and heartily wished I might there end my days. I bemoaned my

◆ **GRAMMAR AND STYLE**  
Reread lines 332–336. Notice that Swift uses **subordinate clauses** beginning with *because*, *when*, and *whom* to convey specific details of the fantasy he is creating.

34. **stile:** a set of steps for climbing over a hedge or a fence.

35. **laid:** knocked down.

desolate widow and fatherless children; I lamented my own folly and willfulness in attempting a second voyage against the advice of all my friends and relations. In this terrible agitation of mind, I could not forbear thinking of Lilliput, whose inhabitants looked upon me as the greatest prodigy that ever appeared in the  
360 world; where I was able to draw an imperial fleet in my hand, and perform those other actions which will be recorded forever in the chronicles of that empire, while **posterity** shall hardly believe them, although attested by millions. I reflected what a mortification it must prove to me to appear as inconsiderable in this nation as one single Lilliputian would be among us. But this I conceived was to be the least of my misfortunes; for as human creatures are observed to be more savage and cruel in proportion to their bulk, what could I expect but to be a morsel in the mouth of the first among these enormous barbarians who should happen to seize me? Undoubtedly philosophers are in the right when they tell us that nothing is great or little otherwise than by comparison. It might have pleased fortune to  
370 let the Lilliputians find some nation where the people were as diminutive with respect to them as they were to me. And who knows but that even this prodigious race of mortals might be equally overmatched in some distant part of the world, whereof we have yet no discovery? **K**

Scared and confounded as I was, I could not forbear going on with these reflections; when one of the reapers approaching within ten yards of the ridge where I lay, made me apprehend that with the next step I should be squashed to death under his foot, or cut in two with his reaping hook. And therefore when he was again about to move, I screamed as loud as fear could make me. Whereupon the huge creature trod short, and looking round about under him for some time,  
380 at last espied me as I lay on the ground. He considered a while with the caution of one who endeavors to lay hold on a small dangerous animal in such a manner that it shall not be able either to scratch or to bite him, as I myself have sometimes done with a weasel in England. At length he ventured to take me up behind by the middle between his forefinger and thumb, and brought me within three yards of his eyes, that he might behold my shape more perfectly. . . . Lifting up the lappet<sup>36</sup> of his coat, he put me gently into it, and immediately ran along with me to his master, who was a substantial farmer, and the same person I had first seen in the field.

The farmer having (as I supposed by their talk) received such an account of  
390 me as his servant could give him, took a piece of a small straw about the size of a walking staff, and therewith lifted up the lappets of my coat, which it seems he thought to be some kind of covering that nature had given me. He blew my hairs aside to take a better view of my face. He called his hinds<sup>37</sup> about him, and asked them (as I afterwards learned) whether they had ever seen in the fields any little creature that resembled me. He then placed me softly on the ground upon all four; but I got immediately up, and walked slowly backwards and forwards, to let those people see I had no intent to run away. They all sat down in a circle

**posterity** (pŏ-stĕr'ĭ-tē) *n.*  
future generations

**K FANTASY**

Reread lines 358–373. What message about people and nations does Swift convey through the fantasy of the tiny Lilliputians and the giant Brobdingnagians?

36. **lappet**: flap or fold.

37. **hinds**: farm servants.

about me, the better to observe my motions. I pulled off my hat, and made a low bow towards the farmer; I fell on my knees, and lifted up my hands and eyes, and  
400 spoke several words as loud as I could; I took a purse of gold out of my pocket, and humbly presented it to him. . . .

The farmer by this time was convinced I must be a rational creature. He spoke often to me, but the sound of his voice pierced my ears like that of a water mill, yet his words were articulate enough. 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 we were wholly unintelligible to each other. He then sent his servants to their work, and taking his handkerchief out of his pocket, he doubled and spread it on his hand, which he placed flat on the ground with the palm upwards, making me a sign to step into it, as I could easily do, for it was not above a foot in thickness. I  
410 thought it my part to obey, and for fear of falling, laid myself at full length upon the handkerchief, with the remainder of which he lapped me up to the head for further security, and in this manner carried me home to his house. . . .

