



3

LITERATURE

Gulliver's Travels

- 1 *Gulliver's Travels* is a novel by Anglo-Irish writer Jonathan Swift, first published in 1726. What do you know about the stories in the book?
- 2 Complete the Factfile on *Gulliver's Travels* with the words in the box.

inhabitants early 1700s Lilliput
society rejection satire

- 3 Gulliver's second voyage is to the country of Brobdingnag. Read the extract. What is unusual about Gulliver's description of the inhabitants of this country?

There was a stile to pass from this field into the next. It had four steps, and a stone to cross over when you came to the uppermost. It was impossible for me to climb this stile, because every step was six foot high, and the upper stone above twenty. I was endeavouring 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, and heard him call in a voice many degrees louder than a speaking trumpet; 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 size of six scythes. These people were not so well clad as the first, whose servants or labourers they seemed to be: For upon some words he spoke, they went to reap the corn in the field where I lay.

(*Gulliver's Travels* Part II, Chapter I)

- 4 Find words in the extract with these meanings.

- 1 steps to climb over a wall
- 2 highest
- 3 trying
- 4 row of small bushes or trees planted together
- 5 tall, pointed structure on top of a church
- 6 long step, when walking
- 7 from where (*old use*)
- 8 after which (*old use*)
- 9 curved, pointed piece of metal
- 10 curved, flat tool used for cutting grass
- 11 dressed in good clothes (*formal*)
- 12 cut and collect crops, e.g. corn

FACTFILE

Gulliver's Travels

Genre: (1) _____

Narrator: Lemeul Gulliver

Point of view: first person

Setting (time): (2) _____

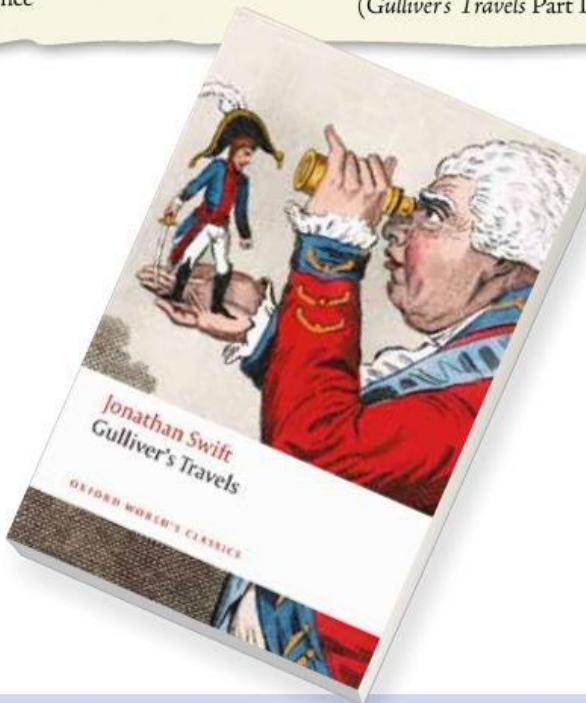
Setting (place): England, and the

fictional countries (3) _____,

Blefuscu, Brobdingnag, Laputa, and
the land of the Houyhnhnms.

Plot: Gulliver travels to other countries, meeting the (4) _____ and spending time with them. His encounters with other societies result in his (5) _____ of human society in the fourth voyage.

Main themes: politics, religion, and corruption; the individual and (6) _____; the limits of human understanding

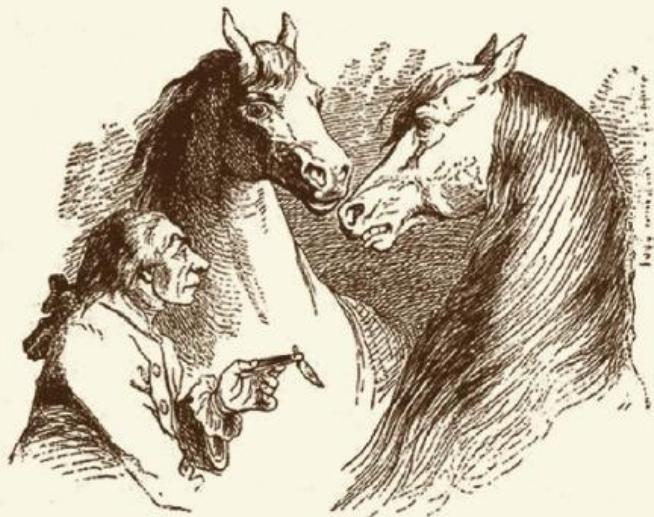


5 Answer the questions about the extract.

- 1 Why was it impossible for Gulliver to climb over the stile?
- 2 Who does Gulliver see in the next field?
- 3 Who was this person like?
- 4 Why is he 'struck with the utmost fear and astonishment'?
- 5 What did Gulliver do when he saw him?
- 6 What did Gulliver hear that sounded like thunder?
- 7 What do you think a 'speaking trumpet' was? What would people use nowadays?
- 8 What is the relationship between the first person Gulliver sees in the field, and the other seven? What evidence does the text give of this relationship?
- 9 What kind of work were these people doing?
- 10 How many of the island's inhabitants does Gulliver mention in the text?

6 In this extract from Part IV, Gulliver is in the land of the Houyhnhnms (intelligent horses with a superior culture), talking to one of them. Read the text and answer the questions.

He asked me, 'what were the usual causes or motives that made one country go to war with another?' I answered 'they were innumerable; but I should only mention a few of the chief. Sometimes the ambition of princes, who never think they have land or people enough to govern; sometimes the corruption of ministers, who engage their master in a war, in order to stifle or divert the clamour of the subjects against their evil administration. Difference in opinions has cost many millions of lives: for instance, whether flesh be bread, or bread be flesh; whether the juice of a certain berry be blood or wine; whether whistling be a vice or a virtue; whether it be better to kiss a post, or throw it into the fire; what is the best colour for a coat, whether black, white, red, or gray; and whether it should be long or short, narrow or wide, dirty or clean; with many more. Neither are any wars so furious and bloody, or of so long a continuance, as those occasioned by difference in opinion, especially if it be in things indifferent.'



(Gulliver's Travels Part IV, Chapter V)

- 1 What is Gulliver explaining to him? Why do you think he needs to do this?
- 2 What are the three main reasons he gives?
- 3 What kinds of example does he give of the third reason? What is the effect of the way he gives these examples?
- 4 What causes the worst wars according to him?
- 5 What is Swift's aim in this extract?
- 6 Is his satire relevant to more modern times?

What do you think?

- Think of a culture very different from that in your country. What do you find most surprising about the way of life there? What would the inhabitants there find most surprising about your culture? Why?
- How can travel change people?
- Think of a journey you have made and describe the ways in which it changed you.

PROJECT

Gulliver's Travels is an adventure novel. Think of an adventure novel either set in your country or written by somebody from your country. Find out as much as you can about this novel, using the Internet, textbooks and encyclopaedias. Write a factfile about it, similar to the one in exercise 2.