
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

Gulliver's Travels

5: Palace of the giants



This is not a word-for-word transcript

LANGUAGE FOCUS: Linking devices of contrast

Gulliver narrator

I'm Gulliver. This is the story of my life in the strange land of Brobdingnag, where I was but the size of a mouse among giants.

My master, the farmer who found me, saw me as a way to make money. Every day I was made to perform for the amusement of a crowd. I danced and sang for them. Until one day, I collapsed with exhaustion.

Glumdalclitch

Gulliver!

Gulliver narrator

That was my dear Glumdalclitch, the farmer's daughter, and my only true friend here.

Glumdalclitch

He's fainted! Father, I told you it was too much. He'll die.

Farmer

Don't worry dear, he's fine, aren't you Gulliver?

Gulliver

I'm... I'm OK.

Sladral

Excuse me. I'm here on official business.

Gulliver narrator

Although I was exhausted, I looked up to see a finely dressed man.

Sladral

Will the little man live?

Farmer

Oh, he's **as right as rain**.

Sladral

Good. The Queen has heard of this Gulliver, and would like to see him for herself.

Farmer

Oh, of course my lord. But... well I'm like a father to him. I couldn't...

Sladral

We'll pay you, of course. One thousand **gold pieces**? And the girl – she will come with us too and live in the palace.

Gulliver narrator

Of course, the greedy farmer agreed without any hesitation. Before I knew it, we were on our way to the palace. I felt relieved.

[sfx: Large court, horns playing]

Sladral

Your Majesty. May I present, Mr Gulliver. Oh, and his maid, Glumdalclitch.

Glumdalclitch

Your Majesty.

Queen

Yes, yes, now where is this Gulliver?

Gulliver

Down here, your Majesty. It is an honour. May I kiss your royal foot?

Queen

He speaks! It's true... Mr Gulliver, you may kiss... my **fingertip**!

Gulliver

My lady.

Queen

He's lovely. He will dine with me tonight!

Gulliver narrator

Despite the Queen's beauty and kindness, at dinner I was quite **appalled** by her behaviour. At one mouthful she ate as much as 12 English farmers would eat in a meal – crunching the wing of a **lark**, bones and all – though it were nine times the size of a turkey.

Gulliver

Quite an appetite, your Majesty!

Gulliver narration

Not that it mattered. I was happy to rest and eat well. Everyone at court was **enchanted** by me!

Queen

Are you enjoying the meat, Gulliver?

Gulliver

Oh certainly, Madam. It's delicious.

Queen

Oh, have some more.

Gulliver narration

Everyone at court loved me, except that is, the Queen's dwarf.

Dwarf

Pipsqueak.

Gulliver

Pipsqueak? Me?

Gulliver narration

He had lost his position now that he was no longer the shortest man in the kingdom. And he wasn't happy.

Dwarf

Yes. Quite a big meal for a little **runt**. Just you wait.

Queen

Gulliver, do hurry and finish supper, I have a present for you!

Gulliver narration

It was a house made by the finest craftsman in the land. It was the perfect size for me, with little chairs and a table, and even a lock to keep out rats. Best of all, laid on my bed, shirts of the finest silk. Though Brobdingnag silk is rather rough for a man of my size.

Life passed in this way for some time. I was treated like royalty! But **in spite of** the fine dining and beautiful clothes, life at court was not always so smooth. Especially because of my, adventures...

Queen

Gulliver, tell them what happened today!

Gulliver

I was attacked by a large fly, your Majesty.

Sladral

Oh Gulliver, we heard you had an accident today?

Gulliver

An apple, Sir. It fell on my back. It almost broke it...

Gulliver narrator

I was getting upset. Even my dear Glumdalclitch seemed to find me funny. I had to get out of the court. I **slipped away** from everyone, and wandered down a vast hallway.

Dwarf

Psst.

Gulliver

Oh you. Go away, dwarf.

Dwarf

That's no way to speak to a friend. I have just the thing to **soothe** you after their **mockery**, Gulliver. Come with me.

Gulliver narrator

I had no choice but to follow him. We arrived in a quiet study. The dwarf scooped me up.

Dwarf

Some dessert, my friend? Or should I say, a **just desert** for you Gulliver?!

Gulliver

Now, now. What's this?

Gulliver narrator

It was a giant bowl of honey. Over which the dwarf held me...

Gulliver

Hey, we're not enemies. Listen, you're like a big brother to me...

Dwarf

In you go.

Gulliver

No, wait. Please.

[sfx: splash]

Dwarf

No one will know.

Gulliver narrator

I struggled and struggled, and tried to swim, taking mouthfuls of the sweet honey. But I had been a sailor for many years, and I made it out.

Gulliver

There! Not so easy to stop me, dwarf!

Dwarf

Oh, well done, Gulliver. Such a shame there are so many wasps at this time of year! They do so like honey...

Gulliver narrator

And off he went. From the window, I heard a buzzing sound. Ten large wasps, the size of eagles – were flying towards me!

Gulliver

Take that! And you. Come here, wasp! I've not finished with you.

Gulliver narrator

I fought off the wasps. And collapsed, exhausted.

Life in Brobdingnag had become very dangerous for me. But how could I escape from this land of giants? I decided I had to meet with the king.

Vocabulary

as right as rain

feeling healthy and well

gold pieces

gold coins

fingertip

the very end of a finger

appalled

shocked

lark

a small, brown bird

enchanted

attracted, pleased very much

pipsqueak

old-fashioned insult for a small person

runt

the smallest animal born in a group, here used as an insult

slipped away

quietly escaped

soothe

calm

mockery

laughing at someone in a nasty way

just dessert (also 'just deserts')

to get what you deserve

Questions

1. How did Sladril persuade the farmer to give him Gulliver?

(Hint: Look up the term 'gold pieces'.)

- a) He threatened to take away his daughter.
- b) He offered the farmer money.
- c) He said it would be an honour to meet the Queen of Brobdingnag.

2. Why does the Queen not see Gulliver at first?

(Hint: He says 'down here'!)

- a) Because he is in a travelling box.
- b) Because he is outside the palace waiting for permission to enter.
- c) Because he is so small.

3. Why does the dwarf dislike Gulliver?

(Hint: What happened to his position at court?)

- a) Because Gulliver mocks the royal family.
- b) Because Gulliver has stolen his role as the shortest person at the palace.
- c) Because Gulliver is dangerous.

Answers

1. How did Sladril persuade the farmer to give him Gulliver?

a) He threatened to take away his daughter. That's not right. He offered to take the farmer's daughter to the palace and the farmer did not object.

b) He offered the farmer money. That's right. He offered the farmer 1,000 gold pieces.

c) He said it would be an honour to meet the Queen of Brobdingnag. That's not right. What does 'gold pieces' mean?

2. Why does the Queen not see Gulliver at first?

a) Because he is in a travelling box. That's not right. Why does Gulliver say 'down here'?

b) Because he is outside the palace waiting for permission to enter. That's not right. Sladril took him inside the palace. Why does Gulliver say 'down here'?

c) Because he is so small. That's right. He's so small that he has to say 'down here' to attract the Queen's attention.

3. Why does the dwarf dislike Gulliver?

a) Because Gulliver mocks the royal family. That's not right. The royal family mock Gulliver.

b) Because Gulliver has stolen his role as the shortest person at the palace. That's right. Well done.

c) Because Gulliver is dangerous. That's not right. What happened to the dwarf's position at court?