



Boy Giant: Son of Gulliver

# BOY GIANT

## *Son of Gulliver*

Revisit the island of Lilliput through Michael Morpurgo's offbeat and engaging story where modern-day war and migration collide with a much-loved classic

**CAREY FLUKER HUNT**

**W**hen war comes to Omar's Afghan village, ten-year-old Omar and his mother set off on a long and dangerous journey, heading for England and Uncle Said's café. But Omar's mother can't afford two boat tickets and Omar must travel on alone. When the worst happens at sea, Omar expects his life to end. Instead he is washed up somewhere marvellous and strange – the island of Lilliput, whose tiny inhabitants welcomed Gulliver so long ago. Helped by his new friends, Omar becomes Son of Gulliver – a role that requires him to develop peacemaking abilities.

In *Boy Giant*, the harsh realities of modern-day war and migration collide with a much-loved classic to deliver an engagingly offbeat reading experience.

Omar narrates his own story with age-appropriate realism and a sense of energy that keeps readers hooked. Using the Lilliputian microcosm as a metaphor, Michael Morpurgo explores conflict and its resolution through imaginative charm, unsettling questions and hard-hitting truth. Michael Foreman's line illustrations bring the text to life throughout.

Before reading, pool your knowledge of Gulliver (he met tiny people and giants, the book was written long ago...) Has anyone sailed or flown abroad? Where did you go? What did you see or learn that interested or surprised you? What reasons do people have for travelling?

Look at the front cover. What do you think this story is about? What questions do you have, based on the cover and title?

Read the blurb. Does it answer your questions? What new questions does it raise?

Share the story, making sure everyone's comfortable and that you won't be interrupted. Aim for a 'reading for pleasure' experience that draws children in, and follow with the kind of book talk that explores reactions, connections, opinions and ideas.

Did this story match your expectations? What did you enjoy most? What surprised you? Was there anything you would have changed?

Does Omar's story relate to the experiences of anyone in class? Have children seen news items about refugees?

Who would you recommend this book to, and why? Can you think of other books inspired by traditional or classic stories?



## Building on your book experience

### The 'real' Gulliver

Gulliver's Travels by Jonathan Swift was published in 1726. What can you spot in Boy Giant that feels old fashioned? What can fiction tell us about history?

Research Swift and his 18th century world. What did people wear, what did they eat, what jobs did they do, how were they educated, who was in charge...? Share your discoveries. (See 'Free resources', resource 1.)

### Tiny people in a giant world

Swift's Lilliputians are part of a long tradition of stories about little people inhabiting wild places, like the spriggans in this book. Research folk traditions worldwide and write about what you've learned. Explore your school/ neighbourhood from a Lilliputian perspective. View things from below and look for details Lilliputians would see but you might miss. How would they navigate your world? What could be dangerous? Sketch and make notes, then use these ideas to write a first-person story from the point of view of a lost Lilliputian secret agent sent to investigate a strange



new find. (See resource 2.) Extend by constructing tiny homes outdoors from natural materials. Take photos and write estate-agent-style adverts for each residence. Who will live in them? Invent characters and write about what happens when they move in. (See resource 3.)

### Story mash-ups

"How strange it was that two such stories, hers and mine, should meet like this... in the middle of thousands of miles of ocean... our separate stories were now becoming one story..."

It isn't just Omar and JJ's stories that collide in this book. Inspired by current affairs and Swift's classic, Michael Morpurgo wove two very different strands into something original and surprising. Follow his example to create new stories of your own!

In pairs, invent a character plus 'back story' with information about their life. What does this character want? What challenges do they face? Split couples to form new pairs, then share the characters and information you've created. How could these characters meet? Invent a setting for that encounter and tell the story of what happens next.

### Eggy drama!

"Because (the emperor) had always opened his boiled egg at the round end, he decreed that everyone should do the

same. 'Round end good. Sharp end bad.' ...From that day on, if you opened your boiled egg at the sharp end, it would be a crime, the act of a traitor, an act of grave disloyalty and disobedience to the emperor..."

Divide children into Lilliputians and Blufescuans and arrange for the groups to work separately, each with an adult helper. Give the Lilliputians a card saying ROUND END GOOD, SHARP END BAD and the Blufescuans one saying SHARP END GOOD, ROUND END BAD. (See resources 4.)

Ask groups to discuss their island's view of egg-eating and invent laws to govern the issue. Why must people eat eggs that way? What will happen to those who disobey? Make posters telling everyone what to do and start rumours about 'those people on the other island' who do things differently.

"So the people of the two islands became enemies... They opened their eggs differently... and that was enough for them to start a war..."

