

youth & stages

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GENIES, LAMPS, AND DREAMS: TALES OF THE ARABIAN NIGHTS

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photo: illumadigital.com

STUDY GUIDE

GENIES, LAMPS, AND DREAMS: TALES OF THE ARABIAN NIGHTS

STUDY GUIDE

BEFORE THE SHOW

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS/TOPICS:

1. Ask the children what they know or have heard, from their parents or the news, about "The Middle East", "Iraq" or "Baghdad."

Explain (in terms your children can understand): Today, Baghdad is the capital of a country called Iraq and things are in turmoil in that region. But a thousand years ago, Baghdad was the capital of that entire area of the world, known as Persia. The Abbasid dynasty, 750–1258 AD, is known as the "golden age" of the Islamic world. Baghdad was wealthy, culturally sophisticated, and saw great leaps in philosophy, science and, especially, the arts. The tales from *The Arabian Nights* (*The Book of a Thousand Nights and a Night* or *1001 Arabian Nights*) grew out of this culturally rich climate.

The play is set in 803 AD in the great room of the Sultan's palace in the Persian Empire, in Baghdad, capital of the Abbasid Dynasty.

2. Ask the children if they have seen the Disney movie of *Aladdin*.

Tell them that the tale of Aladdin is from the Arabian Nights. It probably originated in China, but is frequently set in the Middle East. (Disney set it in a mythical/pretend land, they called Agrabah.)

3. Ask the children: "If you had three wishes, what would you wish for?"

HISTORICAL VOCABULARY WORDS:

Sultan/Caliph: an Islamic monarch; the ruler of a Moslem country

Empire: an area larger than a kingdom, made up of different territories and nations, ruled by one authority

canopy: a cloth covering, usually held up horizontally on poles, so it looks like a roof

gold lamp: Lamps today have a lightbulb and use electricity. A Persian lamp, usually made of metal, provides a space or reservoir for oil. A wick is placed in the liquid and absorbs the oil. When lit, it burns to produce light and warmth. People rub them to polish them and make them shiny.

roc: a large and strong mythical (pretend) bird

gems: precious stones like diamonds and rubies

thief: a person who steals other people's property (a robber or "bad guy"!)

THEATRICAL VOCABULARY WORDS:

play: A story written with action and as dialogue (where characters speak to one another) to be performed for an audience

actress (female) actor (male): a person who pretends to be someone else in a play. The term actor is used today for both males and females. The term actress is rarely used.

character: the person, animal, or thing an actor pretends to be. A talented actor can pretend to be a queen, a thief, a bird, a snake, the sun, even a door (and many more besides)!

THEATRICAL VOCABULARY WORDS (CONT.):

director: a person who instructs the actors where to walk, sit, and stand on stage, and coordinates the costumes, set and other components of the production

troupe: a group of actors who travel and perform a play in various places

costumes: the special clothes an actor wears in a play (like on Halloween when you wear a costume, or special clothes)

props: anything an actor holds or uses in a play (a pen, paper, flashlight, bag, etc.)

set: the backdrop, pretend walls, chairs or furniture used in a play

ACTING AND PRETENDING:

In our play, *Genies, Lamps, and Dreams: Tales of the Arabian Nights* our troupe of traveling actors brings the show to your school, library or other location. The play is made up of four of the 1001 tales from the Arabian Nights; *The Genie and the Fisherwoman, Sinbad the Sailor, Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp, Ali Baba and the Sticky Thieves.*

Our *troupe* consists of two *actors*. Their real names are Jim and Debby. In the *play*, Jim pretends to be the *character*, The Sultan Caliph Harun al-Rashid. Debby pretends to be the *character* of his daughter, Princess Zubaydah. But in the *play*, the *characters* also put on a *play!!!*

Jim, as the Sultan, pretends to be:

- | | | |
|--|---------------------|----------------------|
| • Ajib, a traveling performer and director | • a king | • Aladdin, the boy |
| • a puppeteer and the voice of a Genie | • Sinbad the Sailor | • Mustafa, the thief |
| • Ali Baba, the poor merchant | | |

Debby, as the Princess, pretends to be:

- | | | |
|--|--------------------------------|--------------------------|
| • the Fisherwoman | • a roc, a mythical bird | • the Snake Queen |
| • Aladdin's mother | • a Wizardess/Auntie | • Captain of the Thieves |
| • a puppeteer and the voice of a Genie | • Morgiana, a faithful servant | |

Wow!! That's a lot of pretending!!

