

# Introduction

The stories in this book come from many parts of the world.

## Germany

In Hamelin there is an old house called the *Rattenfängerhaus* — the Rat-catcher's House. On one wall of the house is a poem. *The Pied Piper of Hamelin* tells the story of a piper in a red and yellow robe. He led 130 of Hamelin's children away, and nobody ever saw them again. The name Pied Piper comes from a long English poem by Robert Browning.

## The USA

Rip Van Winkle was the laziest man in the village. One day he fell asleep — and he slept for twenty years! Until 1776, George III was King of England. He was also King of the American colonies. In 1776, the colonies wanted to rule themselves. There was a lot of fighting and a lot of arguing, but Rip did not know about that because he was asleep!

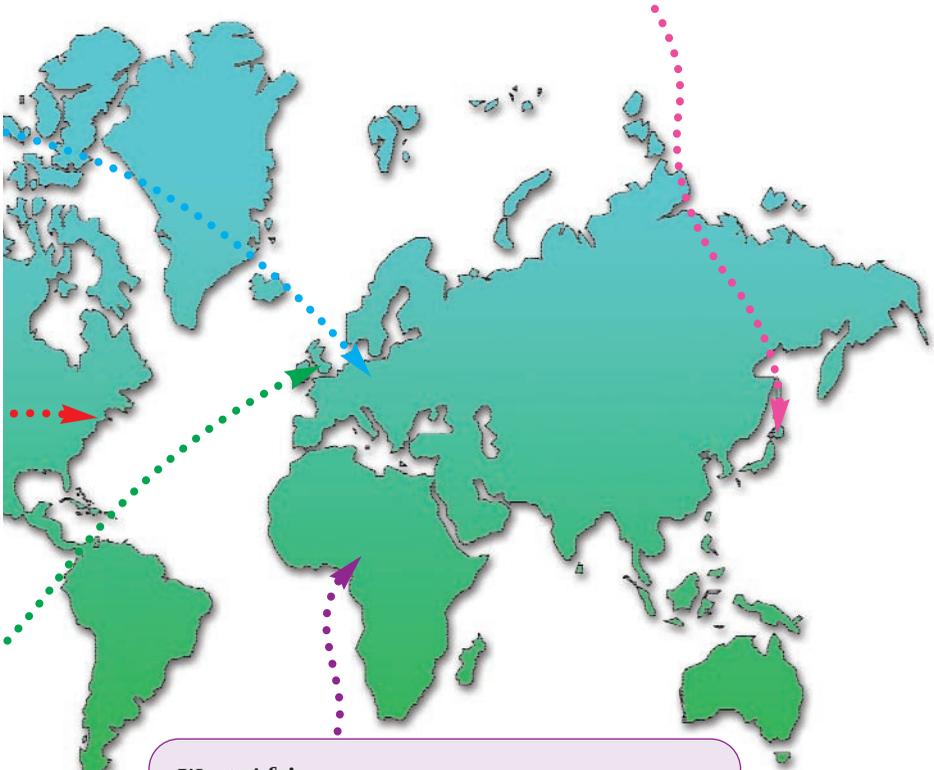
## Britain

*Dick Whittington* tells the story of a poor boy and his cat. The cat made Dick a rich man. He became Lord Mayor of London. There was a real Dick Whittington. He became Lord Mayor of London too. Did he have a cat? Nobody knows!



### Japan

Have you ever got into trouble for drawing on walls or in books? In Japan, a boy could not stop himself from drawing dragons — on walls, on floors, on pieces of paper. One day those dragons saved the boy's life. How did they do that? Read *The Boy Who Drew Dragons* and find the answer.



### West Africa

Where do stories come from? Nobody knows. The last story in the book comes from Africa. It is called *Where Do Stories Come From?* A mother visits the Land of the Magic People. She brings back the first story.

# 1

## The Pied Piper of Hamelin:

### Part One

#### **Rats!**

Promises are very important. It is easy to make a promise about something. 'I promise to wash the dishes, Mum.' Or 'I won't tell your secret — I promise!' It is not always easy to keep that promise. But you must do your best to keep it. You must wash those dishes. You must not tell that secret to anyone. If you break your promise, something bad usually happens. This is the story of a broken promise. 5

This story happened a long time ago. There was a town called Hamelin. It was a beautiful place. There were pretty houses with red roofs and flower gardens. There was a big market place and busy shops. And there was a wide river with a stone bridge. 10

For many years Hamelin was a good place to live. And then the rats came! Where did the rats come from? Why did they choose Hamelin? Nobody knows. But they came. Soon the town was full of them. 15

Rats! They came into the houses and shops. They found their way into cupboards. They made holes in bags of food. They made their nests everywhere. The rats were big and strong. They had sharp claws and long yellow teeth. They were not afraid of anything or anybody. Nobody was safe. Dogs and cats ran away when they saw them. 20 25