Pair children, asking one child to roleplay the emperor as she/he campaigns about eggs, while the other listens. Agree ground rules to ensure insults are kept on-theme and don't become personal. Then invite your emperors to be as shouty and threatening as they can!

Showback and discuss. What works

## Take it further → → →

### MODELLING LILLIPUT

"The narrow streets were hardly wide enough for me to pass through. The houses were tiny... no roof was higher than my knee..."

How are Lilliputian villages described and depicted in this book? Create model buildings from cardboard boxes and other materials. Arrange as a Lilliputian community with streets you can walk along. Invent road names, number the houses and create character profiles for residents.

Explore historical census returns for your own neighbourhood (available online) and use to help you create a residential record of your Lilliputian village. Set up a Post Office area where children can write tiny letters, wrap miniature parcels and deliver to their Lilliputian residents.

### MEASURING THE GIANT

"They were pacing... up my arm, down my leg, across my chest... They were stretching a thin ribbon from my waist

to my shoulder, from my ankle to my waist, from my wrist to my shoulder. I was being measured!"

Draw round each other on wallpaper. Take measurements and mark on each drawing. As a class, compare your collected data. Who has the longest legs? The shortest arms? What's your average height? (See resource 5.)

If a Lilliputian comes up to your knee, how tall are they? How many Lilliputians would it take to make one of you? If you came up to a giant's knee, how tall would the giant be? Can you work out his other measurements?



best? Collect words to describe your emperors (noisy, hostile...) and their audiences (quiet, angry, powerless...). What happens if you cheer your emperor on instead of listening passively? Add mimed then verbal support.

Choose someone in each group to be emperor while others form a supporting crowd. Meet for an energetic confrontation, with both emperors shouting their messages and supporters cheering them on – noisily or silently, whichever works best for you, then discuss. How did it feel to deliver or receive the antagonism? Could you hear the emperors properly? Did it matter? How did you feel about your fellow islanders? The opposition? What did you enjoy about the exercise, and why? (Being allowed to shout can be cathartic...) What didn't you enjoy, and why? (Being shouted at can make you feel scared...)

Would such a meeting help the islanders? How could they better resolve their differences? (Debates, voting, compromise...) How are disagreements dealt with in school? In your community? What happens when one country disagrees with another?

From p148 to p162, Zaya relates the 'eggy part' of Gulliver's story. Re-read and discuss. What does it tell us about aggression and conflict resolution? Could Gulliver's ideas and/or what you learned from your 'eggy drama' help you resolve conflicts in school? How?

Report on what you've done and the ideas you've discussed, or write persuasively about the conclusions you've reached.

### 'We were the truth of our own story..'

Stories don't have to rely on being true, but having a truth at their heart can make an imaginative story more compelling. In pairs, take turns making statements

that could be true, then adding something unlikely/impossible/imaginative to extend each statement: e.g. I woke up in the night... because an enormous purple hippopotamus was snoring by my bed. Which storystarter is most interesting? Why?

Choose something real that happened to you (or something you've been told about) and write an imaginative story constructed around your truth.

### Washed ashore

"The storm had passed... I realised that I was no longer lying in the boat at all, that the sea was no longer surging beneath me..."

Imagine you've been washed up on an unknown island. Lie down in a large, clear space and mime waking to discover your new surroundings. What happens next? What can you see, hear, smell and taste? How do you feel? Roleplay events, then write about your experiences.

Using textual evidence and your imagination, draw a map of Lilliput from Omar's perspective (a bird's-eye view), marking key locations.

### Owzat!

There are many cricket references in this book. Based on the text, what do Omar and others think of the game, where do they play and what challenges do they face? Do you think Michael Morpurgo likes cricket? Back your answers up with evidence!

Play a game of French Cricket or Kwik Cricket. What did you enjoy and how could you improve your performance? Write an explanation of the rules. What role does sport play in people's lives? Survey children and interview family members about their sporting activities.

## Loved this? Try these...

- ❖ *Kensuke's Kingdom* by Michael Morpurgo, illustrated by Michael Foreman
- ❖ *Jonathan Swift's Gulliver retold* by Martin Jenkins, illustrated by Chris Riddell
- ❖ *The Minpins* by Roald Dahl, illustrated by Patrick Benson (or Quentin Blake)
- ❖ *The Borrowers* by Mary Norton, illustrated by Diana Stanley
- ❖ *The Cottingley Fairies* by Ana Sender (a picture book for older readers set in 1917 about fairies 'discovered' by two cousins)



*Carey Fluker Hunt is a freelance writer, creative learning consultant and founder of Cast of Thousands (castofthousands.co.uk), a teachers' resource featuring a selection of the best children's books and related cross-curricular activities.*

Paint your figures and cut them out. Working together, paint an accurately scaled-up giant and create a display.