*Gulliver lives with the farmer and his family and grows especially close to the farmer's daughter, Glumdalclitch. After a number of adventures in the farmer's house, including an attack on Gulliver by two ferocious rats, he is taken to the metropolis where he is purchased from the farmer by the queen of Brobdingnag, who presents him to the king. Glumdalclitch remains with Gulliver at the royal court as his nurse and instructor. Gulliver becomes a favorite of the king and queen.*

It is the custom that every Wednesday (which, as I have before observed, was their Sabbath) the King and Queen, with the royal issue of both sexes, dine together in the apartment of his Majesty, to whom I was now become a favorite; and at these times my little chair and table were placed at his left hand, before one of the salt-cellars. This prince took a pleasure in conversing with me, inquiring into the manners, religion, laws, government, and learning of Europe; wherein I gave him the best account I was able. His apprehension was so clear, and his judgment  
420 so exact, that he made very wise reflections and observations upon all I said. But I confess that after I had been a little too copious in talking of my own beloved country, of our trade and wars by sea and land, of our schisms in religion and parties in the state, the prejudices of his education prevailed so far that he could not forbear taking me up in his right hand, and stroking me gently with the other, after an hearty fit of laughing, asked me whether I were a Whig or a Tory. Then turning to his first minister, who waited behind him with a white staff, near as tall as the mainmast of the *Royal Sovereign*,<sup>38</sup> he observed how contemptible a thing was human grandeur, which could be mimicked by such diminutive insects as I:  
430 "and yet," said he, "I dare engage, these creatures have their titles and distinctions of honor; they contrive little nests and burrows, that they call houses and cities; they make a figure in dress and equipage; they love, they fight, they dispute, they cheat, they betray." And thus he continued on, while my color came and went

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38. *Royal Sovereign* (sōv'er-yn): at the time, one of the largest ships in the British navy.

several times with indignation to hear our noble country, the mistress of arts and arms, the scourge of France, the arbitress of Europe, the seat of virtue, piety, honor, and truth, the pride and envy of the world, so contemptuously treated.

But as I was not in a condition to resent injuries, so, upon mature thoughts, I began to doubt whether I were injured or no. For, after having been accustomed several months to the sight and converse of this people, and observed every object upon which I cast my eyes to be of proportionable magnitude, the horror I had first  
440 conceived from their bulk and aspect was so far worn off that if I had then beheld a company of English lords and ladies in their finery and birthday clothes,<sup>39</sup> acting their several parts in the most courtly manner of strutting and bowing and prating, to say the truth, I should have been strongly tempted to laugh as much at them as this King and his grandees did at me. Neither indeed could I forbear smiling at myself when the Queen used to place me upon her hand towards a looking glass, by which both our persons appeared before me in full view together; and there could be nothing more ridiculous than the comparison; so that I really began to imagine myself dwindled many degrees below my usual size. . . .

I was frequently rallied by the Queen upon account of my fearfulness, and she  
450 used to ask me whether the people of my country were as great cowards as myself. The occasion was this. The kingdom is much pestered with flies in summer, and these odious insects, each of them as big as a Dunstable lark, hardly gave me any rest while I sat at dinner, with their continual humming and buzzing about my ears. They would sometimes alight upon my victuals, and leave their loathsome excrement or spawn behind, which to me was very visible, although not to the natives of that country, whose large optics<sup>40</sup> were not so acute as mine in viewing smaller objects. Sometimes they would fix upon my nose or forehead, where they stung me to the quick, smelling very offensively; and I could easily trace that viscous matter, which our naturalists tell us enables those creatures to walk with  
460 their feet upwards upon a ceiling. I had much ado to defend myself against these detestable animals, and could not forbear starting when they came on my face. It was the common practice of the dwarf to catch a number of these insects in his hand, as schoolboys do among us, and let them out suddenly under my nose, on purpose to frighten me, and divert the Queen. My remedy was to cut them in pieces with my knife as they flew in the air, wherein my dexterity was much admired. ❶

