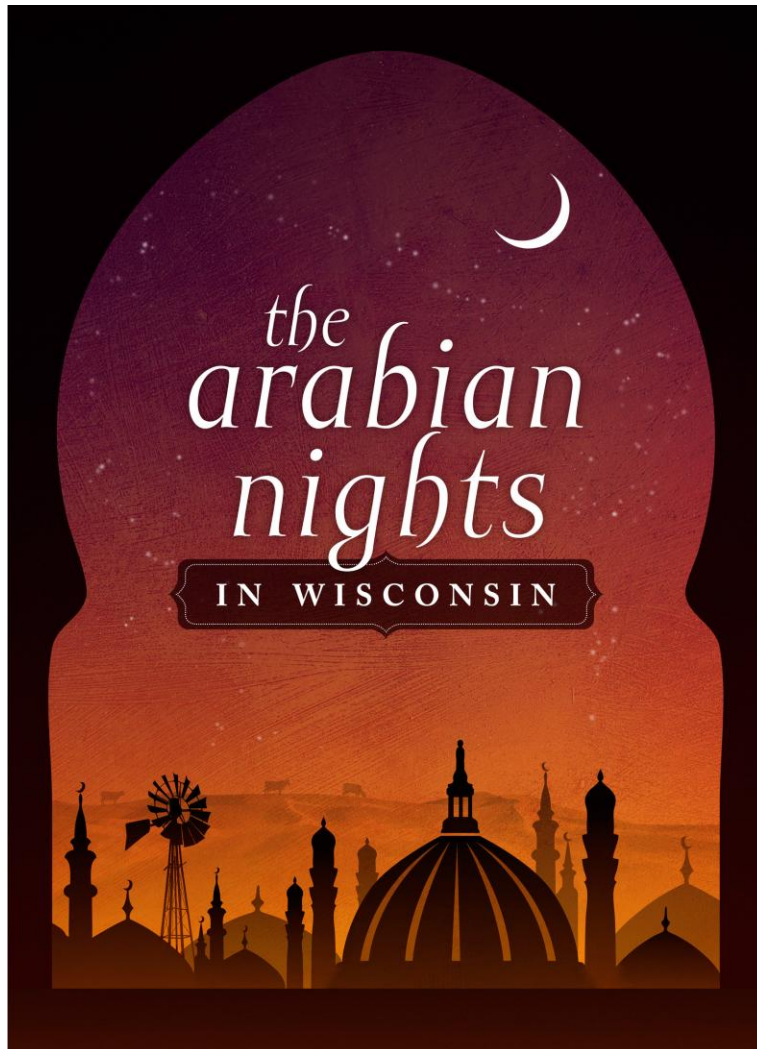


Teaching *The Arabian Nights* In Wisconsin

A Resource Guide for Educators



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Note: All of the materials found in this guide are also available online at:

<http://www.humanities.wisc.edu/programs/great-texts/arabian-nights/curriculum-guides.html>

Maps and handouts can be found at: <http://www.humanities.wisc.edu/programs/great-texts/arabian-nights/center-resources.html>

Introduction and Overview

Reading Across Time and Space

The Arabian Nights can be viewed as both a medieval and a modern text: while the earliest extant manuscript dates from the fourteenth century, the stories themselves have maintained a lively existence to the present day. This situation presents unique opportunities and challenges for educators. It is important to stress the historical distance between the modern Middle East and the world of *The Arabian Nights*, and to resist applying insights on culture derived from the stories to, for example, contemporary Cairo. In addition, the status of the *Nights* as a collection of stories designed to entertain should be kept in mind: what we are reading is fairy tale, not history or anthropology. At the same time, the persistence of images from the *Nights*, of marvelous happenings and magical transformations, testifies to the enduring power of the tales. This power deserves to be celebrated.

