My father', begins the narrative of Jonathan Swift's Gulliver's Travels, 'had a small estate in Nottinghamshire; I was the third of five sons.'When Gulliver embarks upon his fantastic journeys the reader can be even more certain that there are no distant islands like Lilliput, populated with diminutive people.This dependence upon precise wording is why a literary text loses so much in paraphrase or translation.We enjoy it, lose ourselves in it, and indirectly learn from it some truths about the real world in which we do live–the one which is not created, as Gulliver's islands are, entirely by words.It not only creates a surrogate world for us but also determines our attitude to its inhabitants and the events that take place there.Swift's opening sentence, for example, both gives us the details of Gulliver's family and origins and also indicates something of his character.His matter–of–fact tone and unembellished style suggest a blunt, no–nonsense kind of a fellow–one, therefore, to be trusted as he leads us through increasingly fantastic scenes.None of this is true: there never was a Captain Gulliver, and consequently no father or brothers.Yet we would never think of calling Swift a liar even though his language does not correspond to reality.Language, in literature, is used to create alternatives to the real world.In doing so, the precise choice and ordering of words is very important.Hamlet's To be, or not to be ...'We recognize the book as fiction.