

“Ali Baba is a very lucky young man, but he wouldn’t be so fortunate if the servant girl Morgiana wasn’t so intelligent.” Zarah, 12



ALI BABA AND THE FORTY THIEVES

The horsemen stopped close to where Ali Baba was hiding. He could scarcely breathe. As they dismounted he counted them – there were forty in all, and they were carrying bags of gold, silver and precious stones.

When Ali Baba goes into the forest as usual to gather wood to sell, he can hardly imagine that it is the start of an amazing adventure that will change his life.

After he discovers the secret of the treasure cave, his good fortune soon turns into terrible danger. Can he ever live safely again with his wife and family?

Ali Baba’s brother Cassim is a rich man, but cares little for the happiness of others. Where will his selfishness lead him?

Morgiana, the servant girl, is faced with a deadly crisis. Is she clever and brave enough to save herself and Ali Baba’s family from destruction?



ALI BABA AND THE FORTY THIEVES

from *The One Thousand and One Nights*



Retold by Abdul-Fattah Sabri
Illustrated by Sura Ghazwan

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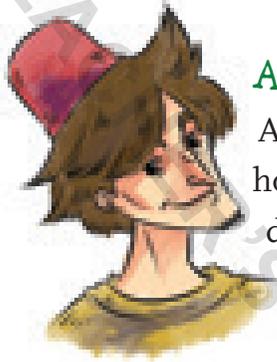
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THE CHARACTERS



Ali Baba

Ali Baba is a young woodcutter, honest and poor. What amazing discovery will change his life for ever?

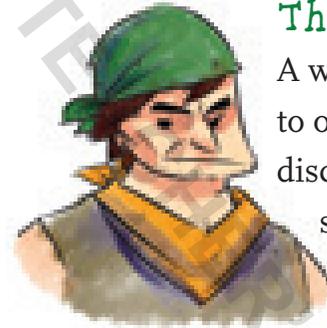
Cassim

Cassim is Ali Baba's rich brother, and has never been kind to his relatives. Where will his greed and jealousy lead him?



Cassim's Wife

Cassim's wife is jealous of Ali Baba's good fortune, but when she finds herself in a dreadful situation will Ali Baba choose to help her?



The Chief of the Thieves

A wicked man who will do anything to obtain money, the thieves' leader discovers that Ali Baba knows a secret that might ruin him. Can Ali Baba and his friends defeat their evil foe?

Mustapha the Undertaker

When Mustapha is given a strange and important task to carry out, he swears to keep it secret. What happens when he breaks his promise and tells the thieves what he has done?



Morgiana

Morgiana is a clever and quick-thinking servant girl who is employed by Cassim and his wife. When tragedy strikes the household, can she save them from disaster?