### 'BE NOT INHOSPITABLE TO STRANGERS LEST THEY BE ANGELS IN DISGUISE...'

What do you think George Whitman's



quote means? Why is it on the frontispiece of this book? What do we mean by hospitality? Who is hospitable in this story and who isn't? Can you think of real-world examples of hospitality? What stops people being hospitable?

On Lilliput, as Omar observes, "the young look after the old, and the old look after the young".

Could you host a get-together for elderly people in your community? Is there an organisation working with refugees that you could help? What could you do to tackle loneliness in school?

## Free online resources

Download resources to help deliver the ideas set out in this feature at [teachwire.net/boy-giant](http://teachwire.net/boy-giant)



# BOY GIANT

*Son of Gulliver*

by Michael Morpurgo

When war comes to Omar's Afghan village, ten-year-old Omar and his mother set off on a long and dangerous journey, heading for England and Uncle Said's café. But Omar's mother can't afford two boat tickets and Omar must travel on alone. When the worst happens at sea, Omar expects his life to end. Instead he is washed up somewhere marvellous and strange – the island of Lilliput, whose tiny inhabitants welcomed Gulliver so long ago. Helped by his new friends, Omar becomes Son of Gulliver – a role that requires him to develop peacemaking abilities.



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## The 'real' Gulliver

### *Resource 1*

*Gulliver's Travels* by Jonathan Swift was published in 1726. What can you spot in *Boy Giant* that feels old fashioned? What can fiction tell us about history?

Research Swift and his 18th century world. What did people wear, what did they eat, what jobs did they do, how were they educated, who was in charge...? Share your discoveries.

BOY GIANT  
My 18TH CENTURY CHARACTER

My character's name:  Age:

Occupation:

Favourite food:

Hobbies:

Draw a picture of your character

Draw a picture of your character's home

HarperCollins Children's Books michael morpurgo

## Tiny people in a giant world

### Resource 2

Swift's Lilliputians are part of a long tradition of stories about little people inhabiting wild places, like the spriggans in this book. Research folk traditions worldwide and write about what you've learned.

Explore your school/neighbourhood from a Lilliputian perspective. View things from below and look for details Lilliputians would see but you might miss. How would they navigate your world? What could be dangerous? Sketch and make notes, then use these ideas to write a first-person story from the point of view of a Lilliputian secret agent sent to investigate a strange new find.



## Property listing

### Resource 3

Extend the previous activity by constructing tiny homes outdoors from natural materials.

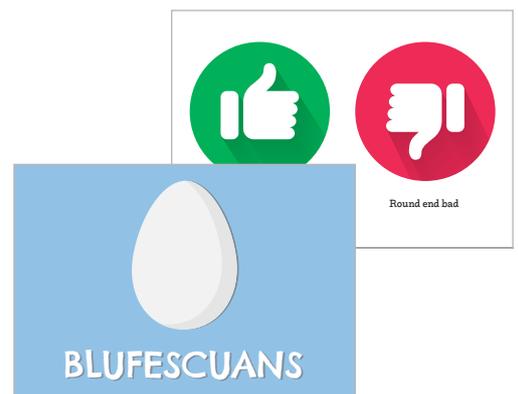
Take photos and write estate-agent-style adverts for each residence. Who will live in them? Invent characters and write about what happens when they move in.



## Eggy drama

### Resource 4

*“Because (the emperor) had always opened his boiled egg at the round end, he decreed that everyone should do the same. ‘Round end good. Sharp end bad.’ ....From that day on, if you opened your boiled egg at the sharp end, it would be a crime, the act of a traitor, an act of grave disloyalty and disobedience to the emperor...”*



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**1** Ask groups to discuss their island's view of egg-eating and invent laws to govern the issue. Why must people eat eggs that way? What will happen to those who disobey? Make posters telling everyone what to do and start rumours about 'those people on the other island' who do things differently.

**“ So the people of the two islands became enemies... They opened their eggs differently...and that was enough for them to start a war...”**

**2** Pair children, asking one child to roleplay the emperor as she/he campaigns about eggs, while the other listens. Agree ground rules to ensure insults are kept on-theme and don't become personal. Then invite your emperors to be as shouty and threatening as they can!

**3** Showback and discuss. What works best? Collect words to describe your emperors (noisy, hostile...) and their audiences (quiet, angry, powerless...). What happens if you cheer your emperor on instead of listening passively? Add mimed then verbal support.

