

Glossary for Gulliver's Travels

from Cliff Notes (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt)

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Part 1 – Chapter 1

to alter my condition to marry.

hosier a haberdasher, a person whose work or business is selling men's furnishings, such as hats, shirts, neckties, and gloves.

four hundred pounds for a portion The part of a man's money or property contributed by his bride; here, meaning Gulliver's dowry.

East and West Indies East: Malay Archipelago; especially, the islands of Indonesia; West: the large group of islands between North America and South America; it includes the Greater Antilles, Lesser Antilles, and the Bahamas.

Van Diemen's Island former name for Tasmania.

declivity a downward slope or sloping, as of a hill.

several slender ligatures the ropes used to tie Gulliver to the ground.

buff jerkin a short, closefitting, sleeveless jacket or vest made of soft brownish leather.

durst dared.

hogshead a large barrel or cask holding from 63 to 140 gallons.

retinue a body of assistants, followers, or servants attending a person of rank or importance.

Signet Royal an official seal.

express a special messenger; courier.

soporiferous medicine medicine that causes or tends to cause sleep.

latitude angular distance, measured in degrees, north or south from the equator.

Part 1 – Chapter 2

demesnes lands or estates belonging chiefly to a lord and not rented or let but kept in his hands.

draymen persons whose work involves hauling loads in a dray (a cart).

Part 1 – Chapter 3

summerset a somersault.

trencher a wooden board or platter on which to carve or serve meat.

colossus a gigantic statue.

pikes advanced a pike is a weapon used by foot soldiers, consisting of a metal spearhead on a long, wooden shaft; here, the weapons are held in an attacking position.

Part 1 – Chapter 4

garret the space, room, or rooms just below the roof of a house; attic.

damage to the pile a pile is a long, heavy timber driven into the ground to support a structure; here, meaning that Gulliver did not want to damage the structural support of the Emperor's palace by stepping in the wrong place.

fortnight a period of two weeks.

schism a split or division in an organized group or society, especially a church, as the result of difference of opinion, of doctrine, etc.

Part 1 – Chapter 5

encomiums formal expressions of high praise.

diuretic increasing the excretion of urine.

Part 1 – Chapter 6

concupiscence strong desire; lust.

his white staff domestic staff; housekeepers.

postillion a person who rides the left-hand horse of the leaders of a four-horse carriage.

Part 1 – Chapter 7

the meanness of my condition my lowness in social status and rank; here, meaning that Gulliver was of humble origins and not of the nobility.

in a close chair in an enclosed, one-person chair with glass windows, carried on poles by two men; a sedan chair.

standing my trial facing my accusers

Part 1 – Chapter 8

cordage cords and ropes collectively, especially, the ropes in a ship's rigging.

cabal a small group of persons joined in a secret, often political, intrigue.

young princes of the blood the nobility; here, meaning the succession of royalty.

the lee-side of the island the side or direction away from the wind.

ancient an ensign, or flag.

a bowling green at Greenwich a smooth lawn at Greenwich, a borough of Greater London.

the Black Bull in Fetter Lane a place of business (possibly a pub) leased by Gulliver.

leaving my family upon the parish leaving my family with no income; here, meaning Gulliver provides financial support for his family before leaving on his second voyage.

towardly child a friendly child.

Surat a seaport in western India, on the Arabian Sea.

Part 2 – Chapter 1

the Line the equator.

ague a fever, usually malarial, marked by regularly recurring chills.

arch boy a clever, crafty boy.

hanger a short sword, hung from the belt.

lappet a loose flap or fold of a garment.

scabbard a sheath or case to hold the blade of a sword.

sorrel any of various short, coarse weeds.

Molucca Islands group of islands of Indonesia, between Sulawesi & New Guinea.

Part 2 – Chapter 2

manikin (mannequin) a little man; dwarf; here, being a translation of the name *Grildrig*, the name given to Gulliver by the farmer's daughter.

pillion a cushion attached behind a saddle for an extra rider.

gimlet-holes holes made by a gimlet, a small boring tool with a handle at right angles to a shaft having at the other end a spiral, pointed cutting edge; here, meaning the holes bored in Gulliver's traveling box.

the Sign of the Green Eagle an inn where Gulliver performed.

Ganges a river in northern India, flowing from the Himalayas into the Bay of Bengal.

Part 2 – Chapter 3

scrutore (escritoire) a writing desk or table.

equipage furnishings; accessories.

Part 2 – Chapter 4

wen a benign skin tumor, especially of the scalp, consisting of a fatty cyst.

in battalia in full battle dress.

Part 2 – Chapter 5

Bristol barrel a barrel made in Bristol, England.

kite any of various birds of prey (e.g., hawks, eagles) with long, pointed wings and usually a forked tail.

espalier a lattice or trellis on which trees and shrubs are trained to grow flat.

cudgel a short, thick stick or club.

linnet a kind of small finch.

three tuns a tun is a large cask, especially for wine, beer, or ale.

wherry a light rowboat used on rivers.

varlet a scoundrel; knave.

Part 2 – Chapter 6

the King's levee a morning reception held by a sovereign or person of high rank upon arising.

awl a small, pointed tool for making holes in wood, leather, etc.

consorts seventeenth-century English chamber music ensembles, sometimes including vocalists.

spinnet an early, small variety of harpsichord with a single keyboard.

play a jig to perform a fast, gay, springy sort of dance, usually in triple time.

sifted me to inspect or examine with care, as by testing or questioning; here, meaning the King asked many probing questions of Gulliver.

chancery the court of the Lord Chancellor of England.

gaming the act or practice of gambling.

Part 2 – Chapter 7

transcendentals philosophers who propose to discover the nature of reality by investigating the process of thought rather than the objects of sense experience.

Part 2 – Chapter 8

hundred leagues one league is about three nautical miles; here, meaning about 300 nautical miles.

conceit an idea, thought, concept.

raillery light, good-natured ridicule or satire; banter.