Some of the units in this guide focus on the *Nights* in its historical context, while others explore the ways in which it has proliferated in other contexts, including our own. The critic Edward Said's concept of Orientalism – that body of assumptions and stereotypes which Western societies have, particularly since the colonial era, applied to the countries of an “exotic” East – is a key component of our approach. An awareness of how easy it is to fall into such stereotyping should help stave off a Disneyfied approach to the text and encourage students to develop a more nuanced perspective.

How to Use this Guide

The Arabian Nights is a loosely connected collection of stories. The structure of the text means that it is quite easy to pick and choose from the material in order to suit a longer or shorter course. Only the frame story of Shahrazad, included in Unit One, is really essential to understanding the text, though because of this guide's focus on Orientalism, Unit Two can also be considered crucial. Unit Three, which deals with structure, follows the first two units in importance. After this, however, the units and their accompanying stories can be approached in any order. As the units are organized thematically, instructors can choose which themes they find most intriguing or important, or those which fit most naturally with other course material.

The lesson plans and activities provided in this guide are designed to allow you the opportunity to tailor the way you teach the text to your own course, interests, and goals. The individual units could be taught over one or several days, and you can mix and match ideas from the various sections to put together your own syllabus. Each section includes project ideas, study/discussion questions, and suggestions for further teaching of the theme or issue covered, as well as recommendations for material and concepts to be covered in lecture. Discussion questions can be used as prompts for in-class discussion, or for small group activities or in-class writing assignments.

Suggested Preparatory Readings and student materials (handouts)

Every attempt has been made to make use of the supplementary essays in the Norton edition of *The Arabian Nights*. Additional materials are available online at: <http://www.humanities.wisc.edu/programs/great-texts/arabian-nights/center-resources.html>

Homework, Projects and Student Materials (available online)

Each unit is accompanied with supplementary materials, study questions and project ideas which can be used to develop handouts and classroom aids. After surveying the wealth of information available online for this text, we felt no need to reinvent the wheel in this department, and point you to handy handouts available online whenever possible. Teachers should preview these materials carefully however, and make efforts to avoid using materials which present the text ahistorically or without taking into account the distance between the world of *The Arabian Nights* and contemporary Middle Eastern literature and culture. We have made efforts to point you toward the best web resources we could find on the novel, and encourage you to make use of the recommended materials found in this guide.

Close Reading Strategies

All of the lessons in this guide are attached to specific stories from *The Arabian Nights*. During discussion, students should be encouraged to support their interpretations with evidence from the text. Close reading lends itself well to group work and small-group discussions, and is an excellent way for students to learn both critical thinking and analysis skills as they make connections, use evidence to support their views, and discuss the impact of fiction. For close reading to work successfully, it's important that the teacher always remind the students to point to the passage/line/occurrence that supports their position as they share their ideas. Close reading teaches students the difference between "opinion" or "personal reaction" and "analysis."

Lecture Points

Each unit in this guide contains a set of lecture points. These are the ideas and concepts we recommend you cover in class, but you should feel free to add, adjust and customize these ideas to fit your own goals and objectives for the unit. Since every teacher has a different teaching preparation style, we just provide some basic tools here – the goal was to provide enough information that teachers who wanted to could construct an entire unit out of the materials, but leave room for flexibility and adaptation to different course and teaching needs. Whatever your approach, lecture should always model the sort of close reading you want the students to perform by using as many examples from the text as possible to support and reinforce your points.

A Note on the Editions

Two editions of the text are used here. The first, which students will use, is referred to as "Norton." The other edition will be available to teachers and is referred to as "Norton Crit."

A Note of Caution on Plagiarism

As with other “great texts,” there is a wealth of information readily available on *The Arabian Nights*, which can be tempting material to plagiarize from the web or other study guides. Teachers may consider discussing their policies on academic honesty and the differences between paraphrasing, summarizing, citation and undocumented use of other sources. It’s also recommended that teachers make plagiarism less likely by customizing their assignments to their classes and avoiding generic and widely-used prompts for take-home essay assignments or longer projects.

