



The inventory¹

Gulliver's ship is caught by a storm and wrecks in a strange region called Lilliput. After the shipwreck Gulliver falls asleep. When he wakes up, he finds that he has been tied up by the Lilliputians, who are now inspecting his clothes.

Jonathan Swift
Gulliver's Travels (1726)

Book 1, Chapter 2

I took up the two officers in my hands, put them first into my coat-pockets, and then into every other pocket about me, except my two fobs², and another secret pocket which I had no mind should be searched³, wherein I had some little necessities of no consequence⁴ to any but myself. In one of my fobs there
5 was a silver watch, and in the other a small quantity of gold in a purse. These gentlemen, having pen, ink and paper about them, made an exact inventory of everything they saw; and when they had done, desired I would set them down⁵, that they might deliver it to the Emperor. This inventory I afterwards translated into English, and is word for word as follows.

10 IMPRIMIS, In the right coat-pocket of the Great Man-Mountain (for so I interpret the words *Quinbus Flestrin*) after the strictest search, we found only one great piece of coarse cloth⁶, large enough to be a foot-cloth for your Majesty's chief room of state. In the left pocket, we saw a huge silver chest⁷, with a cover of the same metal, which we the searchers were not able to lift⁸.
15 We desired it should be opened, and one of us stepping into⁹ it, found himself up to the mid leg in a sort of dust, some part whereof flying up to our faces set us both a sneezing¹⁰ for several times together. In his right waistcoat¹¹-pocket, we found a prodigious bundle¹² of white thin substances, folded¹³ one over another, about the bigness of three men, tied with a strong cable, and marked
20 with black figures; which we humbly conceive¹⁴ to be writings, every letter almost half as large as the palm of our hands. In the left, there was a sort of engine, from the back of which were extended twenty long poles¹⁵, resembling the palisados¹⁶ before your Majesty's Court; wherewith we conjecture the Man-Mountain combs his head, for we did not always trouble him with questions,
25 because we found it a great difficulty to make him understand us. [...] There were two pockets which we could not enter: these he called his fobs; they were two large slits¹⁷ cut into the top of his middle cover, but squeezed close by the pressure of his belly¹⁸. Out of the right fob hung a great silver chain, with a wonderful kind of engine at the bottom. We directed him to draw out whatever
30 was at the end of that chain; which appeared to be a globe, half silver, and half of some transparent metal: for on the transparent side we saw certain strange figures circularly drawn, and thought we could touch them, till we found our fingers stopped with that lucid substance. He put this engine to our ears, which made an incessant noise like that of a watermill. And we conjecture it is either
35 some unknown animal, or the god that he worships: but we are more inclined to the latter¹⁹ opinion, because he assured us (if we understood him right, for he expressed himself very imperfectly), that he seldom did any thing without consulting it. He called it his oracle, and said it pointed out the time for every action of his life.

- 1 inventory. Inventario.
- 2 fobs. Taschini per l'orologio.
- 3 searched. Ispezionata.
- 4 consequence. Importanza.
- 5 I would set them down. Che li mettessi giù.
- 6 coarse cloth. Stoffa grezza, non pregiata.
- 7 chest. Scrigno, forziere.
- 8 lift. Sollevare.
- 9 stepping into. Essendovi entrato.
- 10 sneezing. Starnutire.
- 11 waistcoat. Panciotto, gilè.
- 12 bundle. Fascio, fagotto.
- 13 folded. Piegato.
- 14 we humbly conceive. Umilmente riteniamo.
- 15 poles. Pali.
- 16 palisados. Palizzate, steccati.
- 17 slits. Fessure.
- 18 belly. Ventre.
- 19 the latter. La seconda.

**READING COMPETENCE****1 READ the text and match the highlighted words and phrases with their Italian translation.**

- | | | | |
|---|-----------------------|---|-----------------------|
| 1 | mulino ad acqua | 5 | pettina |
| 2 | dove | 6 | cavo |
| 3 | cifre | 7 | la più rigorosa |
| 4 | riportare | 8 | schacciati |

2 READ the text again and do the following activities.**1** The Lilliputians are ... while making the inventory.

- A near Gulliver's body
 B on Gulliver's body
 C far from Gulliver's body

2 The word 'Great Man-Mountain' (line 10) refers to

- A Lilliputians' king.
 B a great mountain near the seaside.
 C Gulliver.

3 List the objects the Lilliputians find on Gulliver.

- | | |
|---------|---------|
| 1 | 4 |
| 2 | 5 |
| 3 | |

4 Focus on the description of the inventory. How would you define it? Choose from the following adjectives.

vague	rambling	realistic
detailed		precise

5 To the impression of realism conveyed by the description of the objects, Swift adds a twist of absurdity through the distorted perspective of the Lilliputians. Complete the table below.

Lilliputians' description	What they actually find

6 Underline the personal pronouns used in the text and write down who they refer to.

- 1 →
 2 →

Does the narrator interpret what he sees for the reader or does he just describe what he sees?

7 Circle the words referring to the Lilliputians' behaviour. What is the main feature that strikes Gulliver?**8** How is Gulliver referred to in the text? What does he stand for, in contrast to the Lilliputians?**9** What kind of language is used in the passage? Tick as appropriate.

- | | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Witty. | <input type="checkbox"/> Emphatic. | <input type="checkbox"/> Ironic. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Amusing. | <input type="checkbox"/> Objective. | <input type="checkbox"/> Moralising. |

10 What do you think the author's aim is? Tick as appropriate.

- ☐ To amuse the reader.
☐ To moralise.
☐ To satirise some aspects of his society.

11 What do you think the targets of Swift's satire are in this passage? Tick as appropriate.

- ☐ Man's pettiness. ☐ Man's lust. ☐ Man's lack of sense.

**3 COMPLETE** the summary with the words from the box.

comb
animality
efficiency

tiny people
distorted

bundle
details

handkerchief
conveyed
absurdity



When Gulliver wakes up, he finds that his arms, legs and long hair have been tied to the ground with pieces of thread. He feels something over his chest, and looking down, he sees six-inch-tall people climb onto his body. The objects these **(1)** find on Gulliver are described in **(2)** To the impression of realism **(3)** by this description, Swift adds a twist of **(4)** through the **(5)** perspective of the Lilliputians. In fact a **(6)** is described as a coarse cloth, a snuffbox as a huge silver chest, some letters as a **(7)** of white thin substances, a **(8)** is perceived as an engine, and a watch as a globe. Gulliver is impressed by the Lilliputians' perfect organisation and **(9)** These tiny people stand for the systematic use of reason, whereas Gulliver is a body and represents materiality and **(10)** opposed to rationality.