
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

Gulliver's Travels

Part 2: War with Blefuscu



This is not a word-for-word transcript

LANGUAGE FOCUS: Future continuous tense

Blefuscu captain

Pull those sails down quickly, lads! There's a good wind today... We'll give those Lilliputians a surprise. Oh, **we'll be celebrating** tonight...

Boy

Aye, aye sir... eh... What? Cap'n! Cap'n! Quick... Look! Look!

Blefuscu captain

What's up, boy? What's the problem? Seen a ghost?

Boy

Not a ghost. A... a... giant! He's huge... he's coming this way... walking through the waves!

Blefuscu captain

Holy smoke! He's the size of a mountain! **Abandon ship!** Abandon ship!

Gulliver narrator

Yes. I, Gulliver, was crossing the **stretch** of water between Lilliput and the island of Blefuscu, half swimming, half **wading**, carrying ropes and iron hooks.

I had a plan to save Lilliput from **invasion** by the islanders of Blefuscu – it was dangerous, but I had made a promise to the king in return for my freedom.

Skyresh, the chief **admiral** and my enemy, brought me the news.

Skyresh

The King has agreed to set you free.

Gulliver

Yippee! Thank you, Skyresh. That's fantastic news!

Skyresh

Against my advice, mind you... And there is a price.

Gulliver

Oh... What is that?

Skyresh

I have the contract written here: "Conditions to be promised by the Man-Mountain in return for his freedom. One: He shall not leave Lilliput without permission... Two: When a messenger has to travel a long way, they may ask..."

"Finally, he shall help us in our war against Blefuscu."

Gulliver

Ble... fu...?

Flimnap

Blefuscu. The kingdom of Blefuscu lies to the north-east of ours. Its **inhabitants** are our deadly enemies. At this very moment their navy is preparing to invade us.

Gulliver

What are you fighting over? Land? Religion?

Skyresh

Eggs.

Gulliver

Eggs?!

Skyresh

Yes, here on Lilliput, we believe that eggs should be cracked at the small end. This is because our King's grandfather cut his finger when breaking an egg at the big end. But over in Blefuscu they crack their eggs at the big end. It's an **outrage** and an insult. Those so-called Big-Endians across the sea are our enemies now.

Gulliver

I... understand.

Gulliver narrator

This seemed the strangest of reasons to go to war, and yet... in my own country there had been stranger causes of wars.

Skyresh

Before we unlock your chain, you must promise to obey these rules.

Gulliver narrator

I had no choice.

Gulliver

I, Lemuel Gulliver do solemnly swear to defend the state of Lilliput and do all I can to destroy the Blefuscu navy.

Skyresh

One more thing: if you break any of the conditions in the contract, the consequences will be serious. **We'll be watching** you.

Gulliver narrator

And so at last, I was free from my chains and could walk about the island as I wished.

I went to the coast to see how I could escape from Lilliput. But all I could see were miles and miles of ocean. But in the distance there was one small, rocky island – Blefuscu!

They were getting ready to attack Lilliput. It was time to **honour** my promise to defend the island. A bold plan appeared in my mind...

Gulliver

Flimnap, I need some of your strongest rope and your heaviest iron bars.

Flimnap

That is a strange request.

Gulliver

You will see... Trust me. I have a plan. I can save Lilliput.

Flimnap

Very well. I trust you, Gulliver.

Gulliver

You're a good woman and a true friend, Flimnap.

Gulliver narrator

I twisted three ropes together into one, so it was like thick **cord**. I bent the iron bars into hooks and fixed them on the ends of the cords. With these, I strode into the sea. I swam for half an hour, and then, when the Blefuscu harbour came into view, I waded with the ropes behind me...

When the Blefuscu sailors saw me, they were so frightened, they **leapt** from the ships and swam to shore. There were about 30,000 of them.

I fixed one of my iron hooks to each empty ship. When the people on the shore realised what I was doing, they fired arrows at me.

But I remembered my glasses and put them on to protect my eyes. I then pulled the ships away...

Crowds were waiting for me at Lilliput harbour as I brought the entire Blefuscu fleet with me there.

They called me a hero. The king was delighted and wanted me to help him attack Blefuscu. But I told him that I had promised to defend Lilliput, not to invade Blefuscu and make its people slaves. I persuaded him that it was better to live in peace.

Soon afterwards, something happened that was to change my life in Lilliput completely. It started in the middle of the night...

Crowds

Fire! Fire! Help! The palace is on fire!

Vocabulary

abandon ship!

something sailors shout when they have to leave their ship in an emergency

stretch

area (of water)

wading

walking through deep water

invasion

attack with the aim of controlling a place

admiral

high-ranking officer in the navy

inhabitants

people who live in a particular place

outrage

feeling of anger

honour

(here) keep

cord

thick rope

leapt

jump

Quiz

1. Why are Lilliput and Blefuscu at war?

(Hint: It is a very strange reason.)

- a) They have different religions.
- b) They crack their eggs differently.
- c) Skyresh insulted the Blefuscan king.

2. How does Gulliver stop the Blefuscan invasion?

(Hint: The answer is connected to the sea)

- a) He frightens the Blefuscan sailors and takes their ships.
- b) He attacks the Blefuscan navy with iron hooks.
- c) He made the Blefuscans slaves.

3. What does 'in return for' mean?

(Hint: The phrase is used when Skyresh reads the conditions for Gulliver's freedom.)

- a) In exchange for.
- b) On the way back.
- c) To promise.

Answers

1. Why are Lilliput and Blefuscu at war?

a) They have different religions. That's wrong. The reason they are fighting is because they crack their eggs differently.

b) They crack their eggs differently. That's right. Lilliputians are insulted by the way Blefuscans crack their eggs.

c) Skyresh insulted the Blefuscan king. That's not right. The reason they are fighting is because they crack their eggs differently.

2. How does Gulliver stop the Blefuscan invasion?

a) He frightens the Blefuscan sailors and takes their ships. Well done. The frightened Blefuscan sailors jump into the sea and Gulliver takes their ships.

b) He attacks the Blefuscan navy with iron hooks. That's wrong. He uses iron hooks to steal their ships, not to attack them.

c) He made the Blefuscans slaves. That's wrong. He persuaded the Lilliputian King not to make the Blefuscans slaves.

3. What does 'in return for' mean?

a) In exchange for. That's right. Well done.

b) On the way back. That's wrong. It means 'in exchange for'.

c) To promise. That's wrong. It means 'in exchange for'.