

Gulliver's Travels

A great big journey reveals small wonders.

Written by Bryon Cahill • Based on the novel by Jonathan Swift • Illustrations by Micah Farritor

CHARACTERS

(main characters in **boldface**)

Gulliver, *the storyteller*

Mary, *Lemuel Gulliver's wife*

Narrators 1, 2, 3

Captain William Prichard,
master of the Antelope

Lemuel, *a surgeon and world traveler*

Messenger

King of the Lilliputians

Queen of the Lilliputians

Reldresal, *secretary of Private Affairs*

Blefuscians 1, 2, 3

Girl

King of the Blefuscians

PROLOGUE

Gulliver: You may find it hard to believe, but the following story is true. Every word of it. I know because it happened to me. My name is Lemuel Gulliver, and I

am a surgeon and world traveler. I had the good fortune to go on many safe voyages before the weirdness at Lilliput. But I'm getting ahead of myself. First off, meet my wife, Mary.

Mary: Hello.

Gulliver: Mary and I were married before all this happened. As a young man, I served as a surgeon onboard a ship. Upon returning from my first three years at sea, I decided that I had grown weary of the job. I wanted to settle down. A friend and I opened a doctoral practice in London, and I married my dear wife. Our lives were going well for some time.

Mary: Yes, everything was going well.

Gulliver: But then my friend died, and with him, the business. So what was I to do?

Mary: What was he to do?

Gulliver: I ached and moaned for weeks before the bug bit me

once again. The sailing bug. So I hopped a boat, and for the next six years, I once again lived my dream.

Mary: His dream. For six years.

Gulliver: Well, don't say it like that, dear. I came home to you.

Mary: Yes. For three years.

Gulliver: And then I went off again. I accepted an offer from Captain William Prichard, master of the *Antelope*. He was making a voyage to the South Sea, and he needed a well-practiced doctor.

Mary: And you left. Again.

Gulliver: Yes. We set sail from Bristol on May 4, 1699.

SCENE 1

Narrator 1: Three months into the journey, 12 crew members are dead. The deaths have come during a violent storm near the East Indies that rocks the boat for days. Some of the men were swept overboard and lost at sea.



Others got sick from spoiled meat.

Narrator 2: The good doctor Lemuel Gulliver does not take their deaths lightly. When the storm at last **subsides**, the captain meets Lemuel at the **stern**.

Captain William Prichard: It is a beautiful day for sailing, wouldn't you agree?

Lemuel: Aye, aye, Captain.

Narrator 3: Lemuel is heavy with thoughts of the deceased crew members. He does not hide his gloom.

Captain: You did all that you could for those men, Lemuel. You acted bravely in the harshest of conditions.

Lemuel: Thank you, Captain.

Captain: You know, Lemuel, you can't save everybody.

Lemuel: No, sir. Not even myself.

Captain: Speak your mind, sailor.

Lemuel: I left my wife, Captain. Twice now. And for what? To be among dying men and dead souls? I fear my journey is misled.

Captain: You have survived one of the most awful storms I have seen in my 30 years of sailing, Lemuel. And you did it while attending to the **infirm**. You put your own life at risk for those men. In my book, that is not an ill-sought journey.

Lemuel: Thank you, Captain.

Captain: Carry on.

Narr 1: The captain leaves Lemuel to his thoughts.

Narr 2: Months of smooth sailing pass. And then, on November 5,

a sudden sea squall attacks the ship. The *Antelope* is smashed upon a rock and must be abandoned.

Narr 3: Lemuel, the captain, and four other surviving crew members manage to escape the sinking ship by boarding a lifeboat. However, as ill fortune would have it, the sea rages, and their lifeboat is **capsized**.

Narr 1: The storm is unrelenting. Lemuel tries to swim but is constantly being pulled underwater by unseen forces.

Lemuel: O Captain, my Captain, our fateful trip is done!

Narr 2: Lemuel shouts, but no soul answers. He struggles for an hour against the raging sea, desperate to keep his head above water. Night falls. Somehow, Lemuel feels ground under his feet. He shuffles to shore, a wreck of a man—the sole survivor of the *Antelope*. Exhausted, he collapses on the beach and passes out.

SCENE 2

Narr 3: At daybreak, Lemuel wakes. He is lying on his back, staring at the sky. Blinded by the sun, he realizes that he cannot move.