For further information

If you have any questions about this guide, or would like additional information on any of the materials included here, please feel free to contact the author, **Sofia Samatar**, at samatar2@wisc.edu.

Lesson Plans and Activities

Unit 1: Text and Context – The World of *The Arabian Nights*

It is impossible to pinpoint the precise origin of the collection of tales we know as *The Arabian Nights*. The stories have their sources in a variety of places, including India and Persia as well as the Arabic-speaking regions more commonly associated with the text: Egypt, Syria and Iraq. This variety testifies to the diversity of the medieval Islamic world, a vast area drawn together by interactions sparked primarily by religion and trade.

The complexity of the origins of the *Nights* is almost matched, for English speakers, by the bewildering array of translations into European languages. The manner in which the *Nights* came to be known in English is inextricably linked to the colonial project, a connection explored more deeply in Unit 2. In Unit 1, the focus is on historical background as a framework for approaching the text, and on developing an awareness of the impact of translation. An improved understanding of the historical setting of the *Nights* can help achieve a double aim: to place the stories firmly in a historical context, and to enrich our appreciation of their many enchantments.

It is worth noting that the Arabic text of *The Arabian Nights* is called *Alf Layla wa Layla* – literally, “A Thousand Nights and a Night.” The title *The Thousand and One Nights* is often used in English, but *The Arabian Nights* is probably the more familiar title. The title we tend to recognize attaches an Arab or “Arabian” character to what is actually a diverse collection.

Stories:

The Story of King Shahrayar and Shahrazad, His Vizier’s Daughter; The Tale of the Ox and the Donkey; The Tale of the Merchant and His Wife

Objective:

Provide background and context for the study of *The Arabian Nights*, and examine the role translation plays in reading across cultures.

Preparatory Reading:

Daniel Heller-Roazen’s preface, Norton Crit., p. vii

“The Origins of *The Arabian Nights*” by Josef Horowitz, Norton Crit., p. 386

“The Translators of *The Thousand and One Nights*” by Jorge Luis Borges, Norton Crit., p. 409

(NOTE: any of these short readings could also be suitable for students, particularly in AP literature or history courses)

Additional Readings and Resources:

- “A New Translation of *The Arabian Nights*” by Jack Ross
<http://mairangibay.blogspot.com/2008/12/new-translation-of-arabian-nights.html>

- Discussion of *The Arabian Nights* on BBC radio:
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0081kdb>
- BBC page on Islam: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/>
- Islamic history timeline: <http://www.pbs.org/empires/islam/timeline.html>
- Free article on the history of Islam:
http://www.cqpress.com/context/articles/epr_islam.html
- History of Iraq, including medieval history:
<http://historymedren.about.com/library/text/bltxtiraqmain.htm>

Handout/presentation materials

Adventures in Translation: selections from different translations of *The Arabian Nights*

Lecture points:

Using the preparatory materials above, the lecture should provide background for the text, including:

- Locate the key settings of the *Nights* on a map, particularly the cities of Baghdad, Basra and Cairo
- Briefly discuss the Abbasid Caliphate (750-1258) and the reign of the caliph Harun al-Rashid
- Discuss the various translations of the *Nights*, focusing on how translation shapes the reception of a work
- Note the suppression of overtly sexual language and content in some translations, and discuss reasons for this
- Discuss the function of the *Nights* as a source of both education and pleasure, as stated in the Foreword (Norton Crit. 3)
- This would be a good time to address the often explicit language and content of the *Nights*. Students should be prepared for an encounter with an unexpurgated translation, perhaps for the first time. The bawdy nature of some of the stories is likely to provoke surprise in students who have a view of Islamic societies as puritanical and sexually repressed. This surprise can provide a gateway to a discussion of the need to resist stereotypes of other cultures. Resources for dealing with the topic can be found at the end of this guide under “Recommended Web Resources: Resources on the Issue of Explicit Language/Content in the Classroom.”

