
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

Gulliver's Travels

4: Voyage to Brobdingnag



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LEARNING
ENGLISH

This is not a word-for-word transcript

LANGUAGE FOCUS: Conditionals

Gulliver narrator

My name is Gulliver. Let me tell you the story of my second voyage, to the strange land of Brobdingnag.

I had spent the winter in England, but soon became **restless**. I said farewell to my wife and family to **seek my fortune** across the sea once more. The wide world waited for me!

But sea voyages don't always go to plan. A huge storm blew up. And when it passed, we found ourselves...

Sailor

Land ahoy!

Gulliver narrator

...at an island.

Sailor

Food and water. We get what we need and set sail. And men, stay **armed**.

Gulliver narrator

It was **barren** and rocky. I set off alone to explore, but I found nothing. When I returned to the beach...

Sailor

Run! Back to the boat!

Gulliver

Where are you going?! Stop!

Gulliver narrator

The men were already in back in the boat, rowing **for their lives**, and... a huge creature was chasing them, like a man, but so... tall. I can't tell you what happened, for I turned and ran for my life...

I ran into a giant field, where I hid under stalks of corn rising 40 feet into the sky.

Gulliver

What is this place?

Gulliver narrator

I felt sick. Across the field I saw another man-creature, as tall as a church **steeple**, harvesting the giant corn.

Brobdingnag farmer

What have we here?

Gulliver

Don't eat me!

Gulliver narrator

He spoke a strange **tongue**.

Brobdingnag farmer

[booming voice] Like a little... man.

Gulliver narrator

Just then he **scooped** me up, close to his face. His breath was **foul**.

Brobdingnag farmer

I think the wife would like to see this.

Gulliver narrator

And he tucked me into his coat pocket. How I trembled with fear as he walked back to his house.

Farmer's wife

[Screams] It's a mouse! Get it out of my kitchen!

Gulliver narrator

The farmer's wife was shocked when she saw me. For there I stood, on their kitchen table, his whole, huge family looking at me.

Farmer's wife

It's a man! So tiny.

Glumdalclitch

He must be hungry, mother.

Farmer's wife

Here, give him some meat.

Gulliver

Oh, thank you.

Gulliver narrator

And they pushed a huge slice of meat my way. With a thimble of **ale**.

My drinking seemed to amuse them. The ale made me a little bolder, and I did a little dance for them. Perhaps they would treat me well... But just then...

[sfx: baby crying]

Gulliver

What's that?!

Gulliver narrator

A huge baby, that's what it was. Thankfully, the baby soon fell asleep.

And so did I. The farmer's daughter tucked me into bed with a handkerchief for a blanket. It was heavy and rough like the sail of a warship, but I was exhausted.

Glumdalclitch

Good morning my little man. My name's Glumdalclitch. Glumdalclitch.

Gulliver

Glumdal... Oh, what? Your name? Glumdalclitch?

Glumdalclitch

Oh, he said my name! He's so cute. I'm Glumdalclitch and you're...?

Gulliver

She's asking my name. I'm Gulliver. Gulliver!

Gulliver narrator

The farmer's daughter must have been only nine or ten years old, and a **mere** 30 feet tall. She was kind to me and became my closest friend. Over the next days she taught me their language, which I learned fast. Life was good, for a while.

Farmer

Gulliver! We're going to town. Come here.

Gulliver

To town? Yes, sir, of course.

Glumdalclitch

Don't worry Gulliver, we're taking you to market, so people can see you. You've become quite famous! Here, I've made this little travelling box.

Gulliver

Why thank you Glumdalclitch.

Gulliver narrator

I climbed inside, and off we went. The journey was bumpy, like rising and falling in a ship in a great storm. Finally we came to a rest, somewhere... indoors.

Farmer

[To Gulliver] Now then little man, let's see if we can earn ourselves a **pretty penny**.

[To the crowd] Ladies and gentlemen, I give you the smallest man in Brobdingnag!

Crowd

[sfx: gasping]

Gulliver narrator

And the farmer opened the box. Out I stepped onto a table – in a room full of giant people...

Farmer

Now Gulliver, show them what you can do.

Gulliver

Err, good day to you all! I am Gulliver!

Gulliver narrator

And so I performed for them. I danced, and **fenced** with my sword... I drank another thimble of ale. The crowd loved me!

Farmer

That's three crowns each. Next performance, at six o'clock. Thank you Madam... Thank you Sir...

Gulliver narrator

And so it went. The next day we did three shows. Then ten the next. Then 15. I was exhausted. But the farmer kept pushing me. Poor Glumdalclitch tried to stop him. But it was no use.

Glumdalclitch

Father, he can't go on. He must rest today. He'll die.

Farmer

Well, **if he dies, we'll make no more money**. Let's make as much as we can, first.

Gulliver narrator

I lost my appetite. I feared I would die here, in this strange land, miles from home. **Oh, if only I had stayed at home in England, none of this would have happened!** But just as I thought all was lost... something wonderful happened. I'll tell you about that, next time.

Vocabulary

restless

bored of resting, needing excitement

seek my fortune

move to a new place to try and make a lot of money

armed

carrying weapons

barren

with no plants growing

for their lives

as if their lives depended on it

steeple

the pointed, tallest part of a church

tongue

(here) language

scooped

gently lifted

foul

disgusting, bad smelling

ale

beer

mere

used to emphasise a small amount

a pretty penny

a lot of money

fenced

fought with my sword

Questions

1. Why did Gulliver go to sea again?
(Hint: Look up the word 'restless' and the phrase 'seek my fortune'.)
 - a) He became bored and wanted to make his money over the sea.
 - b) He became tired and thought he would be luckier abroad.
 - c) He couldn't rest so decided to have a new adventure.

2. Who makes Gulliver feel at home in Brobdingnag?
(Hint: Who teaches him how to speak the language?)
 - a) The farmer.
 - b) The farmer's wife.
 - c) Glumdalclitch.

3. Why does the Brobdingnag farmer want to show Gulliver?
(Hint: What does 'a pretty penny' mean?)
 - a) To receive beautiful coins.
 - b) To make a lot of money.
 - c) To seek Gulliver's fortune.

Answers

1. Why did Gulliver go to sea again?
 - a) **He became bored and wanted to make his money over the sea. That's right. He became 'restless' and wanted to 'seek his fortune' across the sea.**
 - b) He became tired and thought he would be luckier abroad. That's not right. Look up the word 'restless' and the phrase 'seek my fortune' and try again.
 - c) He couldn't rest so decided to have a new adventure. That's not right. Look up the word 'restless' and the phrase 'seek my fortune' and try again.

2. Who makes Gulliver feel at home in Brobdingnag?
 - a) The farmer. That's not right. Who teaches Gulliver the language?
 - b) The farmer's wife. That's not right. Who teaches Gulliver the language?
 - c) **Glumdalclitch. That's right. She puts him to bed and teaches him the language.**

3. Why does the Brobdingnag farmer want to show Gulliver?
 - a) To receive beautiful coins. That's not right. 'A pretty penny' means a lot of money.
 - b) **To make a lot of money. That's right. Well done.**
 - c) To seek Gulliver's fortune. That's not right. 'To seek your fortune' means to move to a new place to try to make money.