



GULLIVERS TRAVELS

DETAILED SUMMARY

Part I: Chapter 1

On this voyage, Gulliver goes to the sea as a surgeon on the merchant ship, Antelope. The ship is destroyed during a heavy windstorm, and Gulliver, the only survivor, swims to a nearby island, Lilliput. Being nearly exhausted from the ordeal, he falls asleep. Upon awakening, he finds that the island's inhabitants, who are no larger than six inches tall, have captured him. After the inhabitants examine Gulliver and provide him with food, the Emperor of this country orders his subjects to move Gulliver to a little-used temple, the only place large enough to house him.

Part 1: Chapter 2

In this chapter, the Imperial Majesty (the Emperor) and Gulliver carry on a conversation as best they can. After the Emperor's visit, six Lilliputians shoot arrows at Gulliver. Gulliver retaliates by pretending to eat the little archers and then releases them. This clemency, and Gulliver's cooperation, so impress the Imperial Council that they debate whether or not to free Gulliver. An officer takes inventory of Gulliver's possessions, which will be held until Gulliver's fate is settled upon.

Part 1: Chapter 3

The Lilliputian emperor is pleased that Gulliver is friendly and cooperative, so he rewards him with some court diversions. The diversions, however, prove to be quite different than one might expect. It is the Lilliputian court custom that men seeking political office demonstrate their agility in rope dancing, among other things. How long and how skillfully a candidate can dance upon a rope determines his tenure in office. Of the candidates, two are particularly adept: Reldresal, Gulliver's friend, and Flimnap, the treasurer. Other diversions include noblemen competing for official favor by crawling under or leaping over a stick, a feat for which they are then rewarded with various colored threads. Gulliver also reviews the Emperor's troops; he stands, legs apart, while the tiny men march through.

Part I: Chapter 4

After Gulliver's visit to the Emperor's palace at Mildendo, Reldresal, Lilliput's Principal Secretary of Private Affairs, pays a visit to Gulliver and explains the faction quarrels between the High Heel Party and the Low Heel Party. The conflict, he says, started over a religious question: At which end should the faithful break their eggs: at the big end or at the little end? The Blefuscudians break theirs, in the original style, at the big end. But, by royal edict, the Lilliputians must break their eggs at the little end. There are rebels in Lilliput, Reldresal says, and already 11,000 of them — Big Endians — have been put to death; others have fled to the court of Blefuscu. He explains further that the Lilliputians have lost 40 ships in the war. The dilemma seems hopeless, for Lustrog, the prophet of their religion, has said, "All true believers shall break their eggs at the convenient end."

Part I: Chapter 5

Gulliver saves Lilliput from a Blefuscudian invasion by dragging the Blefuscudian ships to Lilliput. In gratitude, the Lilliputian emperor rewards Gulliver with the title Nardac. Gulliver is pleased with his new title, but he is not the Emperor's dupe. He rejects a plan to destroy Blefuscu completely and argues for a reasonable peace treaty. Gulliver's moderation in dealing with the Blefuscudians gives Flimnap and Skyresh Bolgolam a chance to slander him. The Emperor listens to the accusations and is cold to Gulliver when he grants him permission to visit Blefuscu in the future. Later, a fire in the palace breaks out, and Gulliver puts out the fire by urinating on it. There is a law against anyone passing water in the royal palace, however, and the Empress is so horrified by Gulliver's fire-fighting techniques that she never forgives Gulliver. The Emperor softens, though, and promises Gulliver a pardon for his crime

Part I: Chapter 6

Gulliver provides the reader with information regarding Lilliputian culture and the personal treatment that he receives from the Lilliputians. Regarding the Lilliputian system of laws, Gulliver says that treason is severely punished, which is not particularly surprising, but other laws are. These laws punish an unsuccessful accuser as severely as a traitor; fraud is most frequently punished with death; and any innocent man who is vindicated of a charge is rewarded. Interestingly, ingratitude is a capital offense. Moral, rather than clever men, are appointed to powerful positions, and atheists are barred from all government offices. Explaining the seeming contradiction between these good laws and the rope-dancing corruptions, Gulliver says that the latter were instituted by the present Emperor's grandfather.

The Lilliputians believe that parents marry out of sexual desire rather than love of children. Therefore they deny any filial obligation and establish public schools for children. Parents with children in school pay for each child's maintenance and are forced to maintain those that they breed. The schools for young nobles are spartan, and students are trained in honor, justice, courage, modesty, clemency, religion, and patriotism. The schools for tradesmen and ordinary gentlemen are like those of the nobles, but the duration of schooling is shorter. The Lilliputians educate women to be reasonable, agreeable, and literate. Workers and farmers have no schools.

Resuming his tale, Gulliver describes the visit of the Emperor and his family. They come to dine with Gulliver and bring Flimnap with them. The dinner proves to be a disaster because Flimnap, the royal treasurer, is appalled when he reckons the cost of feeding and housing Gulliver. What's more, Flimnap charges, his wife is attracted to Gulliver and has visited him secretly.

Part I: Chapter 7

Gulliver learns that Flimnap, Skyresh Bolgolam, and others have approved articles of treason against him. His crimes include putting out the fire in the palace, refusing to devastate Blefuscu, speaking to the peace embassy from Blefuscu, and preparing to take advantage of the Emperor's permission to visit Blefuscu. The Emperor accepts the charges, but he refuses to kill Gulliver. Instead, he "mercifully" decides to blind Gulliver and save money on his upkeep by starving him slowly. On learning this, Gulliver escapes to Blefuscu.

Part 1: Chapter 8

A few days after his arrival at Blefuscu, Gulliver sees a large overturned ship floating in the bay and hauls it to port. While he is restoring the ship for his return home, a Lilliputian envoy presents a note demanding that Gulliver be returned as a traitor. The Blefuscu emperor refuses to do so, hoping that Gulliver will stay as a war deterrent between the two countries. Gulliver refuses, however, and sets sail for home. Eventually a British merchant ship picks him up and returns him to England where he is reunited with his wife and family.