

Extract 1

This extract is taken from Part 2 of *Gulliver's Travels*, entitled 'A Voyage to Brobdingnag'. Gulliver, who is presented by Swift as a rather naive narrator, has left behind the tiny people of Lilliput and is now in the land of the giants, Brobdingnag. This reversal of size means that he is now the equivalent of a Lilliputian in this world. Gulliver is summoned by the King and told to explain to him how the politics of Britain work. Gulliver begins by boasting of the wonderful country he comes from, before the King gives a very different version of it.

Gulliver's Travels (1726)

I began my discourse by informing his majesty that our dominions consisted of two islands, which composed three mighty kingdoms under one sovereign, besides our plantations in America. I dwelt long upon the fertility of our soil, and the temperature of our climate. I then spoke at large upon the constitution of an English Parliament, partly made up of an illustrious body called the House of Peers, persons of the noblest blood, and of the most ancient and ample patrimonies. I described that extraordinary care always taken of their education in arts and arms to qualify them for being counsellors born to the King and kingdom ... To these were joined several holy persons, as part of that assembly, under the title of Bishops, whose peculiar business it is, to take care of religion, and of those who instruct the people therein. These were searched and sought out through the whole nation, by the Prince and his wisest counsellors, among such of the priesthood, as were most deservedly distinguished by the sanctity of their lives and the depth of their erudition ...

That the other part of the Parliament consisted of an assembly called the House of Commons, who were all principal gentlemen, *freely* picked and called out by the people themselves, for their great abilities, and love of their country, to represent the wisdom of the whole nation ...

I then descended to the Courts of Justice, over which the Judges, those venerable sages and interpreters of the law, presided, for

as for the punishment of vice, and protection of innocence. I mentioned the prudent management of our Treasury, the valour and achievements of our forces by sea and land. I computed the number of our people, by reckoning how many millions there might be of each religious sect, or political party among us ... And I finished all with a brief historical account of our affairs and events in England for about an hundred years past ...

His Majesty, in another audience was at pains to recapitulate the sum of all I had spoken ... then taking me into his hands and stroking me gently, delivered himself in these words '... you have made a most admirable panegyric upon your country. You have clearly proved that ignorance, idleness, and vice are the proper ingredients for qualifying a legislator. That laws are best explained, interpreted and applied by those whose interest and abilities lie in perverting, confounding and eluding them ... by what I have gathered from your own relation, and the answers I have with much pains wringed and extorted from you, 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 2, Chapter 6, pp167-73



Gulliver's Travels

Extract 2

The novel *Queen Camilla* is told in episodic short sections. This extract describes a cabinet meeting at some vague time in the near future. The United Kingdom is now a republic with the royal family exiled to an exclusion zone on a council estate. The cabinet is discussing an economic crisis.

Queen Camilla (2006)

The Cabinet had been in crisis session for over six hours. Sustained only by mineral water and Rich Tea biscuits, they had been discussing the balance of payments, again. The Government had been in power for thirteen long years, having won three general elections, the last by a small majority. Introducing the Exclusion Zones had won them short-term popularity, but water rationing, hospital closures and monumental mistakes by Vulcan – 13,000 paediatricians had been erroneously placed on the paedophile register – had resulted in the pound faltering and falling like a novice ice skater.

The Chancellor was saying to his exhausted, and in some cases tearful, colleagues, 'I warned you that losing the cigarette duty would leave a big financial hole. We have to find another source of revenue.'

Jack Barker, who had been kept awake half the night listening to the Chancellor's dog, Mitzie, yapping through the party wall, said, 'There's plenty of disposable income out there. If the taxpayer can afford bloody aromatherapy candles and grooming products for men, they can afford another tax. I reckon we ought to bring dog licences back.'

There was general laughter. Even the Chancellor smiled.

Jack waited for the laughter to die down, then said, 'There are too many dogs in this country. Did you know there's six million one hundred thousand of them? Or that people spend over three billion quid on feeding the spoilt bastards? And four hundred million a year

on buying the flea-bitten hairy-faced ball-lickers Christmas presents. *Four hundred million!*

The Chancellor looked down and shuffled his papers. Last Christmas he had bought Mitzie a pink latex bone, and a hairbrush and comb set. He'd had them gift-wrapped, at Harrods.

Jack continued, 'And did you know that their combined turds, if laid end to end, would go to the moon and back twice?'

Jack had made this last statistic up, but he had no conscience about the fabrication. After years in politics he knew that statistics were statistically unreliable.

Neville Moon, Home Secretary and owner of two excitable chocolate Labradors, said, 'Prime Minister, you can't touch dogs, not in this country. Not in England!'

Jack said, 'I propose we charge three hundred quid a dog.' Looking at Moon he said, 'No make that five hundred.'

The Deputy Prime Minister growled, 'It's political suicide, Jack. You might as well jump off the top of the fucking Gherkin.'

Mary Bush, Health Minister and owner of a trembling greyhound, said tentatively, 'It has been shown in various studies that dogs have a beneficial effect on the old and the lonely.'

Jack said, looking directly at Mary, 'Do you know how many kiddies go blind every year because of the *Toxocara canis* worm found in dog shit? After waiting a few minutes he answered his own question. 'Three,' said Jack, dramatically holding up three fingers.

Bill Brazier said, 'Threc? Is that all?'

'Bill, that's three little kids who will never see their mother's face. Never see the wonder of spring blossom on a ...' Jack's mind went blank. He couldn't remember the name of a single tree. So he went for the generic, '... tree,' he finished.

Jack said, 'I want reports on my desk this time tomorrow. Costs to the National Health of dog bites and kids going blind, etc. Costs to the police of dog-related incidents, costs to the fire service of dog rescues. The bleedin' things are always falling down wells and mine shafts. I want to know how many tonnes of carbon monoxide emissions are caused by transporting dog food around the bloody country. I want television campaigns. I want billboards. I want dog owners to be the next lepers. We did it with smokers, we can do it with bloody dogs.'

pp50-2

Key terms

Contextual: relating to context (as defined in the Introduction to this book); the circumstances surrounding a text which affect the way it is understood and so need to be considered when we analyse it.

Starting the essay: making notes

One obvious way to begin the process of writing a comparative essay is to make preliminary notes on each of the texts. These notes will focus on the sorts of things that you have been looking for throughout your course. So for each text we can make notes on the following:

- 1 What genre(s) are we looking at in the text?
- 2 What methods of writing is the author using within these genres?
- 3 What **contextual** matters need to be considered?
- 4 What potential meanings are being made in the text?
- 5 Is it possible to interpret the text in different ways?