Genies, Lamps, and Dreams: Tales of the Arabian Nights is a *participatory* play. That means that YOU, as the audience, get to act and pretend with us!

YOU will pretend to be the Sultan's children, make up magic words, count with us, and pretend to be:

- | | | | |
|---------|----------|-----------|----------|
| • birds | • frogs | • fish | • snakes |
| • water | • bakers | • thieves | |

Wow!! That's a lot of pretending, too!!

MAKING A PUPPET:

Two puppets are used in the show. One is a marionette and one is a rod puppet.

A **marionette** is a string puppet, usually manipulated from above.

Rod puppets are usually manipulated from below or behind by moving a rod or pole that's attached to the head or arm of the puppet.

A **hand puppet** or **glove puppet** fits on the hand like a glove. The pointer finger fits into the head and the thumb and middle finger become the arms. Many of the puppets in Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood are hand puppets.

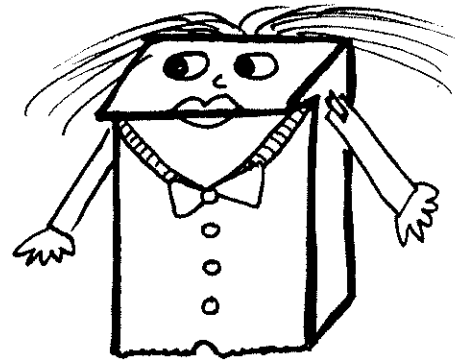
In a **mouth puppet**, the fingers go into the head and the thumb moves the jaw up and down. Most characters on Sesame Street are mouth puppets.

Shadow puppets are flat and cut from leather or cardboard. A light is shown from behind the puppet so the audience watches the shadow of the puppet through a screen.

MAKING A PUPPET (CONT.):

1. Make a mouth puppet

Using a brown paper lunch bag, hold the bag upside down and imagine the fold on the bottom of the bag as the puppet's mouth. Use markers, construction paper cutouts, cotton balls, or store-bought wiggly eyes to put eyes on the bottom of the bag. Around the fold, make lips. Down the side of the bag, draw a shirt, dress, buttons or other suggestions of clothing. Add arms if you'd like. When it's done and dry, put your hand into the bag and manipulate the mouth with your fingers.



2. Make a rod or stick puppet

Photocopy the form below onto oaktag (or draw your own figure onto oaktag or cardboard). Cut around the edges, color it, and attach it to a popsicle or craft stick with masking tape. (If you want, you can set up a shadow puppet stage and manipulate these in front of light!)



With your puppets, act out the story on the next page! (If you want, make the set, too!)

ACTING OUT A STORY:

Teachers/librarians/parents: Read the story below, taken directly from the script. As you read the text, have the children, in pairs, manipulate their puppets; one as the Baghdad merchant the other as the Daroga.

There was a rich man in Baghdad who lived in a beautiful house with a garden in front, a fountain in back, and a canopy of blue silk hung from its side. Through no fault of his own he one day became poor. He was told in a dream that to be rich again he must travel across the desert to a faraway land. Knowing the dream was too strong to be ignored, he left his home and after many weeks and troubles came to a great palace. Being a stranger, he was questioned by the head guard, called the Daroga. "What brings you to our land?" the Daroga demanded. And so the traveler explained his dream. "What a silly, silly man you are!" (laughs) "to come all this way and suffer as you have for a dream. I myself have dreamed three times of a treasure buried in the garden of a Baghdad house. A garden lay in front, a fountain behind and a canopy of blue silk hung from its side. But I have not been silly enough to go there. Leave this place at once!" The traveler hurried home to find a great treasure buried in his garden, just as the Daroga had described.

CREATING CHARACTERS:

Actors need three things to act and create characters.

- First we use our **imagination** to think up who or what we want to be.
- Next we change our **body** to become the character we imagine.
- Then we change our **voice** to match the character.

(Other things like costumes, props, scripts, and makeup aren't as important... it's what we create with ourselves that matters most!)