Narr 1: His legs and arms are bound tightly by rope. He cannot move even his head, for that is tied down too.

Lemuel: What sorcery is this?

Narr 2: Lemuel uses all his strength and manages to break one of his arm restraints. Immediately, a hundred tiny arrows



pierce his face and arm. He does not know where the mysterious arrows are coming from. They don't hurt terribly, but he decides it best to lie still and wait for whatever comes.

Narr 3: Lemuel hears quiet commotion all around him. Then, he feels something small walking on his chest.

Lemuel: What's happening? Is someone there?

Narr 1: A man, no taller than 6 inches, appears in Lemuel's line of vision. He is a messenger.

Messenger: Man Mountain from beyond! Be still, or we will destroy you.

Lemuel: Destroy me? With what? Your puny arrows? They are but needle pricks to me!

Messenger: We have much greater weapons at our disposal, sir. It would **behoove** you to

remain still.

Narr 2: Lemuel doesn't know whether he believes this tiny messenger, but he decides it best to follow his advice.

Lemuel: Very well.

Narr 3: Lemuel can hear the murmurings of foreign speech all around him.

Lemuel: What language is that? What are your people speaking?

Messenger: We are Lilliputians. The people are speaking our language. I am considered the smartest among us. I have learned your entire language just by hearing you speak a few words. Do you understand me well?

Lemuel: Yes, effortlessly. But what are Lilliputians? What strange land is this?

Messenger: Lilliputians are we. You are in the land of Lilliput.

Narr 1: There is some more commotion around Lemuel. The Lilliputians seem to be building something.

Messenger: If you are wondering about the hammering, I will explain. The people are building a giant wooden transport. We need to get you to the king's royal palace.

Lemuel: What are you going to do? Wheel me in there? I *can* walk, you know.

Messenger: Forgive our mistrust, sir. But in all our years, we have never seen a Man Mountain such as you, and we need to take the necessary precautions. Surely you understand. It is a matter of national security.

Lemuel: I am harmless. I am a surgeon!

Messenger: Whether that be the case, please bear with us while we work.

Narr 2: The messenger jumps down off of Lemuel and joins his people in building the transport.

Narr 3: The massive project takes all day. By midafternoon, Lemuel is feeling incredible hunger. He calls to the messenger and asks for some food and water.

Messenger: Yes, of course. It will be done.

Narr 1: What happens next is a massive consumption. The people bring Lemuel all sorts of livestock—pigs, cows, sheep, and chickens. The animals are so tiny that Lemuel must eat them by

* **vocab**

SUBSIDES: becomes less violent

STERN: the back part of a ship

INFIRM: sick people

CAPSIZED: overturned

BEHOOVE: to benefit



the dozens just to **alleviate** his hunger.

Narr 2: By nightfall, the transport is finished. It takes 900 Lilliputians using ropes and pulleys to move Lemuel onto it. When at last he is secure, they roll him to town, then through the streets toward the palace.

SCENE 3

Narr 3: The Lilliputians chain Gulliver to a building just outside the palace. There, he is finally allowed to stand up and view the entire countryside, which he discovers is beautiful and **rustic**.

Gulliver: The country ground resembled a continued garden. And the enclosed fields, which were generally about 40 square feet, resembled so many beds of flowers. These fields were intermingled with woods. But the tallest of the trees, as far as

I could figure, were just about 7 feet high. The whole of the area looked more like a theater set to me than anything real.

Narr 1: The Lilliputians chain observe Lemuel for a few days. On the third day, the king himself pays Lemuel a visit. The messenger translates for them.

King of the Lilliputians: So this is the great Man Mountain? I must say, I have heard many remarkable things about your size. However, none of the tall tales I have heard do you justice.

Lemuel: I shall take that as a compliment, Your Highness.

King: You must forgive me for not coming to visit you sooner. My people had to make absolutely certain that you could pose no credible threat to my person. Hence, these chains that bind you.

Lemuel: I beg your pardon, Your

Majesty. I have been telling your messenger for days that I am a man of peace. I wish no harm to you or your people.

King: Yes. And I have been in constant meetings with my council about just what we are to do with you. You will be happy to know that we have decided against executing you.

Lemuel: Well, that is good news.

