

JONATHAN SWIFT.
HIS LIFE AND WORK.
“GULLIVER’S TRAVELS”.

English Lesson

Jonathan Swift (1667 -1745)

was the greatest of English satirists.

His bitter satire was aimed at the contemporary social order in general, and the policy of the English bourgeoisie towards the Irish in particular.

Jonathan Swift was born in Dublin, but he came from an English family.



The writer's father, supervisor at the court buildings of Dublin, died at the age of twenty-five, leaving his wife and daughter penniless. His son was born even months after his death.

He was named Jonathan after his father.

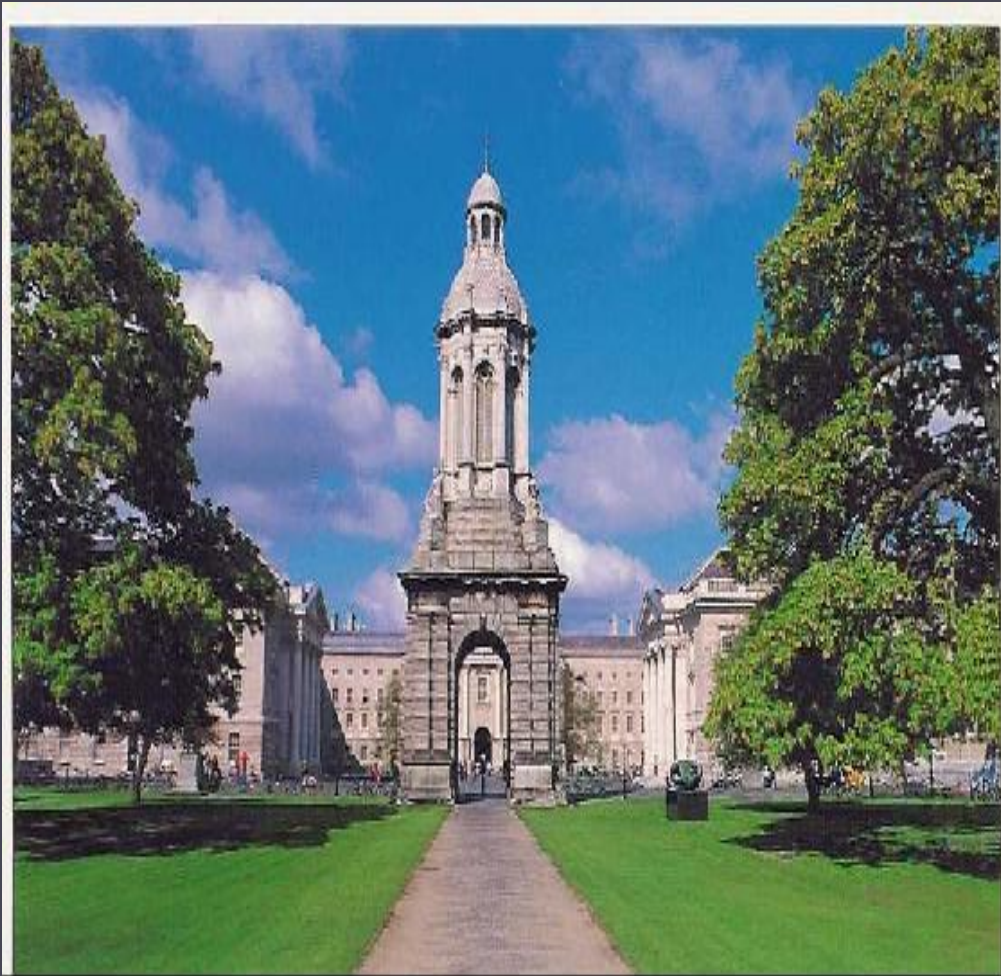
The boy knew little of his mother's care: she had to go back to her native town of Leicester.



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Jonathan hardly saw her during his childhood. He was supported by his uncle Godwin.

At the age of six he was sent to Kilkenny School, which he left at the age of fourteen.



Then he entered Trinity College in Dublin and got his bachelor's degree in 1686.

The Revolution of 1688 was followed by an uprising in Ireland, and Swift, being English, narrowly escaped the vengeance of the Irish supporters of James II.

He sailed over to England, and after many years, once again saw his mother at Leicester.



With her help he became private secretary and account keeper to Sir William Temple at his estate not far from London. Sir William was a retired diplomat and also a writer.

At that time he made friends with Hester Johnson, the daughter of the housekeeper.



He taught the little girl English spelling and gave her advice on reading. This friendship lasted all his life. Hester became the prototype of Stella in Swift's famous work "Journal to Stella".

Having improved his education by taking advantage of Sir William Temple's library, Swift went to Oxford and took his Master of Arts degree in 1692.



After that he got the place of vicar at a little parish church in Ireland where he remained for a year and a half. Soon he got tired of his lonely life and returned to Sir William Temple's estate, where he continued to live and work until his patron's death in 1699.

There Swift became vicar again and went to live in a little place called Lacor, in Ireland.

He invited Hester Johnson to come to his place. She had by then grown up into a beautiful young woman. It is believed that Swift secretly married Hester, but much of his private life is unknown to us.