**4** Choose someone in each group to be emperor while others form a supporting crowd. Meet for an energetic confrontation, with both emperors shouting their messages and supporters cheering them on – noisily or silently, whichever works best for you, then discuss. How did it feel to deliver or receive the antagonism? Could you hear the emperors properly? Did it matter? How did you feel about your fellow islanders? The opposition? What did you enjoy about the exercise, and why? (Being allowed to shout can be cathartic...) What didn't you enjoy, and why? (Being shouted at can make you feel scared...)

Would such a meeting help the islanders? How could they better resolve their differences? (Debates, voting, compromise...) How are disagreements dealt with in school? In your community? What happens when one country disagrees with another?

**5** From p148 to p162, Zaya relates the ‘eggy part’ of Gulliver’s story. Re-read and discuss. What does it tell us about aggression and conflict resolution? Could Gulliver’s ideas and/or what you learned from your ‘eggy drama’ help you resolve conflicts in school? How?

Report on what you’ve done and the ideas you’ve discussed, or write persuasively about the conclusions you’ve reached.

## Measuring the giant

### Resource 5

*“They were pacing... up my arm, down my leg, across my chest... They were stretching a thin ribbon from my waist to my shoulder, from my ankle to my waist, from my wrist to my shoulder. I was being measured!”*

Draw round each other on wallpaper. Take measurements and mark on each drawing. As a class, compare your collected data. Who has the longest legs? The shortest arms? What’s your average height?

BOY GIANT  
Tale of The Tape

OUR CLASS  
Tale of The Tape

2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11

Measurements and statistics (in centimetres)

Tallest: <input type="text"/>	Longest leg: <input type="text"/>	Longest arm: <input type="text"/>
Shortest: <input type="text"/>	Shortest leg: <input type="text"/>	Shortest arm: <input type="text"/>
Average height (show your workings): <input type="text"/>	Average leg size (show your workings): <input type="text"/>	Average arm size (show your workings): <input type="text"/>

HarperCollins Children's Books

michael morpurgo



# MY 18TH CENTURY CHARACTER

My character's name:

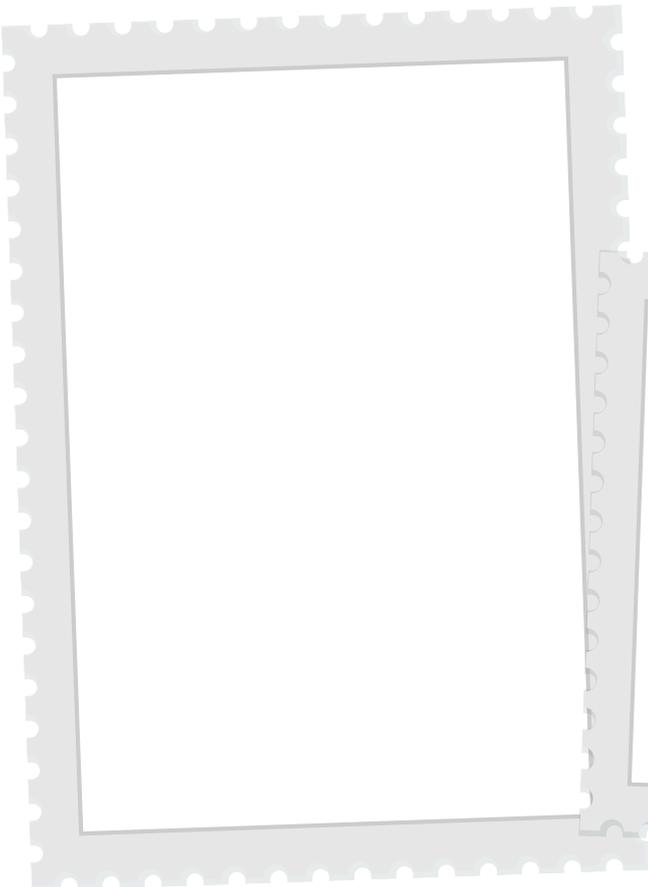
Age:

Occupation:

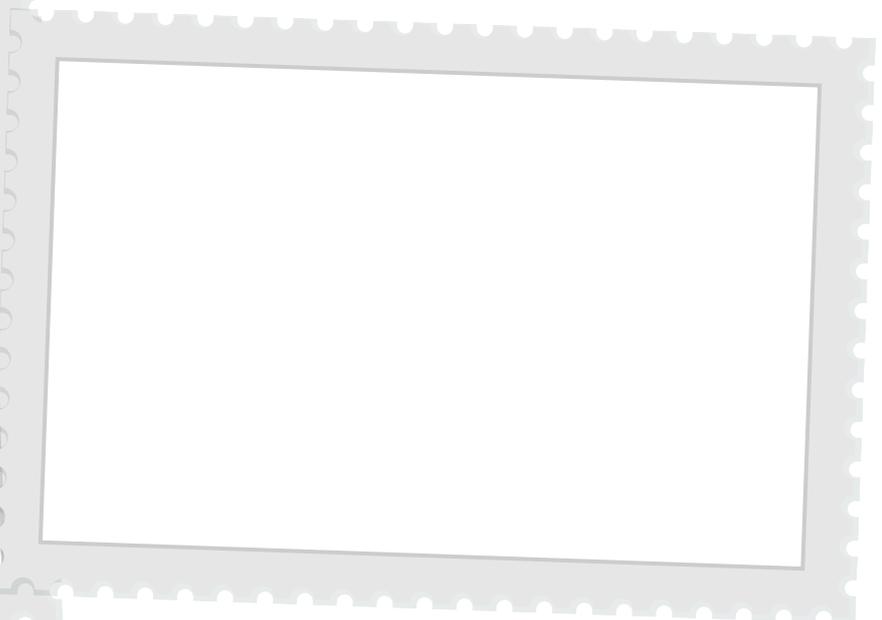
Favourite food:

Hobbies:

Draw a picture of your character



Draw a picture of your character's home



# BOY GIANT

*Son of Gulliver*

## Lilliputian Secret Agent Report

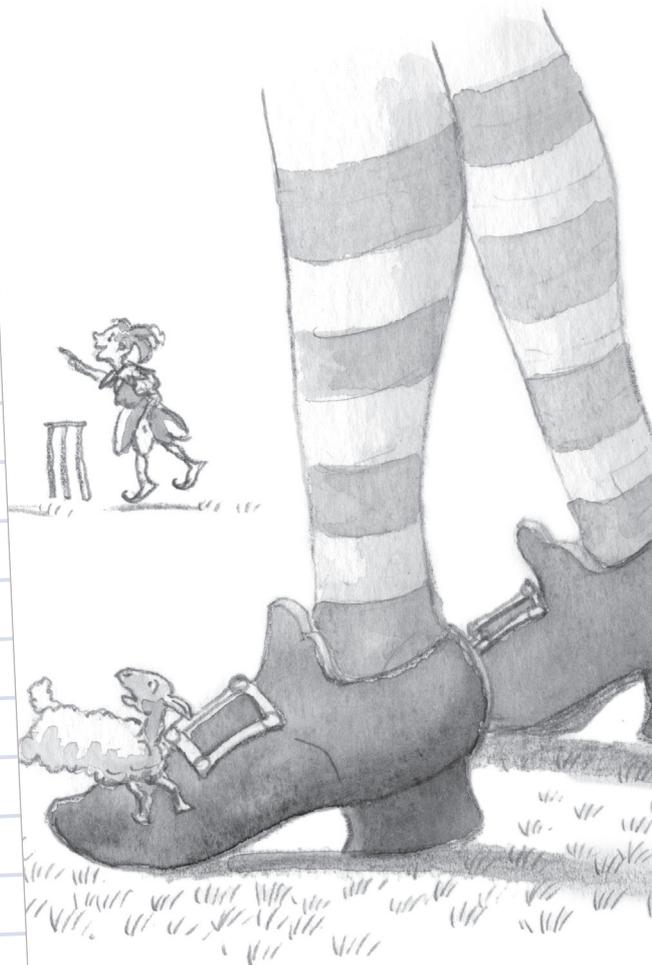
Name of school:



Describe inhabitants:

