 Resource 17 - Understanding Gulliver

| Poem | Gulliver |
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| Context | Slessor uses the satirical novel Gulliver’s travels by Jonathon Swift as the inspiration for the poem. Swift depicted the human condition as often despairing, but occasionally hopeful, creating a sketch of the possibilities for humanity to rein in its baser instincts. This inspired Slessor in the twentieth Century to imagine himself as Gulliver in Lilliput, tormented by the pigmy people and raging against them. He is bound down by insoluble human problems  [Gulliver’s Travels ‘The Beast’](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DBqmniLGEh8) clip: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DBqmniLGEh8 – clip of Jack Black in the scene |
| Content | The persona is weighed down with the problems of his society. He tries to break free of the problems but they are too great and he feels that he cannot escape. The poet compares his experiences to that of the fictional character, Gulliver, who is literally tied down and is left helpless. |
| Purpose | To capture the plight of modern man faced with constraint. A time of despair and darkness where man is without hope or power. |
| Structure | Free verse |
| Stylistic Features | First person  Modernist techniques – adopting a freer form  Bleak perspective  Rhetorical question  Strong poetic expression  Intertextuality  Repetition  Metaphor of restraint |

Questions

1. What is the poet’s mood at the beginning of the poem? What words indicate this?
2. “Lashed with a hundred ropes”. How is the poet like the original Gulliver?
3. What human condition is the poet complaining about in the first 9 lines?
4. What does Slessor mean by his line “One chain is usually sufficient for a cur”?
5. What words give the impression of being tied up or bound?
6. What evidence is there that Slessor is trying to solve his problems?
7. “What’s the use?” what does this imply about the poet’s state of mind?
8. What things does the poet suggest have spongy fingers? What is the effect of listing them in the poem?
9. What imagery is used to suggest that the problems cannot be overcome?
10. What does the last line of the poem suggest?
11. In what ways is the poet’s helplessness similar to the original Gulliver? In what ways does it differ?