King: It came down to the fact that no one wanted to clean up your giant, rotting corpse.

Narr 2: Lemuel is relieved to learn he won't be executed but somewhat concerned by the way decisions are made in Lilliput.

King: I must admit, you do seem to be sincere. But men are quite often not as they seem to be, no matter what their size.

Lemuel: Spoken wisely, fair king. But, if I may add, what hope have I of convincing you that I

am a man of peace?

Narr 3: The king ponders this. He is at a loss for an answer. From behind him, the queen approaches. The messenger translates for her as well.

Queen of the Lilliputians: Who is this Man Mountain that has my kingdom all in a stir? Does it have a name?

King: This is the Queen of Lilliput, sir. Do please answer her question.

Lemuel: My name is Lemuel Gulliver, Your Majesty. And in my three days here, you are the first to ask. Forgive me if I do not bow in your presence. As you can see, your soldiers have fastened me securely to this wall.

Queen: Yes, I can see that. It does not look to be very comfortable. Guards! Release Lemuel Gulliver!

King: My dear, let us not be

hasty. I am still sizing him up.

Queen: You have been sizing up this poor giant for days! It is uncivil to leave him in chains any longer.

King: Very well. Release Lemuel Gulliver from his chains!

Narr 1: Several guards approach Lemuel carefully. Several other men protect the king and queen, in case Lemuel decides to become violent.

Lemuel: Your Majesties are too kind.

King: Yes, well. Just promise not to eat us.

Narr 2: Lemuel chuckles and promises as he is unbound from his chains. The guards scatter from him as soon as he is free.

Narr 3: Lemuel approaches the king and queen slowly. He bows before them.

Lemuel: If it pleases Your Majesties, I would like to discuss with you about getting home.

King: Home? No, no, no. I'm afraid we have more important things to discuss with you.

Lemuel: With all due respect, Your Majesty, I would very much like to go home.

King: With all due respect, sir, I could chain you back to that wall.

Narr 1: Lemuel looks back at his chains lying on the ground. He also considers the few dozen soldiers that surround him. He doubts that these miniature people could take him in a fight. However, he does not have a taste for violence or killing. So he plays along.

Lemuel: I understand. What is it you wish to discuss?

Queen: Let us speak of politics and war later.

Lemuel: War?

Queen: Later, Lemuel Gulliver. For now, you are our guest. Let us celebrate.

Narr 2: The queen claps her hands, and suddenly, dozens of tiny circus performers appear. They dance and sing as Lemuel watches, trying to stay as out of the way as possible.

Narr 3: During the celebration, many Lilliputians dance and play games at Lemuel's heels. He is amused but dares not join in the merriment for fear of accidentally crushing them.

Narr 1: When night falls, the king and another man walk up to Lemuel to discuss important matters. The messenger once again translates.

King: Mighty Lemuel, allow me to introduce to you my secretary of Private Affairs, Reldresal.

Reldresal: Good evening, friend from beyond.

Lemuel: Good evening. It is a pleasure to make your acquaintance, sir.

Reldresal: Likewise.

King: I must attend to the queen. You two have much to discuss.

Narr 2: The king takes his leave.

Lemuel: And what is it that we

* vocab

ALLEVIATE: to lessen

RUSTIC: simple or rural

have to discuss, sir? I imagine you are here to school me on some war effort? The king mentioned it to me briefly.

Reldresal: Yes. War. Our good country has enemies, Lemuel, both foreign and domestic.

Lemuel: I see.

Reldresal: Here at home, there is a small group of **dissenters**. You see, our kingdom is made up of two kinds of people: those who wear boots with low heels, and those who wear higher heels.

Lemuel: Right. OK.

Reldresal: During his **reign**, the king has favored to employ mostly those who wear boots with low heels.

Narr 3: Lemuel takes a closer look at the many dancing Lilliputians. Sure enough, they are separated into two distinct groups.

Lemuel: Oh my. I hadn't noticed it before. Perhaps that was because you are all so tiny that a mere half inch in your heights had escaped me.

Reldresal: Right, well, there is no need to poke fun at our meager stature, Man Mountain.

Lemuel: Apologies, sir. I meant no disrespect.

Reldresal: Regardless, the Lilliputians who favor high heels are not as big a threat right now as our foreign enemies.

Lemuel: And who might they be?