Dangers of environment for Lilliputians

•
•
•
•
•

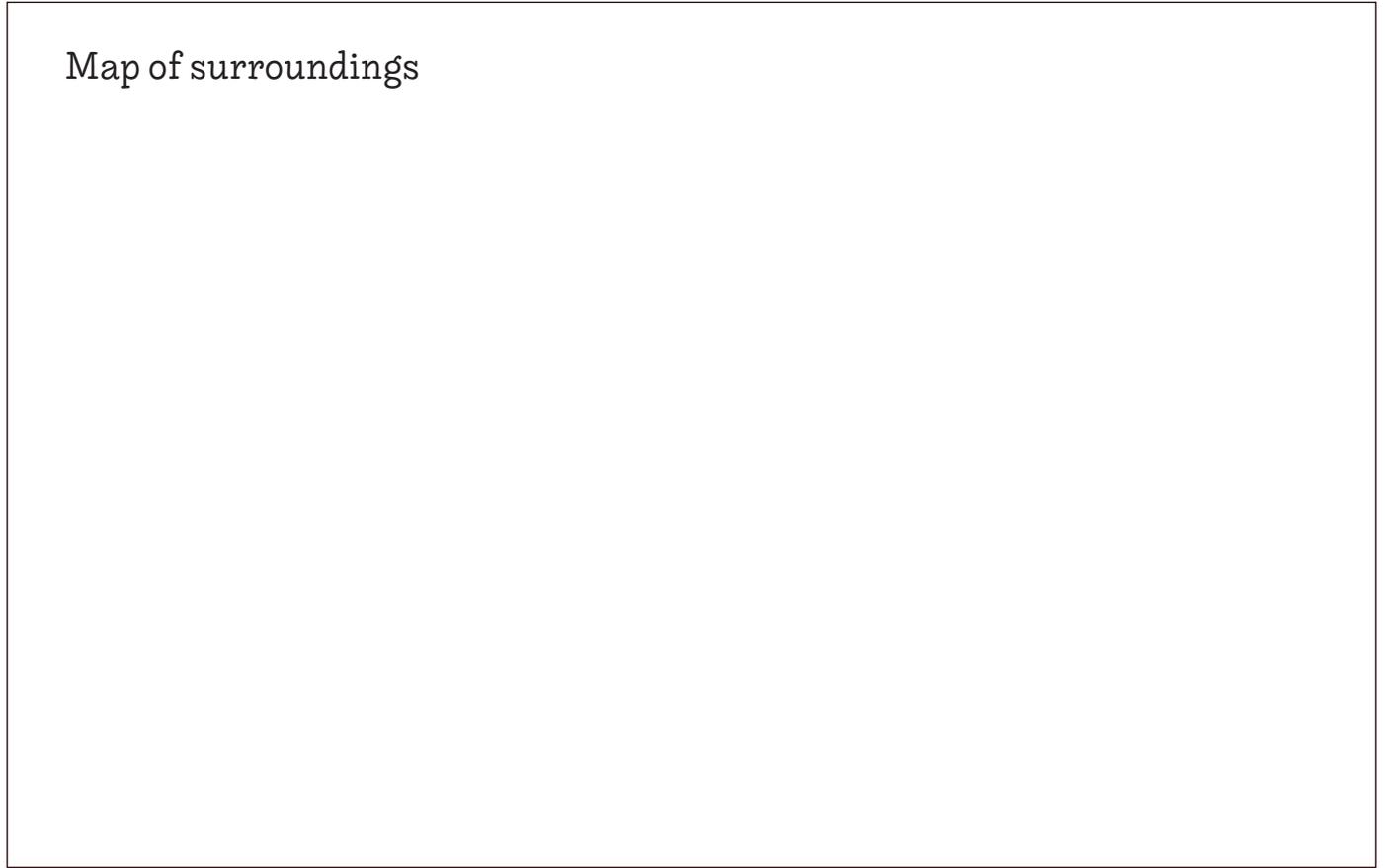


# BOY GIANT

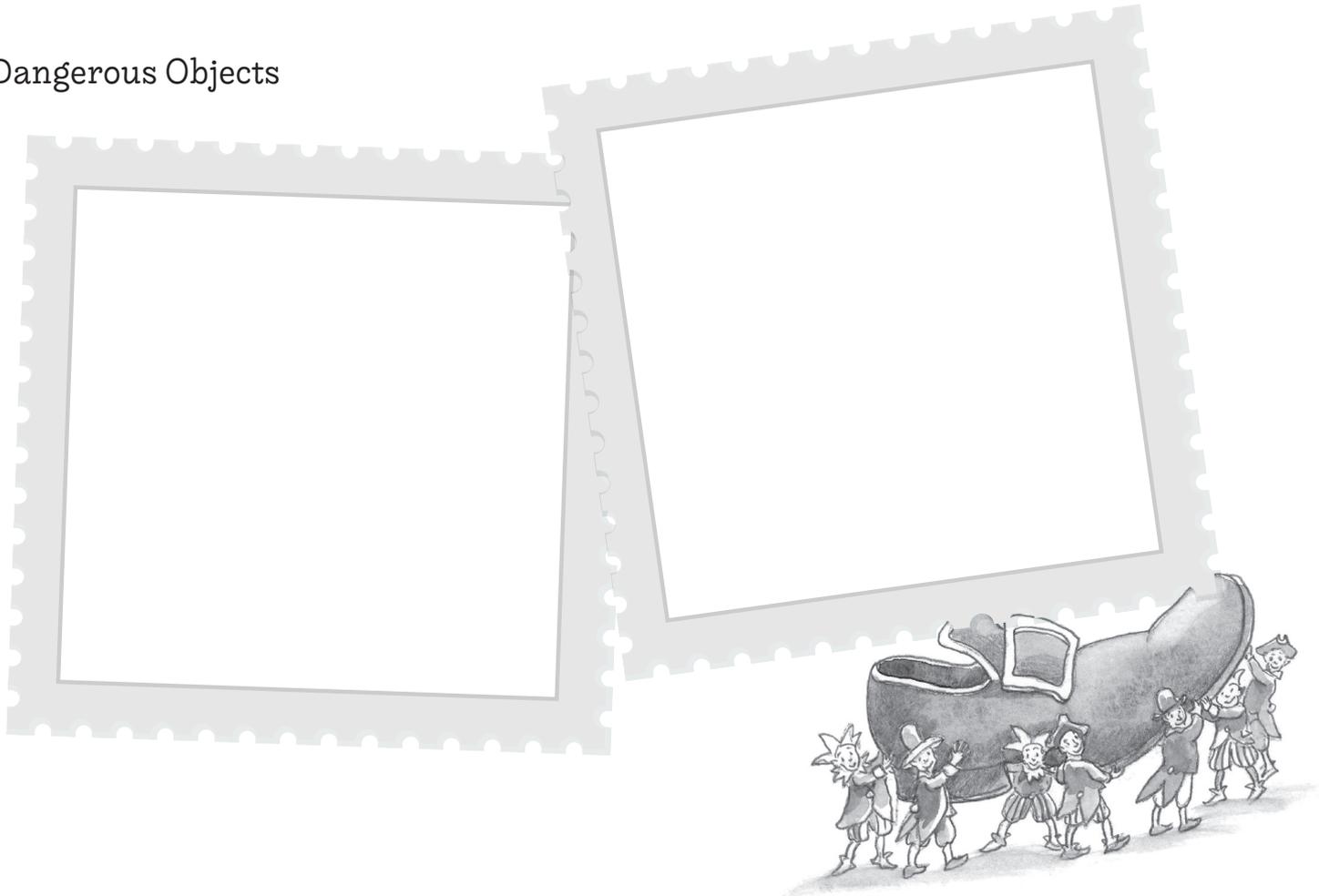
*Son of Gulliver*

## Lilliputian Secret Agent Report

Map of surroundings



Dangerous Objects