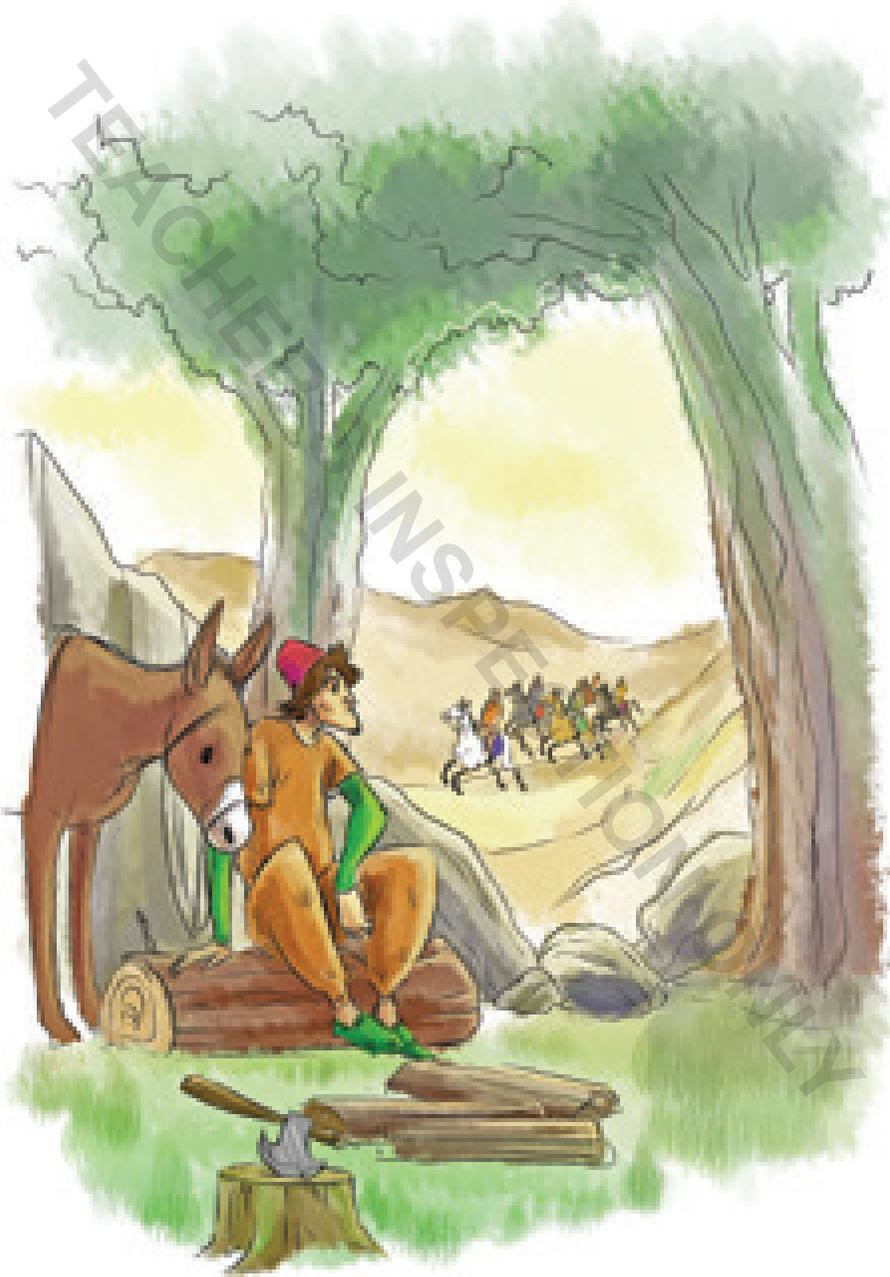


ALI BABA AND THE FORTY THIEVES

Long ago there lived in a town in Persia two brothers, one named Ali Baba and the other Cassim. When their father died, he left a small sum of money which was divided equally between them. Cassim married a wealthy widow and became a rich merchant, but Ali Baba married a woman as poor as himself. Ali Baba made a living by collecting firewood and bringing it into the town to sell, yet he was hardly able to feed his six children.

One morning Ali Baba was in the forest and had just cut enough wood to load his donkey. When he had finished his labours the young woodcutter sat down in the shade of some trees to give himself and his donkey a rest, and began to daydream about his difficult situation in life.