Reldresal: They hail from the distant island Blefuscu, the only other great empire of the universe.

Lemuel: Forgive me, sir, but you do realize there are more than two empires in the universe, don't you?

Reldresal: Hogwash.

Lemuel: No, it is true. I, myself, hail from a place called England.

Reldresal: And England is in the stars, yes? For we all know you fell from above.

Lemuel: What? No, England is one of the most powerful nations on Earth!

Reldresal: Earth?

Lemuel: Yes, Earth. Our planet.

Narr 1: Reldresal stares at the ground beneath his feet. He considers what Lemuel is saying, but then he makes up his mind that the Man Mountain must merely be drunk.

Reldresal: Surely you have had too much wine during the festivities, Lemuel. For we are standing on Lilliputian soil, and the only other nation in the universe is Blefuscu. And it is a warring nation. We have been at war with the Blefuscuans for many, many moons.

Narr 2: Lemuel chooses not to continue the geography lesson. In fact, he is not even entirely certain they *are* still on the Earth that he knows.

Lemuel: Can there be no peace between your two nations?

Reldresal: I'm afraid not, Lemuel. For you see, it all started six and thirty moons ago when the incident of the egg occurred.

Lemuel: What is "the incident of the egg"?

Reldresal: Well, Lilliputians have always cracked their eggs at the small end. However, one day long ago, a traitor decided to crack an egg from the big end.

Lemuel: You don't say.

Reldresal: Yes! And when news of this terrible egg treason reached the shores of Blefuscu, the Blefuscuian government supported big-end egg breakers and welcomed them to their land. And with that, the war began. It has raged ever since.

Narr 3: At first, Lemuel thinks this history is ridiculous. But then he considers some of the wars his own nation has fought and realizes that no war has ever begun with sanity.

Lemuel: High heels and egg ends, you say?

Reldresal: Yes, Lemuel. We will deal with our heel problems here at home, but we would very much appreciate it if you could help us in our war effort against the nation of Blefuscu.

Lemuel: I have told the king, sir, that I am not a violent man. But if in helping your people I can gain permission to return home, then let it be done.

Reldresal: Superb! I shall run and tell the king the good news.

Narr 1: Reldresal rushes off. The messenger who has been translating for them this whole time looks fondly at Lemuel.

* **vocab**

DISSENTERS: people who disagree

REIGN: a period of time in which a king rules

ARMADA: a fleet of warships

Messenger: Between you and me, Man Mountain, I prefer bare feet and bacon.

Narr 2: Lemuel laughs so loudly that the sound of his joy can be heard all the way across the ocean, in the nation of Blefuscu.

SCENE 4

Narr 3: In the morning, the king holds council with Lemuel. He allows Lemuel to travel to Lilliput's highest hill. From there, with the aid of his spectacles, Lemuel can see the neighboring nation of Blefuscu.

Narr 1: Blefuscu is an incredible journey across the sea for the tiny people of Lilliput. However, Lemuel figures that he could swim the distance in less than an hour. And that is what he sets out to do.

Narr 2: When he arrives at the

port of Blefuscu, the people all scatter. They jump from their ships and swim desperately to the shore.

Blefuscuian 1: Save yourselves from the giant who swims in our waters!

Blefuscuian 2: Gather your women and children! Head for the hills!

Blefuscuian 3: To arms, men! To arms!

Narr 3: As some of the tiny men gather up their families and run, others grab their bows and arrows.

Narr 1: Lemuel gets to work tying together the **armada** of ships with hooks and cables that he has brought with him. He is pelted by thousands of small arrows, but he has felt this sort of onslaught before. Their weapons merely sting his skin.

Lemuel: Your arrows are no match for my size!

Narr 2: Having tied up all the boats, Lemuel seizes the cables between his teeth and begins to swim for Lilliput.

Narr 3: Upon his arrival, he is heralded as a hero by the entire nation. The messenger translates the king's praises for Lemuel.

King: Mighty Lemuel Gulliver! Welcome back! You have brought us a fine prize of war. Because of your heroism, I hereby grant you the title of *Nardac*, Lilliput's highest honor!

Narr 1: A momentary hush falls over the crowd. And then, the applause is mighty.

King: Upon the morrow, Lemuel, you shall swim to the shores of Blefuscu once more and capture prisoners of war. At long last, we shall enslave them and rule their



country! The egg yolk will be all over their faces!