Discussion Questions:

- Locate Baghdad, Cairo and Basra on a map. Note the distances between them and other places mentioned in the *Nights* such as India, Persia and China.
- Compare medieval and contemporary maps of the region.
- Discuss the philosophical, scientific and literary achievements of the Abbasid era, known as the Golden Age of Islamic civilization.

- The Foreword to *The Arabian Nights* states that the stories are meant to provide both instruction and entertainment. How is this attitude toward literature expressed in the stories for this unit?
- After reading the frame story and the other stories in the unit, compare various translations using the “Adventures in Translation” handout.
- What makes a good translation?
- Which translation do you prefer?
- How does the use of a different but similar word affect the meaning and tone of a text?
- What are the implications of suppressing material, such as explicit language and content, in a translation?
- Haddawy’s translation is the closest to the Arabic text, while both Lane and Burton have taken some serious liberties with their source material. What have Lane and Burton added? What have they omitted? What reasons can you suggest for this?
- How is the character of Shahzaman affected by the different translations?

Assignment and Project Ideas:

- **Reading/Response Journal.** Now is a good time to ask your students to keep a reflection journal in which they respond to the text and material covered in class. You might ask them to write 1-2 pages of personal response to the text, to find points of identification or highlight confusing or problematic passages. Or you could use the discussion questions in these lesson plans to create your own **guided journal** – a handout of prompts to which you require the students to respond when reading each series of tales. This could be an on-going project, a group activity, or an in-class writing assignment at the end of each class period.
- Have students write an **essay** in which they reflect on the power of language to create perception, if possible giving examples of words in other languages which cannot be translated precisely into English. Students who speak another language well can provide a translation of a passage and reflect on their experience as translators.
- **Research on the Islamic Golden Age:** Request students to research various aspects of the Islamic world during the Abbasid era, particularly in Baghdad, its cultural and political center. Philosophy, science, literature, the arts and daily life are all excellent topics. Other good topics for research include the Abbasid dynasty, the relationship between the Islamic and Christian regions of the world in the Middle Ages, and of course the court of Harun al-Rashid.

Suggestions for expanding this unit

The great Moroccan traveler Ibn Battuta left wonderful accounts of his extensive journeys throughout the Islamic world in the fourteenth century. Incorporating his descriptions of the region into a lecture on *The Arabian Nights* is one way to bring the historical setting to life. You can find an overview and excerpts of his writings here:

- http://www.ummah.net/history/scholars/ibn_battuta/
- <http://www.isidore-of-seville.com/ibn-battuta/index.html>

Unit 2: Orientalism: Reading Others

In 1978, the Palestinian-American cultural critic Edward Said published *Orientalism*, a book which examines European representations of the East. The most influential by far of Said's books, *Orientalism* has sparked lively debates since its publication, and continues to serve as a starting-point for the study of the Middle East in Western universities. Orientalism can be understood as a system (of texts, movies, images, etc) which together reinforce a way of understanding the Middle East through a very Eurocentric lens, through which the "other" is exoticized in inaccurate and ahistorical ways. The concept of Orientalism should inform contemporary studies of *The Arabian Nights*, for it can help us understand how and why the *Nights* were first translated, and why certain aspects of the text have become symbols of the East which persist to the present day. In order for stereotypes to be challenged, they must first be recognized, and Said's perspective can help us to do this. It should be understood that our purpose is in no way to dampen students' enjoyment of *The Arabian Nights*, but rather to develop their skills as critical thinkers.

Stories:

The Story of the Merchant and the Demon; The First Old Man's Tale; The Second Old Man's Tale

Objective:

Introduce students to the concept of Orientalism and help them to see both how it influenced the reception of *The Arabian Nights* and how it continues to inform Western perspectives on the Middle East today.

"The Orient was almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences."

