

Gulliver's Travels
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As a seemingly wise and educated man, throughout the novel Gulliver's Travels, the narrator cleverly gains the reader's respect as a thinking and observant individual. With this position in mind, the comments and ideas that Gulliver inflicts upon those reading about his journeys certainly have their own identity as they coincide with his beliefs and statements on the state of humanity and civilization in particular. Everywhere Gulliver goes, he seems to comment on the good and bad points of the people he encounters. Sometimes, he finds a civilization that he can find virtues within, but he also encounters peoples and places which truly disgust him in their manner of operation and civility. Overall, Swift gives Gulliver a generally negative and cynical attitude towards the manner in which his current day English counterparts behaved cleverly disguised in the subtext of his encounters with other nations that either contrasted the way they lived, or mirrored unflatteringly his contemporaries lifestyles.

In Gulliver's first voyage to Lilliput, his role as the town giant not only put into perspective the selfishness and unrelenting need for power of the human race, but also opened his eyes to the untrusting and ungrateful nature of those aforementioned. When he first arrived in their land, the Lilliputians opted to tie him up, giving him no freedom, which he luckily did not object to. Then, once they had developed a somewhat symbiotic relationship with him, Gulliver was basically forced to abide to their whims and fancies, and ultimately to be their tool in war. At any time, Gulliver could have escaped their grasp, but instead, he opted to stay and observe and oblige to their customs. He was a very agreeable guest. He did tricks for them, he saved their princess from her burning castle, he defeated their mortal enemies, and all he was rewarded with was their spite and mistrust. From the start, no matter how cordial and well-behaved he was, there was little trust bestowed upon him by the people that bound him to their home. Also, Gulliver explains the ridiculous manner in which one becomes accredited in their society. "For as to that infamous practice of acquiring great Employment by dancing on the Ropes, or Badges of Favor and Distinction by leaping over sticks, and creeping under them; the reader is to observe, that they were first introduced by the Grand father or the Emperor now reigning; and grew to the present Height, by the gradual increase of Party and Faction." This ridiculous means of self-validation seems strikingly similar to some of the methods with which people will resort to in our societies, where personal achievement and values are secondary to their outward appearance, ability to impress, and skills totally unnecessary to the job described. Gulliver's description of their government, way of life, and logic patterns reflected either his grievances with or his inability to comprehend the manner in which many decisions, traditions, and ways of living developed in our own society. He also, though, pointed out some redeeming values which he found in their way of living such as their inability to accept fraud, and their total separation of purity of smut, through reward and punishment. When it came down to it though, the Lilliputian's lack of trust towards their giant helper ruined their chances of him staying, and Gulliver was forced to leave. He found their hospitality to be great, but only at a severe stress to their own resources. At this point, some very strong assertions have been made about humanity, but we must go farther into the story to draw any real conclusions.

Although there wasn't much said in this section of the book, the second voyage to Brobdignag put Gulliver in a very compromising situation which made him simply the pawn of social commentary by Swift. The people of Brobdignag treated Gulliver in an almost ridiculous manner. They put him in a cage like we do with rodents, and were truly simple in their ideas. "The Learning of this People is

very defective; consisting only in Morality, History, Poetry, and Mathematicks; wherein they must be allowed to excel. But, the last of these is wholly applied to what may be useful in Life; to the Improvement of Agriculture and all Mechanical arts; so that among us it would be little esteemed. And as to ideas, Entitites, Abstractions and Transcendentals, I could never drive the least Conception into their heads." This situation made Gulliver see a people totally preoccupied with their own ideas, and showed their ignorance of possibly better ideas simply because they refused to acknowledge the possible validity of a little man's ideas. It is this attribute of human thought patterns that many times allows us to miss the fine details in life, overlooking them as trivial.

When venturing in Laputa, Gulliver was thougholy disgusted by the adamant ways of the inhabitants there. Their obsession with the very specifics of their life not only put Gulliver off, but made him realize the follies of all those like them. Their oblivion to the obvious tendencies life engulfs made a great impression on him, seeing their wives totally confounded by the male inhabitants fetish with the workings that they had managed to contrive somehow. Not only did these people behave strangely, but their odd manner of acting had affected their outward appearance, transforming them into convuluted, wretched creatures. Their focus on Mathematicks and Musick were not viewed as unattractive traits, but their narrow-mindedness, and absense of thought on other subjects alarmed him, as he saw the reprocutions of such a lifestyle. In Balnibari, the people there also had a very distorted manner of living. Their beurocratic, innefficient machine of experiments, improvements, and theories appalled Gulliver as he saw the degradation in society that occured as a result of it. Both of these lands, although on somewhat opposite ends of the spectrum belonged to the same family of false maxims to live by. Both systems showcased many of the problems our own societies can face. If we ignore problems we have, that can make us worse, but if we try to fix every imperfection, no matter how rediculous-seeming, we would be totally engulfed by the process.

In Gulliver's last voyage to the land of the Houyhnhnms, there was by far the most demonstrative of comparisons to our society, or should I say, contrasts. When he met those people, animals that we know as horses, he was shocked by their wisdom, sensibility, and kindness. On the other hand, the Yahoos, most closely related to humans as we know them were vile, uneducated, badly-behaved creatures. This reversal of roles demonstrated the shotty treatment we have for lower creatures, even though they have many traits that could be described as positive that we easily overlook. When Gulliver returns to England, he is disgusted not only by the sight, smell, and actions of the people there, but he cant even stand his own family. It is this fact that clearly shows how awful and pitiful the human race would seem if one had the opporotunity to step back and take an honest, unobstructed view of it.

Througout Guliver's Travels, Swift uses anecdotes told through Gulliver's eyes to demonstrate the vices and virtues associated with the way we live. No matter where he was, he was able to see enviable aspects of their society, and to demean the parts of their life that were silly, illogical, and offensive. From each experience he grasped a stronger understanding of what it meant to run a government, how Power and prestige could corrupt, and how false logic could corrup a community. Not only a powerful social commentary, Gulliver's Travels teaches us an important lesson about what we must keep important in our lives.