# Lilliputian Secret Agent Report

Write an account of your mission:

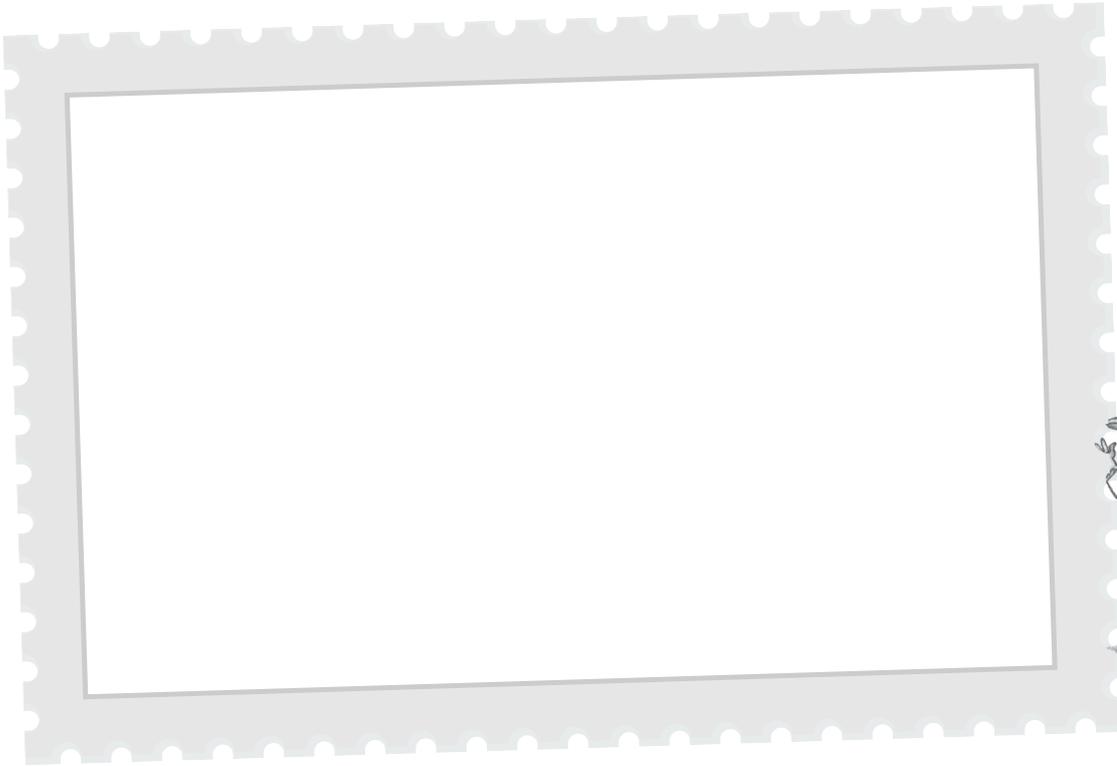
A large rectangular area for writing, featuring a vertical red margin line on the left and horizontal blue lines for writing.