Lemuel: But ... fair king ... it is time I was returning home. I have captured your enemy's mighty fleet for you. My part of the bargain is finished. Besides, I do not feel comfortable in this role between your warring lands. I feel as though I am intruding in politics and histories where I do not belong.

Narr 2: The king is dismayed by Lemuel's response. He leaves to talk it over with his council. When he returns, Lemuel is in the midst of a great celebration. Tiny women are kissing his mighty feet, and tinier children are swinging from his hairs.

King: Away! Away with you all! And don't think I'm not taking note of those of you with heels that are higher than mine. You will be dealt with in due time.

Narr 3: One small girl remains on Lemuel's shoulder. She whispers in his ear in Lilliputian.

Girl: I love you, Man Mountain. We all do. Your heart is by and large your greatest part.

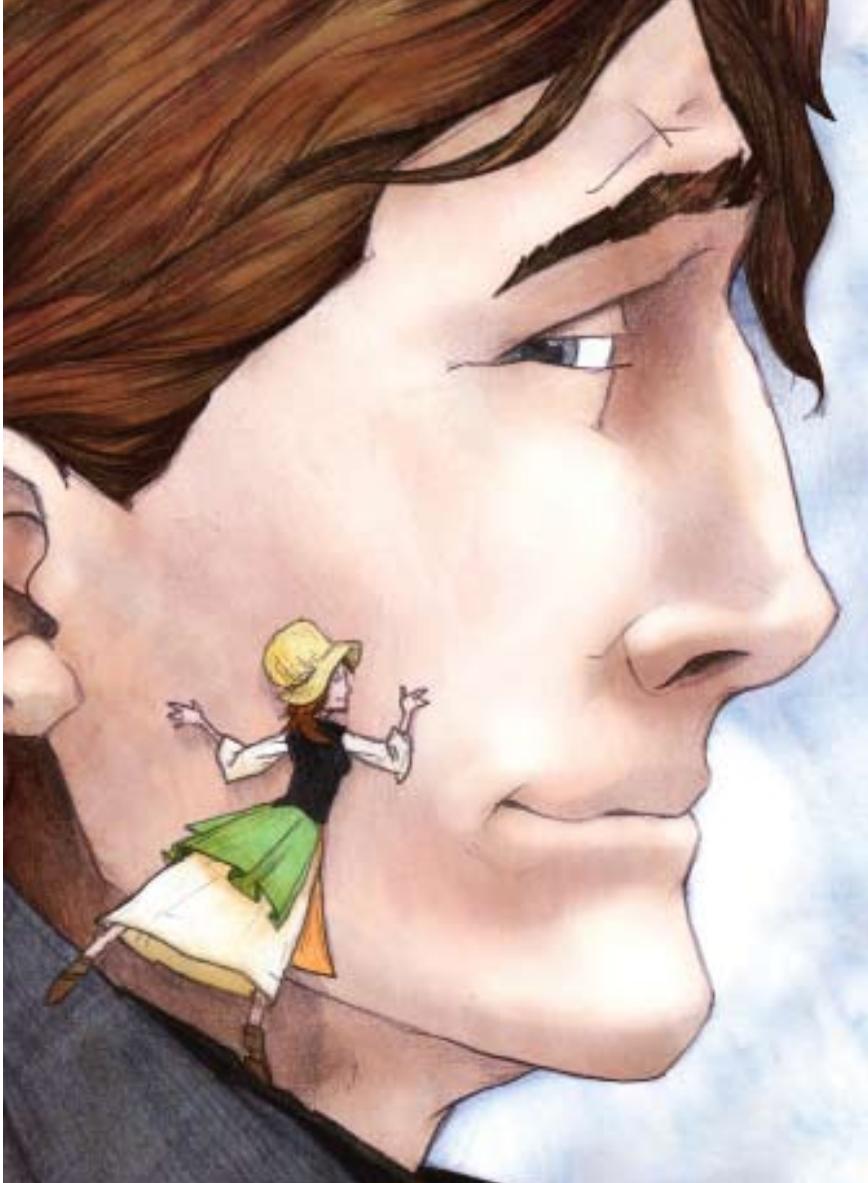
Narr 1: The girl plants a tiny kiss on Lemuel's cheek and then scurries down his back and runs away with the others, giggling.