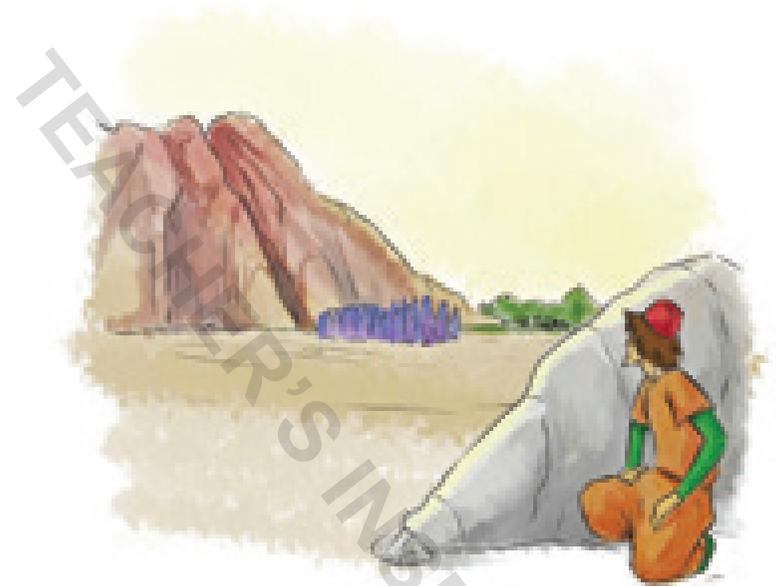
‘Why is it that I am so poor, and my brother so rich?’ he asked himself. ‘Why has such injustice been inflicted upon me? Is it because I am an honest, peaceful man, and my brother is always trying to make money from other people’s misfortunes, and cannot be trusted?’



Suddenly Ali Baba's thoughts were interrupted. He heard noises in the distance which grew louder. A dust cloud spiralled in the sky and the sound of horses disrupted the surrounding calm. Then he saw them – a troop of men wearing colourful clothes and with swords and spears shining in the sunlight. The horsemen were coming towards him, laughing and full of energy.

Ali Baba crouched behind a rock and prayed to God that his donkey would not make a noise. He was frightened, as he had never seen so many fierce horsemen in one place before. 'Are they going into battle? Where are they from? What is their destination?' Ali Baba asked himself.

The horsemen stopped not far from where he was hiding. He could scarcely breathe. As they dismounted he counted them – there were forty in all, and they were carrying bags of gold, silver and precious stones. One of them, a tall, powerful man who seemed to be the chief, walked up to a bare rock face.



He held out his arms and seemed to speak to the rocky hillside. 'Open, Sesame!' he cried.

Before Ali Baba had a chance to wonder what this strange command might mean, an amazing sight made him gasp with surprise. The ground trembled and the cliff in front of the gang of thieves opened up like a doorway. One by one the forty thieves entered, and the rock closed in behind them. Ali Baba waited patiently. After a few minutes the magical opening appeared again, and the robbers emerged – but without their bags of treasure.

the country of their origin. They would have been invented by storytellers, memorised and repeated, and added to over many centuries.

You may wonder why the collection of stories which includes *Ali Baba* is called *The Book of One Thousand and One Nights*. This is because from the ninth century onwards the collection became associated with the story of King Shahryar 'of India and China', who rather gruesomely starts to believe that no woman can be trusted to be his wife, so has every new wife executed soon after he marries them.

Eventually the vizier, whose duty it is to provide suitable women to be the king's wives, runs out of candidates. Scheherazade, the vizier's beautiful daughter, offers herself as the next bride, and her father reluctantly agrees. On the night of their marriage, Scheherazade begins to tell the king a tale, but does not end it. The king, curious to know how the story ends, is thus forced to postpone her execution in order to hear the conclusion. The next night, as soon as she finishes the tale, she begins –

but only begins – a new one, and the king, eager to hear the conclusion, postpones her execution once again.

So it goes on for 1,001 nights, and in the end the king spares Scheherazade's life. The tales in *The Book of One Thousand and One Nights* vary widely: they include historical tales, love stories, tragedies, comedies and poems. Many of the stories depict ghosts, sorcerers, magicians, and legendary places, which are often intermingled with real people and geography.

The first collection of *The Book of One Thousand and One Nights* in a European language did not appear until the early 1700s, when a French version was produced by Antoine Galland, based on an Arabic text. Galland's collection was very popular, and in the 1800s many more editions and translations of the ancient manuscripts appeared.

The Book of One Thousand and One Nights includes some stories which do not appear to be based on Arabic written texts, but were