Summary

Chapter 1  The Sultan and Sheherezade
The wives of Sultan Shariar only last one night. He cuts off their heads at dawn, but his new wife, Sheherezade, has an idea. If she can get the sultan interested in a new story just before dawn each day, he will not cut off her head because he will want to hear the end of the story. So begins the tale of The Thousand and One Nights. Here we have some of Sheherezade’s stories.

Chapter 2  Behind the Door
In Behind the Door, Salem goes through a forbidden door and finds happiness, but when he tries to repeat the trick, he loses the happiness that he found.

Chapter 3  Sultan Haroun Laughs
Sultan Haroun does not laugh at anything in Sultan Haroun Laughs … until, that is, he catches out his servant, Masrour, in a little corruption. Asked by his master to bring a funny man to court, Masrour makes a deal with the man to get half his fee from the sultan. But when the ‘fee’ turns out to be a beating because the sultan does not find the man funny, he forgoes his share. At this point the sultan changes the fee to a hundred pieces of gold – and laughs at the reaction on Masrour’s face.

Chapter 4  Faisal and the Barber
The problem in Faisal and the Barber is that Faisal can’t get away from the barber. The barber is only trying to help but he keeps making things worse for Faisal and eventually ruins Faisal’s chances of meeting the girl he loves.

Chapter 5  The Boy Judge
In The Boy Judge, Ali leaves his secret hoard of gold with Husein, hidden in a jar under some olives. When he returns after seven years, the gold has gone, although the olives are still there. It takes the intelligence of a young boy to establish the truth – that Husein has taken the olives out, stolen the gold and replaced the old olives with new ones.

Chapter 6  The Dwarf of Basra
The Dwarf of Basra doesn’t actually die, but a lot of people think they have killed him. They each try to blame the death on another person, but when that person gets blamed for the murder, they each own up. Finally, the dwarf comes back to life and nobody is guilty of murder.

Chapter 7  Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves
Chapter 8  The End of the Forty Thieves
Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves is the famous story of a poor man, Ali Baba, who finds a store of gold hidden by thieves in a secret cave. The story leads on to The End of the Forty Thieves, in which thieves come looking for their gold but are outwitted by Marjana, a servant girl. She discovers them hiding in oil jars and kills them with burning oil.

Chapter 9  The Thief and the Donkey
The Thief and the Donkey tells the story of a kind but foolish man, who is tricked into believing that his donkey is really a man changed into a donkey after hitting his mother.

Chapter 10  Aladdin and the Lamp
Aladdin and the Lamp is another famous story, of a genie who grants wishes for whoever owns an old lamp. Aladdin gets the lamp and becomes rich. He marries the sultan’s daughter and gets a lovely house from the genie. But then the lamp, the house and Ali’s wife are transported to another country by a magician. It takes Ali a long time to find the house, but with the help of his wife, the magician is killed, the lamp recovered and Aladdin, his wife and the house are transported back to his own country.

About the collection
Tales from the Arabian Nights, or to give it the original title, The Thousand and One Nights, is a collection of stories from Persia, Arabia, India and Egypt which were brought together over hundreds of years. The names of the actual authors of the stories are lost in the mists of time as these stories were handed down orally from generation to generation. An early fragment of the collection has been found which dates from around 800 AD, but the collection grew after that until it reached its final form around 1500. At this point, the stories were in Arabic but a French translation appeared in 1717 and two English translations in the 1800s, the second by the well-known explorer and Arabist, Sir Richard Burton.
Tales from the Arabian Nights

Background and themes

*Tales from the Arabian Nights* is an example of a frame story, in which a number of stories are told within the context, or ‘frame’, of an ongoing story. The form may have originated with Sanskrit literature which used the device in, for example, the *Kathasaritsagara*, composed by the Kashmiri poet, Somadeva, in about AD 1070. There are several other well-known examples of frame stories. In Italy, there is the *Decameron*, by Giovanni Boccaccio, published in 1353 and translated into English in 1620. The frame for this collection of 100 tales is the story of 10 people taking refuge from the plague in a villa outside Florence. To entertain each other they tell stories. Boccaccio took his themes from Italian folklore plus Latin, Greek and French stories. Chaucer was influenced by Boccaccio as he was writing his *Canterbury Tales*, completed in 1400 AD, which contains 22 stories told by a group of pilgrims on their way to Canterbury Cathedral.

Discussion activities

Chapter 1, pages 1–2

**Before reading**

1. **Discuss:** Talk about bed time stories.
   Ask students if they remember any bed time stories they heard when they were little. Put students into small groups and talk about them. Ask some students to share their stories with the whole class.

