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|  | **Gulliver's Travels Summary** | **[Next](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/gulliver-s-travels/preface-1-the-publisher-to-the-reader)**  [Preface 1](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/gulliver-s-travels/preface-1-the-publisher-to-the-reader) |

Lemuel Gulliver is a married English surgeon who wants to see the world. He takes a job on a ship and ends up shipwrecked in the land of Lilliput where he is captured by the miniscule [**Lilliputians**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/gulliver-s-travels/characters) and brought to the Lilliputian king. The Lilliputians are astonished by Gulliver’s size but treat him gently, providing him with lots of food and clothes. Gulliver is at first chained to a big abandoned temple then, after surrendering his weapons and signing articles of allegiance to Lilliput, he is granted his liberty. He befriends the king and puts out a fire in the palace by [**urinating**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/gulliver-s-travels/symbols/excrement) on it. He successfully assists Lilliput by stealing the neighboring Blefuscans’ war ships and receives a high honor, but the Lilliputian king begins to cool towards Gulliver when Gulliver refuses to help enslave the Blefuscans. Gulliver makes friends with the Blefuscans’ when they come to make peace and, soon after, an unnamed man of the court informs Gulliver that the Lilliputian court plans to accuse him of treason and put out his eyes. Gulliver escapes to Blefuscu and then returns to England.

Gulliver soon sets out on his next voyage and is stranded in the land of Brobdingnag where the Brobdingnagians are immense giants and Gulliver feels like a Lilliputian. After being forced to perform exhausting freak shows by the Brobdingnagian farmer, Gulliver is sold to [**the Brobdingnagian queen**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/gulliver-s-travels/characters), the farmer’s daughter and his loving caretaker Glumdalclitch in tow. In the court, Gulliver is well cared for but everyone laughs frequently at his physical mishaps. Gulliver tries to maintain his dignity with little success. He offers to help [**the Brobdingnagian king**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/gulliver-s-travels/characters) strengthen his power by using gunpowder and is puzzled the king’s disgust, concluding that, though the Brobdingnagians are a good-hearted people, they are just not as sophisticated as humans. One day, the box Gulliver is carried around in for outings gets snatched up by a bird on the beach and, dumped in the sea, he is picked up by a human ship and carried back to England. Back among humans, Gulliver is astonished by their littleness.

Gulliver sets out yet again to sea and is again stranded, this time getting taken up by [**the Laputians**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/gulliver-s-travels/characters) to their floating island. He meets [**the Laputian king**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/gulliver-s-travels/characters/the-laputian-king) and observes life in Laputa where everyone is so obsessed with abstract mathematical, musical, and astronomical theory that they are utterly incompetent about practical matters and can barely hold a conversation. Gulliver is disgusted when he visits the city of Lagado below and sees the destructive influence the Laputians’ theories have had, turning a once functioning people into a broken society. He tours the academy where the projectors contrive useless scientific projects. Afterwards, Gulliver visits Glubbdubdrib and meets ghosts of history, visits Luggnagg and meets the power-crazed Luggnaggian king and the grim immortal Struldburgs, and finally returns to England.

Gulliver sets out on his fourth voyage only to be mutinied and stranded in a land where the noble and reasonable horses, the Houyhnhmns, do their best to control the foul degenerate human [**Yahoos**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/gulliver-s-travels/characters). Gulliver tries to distance himself as much as possible from the Yahoos and, indeed, the Houyhnhmns, especially Gulliver’s mentor, [**the master horse**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/gulliver-s-travels/characters), see Gulliver is different because he has a rational mind and wears clothing. The more Gulliver learns from the Houyhnhmns, the more he admires their uprightness, egalitarianism, and reason, and he eventually turns against humankind, wanting to live forever among the Houyhnhmns. As he learns about the Houyhnhmns from the master horse, the master horse also learns about humanity from Gulliver, and concludes that the Yahoos Gulliver has come from are really not very different from the filthy Yahoos among the Houyhnhmns. Much to Gulliver’s chagrin, the Houyhnhmns ultimately insist that Gulliver return to his own country. Though he tries to avoid returning to human society, [**Don Pedro**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/gulliver-s-travels/characters)’s ship picks Gulliver up and forces him to return to Europe. Back home, Gulliver remains disgusted by all the Yahoos around him, including his family members, and spends all his time with horses, reminiscing longingly about the Houyhnhmns. He concludes by assuring the reader that everything he’s described is true and that he’s written his travels solely for the public good so that the wretched Yahoos around him might learn from the virtuous beings of other lands.