**Gulliver’s Travels**

1. Gulliver’s Travels is one of the world’s great examples of **satire.**
   1. Satire is from a Greek term meaning “a bowl of mixed fruit.”
   2. The textbook definition is “A literary manner that blends criticism with humor for the purpose of improving humanity or human institutions.” This definition has 3 requirements:
      1. Humor
      2. Criticism
      3. A desire to improve (highly subjective)
   3. Ancient Greek and Roman satire had two forms of expression:
      1. Formal or direct satire (Horace and Juvenal: direct criticism, spiced with humor (generally sarcastic humor)
         1. Survives today in critical editorials and the like
         2. Is not usually called “satire”—since the word now has a connotation of **indirectness**
      2. Situational or indirect satire (Mennipias, Lucian): narrative

situations that convey satire indirectly.

* + - 1. This kind of satire is usually a story.
      2. It has become popular for 2 reasons
         1. Entertainment value (sugar that helps the medicine go down)
         2. Plausible deniability
      3. Some contemporary examples
         1. Saturday Night Live
         2. The Simpsons
         3. Movies like *Wag the Dog, Bullworth, Natural Born Killers*
    1. Indirect satire uses some specific strategies to achieve its ends (

though not everything that uses these strategies is necessarily

satirical).

a. Parody (deliberate imitation in a humorous context)

1. Weird Al Yancovich (Amish Paradise)
2. SNL skits
3. Mad Magazine

b. Exaggeration (taking a problem and making it seem larger

than it is, often by projecting the problem into the future—

what would society be like if the trend towards X

continues?)

1. Computerization: Vonnegut’s *Player Piano*
2. Absentee Parents: *Brave New World*
3. Government Surveillance: *1984*

c. Defamiliarization: shows our society in an unfamiliar

context and then leads us to a shock of recognition.

1. *Animal Farm*
2. “The Nacirema” (Horace Miner)

d. Diminution (The opposite of Exaggeration--takes as

serious issue and treats it like no big deal.

1. “Massive Head Wound Harry”
2. *Metamorphosis*
3. *Gulliver’s Travels*
   1. Written by Jonathan Swift (1667—1745)
   2. One of the world’s greatest examples of satire—almost every kind of satire possible is represented somewhere in the text.
   3. The Text begins with a conversation in a coffee shop—Swift and all of his friends were talking about how bad modern literature was and they each decided to **parody** one aspect of it.
      1. Alexander Pope—Epic poetry—“The Rape of the Lock”
      2. John Gay—light opera—*The Beggar’s Opera*
      3. Swift—the travel narrative—*Gulliver’s Travels*. The initial point was to parody the wild nature of travel narratives by creating one that was completely impossible and relating it in a scientific, detached, matter-of-fact style.
   4. *Gulliver’s Travels* consists of four distinct books
      1. The voyage to Lilliput
         1. Gulliver travels to a land of small people with an intricate

political system.

* + - 1. Main satire = politics (rope dancers, Big-Endians vs. Little

Endians, putting out the fire)

* + - 1. Main devices: **Diminution** (literally), **defamiliarization**
    1. The voyage to Brobdingnag
       1. Gulliver meets a race of giants who are also morally

superior to humans in every way.

* + - 1. Gulliver tries to convince them of the value of human

Institutions such as war and gunpowder.

* + - 1. Satire: to see how ridiculous our institutions are when

explained in a neutral context.

* + - 1. Principal device: **Utopianism**
    1. The voyage to Laputa
       1. Gulliver meets a race of scientists and mathematicians (he is making fun of England’s new Royal Academy of Science).
       2. Their clothes don’t fit because they have been measured with mathematical calculations.
       3. They have to have “flappers” to keep them from completely losing their attention
       4. They perform all kinds of ridiculous experiments with no purpose.
       5. Satire: the folly of abstract, scientific thinking about concrete human problems.
       6. Devices: **Characterization, Exaggeration**

1. Book Four
   1. Book Four is considered Swift’s masterpiece (though Book One is much more famous).
   2. It is a critique of two different, mutually exclusive, things.
      1. Irrationality
      2. Rationality
   3. The main satiric device is defamiliarization: Gulliver encounters a society

where the humans (Yahoos) are monstrous beasts and the horses

(houyhnhms) are rational.

* 1. The criticism of **irrationality** is carried through the yahoos

* + 1. Initial description—designed to defamiliarize
    2. Yahoos—Human
    3. War
    4. Weapons
    5. Reason makes us dangerous
    6. Lawyers
    7. Merchants
    8. Doctors
    9. Politicians

* 1. The criticism of **rationality** is carried through the Houhnhnyms
     1. No salt
     2. No difference of opinion
     3. Sex is only for procreation
     4. Genetic engineering
     5. Children taught to work, not play
     6. No family affection
     7. Contemplate the extermination of Yahoos WHEN they discover the capability of sentience. **Gulliver makes them nervous because he suggests that their ordered vision of the world may be flawed**
     8. **Swift’s ultimate suggestion: if humanity were purely reasonable, they would stop being human and would be nothing more than talking horses.**
  2. The criticism of **critics** is carried through Gulliver—at some point,

Gulliver’s rejection of his species and his adoration of the horses becomes

irrational and silly.

* 1. Gulliver becomes a misanthrope
  2. Yahoos make him sick
  3. He wears Yahoo skin shoes
  4. He can’t stand the thought of humans
  5. He kills Yahoos (humans) to make his boat
  6. He cannot handle the friendliness of Pedro de Mendez, who is an honorable man
  7. He ignores his wife and children and talks to his horses
  8. There is no one target to Swift’s satire—he is equally satirizing a wide variety of targets.

Satire is a sort of glass, wherein beholders do generally discover everybody's face but their own. –J. Swift