Teachers/librarians/parents: Try these acting exercises with your children:

Bird: Imagine you are a bird. Birds don't have arms and hands. Use your arms and hands as wings. Flutter your wings as a little bird. Flap your arms to soar as a large bird. Most birds' eyes are not on the front of their face as human eyes are. Birds have one eye on either side of their heads. Turn your head from side to side to look at something in front of you! What kind of small chirping sound would your little bird make? From the top of an imaginary tree, soar to the ground below and catch a mouse in your sharp talons. (Don't use your hands, they're wings!! Use your feet to catch the imaginary mouse.) What sort of loud squawking or cawing voice would your large bird use?

Frog: Imagine you are a frog. Squat down with your knees out to either side and your hands touching the floor in front of you. Jump up and land in the same squatting position. Frogs have much longer tongues than humans do. Imagine there is a fly buzzing around your head. Quickly stick out your tongue and catch it! Frogs are excellent swimmers. How can you look like you are swimming? Can you do a frog kick? What sort of ribbit or croaking sound would you make?

Try some other animals: **dog, cat, fish, snake.**

Try some different types of people: **baker, detective, thief, waitress.**

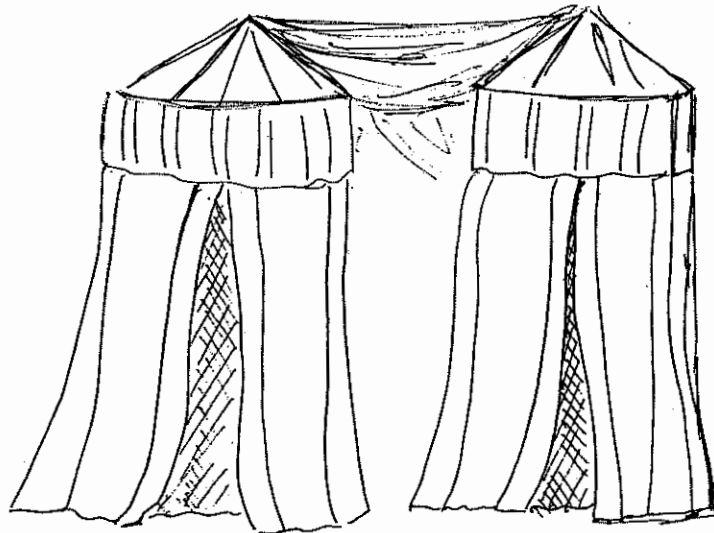
Try being something completely different. How would you be **fire? water? wind?**

Teacher/librarian/parent note: Side coach: give the children ideas of active things they can do as each character (dog burying a bone, baker measuring flour and stirring, detective looking for clues, etc.)

AFTER THE SHOW

SET DESIGN:

Every play has a certain "look" to it. In Youth Stages' production of *Two Marys, Five Jacks, and One Very Big Shoe: a clever retelling of the rhymes of Mother Goose*, we wanted the set to be playful and look like a kid's bedroom. When the production team for *Genies Lamps and Dreams: Tales of the Arabian Nights* met, we discussed a set that was made of fabric; flowing and billowing. Three months before the play began to tour, Nancy Jean McBride designed the set. This is what she drew. Does the set look like this? Did she make any changes along the way from this original design to the finished product you saw?



If you were asked to design (create) the set for, say, *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*, what would it look like? Would you make a woods, a cabin? Would you have three bowls, three chairs, and three beds? Is there any way you could have only one bed and use it three different ways?

(Our troupe tours this show, so our set has to come apart and fit in a car to transport from place to place!!)

WRITE A LETTER/DRAW A PICTURE:

Youth Stages would like to know what you thought of *Genies Lamps and Dreams: Tales of the Arabian Nights*. Write us a letter and/or draw us a picture about your favorite part of the show. Maybe you have a question you'd like to ask us. We love to get mail so send your letters and pictures to:



Youth Stages, LLC
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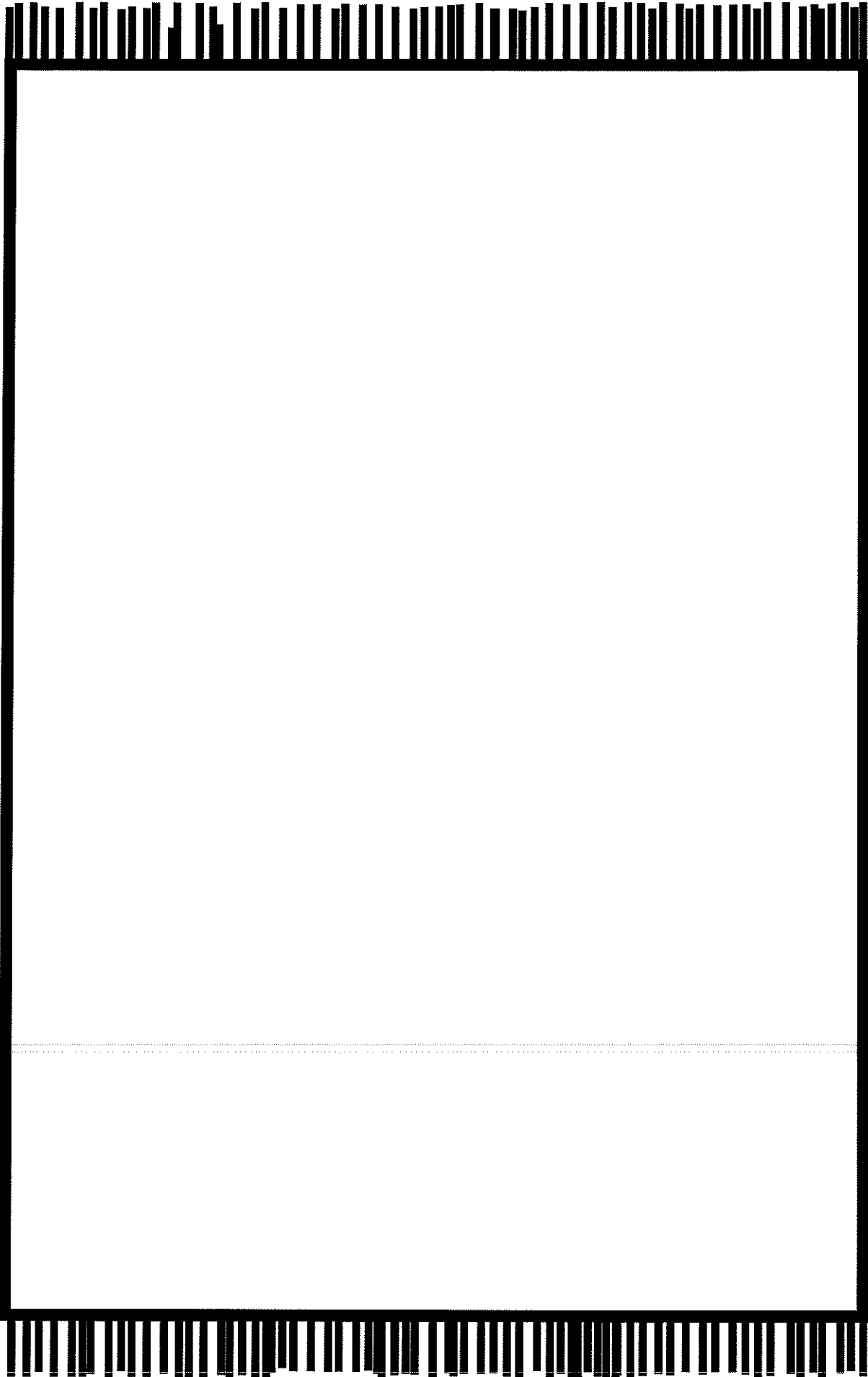
or e-mail them to us at:
manager@youthstages.com

We look forward to reading them!

CREATIVE THINKING, STORY MAKING, AND DRAWING:

The following pages require creative thinking, tactile drawing/craft project, and creative storytelling by children. Remember to ask the child about what s/he drew. Ask questions which will advance their story and elicit greater detail. If they say "There's water there" ask if it's clear, blue-green or purple. Ask if it's calm or choppy. If they decorate their lamp with dots, ask what those dots are; jewels? bugs? gumdrops? Let the child create and describe as you listen and encourage.

If you could travel anywhere on a magic carpet, where would you go? Why? In the magic carpet below, draw a picture of that place. Tell your teacher, parent, or a friend about this place. What does it look like? What kind of plants grow there? What kind of animals live there? What does it smell like? What sounds can you hear in this place?



Decorate the magic lamp below.
You can color it with markers, bingo markers, or crayons; draw lines, squiggles, dots, pictures, decorations, jewels!
Or as a project; stick stickers on it, glue construction paper or foam shapes to it, add glitter or cotton balls to it. Be creative!

