

Gulliver's Travels Quotations

Writer: Jonathan Swift | Generated: Jan 26, 2026

"Undoubtedly, philosophers are in the right when they tell us that nothing is great or little otherwise than by comparison." (Part II, Chapter I: A Voyage to Brobdingnag)

Explanation:

Gulliver realizes that size, importance, and power are all relative; what seems big in one context is small in another. This theme is especially visible in Lilliput and Brobdingnag.

"I cannot but conclude the bulk of your natives to be the most pernicious race of little odious vermin that nature ever suffered to crawl upon the surface of the earth." (Part II, Chapter VI: A Voyage to Brobdingnag)

Explanation:

This is said by the King of Brobdingnag, after hearing about the wars, corruption, and violence in England and Europe. He is disgusted by human nature.

"The Houyhnhnms have no word in their language to express any thing that is evil, except what they borrow from the deformities or ill qualities of the Yahoos." (Part IV, Chapter IX: A Voyage to the Land of the Houyhnhnms)

Explanation:

Houyhnhnms are so pure that they must borrow their words for evil from the Yahoos, who represent all that is bad in humans.

"It is computed that eleven thousand persons have at several times suffered death rather than submit to break their eggs at the smaller end." (Part I, Chapter IV: A Voyage to Lilliput)

Explanation:

This mocks the silly causes of war. It refers to the Big-Endians and Little-Endians' deadly argument over how to crack an egg, a satire on religious and political conflicts.

"When I thought of my family, my friends, my countrymen, or the human race in general, I considered them as they really were, Yahoos in shape and disposition." (Part IV, Chapter X: A Voyage to the Land of the Houyhnhnms)

Explanation:

After returning home, Gulliver's experiences have changed him so much that he can no longer view humans as noble but only as Yahoos.

"The most pernicious race of little odious vermin that nature ever suffered to crawl upon the surface of the earth." (Part II, Chapter VI: A Voyage to Brobdingnag)

Explanation:

The King of Brobdingnag says this after hearing about Europe's wars and corruption. He is horrified by human nature and calls humans dangerous vermin.

"Sole Monarch of the whole world." (Part I, Chapter V: A Voyage to Lilliput)

Explanation:

This phrase is used ironically when talking about some rulers who imagine themselves to be the most powerful on earth, criticizing their arrogance and pride.

"He had been eight years upon a project for extracting sunbeams out of cucumbers,, and let out to warm the air in raw, inclement summers." (Part III, Chapter V: A Voyage to Laputa, Balnibarbi, Luggnagg, Glubbdubdrib and Japan)

Explanation:

This refers to one of the Laputan projectors (scientists) in the Academy of Lagado, engaged in ridiculous and impractical experiments, satirizing pointless scientific research.

"When I happened to behold the reflection of my own form in a lake or fountain, I turned away my face in horror and detestation of myself." (Part IV, Chapter X: A Voyage to the Land of the Houyhnhnms)

Explanation:

Gulliver says this after living among the Houyhnhnms, feeling deep shame for being human and identifying more with the rational horses.

“The disbelief in a Divine Providence renders a man incapable of holding any public station.” (Part I, Chapter VI: A Voyage to Lilliput)

Explanation:

This is about Lilliputian society, where only those who believe in God are eligible for government service—a satire on religious restrictions in politics.

“That all true believers break their eggs at the convenient end.” (Part I, Chapter IV: A Voyage to Lilliput)

Explanation:

This refers to the absurd religious/political dispute in Lilliput over which end of the egg should be broken—a satire on how silly rules can lead to big conflicts.

“Upon the whole, I never beheld in all my Travels so disagreeable an Animal, nor one against which I naturally conceived so strong an Antipathy.” (Part IV, Chapter I: A Voyage to the Land of the Houyhnhnms)

Explanation:

Gulliver says this about the Yahoos, expressing his strong disgust for their filthy, savage nature—a reflection of his growing rejection of human flaws.

“Heap of conspiracy, rebellion, murder, massacres, revolution and banishment.” (Part II, Chapter VI: A Voyage to Brobdingnag)

Explanation:

This phrase describes the history of English politics and courts as seen by Swift, filled with constant conflict and violence.

“We ate when we were not hungry, and drank without the provocation of thirst.” (Part IV, Chapter VI: A Voyage to the Land of the Houyhnhnms)

Explanation:

Gulliver says this while explaining to the Houyhnhnm master how humans often act against nature, indulging in excess eating and drinking for pleasure, not for necessity. It reflects the folly and lack of discipline in human behavior compared to the rational and moderate lifestyle of the Houyhnhnms.