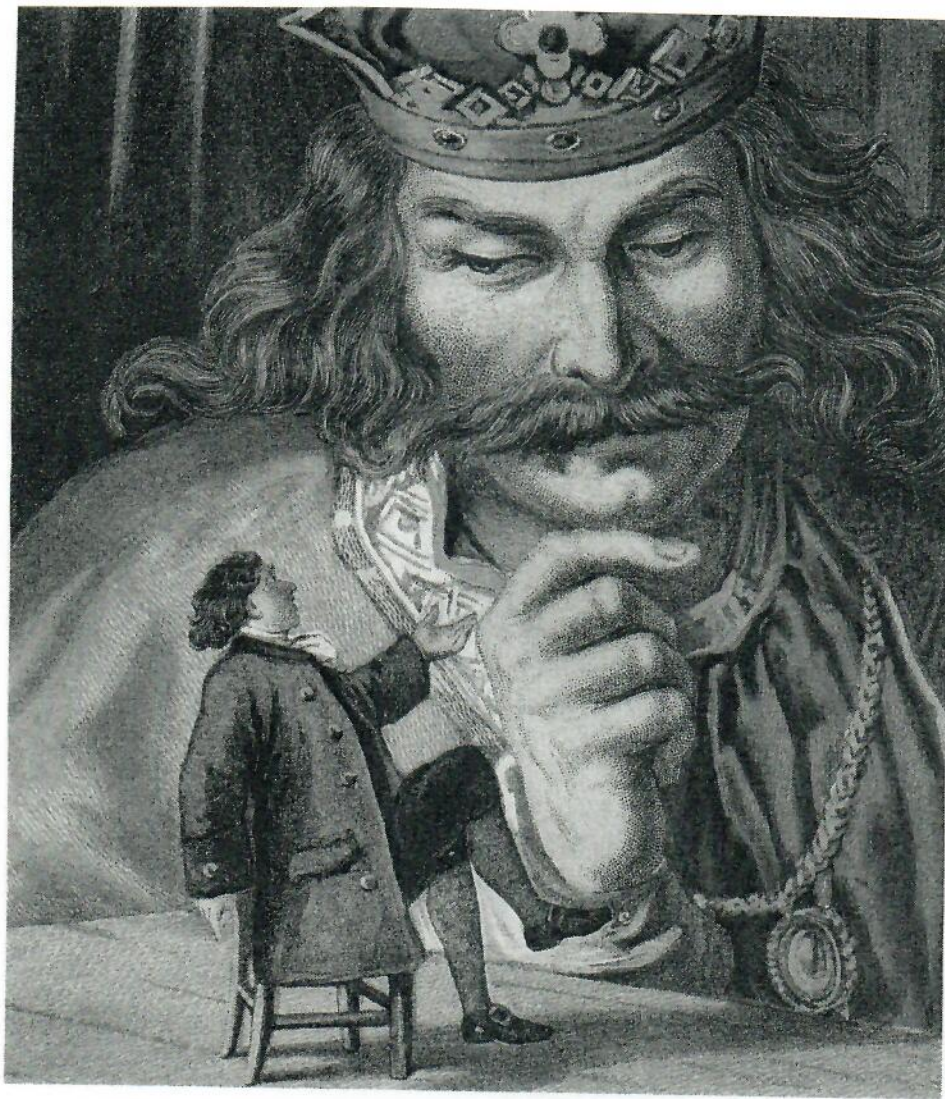
I remember one morning when Glumdalclitch had set me in my box upon a window, as she usually did in fair days to give me air (for I durst not venture to let the box be hung on a nail out of the window, as we do with cages in England),  
470 after I had lifted up one of my sashes, and sat down at my table to eat a piece of sweet cake for my breakfast, above twenty wasps, allured by the smell, came flying into the room, humming louder than the drones of as many bagpipes. Some of them seized my cake, and carried it piecemeal away; others flew about my head and face, confounding me with the noise, and putting me in the utmost terror of

39. **birthday clothes:** elaborate clothing worn at court on the monarch's birthday.

40. **optics:** eyes.

