

Introduction

Tales from the Arabian Nights are stories from India, Persia and the Arab world. They were told and retold thousands of years ago. Over the years they were made more interesting by people adding things to the story. Were they true things? We don't know.

The tales have been translated into many languages and are well known by readers all over the world. They have given some exciting ideas to writers, poets and artists. The tales have been made into films and cartoons too.

Tales from the Arabian Nights are stories within a story about a great but cruel king. King Shahriah marries beautiful women, but always has their heads cut off in the morning. However, his new wife, Sheherezade, is clever. She has a plan. Each night, she starts to tell him a wonderful story. Every morning, the King lets his new wife live because he wants to hear the end of the story. Her tales last for two years and two hundred and seventy-one days, or a thousand and one nights. This is why the stories are also known as *One Thousand and One Nights*.

Sheherezade tells stories about ordinary people who become heroes because they are brave and clever. She tells a story about Ali Baba who finds a robbers' cave full of treasure; a story of Sinbad the sailor who travels around the world and meets strange things and animals; a story about a simple fisherman who finds a genie in a bottle; of Aladdin and his magic lamp, and many more.

Read on to find out about Ali Baba, Sinbad, Aladdin and the other characters in the book — and find out what happens to the beautiful storyteller herself!

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The Unhappy King

The King wants a wife

Long ago, there was a great king called Shahriah. He was a good king — until he found his wife loved another man. Then the King was very angry with his wife. ‘Cut off her head!’ he roared. The executioner took the King’s wife away, and cut her head off. 5

Every night after that the King lay in his great bed all alone and very sad. When he slept, he dreamt of his beautiful, dead wife. When he was awake, he thought he could see her in the arms of the other man. He did not know what to do. At last he called for the Wazir, the chief of his servants.