Lemuel: I understood her! Is it possible that I have learned your language?

Messenger: Great sir, you are speaking in Lilliputian now!

Queen: War hero and genius linguist! Is there anything you cannot do?

Lemuel: Once again, I must insist



that I cannot take prisoners for you, or be any more part of this ancient war of yours.

King: Yes, you are right, Man Mountain. My council has advised me, and we do agree that your part in our mighty war is through. However, I beg of you to stay just a wee bit longer. If the Blefuscians decide to retaliate, we would certainly feel safer having you as our mighty protector. You are, in fact, the greatest thing that has ever happened to us.

Narr 2: Lemuel is overwhelmed by the royal compliment.

Lemuel: Your words touch me, Your Majesty. Yes, I will stay and see this through. I will make certain that not a hair on any Lilliputian's head is harmed until your two lands make peace.

Narr 3: With this, trumpets blare and the merriment begins again. For the rest of the day and well into the night, Lemuel enjoys the company of his tiny, grateful friends.

SCENE 5

Narr 1: As the weeks go by, Lemuel keeps careful watch over the people of Lilliput. They bring him flowers and pastries and gold and meat. Lots and lots and lots of meat.

Narr 2: Lemuel is very grateful, but he never takes his eyes off the tides.

Narr 3: After three weeks of watching, Lemuel sees a lone boat approaching. He greets it at the shore.

King of the Blefuscians: Giant protector of Lilliput! I am the king of the Blefuscians! I am here to surrender to your king.

Lemuel: He is not my king, sir. But he will be very glad to hear this news. It will be my honor to bring you, your small crew, and your message of peace to him.

Narr 1: As Lemuel leads the foreign king into the palace, he feels a great sense of worth and purpose. And then, thoughts of home flood his brain.

EPILOGUE

Gulliver: And that's how it went. Like I said, every word is true. The two kings made peace, and a giant statue of me was erected in the palace square. Two weeks later, they constructed a boat for me, and I sailed away.

Mary: And somehow, unbelievably, you found your way back home.

Gulliver: Yes, I'm still not quite sure how. I had no direction, no compass, just hope. And the winds blew me back to you.

Mary: Thank goodness for small favors.

Gulliver: Yes. The Lilliputians were quite small indeed. And they favored me greatly.

Mary: Of course they did, dear.

Gulliver: I have been home for about a year now. But the sea,

ah, the great and wondrous sea, she calls to me still.

Mary: She is your mistress. Her, and adventure.

Gulliver: You know I will always return to you, Mary.

Mary: I do, Lemuel. I do. ■

The Fantastic Uses of Satire

Why do writers create fantasy worlds? One answer: to allow them to comment on the real world.

Gulliver's Travels was first published in 1726 and was an instant best seller. On the surface, Irish author Jonathan Swift's novel is a lighthearted fantasy. But on a deeper level, it is a work of **satire**. That is literature (or any artistic piece, really) in which human frailties are cleverly ridiculed. Think of the Lilliputians' silly dispute with the Blefuscians. In reality, nations would most likely never fight over which side of an egg to crack. By using satire, Swift was commenting on the flimsy reasons nations sometimes go to war and the corruption of governments (especially that of King George I, the British monarch at the time). Fearing prosecution, Swift originally published *Gulliver's Travels* anonymously.

The section we have adapted here covers only the first of four voyages that Gulliver embarks on in the novel. In each of his travels, he encounters a different fantasy civilization, inhabited by creatures of various attributes—all of which enabled Swift to comment on human nature, culture, and politics in a sneaky sort of way.

Write About It

In Swift's novel, Lemuel's wife, Mary, is mentioned only briefly. Because of that, many readers have wondered about her role in Lemuel's life. In the adaptation you have just read, Mary has been given a greater part than she was allowed in the original story. We boosted her character in the play to pose this question to you, our *READers*: Why did Lemuel constantly leave his wife? Swift doesn't say. However, other authors have tackled the question in attempt to humanize Mary Gulliver. Now it's your turn! How do you think Mary feels every time Lemuel leaves her? Also, do you think she believes her husband's tales? Send your stories to word@weeklyreader.com by September 23, and we'll post our favorites on our blog, WORD, at www.readandwriting.com on September 24.