❶ **FANTASY**

Reread lines 451–461. How do the details in this passage enhance the depiction of Gulliver's life in Brobdingnag?



their stings. However, I had the courage to rise and draw my hanger,<sup>41</sup> and attack them in the air. I dispatched four of them, but the rest got away, and I presently shut my window. These insects were as large as partridges; I took out their stings, found them an inch and a half long, and as sharp as needles. I carefully preserved them all, and having since shown them with some other curiosities in several parts  
480 of Europe, upon my return to England I gave three of them to Gresham College,<sup>42</sup> and kept the fourth for myself. . . .

The King, who, as I before observed, was a prince of excellent understanding, would frequently order that I should be brought in my box and set upon the table in his closet. He would then command me to bring one of my chairs out of the box, and sit down within three yards distance upon the top of the cabinet, which brought me almost to a level with his face. In this manner I had several conversations with him. . . . He desired I would give him as exact an account of the government of England as I possibly could; because, as fond as princes commonly are of their

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41. **hanger:** a small sword hanging from a person's belt.

42. **Gresham** (grěsh'əm) **College:** a London school that was the meeting place of the Royal Society, the chief British scientific organization in Swift's day.

own customs (for so he conjectured of other monarchs, by my former discourses),  
490 he should be glad to hear of anything that might deserve imitation. . . .

He wondered to hear me talk of such chargeable and extensive wars; that certainly we must be a quarrelsome people, or live among very bad neighbors, and that our generals must needs be richer than our kings.<sup>43</sup> He asked what business we had out of our own islands, unless upon the score of trade or treaty or to defend the coasts with our fleet. Above all, he was amazed to hear me talk of a mercenary standing army<sup>44</sup> in the midst of peace, and among a free people. He said if we were governed by our own consent in the persons of our representatives, he could not imagine of whom we were afraid, or against whom we were to fight; and would hear my opinion whether a private man's house might not better be defended  
500 by himself, his children, and family, than by half a dozen rascals picked up at a venture<sup>45</sup> in the streets for small wages, who might get an hundred times more by cutting their throats. . . . **M**

He was perfectly astonished with the historical account I gave him of our affairs during the last century, protesting it was only an heap of conspiracies, rebellions, murders, massacres, revolutions, banishments, the very worst effects that avarice, faction, hypocrisy, perfidiousness, cruelty, rage, madness, hatred, envy, lust, malice, or ambition could produce.

His Majesty in another audience was at the pains to recapitulate the sum of all I had spoken; compared the questions he made with the answers I had given;  
510 then taking me into his hands, and stroking me gently, delivered himself in these words, which I shall never forget, nor the manner he spoke them in: "My little friend Gildrig, you have made a most admirable panegyric upon your country. You have clearly proved that ignorance, idleness, and vice are the proper ingredients for qualifying a legislator. That laws are best explained, interpreted, and applied by those whose interests and abilities lie in perverting, confounding, and eluding them. I observe among you some lines of an institution which in its original might have been tolerable; but these half erased, and the rest wholly blurred and blotted by corruptions. It doth not appear from all you have said how any one virtue is required towards the procurement of any one station among  
520 you; much less that men are ennobled on account of their virtue, that priests are advanced for their piety or learning, soldiers for their conduct or valor, judges for their integrity, senators for the love of their country, or counselors for their wisdom. As for yourself," continued the King, "who have spent the greatest part of your life in traveling, I am well disposed to hope you may hitherto have escaped many vices of your country. But by what I have gathered from your own relation, and the answers I have with much pains wringed and extorted from you, I cannot but conclude the bulk of your natives to be the most pernicious race of little odious vermin that nature ever suffered to crawl upon the surface of the earth." 

43. **our generals . . . kings:** a reference to the great wealth of the Duke of Marlborough, a former general whom Swift detested and whose palace was larger than the king's.

44. **mercenary** (mûr'sə-nĕr'ē) **standing army:** an army of hired soldiers maintained on a permanent basis. In the English Bill of Rights of 1689, a standing army had been declared illegal, and Swift and the Tories remained strongly opposed to one.