- **Edward Said** (*From Orientalism, in The Edward Said Reader, 67*)

Readings and Resources:

- Introduction to *Orientalism* by Edward Said
- Emory University's Orientalism page: <http://www.english.emory.edu/Bahri/Orientalism.html>
- Said on Orientalism: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xwCOSkXR_Cw&feature=related
(This is Part 1 of an excellent 4-part series of interviews with Said)
- "The Utility of Islamic Imagery in the West" by J.A. Progler: <http://www.al-islam.org/al-tawhid/islamicimageryinwest.htm>

- Article on the portrayal of Arabs in the U.S. media:
<http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/ic50.2008/reelBadArabs/index.html>
- “Arab Stereotypes and American Educators” by Marvin Wingfield and Bushra Karaman:
<http://www.adc.org/education/arab-stereotypes-and-american-educators/>

Lecture Points:

- Introduce Edward Said and the concept of Orientalism
- Orientalism’s roots in British and French colonial efforts of the 18th and 19th centuries
- Features of Orientalism: people from the “East” (which lumps together Asia, the Middle East and sometimes even Russia) are:
 - Weak
 - Feminine
 - Culturally backward
 - Shifty and untrustworthy
 - Exotic
 - Seductive
 - Unchanging
 - Biologically inferior to Westerners
 - Eager to be dominated
 - Silenced (by religious extremists, oppressive governments and the veiling of women)
 - Etc....
- Discuss stereotypes of people from the Middle East and Asia in the U.S. media, particularly negative or exoticized images of Arabs
- Discuss the pervasiveness of stereotypes, and ways to resist them
- Present a reading of the stories for the unit that emphasizes their literary elements rather than their exoticism. You might choose to focus on the idea of telling a tale to save a life, and how this action in *The Story of the Merchant and the Demon* reflects Shahrazad’s own efforts to survive through storytelling.

Handouts/presentation materials

Orientalism

Discussion Questions:

- Why did Edward Said find it necessary to develop the concept of Orientalism?
- When you think of *The Arabian Nights*, what images of the Middle East come to mind? Where do these images come from?

- What are the images from the stories you have read so far that conform to the stereotypes of Orientalism? Which images contradict these stereotypes?
- Is there such a thing as a “good stereotype?”
- Based on the translation discussion from Unit 1, how do various translations of the *Nights* support or undermine stereotypes?
- Consider Orientalism in reverse. If a non-Westerner came up with a perspective on the West based on fairy tales, what might it look like?
- Is it possible not to be affected by stereotypes? How can we resist them?

Assignment and Project Ideas:

- The Disney film “Aladdin” is offensive to many Arabs and Arab Americans. Watch part of the movie (the opening scene is a good choice, but there are many others) and ask students to reflect on what they see and hear. You might also like to compare and contrast Aladdin’s “Arabian Nights” song with the theme song from the new “1001 Nights” cartoon, available here: <http://www.bigbadboo.ca/index.php/home?page=propertiesdetail&pid=9&st=1>¹
- For a different perspective on the contemporary Middle East, ask students to visit and reflect on the Al-Jazeera site, which offers news stories in English from an Arab point of view: <http://english.aljazeera.net>
- Ask students to write an **essay** examining their own perspective on the Middle East, or consider it in their journals.

Suggestions for expanding this unit

Arabs in the U.S. Media: There is a wealth of information on this topic, and once you get started, your students will probably provide even more. Here are some useful web resources:

- Article on Arabs in the media:
<http://www.calstatela.edu/faculty/sfisco/Arabs.html>
- Children’s Media Project page; includes video:
<http://www.childrenmediaproject.org/article.asp?showid=41>
- Link to lyrics of the song “Arabian Nights” which opens the Disney film of Aladdin:
http://www.aladdincentral.org/encyclopedia/index.php?title=Arabian_Nights

¹ Note: We strongly encourage you to show clips or episodes from this series to your classes, as the creators of the “1001 Nights” animated series, **Shabnam Rezaei** and **Aly Jetha**, will be the keynote speakers at our spring Student Conference on April 6, 2011. Students familiar with the work are likely to get even more out of their presentation.

