 Resource 16 - Gulliver Analysis

Stanza 1

* The poem begins with an angry tone established through the violent verbs “kick’ and ‘scratching’. This implies that the persona is fighting against the oppression.
* The first person “I’ll kick” humanises the persona and gives the poem more force as he is talking from experience.
* The repeated “If you’ll” gives the impression that the persona in the poem is talking to whoever has him bound down.
* Sinews are tendons and used in the phrase, it becomes a metaphor explaining how mankind is holding him down. He can escape the physical elements that hold him – the walls and the dungeon but he cannot escape from ‘ropes of nerve and bone’.
* The strings represent human problems that are seemingly difficult to overcome.
* Slessor identifies himself as Gulliver held down and ‘helpless’ and there are too many strings holding him down.
* ‘Cur’ refers to a dog of low breeding.

Stanza 2

* The persona begins to give up – there is a tone of defeat – he cannot overcome the things tying him down.
* Emotive references “swollen with sobbing”.
* Rhetorical Question “What’s the use?” indicates that he finds the task insurmountable.
* Listing “Love, hunger, drunkenness..” suggesting that these personal everyday human experiences are the very things that weigh him down and he cannot break free of them and their effect upon him.

Stanza 3

* He refers to physical restraints ‘chain’ which he sees as being more ‘honest’ than the human experiences that restrain him.
* Turnkey refers to a jailer.
* Repeated phrase – almost begging “ If you’d”.
* Rhetorical Question “what can you do with hairs?” – he can fight against the physical items of restraint – the chain, the turnkey, the metal but he can’t fight against the emotions that hold him back.
* Tone of desperation “ For God’s Sake”.
* Imperative “Call the hangman” – seeks death rather than trying to free himself from the human problems.