45. **at a venture:** at random.

**M HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

Reread lines 491–502 and the accompanying footnotes. In what ways are Swift's own political views reflected in the questions and comments of the king?



## Reading for Information

**LETTER** In this letter to his friend, Swift tells Pope some of the reasoning behind the writing of *Gulliver's Travels*. Swift also offers a friendly wager on whether Pope will agree with him or not.

### Letter to Alexander Pope

*September 29, 1725*

Sir,

*I am now returning to the noble scene of Dublin. . . . I have employed my time . . . in finishing correcting, amending, and transcribing my Travels, in four parts complete, newly augmented, and intended for the press when the world shall deserve them, or rather when a printer shall be found brave enough to venture his ears. I like your schemes of our meeting after distresses and dispersions; but the chief end I propose to myself in all my labors is to vex the world rather than divert it, and if I could compass that design without hurting my own person or fortune I would be the most indefatigable writer you have ever seen. . . . I have ever hated all nations, professions, and communities, and all my love is towards individuals; for instance, I hate the tribe of lawyers, but I love Counsellor Such-a-one, Judge Such-a-one: so with physicians—I will not speak of my own trade—soldiers, English, Scotch, French, and the rest. But principally I hate and detest that animal called man, although I heartily love John, Peter, Thomas, and so forth. This is the system upon which I have governed myself many years (but do not tell) and so I shall go on till I have done with them. . . . Upon this great foundation of misanthropy . . . the whole building of my Travels is erected; and I never will have peace of mind till all honest men are of my opinion. By consequence you are to embrace it immediately and procure that all who deserve my esteem may do so too. The matter is so clear that it will admit little dispute; nay I will hold a hundred pounds that you and I agree in the point.*

*J. S.*



SUNSHINE STATE STANDARD

Literary Analysis

Benchmark LA.1112.2.1.8 Explain how ideas, values, and themes of a literary work often reflect the historical period in which it was written.

## Comprehension

1. **Recall** How do the Lilliputians treat Gulliver when they first encounter him?
2. **Clarify** Why does Gulliver become important to the Lilliputians?
3. **Recall** What dangers does Gulliver face in Brobdingnag because of his size?
4. **Paraphrase** Based on Gulliver's descriptions, what does the king of Brobdingnag conclude about the English?

## Literary Analysis

5. **Examine Narrator** *Gulliver's Travels* is told from the **first-person point of view**, which means the reader is limited to Gulliver's **perceptions**—what he sees, hears, or experiences. What do Gulliver's reactions and thoughts in the following events from the story tell us about his character?
  - his temptation to injure the Lilliputians (lines 90–100)
  - his response when asked to fight the nation of Blefuscu (lines 321–324)
  - how he feels when the king of Brobdingnag insults England (lines 436–444)
6. **Analyze Fantasy** In order for a **fantasy** tale to succeed, the world that is created needs to be somewhat believable to the reader. How does Swift create a believable fantasy world in Lilliput? Cite examples from the text.
7. **Make Inferences** Reread lines 420–425. The king of Brobdingnag asks Gulliver if he is a Whig or a Tory. What does the king's laughter suggest about Swift's attitude toward political conflict in England?
8. **Interpret Satire in Historical Context** Swift's descriptions of people and events are intended to satirize specific individuals or aspects of English society and politics. Find examples of such descriptions from the selection, and interpret what Swift is satirizing.
9. **Compare Texts** In his letter to his friend Alexander Pope on page 642, Swift says that although he hates nations and communities, he reserves his love for individual people. Based on the excerpts you read from *Gulliver's Travels*, do you agree with Swift's self-assessment? Support your answer.

## Literary Criticism

10. **Different Perspectives** At the time Swift was writing his anonymously published satires, England had been entrenched in a long war with France, the British monarchy had undergone upheaval—King George I was unpopular yet very powerful—and the country was plagued by political scandals. *Gulliver's Travels* gave Swift the opportunity to express his anger and frustration with England's ruling class and monarchy. Nevertheless, to what extent might Swift's satire be relevant today?