Unit 3: Stories Within Stories: the Structure of *The Arabian Nights*

The “frame story” structure of *The Arabian Nights* is one of its most intriguing aspects, and has captured the imagination of generations of writers, artists and more recently filmmakers in different parts of the world. The essays at the back of the Norton Critical edition of the *Nights*, listed below, express the commonly held but still thought-provoking view that the embedding of stories within stories is a means of prolonging life. As long as the first story in the series – the story of Shahrazad – is suspended, it cannot end, and Shahrazad cannot die. Shahrazad, of course, is telling the stories specifically in order to escape death – making *The Arabian Nights* one of literature’s most brilliant and successful examples of the matching of form and content.

This unit contains more reading than some of the others, encompassing The Story of the Fisherman and the Demon and all of the stories contained within it. The larger amount of reading will help to illustrate the structure of the text as a whole. If necessary, one or more of the tales can be dropped from the unit.

Note that this translation uses “story” in the titles of major stories and “tale” in the titles of stories within stories. Attention to the titles can help a great deal in navigating the text.

Stories:

The Story of the Fisherman and the Demon; The Tale of King Yunan and the Sage Duban; The Tale of the Husband and the Parrot; The Tale of the King’s Son and the She-Ghoul; The Tale of the Enchanted King

Objective:

To discuss and explore the complex narrative structure of *The Arabian Nights*, and to reflect on the relationship between form and content.

Preparatory Reading and Resources:

- Excerpt from *The Art of Storytelling* by Mia Irene Gerhardt, Norton Crit., p. 433
- “Narrative-Men” by Tzvetan Todorov, Norton Crit., p. 443
- “Story-Telling Techniques in *The Arabian Nights*” by David Pinault, Norton Crit., p. 504
- “What is *The Arabian Nights*?” by Michael Lundell:
<http://journalofthenights.blogspot.com/2009/05/what-is-arabian-nights-1001-nights.html>
- Examples of frame stories in literature, television and film:
<http://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/FramingDevice>

Lecture points:

- Define “frame story” and explain the technique.
- Explain the difference between form (*how* the text is put together) and content (*what* the text says, the story)

- Discuss the relationship between form and content in *The Arabian Nights*.
- Explore reasons for the universal appeal of this type of story.
- Provide examples of frame stories in literature and film, and elicit examples from students.
- Explore the idea of stopping time, or prolonging life, through storytelling.
- Discuss the ideas of tradition and innovation in literature. The *Nights* is a good starting point for such a discussion, as it is a very old body of work with what can be regarded even in contemporary times as an innovative structure.
- Lines of poetry, as well as tales, are embedded in the stories. Discuss their meaning and function.

Discussion questions:

- What is a story? Where do stories begin and end?
- How do stories differ from poetry?
- Are there limits on what form a story can take? If so, what are they?
- What is a traditional story? What is avant-garde literature? How does *The Arabian Nights* relate to these categories?
- Are folk tales literature?
- Why are people attracted to the form of stories within stories?
- How do you personally respond to this structure?
- What is the relationship between literature and experience? Between fairy tales and experience?
- Are there ways other than storytelling in which one experience is embedded in another? What about dreams, role-playing games or the act of reading itself?
- How long can the stories-within-stories structure be maintained? Is there a point where it becomes too difficult to follow?
- Can a work of literature be both challenging and entertaining? Is it necessary for it to challenge us in order to keep our attention, or would we be better entertained by something less demanding?

Assignment and Project Ideas:

- Have students write an **essay** on an example of a frame story in literature or film, or reflect on it in their journals.
- This would be a great time to work in some creative writing. Have students write their own **stories** with the frame story structure.

