

***Gulliver's Travels* Discussion Questions**

Book One: Lilliput

1. How does Gulliver appear to regard his own story's publication--what effect, if any, does he expect it will have on readers?
2. What first led Gulliver to follow the course of life he did--that of an adventurer and traveler? Do his motives change as time passes?
3. What are your impressions of the Lilliputians at the beginning? How do they change as the book progresses?
4. How does being a giant change Gulliver's attitude toward himself?
5. How does Swift present the Lilliputian Emperor? (Swift is satirizing England's King George) Flimnap? Bolgolam?
6. Why are the Lilliputians at war? What is Swift saying about war? About nationalism?
7. How does Gulliver treat the Lilliputians during his first weeks on the island? What does this tell you about Gulliver?
8. How does Gulliver describe the physical appearance of the Lilliputians? Do their physical characteristics compliment their personality?
9. What ideas about religion are satirized? What ideas about government are satirized?

Book Two: Brobdingnab

1. What convinces the farmer that Gulliver is a "rational creature"?
2. What do the three scholars conclude about Gulliver?
3. How is the king portrayed? The queen?
4. In what sense is Gulliver diminished in more than size when he meets up with the giant Brobdingnagians? What does the king, for example, think of him? And what does Gulliver come to think of himself?
5. How does the King react to Gulliver's description of his native Britain? Is the King's realm similar to or very different from what Gulliver has described of his own country? About what English invention does Gulliver inform the King? How does the King react to this information?
6. How does Gulliver function as a foil to both the Lilliputians and to the Brobdingnagians? What is Swift saying with their different sizes?
7. How have Gulliver's perceptions of physical reality been changed by his time in Brobdingnag?
8. How does Swift's depiction of the Brobdingnagians reflect on ordinary humans? What do you think he is suggesting to us? What is accomplished by so many strange comparisons between creatures of different sizes and shapes?

Book Three: Laputa

1. In his account of the Lagado Academy, what basic philosophical position is Gulliver mocking? To what extent do you think that *Gulliver's Travels* as a whole counters this philosophy?
2. How does Gulliver's account of the long-lived Struldbruggs deal with the problem of desire? What error or errors does this account suggest is the cause of much human folly and failure?
3. Are the Struldbruggs happy to have eternal life?

Book Four: the Land of the Houyhnhnms

1. What sort of society is that of the Houyhnhnms? What is the guiding power in Houyhnhnm life? Are these horses flawed or incomplete in any way, or are they perfect?
2. What view of humanity emerges from the comparison Gulliver is forced to make between himself and the Yahoos? How are the Yahoos to be differentiated from Europeans like Gulliver, if indeed they are different at all?
3. What has happened to Gulliver's self-image and self-respect by the time he returns to England? How does he feel about his fellow human beings?
4. At the beginning and end of each of the four Parts of *Gulliver's Travels*, Swift locates Gulliver's travels in a familiar world with exact geographical references, etc. What is the effect of this realistic style? How does the realistic style establish the narrator's persona? What are Gulliver's qualities as a narrator? Are you inclined to believe him?