**BOY GIANT**  
*Son of Gulliver*

# LILLIPUT ESTATE AGENTS

## PROPERTY LISTING



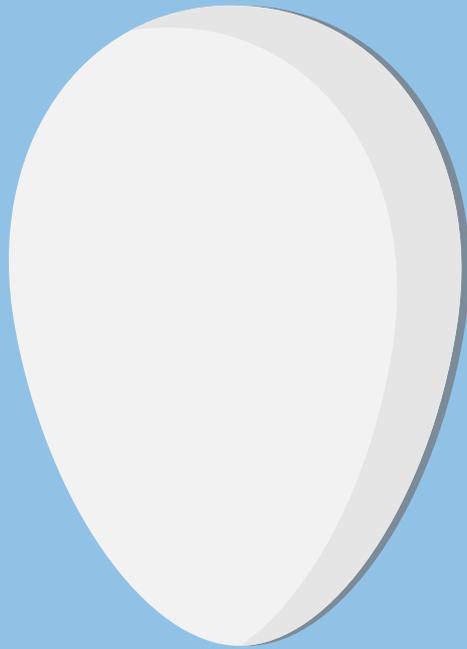
Location:

Property type:

Ideal for:

Property description

Floorplan



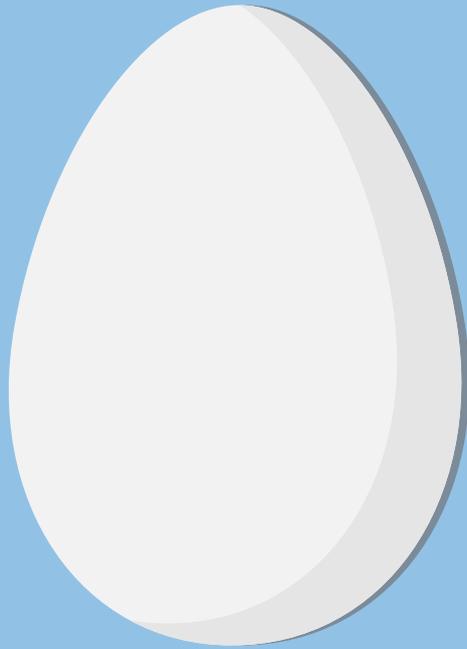
# LILLIPUTIANS



Round end good



Sharp end bad



# BLUFESCUANS



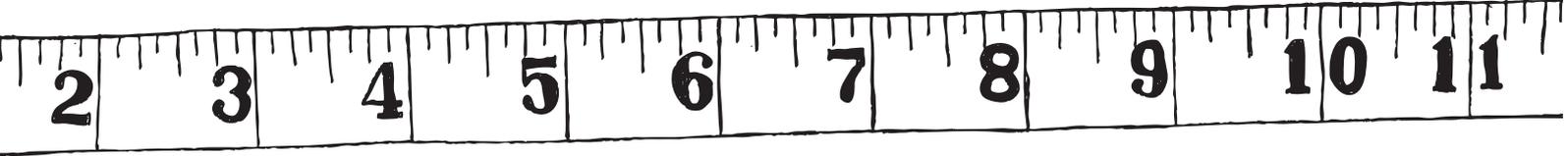
Sharp end good



Round end bad

**BOY GIANT**  
*Son of Gulliver*

**OUR CLASS**  
*Tale of The Tape*



**Measurements and statistics (in centimetres)**

Tallest:

Longest legs:

Longest arms:

Shortest:

Shortest legs:

Shortest arms:

Average height (show  
your workings):

Average leg size (show  
your workings):

Average arm size (show  
your workings):

