

# **UKS2 Topic: Early Islamic Civilisation**

Block F:  
Scheherazade

Session 2  
Resource pack

## Teacher checklist: common themes in '1001 Nights' stories

Have the children spotted recurring themes or story structures, as follows:

### **The 'frame story'**

An example of the frame story, or framing device, is employed in the One Thousand and One Nights, in which Scheherazade narrates a set of tales to the King Shahryar over many nights. Many of Scheherazade's tales are also frame stories, such as the *Tales of Sinbad*: a collection of adventures related by Sinbad to various other characters.

### **Rise to riches**

Many of the Arabian Nights stories tell of men who rise from poverty to wealth and prosperity, as seen with Aladdin, Ali Baba and Sinbad. In each of these stories, the protagonist begins with very little to show for himself, but manages to rise in society both through luck, quick wits and perseverance.

### **Luck and good fortune**

Often, a character finds success in these stories through some rare stroke of good luck. Ali Baba just happened to be in the vicinity of the robbers when they opened the cave, so he knew how to access it and take the treasure...

### **Adventure**

A common theme of adventure and daring is present throughout nearly all of these stories. In *The Seven Voyages of Sinbad the Sailor*, Sinbad has a thirst for adventure on the open sea that cannot be quelled with merely a voyage or two. Other major characters regularly face obstacles that test their wits, strength, and agility, all elements of adventure tales.

### **Greed**

In a collection of stories that focuses so strongly on wealth and riches, greed often arises as a vice that characters must counter in themselves and others. The *magician* in Aladdin and *the forty thieves* are some of the characters met who cause trouble in order to satisfy their own greed.

### **The Power of Storytelling**

Storytelling is possibly the collection's most enduring theme. In the frame story of The Arabian Nights, Scheherazade believes that the power and intrigue of her stories will be able to keep her husband from killing her or any more of his wives. Sinbad believes that his stories will help lead the impoverished porter to a better understanding of the world. Stories are very often used as a means of persuasion, such as in *The Three Apples* and *The Fisherman and the Jinni*.