**After reading**

2. **Pair work:** Talk about the sultan Shahriar.
   Shahriar cut off his wife’s head because she was with another man. He cut every new wife’s head after one night so that no woman would hurt him again. Have students work in pairs and ask them what they think about the reasons for his actions. Ask them to imagine what they would do if they were in his place.
   - You have a wife/husband. You find her/him with another man/woman. What will you do?
   - You don’t want anyone to hurt you again. What will you do?

Chapter 2, pages 2–8

**Before reading**

3. **Guess:** Predict the story.
   Write the title *Behind the Door* on the board or bring in a picture of a door. Have students work in small groups to guess what is behind the door in this story. The title of this story is ‘Behind the Door.’ What do you think is behind the door? Talk about it.

Chapter 3, pages 8–11

**Before reading**

4. **Discuss:** Talk about laughs.
   Have students talk about when they laughed last time. Ask individual students what it was about. Have them think what they would do if they want to have a laugh.
   - When was the last time you laughed?
   - What was it about?
   - You want to laugh. What can you do to have a laugh?

Chapter 4, pages 11–16

**Before reading**

5. **Guess:** Predict the story from the picture.
   Have students look at the picture on page 13. Ask one student to read out the caption. Tell students that the man in the picture is Faisal. Encourage students to guess what happens to Faisal and the beautiful young girl in the picture. Have them think why the barber has something to do with them.

**After reading**

6. **Role play:** Have students work in pairs and play the roles of two friends.
   Student A: You are in love with someone. You talk about it to your friend. Your friend wants to help you. You don’t want any help.
   Student B: Your friend is in love. You want to help your friend. Tell him/her what you can do to help him/her.
Tales from the Arabian Nights

Chapter 5, pages 16–20
Before reading
9 Discuss: Talk about friendship.
Have students look at the picture on page 17. Tell students that these two men are friends. Ask one student to read out the caption ‘Please can I leave this jar of olives with you?’ Tell them that there is something different in the jar under the olives. Put students in groups and have them think what it is and why the man is not telling the truth.

After reading
10 Role play: Put students into groups of three. Have them role play the court case with Ali, Husein and the boy judge.

Chapter 6, pages 20–24
Before reading
11 Discuss: Talk about dwarves.
Ask students if they know about any dwarves from other stories.

After reading
12 Group work: Retell a story as the dwarf.
Ask students to imagine that the dwarf was aware of everything that happened to him, although he seemed to be dead. Have students work in groups to work out the story from his point of view. Ask one group to tell their version and the other groups to decide if everything makes sense or if anything has been left out.

Chapter 7, pages 24–28
Before reading
13 Discuss: Talk about the story.
This is a famous story so that some of the students might know the story in their own language. Have them work in groups to recap the story as much as they remember.

After reading
14 Role play: Act out the conversation.
Put students into pairs to role play a conversation between Ali Baba and a person from the town. The person wants to know where Ali Baba got his money from and what has happened to Kasim. Ali Baba does not want to tell him the truth.

Chapter 8, pages 28–32
Before reading
15 Guess: Have students predict the story. Ask the following questions:
• At the end of Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves, it says, ‘the story didn’t end there.’ Why?
• What do you think the Forty Thieves will do?
• What do you think happens to these people: Ali Baba, his wife, his children, Kasim’s wife and Marjana?

After reading
16 Role play: The thieves want to kill Ali Baba.
Have students work in groups to role play a scene where the leader of the thieves explains his plan for getting into Ali Baba’s house and killing him. The thieves do not understand the plan and have lots of stupid questions.

Chapter 9, pages 32–35
Before reading
17 Research: Find out about donkeys.
Encourage students to use the resources from outside classroom, e.g. the Internet, the encyclopaedia, etc. Have them share their findings with the class.

After reading
18 Discuss: Talk about the man and his wife.
In this story, the man believes the thief’s story. He gives him money too. His wife says, ‘You were right when you gave money to that man.’ When the man sees the same donkey next day, he still does not understand the truth. What do you think about them? Are they stupid?

Chapter 10, pages 35–39
Before reading
19 Brainstorm: Talk about the story.
This is another famous story that some students might know the plot of in their language. Brainstorm the vocabulary that they might see in this story. Write down the words on the board.

After reading
20 Discuss: Talk about wishes.
Put students into groups. Tell them that they have found a lamp with a genie in it, but the genie can only grant three wishes. Have each group discuss to reach agreement on their three wishes. Ask each group to write their wishes on the board. Have the whole class decide which group has the best set of wishes.

Extra activities
21 Pair work: Talk about the stories in the book.
Have students look at the titles of the stories from the contents page. Have each pair ask and answer the following questions:
How much can you remember of each story?
Which is your favourite story? Why?
Which one did you like the least? Why?
If you are honest, you will get a reward.

Vocabulary activities
For the Word List and vocabulary activities, go to www.penguinreaders.com.