

TEXT	GULLIVER'S TRAVELS (1726)
AUTHOR	Jonathan Swift
THEMES	Travel (unit 8), wildlife (unit 12), feelings and moods (unit 13), illusions (unit 20)
VOCABULARY	Describing objects, animals, danger
WRITING	Students describe their bedroom as seen by Gulliver.
SPEAKING	Students discuss potential dangers.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

As a satirist and critical social commentator, Jonathan Swift (1667–1745) is unsurpassed in English literature. He was writing at a time when satire was one of the most important literary forms in prose and poetry. It is a measure of his genius that a book so full of political, social and literary opinions stands just as comfortably as a work of children's literature. That is to say, his satire in *Gulliver's Travels* blends gripping narrative invention with intellectual comment. Students might be interested to hear that Swift was so shocked by England's treatment of Ireland and the poverty of that country that he wrote a 'serious' proposal suggesting the babies of the poor should be sold as food – he even recommends some ways of cooking the babies. In this way, he underlines the inhumanity of the ruling class and attacks their disregard for human life. Some satire is only interesting at the time it is written and published. This is not the case with Swift. Because the subjects of his satire are human nature and human weakness, his observations and comments are universal and constant, which is why he still speaks to us today. If students enjoy this worksheet, you might consider looking at an extract from T.H. White's novel *Mistress Masham's Repose*, which describes the adventures of a girl who discovers a group of Lilliputians living in the grounds of her house.

WARMER

Several film and TV versions of *Gulliver's Travels* have been made and you can find trailers and extracts from these online. The most recent is the 2010 Jack Black version, whilst the 1996 TV version with Ted Danson is excellent and visually powerful. Watch a trailer from one or both of these with the sound turned off and ask the students to describe what they see. Then watch with the sound on and ask whether students would be interested in seeing the film(s).

ABOUT YOU

The Warmer should already have given students some ideas as they talk about the first question. For the second, ask them to be specific and describe the place. The third question is in preparation, in part, for the later Speaking activity, though it is also relevant to the text.

Go through the introduction and clarify the situation.

- 1 After reading, students discuss the question. Students might try and express the ideas of *pride* and *relief*, so you may have to teach these words.

Possible answers

sad surprise fear feeling good/happy (after fighting the rats)

MIXED ABILITY

Drama activities allow weaker and stronger students to work together effectively as everyone has a part to play, regardless of ability. This scene from the novel lends itself to dramatisation – there are six actors plus a narrator. Students work together and decide how they will show the scene (it includes a fight scene and the dog taking Gulliver to the gardener). You could appoint a director for each group or just let the group plan the scene together.

2

Possible answers

- 1 Because his voice isn't loud enough for her to hear. She is in another room but he knows she will not hear him.
- 2 Probably because people would laugh at him.
- 3 He says it was dangerous but the dog was friendly and gentle and gave him to the gardener, so he probably wasn't really in danger.
- 4 At first, they are worried but then they see that he is not hurt and they are happy (relieved).

VOCABULARY

3

Answers

- 1 gently
- 2 reputation
- 3 anger
- 4 gardener
- 5 spaniel

4

Answers

- 1 bloody
- 2 wagging
- 3 threw
- 4 mistress

WRITING

- 5 It is probably a good idea to review or pre-teach some vocabulary of size, e.g. *incredibly big*, *enormous*, *gigantic*, *as big as a x*, *tiny*, etc. Encourage students to imagine how their things would look if they were really small. The description doesn't have to be very long but it should express how big everything looks and how small Gulliver is.

SPEAKING

- 6 Encourage students to be specific in explaining how and why these things are dangerous. Once they have made their list, combine pairs or groups to compare their choices and explain their reasons.