
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

Gulliver's Travels

3: Treachery and treason



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ENGLISH

This is not a word-for-word transcript

Language focus: used to do something, get / be used to something

Crowds

Fire! Fire!

Gulliver

[waking up] Eh... Ooh...

Young girl

Dr Gulliver, wake up! The palace is on fire!

Gulliver

What...? Eugh...

Young girl

You must help us! Hurry!

Gulliver

What? I'm coming.

Gulliver narrator

The tiny Lilliputians were running here and there, passing buckets of water the size of **thimbles**. They were useless against the huge flames.

Flimnap

Quick, Gulliver, you've got to help us! Where's your jacket? You can use it to **smother** the flames.

Gulliver

I haven't got it! I was in such a rush ...

Flimnap

Oh no.

Gulliver

Wait. I've got an idea! I drank a lot of wine last night and I really need to...

[sound of rushing water]

Queen

Ugh! It's splashing on me! What a terrible smell!

Gulliver narrator

The fire was out in minutes. I didn't wait for thanks but hurried home to sleep.

I was a hero, or so I thought. I learnt much later that the Queen was horrified by the way I'd **extinguished** the fire, even though Flimnap explained to her that if it hadn't been for me, the palace would have burnt down. She refused to return to her rooms, even though they were thoroughly cleaned, and she **swore** to have **revenge**.

In the meantime, before I heard how angry the Queen was, I continued to enjoy the hospitality of the Lilliputians. They made me shirts and bed linen. Three hundred cooks prepared my daily food. I ate a lot to impress the King but later learnt that Skyresh used this against me, persuading the King that I was **bankrupting** the country.

I got used to my life of comfort in Lilliput and ideas about escape faded away. But late one evening, Flimnap arranged to meet me outside the city walls.

We met in secret in the light of the moon.

Flimnap

Gulliver, you are in serious danger. No one knows I am here. I've come to warn you as you are my friend. Skyresh and the Queen are plotting your **downfall**. They've drawn up a list of your crimes...

Gulliver

Crimes? What crimes?

Flimnap

They're accusing you of **high treason**.

Gulliver

Treason!! But... What did I do against the state? I'm a hero in Lilliput!

Flimnap

Well...

Gulliver narrator

As I found out, Skyresh had been plotting against me.

Skyresh

The law clearly states that whoever passes water in the palace is committing an act of high treason...

Flimnap

Yes, Skyresh, but the palace would have burnt down if Gulliver hadn't **urinated** on it!

Skyresh

It was a **malicious** act, meant to shame the Queen!

King

It's true... the Queen is extremely unhappy about the whole situation.

Skyresh

Yes, your majesty. There are **rumours**...

King

Rumours? About what?

Skyresh

About Gulliver and the wives of some of the ministers....

Flimnap

Those are just rumours. There's no proof.

Gulliver narrator

I was outraged.

Gulliver

But I saved the palace. I knew Skyresh hated me from the start. I don't know why...

Flimnap

Yes, and he hates you even more now you've defeated the Blefuscu navy. He's admiral of the Lilliput fleet and your victory makes him look weak. He now has the support of the Queen and several other ministers. It's serious, Gulliver.

Gulliver

What are they going to do?

Flimnap

Punish you...

Skyresh

We'll set his house on fire so that he burns to death. We'll fire poisoned arrows at his face and hands and smear his shirts and sheets with deadly poison so that he dies in agony...

Flimnap

Your Majesty! He has saved us from invasion!

King

It does seem a little harsh, Skyresh. I have always been a fair and just ruler. We won't execute him. We'll just blind him. My doctors will put poisoned arrows into his eyes as he is lying down.

Skyresh

But your Majesty, we'll still have to feed him! In fact, he might eat more when he's blind...

King

We'll feed him less and less each day so that he becomes weak and dies of starvation.

Skyresh

Very well, your Majesty. There is no time to lose. I will arrange for the blinding to take place in three days...

Gulliver narrator

The King's judgement seemed neither fair nor just. I **used to** trust the Lilliputians, but now? Time was short.

As the sun rose the following day, I swam across to Blefuscu. There on the beach, I spotted... a rowing boat... of my size!

The Blefuscans helped me make huge oars and ten days later, I was ready.

I set off with six tiny cows and sheep in my pockets and not a moment too soon. In the distance I could see the Lilliputian ships setting sail – for Blefuscu! They were coming after me.

I longed for England and my family. After a day at sea, I spotted an English ship returning from Japan. The captain did not believe my amazing stories, but was amazed when I showed him the miniature sheep and cows.

On arriving back in England, I was delighted to be reunited with my family. But as time went on, I wanted to return to the waves and I set sail once again on a new voyage. Little did I know I would soon face terrible horrors...

Vocabulary

thimbles

small metal cups to protect fingers when using needles

smother

cover something to stop air getting there

extinguished

stopped (a fire)

swore

promised

revenge

punish someone for something they have done

bankrupting

making someone or something lose all their money

downfall

sudden destruction or loss of power

high treason

serious crime against your country

urinated

pass waste water from the body

malicious

designed to do harm

rumours

bad things people say that might not be true

Quiz

1. How did Gulliver stop the fire?

(Hint: It offended the Queen.)

- a) He smothered it with his jacket.
- b) He stood on it.
- c) He urinated on it.

2. Why does Skyresh hate Gulliver?

(Hint: What is Skyresh's position at court?)

- a) He feels threatened by Gulliver.
- b) He is scared of Gulliver's size.
- c) He hates foreigners.

3. How is Gulliver to be killed?

(Hint: This is the King's suggestion.)

- a) By blinding him.
- b) By starving him.
- c) By poisoning him.

Answers

1. How did Gulliver stop the fire?

a) He smothered it with his jacket. That's wrong. He didn't have his jacket.

b) He stood on it. No, he did something else...

c) He urinated on it. That's right! Though the Queen was not happy about this.

2. Why does Skyresh hate Gulliver?

a) He feels threatened by Gulliver. That's right. He is worried Gulliver's victory of Blefuscu will make him look weak.

b) He is scared of Gulliver's size. That's not right. Try again.

c) He hates foreigners. No, we don't know this. Try again.

3. How is Gulliver to be killed?

a) By blinding him. No, they will blind Gulliver, but this won't kill him.

b) By starving him. Well done, that's right. Poor Gulliver.

c) By poisoning him. No. Skyresh wants to do this, but it's not what they decide to do.