In 1702 Swift came to London, where he was involved into contemporary events.

A London Coffee House of the 1660's



He often went to coffee-houses where he talked with journalists and with common people. His contributions to “The Tatler”, ”The Spectator” and other magazines show how well he understood the spirit of the time.

In 1713 Swift was made Dean of St. Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin.



At that time he came into contact with the common people and saw the miserable conditions in which the population lived. Swift wrote a number of pamphlets criticizing the colonial policy of England, intending thus to help the common people.

In 1726 Swift's masterpiece "Gulliver's Travels" appeared. His inventive genius and biting satire were at their best in this work, which made a great sensation.

In 1728 Stella (Hester) died after a long illness.

This loss affected Swift so deeply that he was never the same man again.

Conditions in Ireland between 1700 and 1750 were so awful, that it worked like poison in Swift's blood.

Hard work and continuous disappointments undermined Swift's health.

By the end of 1731 his mind was failing rapidly.

In 1740 his memory and reason were gone and he became completely deaf.

He died on October, 19, 1745 in Dublin.

“Gulliver’s Travels”

In “Gulliver’s Travels” Jonathan Swift satirized existing society in the form of imaginary travels. The scenes and nations described in the book are so extraordinary and amusing, that the novel is a great favourite both with children and grown-ups.

It tells of the adventures of a ship’s surgeon, as related by himself, and is divided into four parts, or four voyages.

Part 1. A Voyage to Liliput.



HE FOUND THAT HIS ARMS AND LEGS WERE TIGHTLY FASTENED TO THE GROUND.

After being ship-wrecked, Gulliver gets safely ashore and finds himself in a strange country inhabited by a race of people about six inches high.

By making them so small Swift stresses their insignificance and makes the reader despise them.

It is easy to understand that Swift meant this small country to symbolize England of the 18th century; the government, the court and religious controversy.

Part 2. A Voyage to Brobdingnag.



Arthur Rackham

The ship meets with a terrible storm and anchors near Brobdingnag, the land of the giants. While on shore, Gulliver is captured by the giants. On the whole, they are good-natured creatures and treat Gulliver kindly. Brobdingnag is an expression of Swift's desire to find the ideal: an agricultural country ruled by an ideal monarch.

Part 3. A Voyage to Laputa, Balnibarbi, Luggnagg, Glubdubdrib, and Japan.

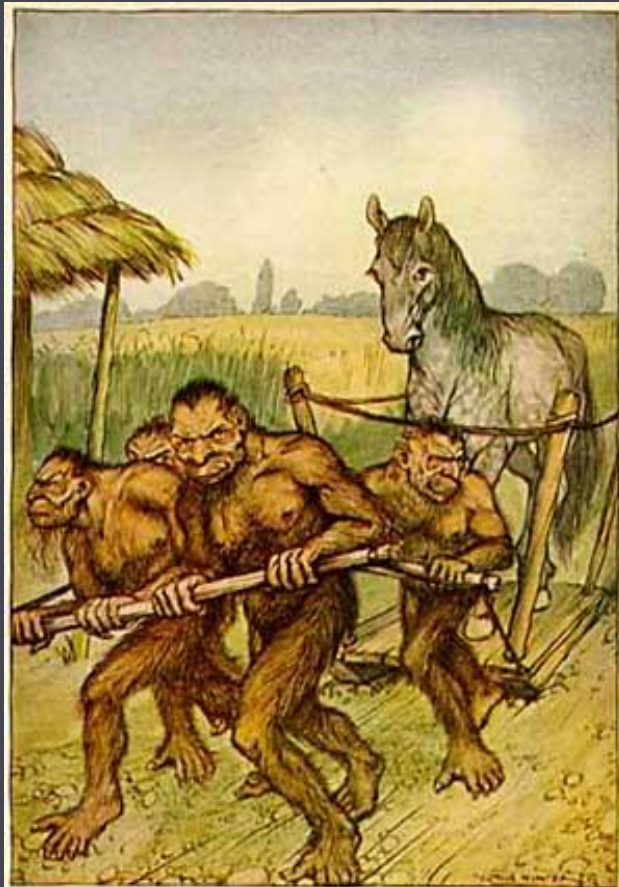


Describing Gulliver's voyage to Laputa, a flying island, Swift attacks monarchs whose policy brings nothing but suffering to their subjects.

Swift's indignation and the bitterness of his satire reach their climax when he shows the academy of sciences in Lagado, the city of the continent of Balnibarbi.

Swift ridicules the scientists of his time, who shut themselves in their chambers, isolated from the world.

Part 4. A Voyage to the Country of Houyhnhnms.



"I am coming towards the house a kind of vehicle drawn like a sledge by four yahoos"

The fourth voyage brings Gulliver to the ideal country of Houyhnhnms, where there is neither sickness, dishonesty, nor any of the frivolities of human society.

The human race occupies a position of servility there and a noble race of horses rules the country with reason and justice. The horses possess virtues which are superior to those of men.

Yahoos have much in common with human beings in appearance, but they are ugly, deceitful and vicious creatures.

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