Suggestions for expanding this unit

This unit could be expanded by looking more closely at examples of frame stories. Use the preparatory resources to find examples. A look at framing in film would be particularly rich in opportunities for discussion. *Inception*, one of the summer's biggest hits, is a great example of stories within stories.

Unit 4: Gender and Class

The issue of gender is one of the most provocative and challenging topics in relations between the U.S. and the Middle East. In many cases it is the “go-to” issue when Middle Eastern culture is brought up – the subject to which Americans are quickest to make reference. When approaching gender in *The Arabian Nights*, it is vital to focus on the text itself and avoid making sweeping generalizations about women in the Middle East. As always, it must be remembered that we are reading a medieval text which should be considered in its historical context.

In fact, *The Arabian Nights* offers a wealth of exciting and surprising material on gender. Its main character is a woman; intelligent and resourceful women abound in its pages; and it can be argued that its entire direction is pro-female, as Shahrazad, in saving herself, also saves all the women of the kingdom.

Class is placed together with gender in this unit because of the way in which the stories tend to subvert the power of kings. These are popular tales designed for a general audience, including both rich and poor. In the pages of the *Nights* we see not only women, but also destitute fishermen, poor traveling dervishes and various social outcasts come into their own.

Stories:

The Story of the Porter and the Three Ladies; The First Dervish’s Tale; The Second Dervish’s Tale; The Tale of the First Lady, Mistress of the House; The Tale of the Second Lady, the Flogged One

A Note on “The Story of the Porter and the Three Ladies:”

This humorous story contains quite a bit of explicit language (Norton, p. 88-91). Be sure to read these pages before assigning them.

Objective:

To examine gender and class in the *Nights* and the way social roles are presented, played with, and subverted.

Preparatory Reading:

- “Madness and Cure in the *1001 Nights*” by Jerome W. Clinton, Norton Crit., p. 485: examines the relationship between Shahrayar and Shahrazad
- “Islam, Culture and Women” by Ruqaiyyah Waris Maqsood:
<http://www.islamfortoday.com/ruqaiyyah09.htm>
- “Shattering Illusions – Western Conceptions of Muslim Women” by Saimah Ahsraf:
<http://www.islamfortoday.com/shatteringillusions.htm>
- Article on slavery in Islam:
http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/history/slavery_1.shtml

- “Arabian Nights Briefing” by T.S. Hattar:
<http://www.outreachworld.org/Files/Curriculum/arabian-nights-lesson.pdf>

Lecture points:

- Discussion of gender and what gender roles mean to culture – including our own.
- Patriarchal society: what is it? Do we live in one?
- Universal feminism: does it exist? Should it?
- Using the resources above, discuss how early Islam improved the lives of women
- Discuss the character of Shahrazad and her relationships with her father, husband and sister
- Discuss the female characters in the stories for this unit, with attention to some or all of the following:
 - The actions of the Three Ladies (p. 80-90) in terms of social, sexual and economic autonomy (all page numbers in this section are for the Norton edition the students use)
 - The captured lady (p. 115-122), her bravery and endurance under torture
 - The wisdom and fighting spirit of the king’s daughter (p. 131-135)
 - The behavior of the female characters in The Tale of the First Lady and The Tale of the Second Lady
 - The similarities and differences between these stories and Shahrazad’s
- Using the resources above, discuss slavery in Islam and its differences from American slavery
- Note that the medieval attitude toward race differed considerably from our own; for example, religion was far more important to identity than race
- Discuss the social status of the characters in the stories and the changes they undergo, with attention to some or all of the following:
 - The relationship between the Porter, a manual laborer, and the Three Ladies, who are of a higher class
 - The three dervishes were sons of kings, became religious beggars, and then rose to a high status again
 - The Caliph disguises himself as a merchant (p. 94)
 - Several characters are transformed into animals
 - Shahrazad herself will be transformed into a queen, instead of murdered by Shahrayar

Discussion Questions:

- What is the difference between sex and gender?
- What is a patriarchal society?
- What changes did Islam bring to women’s lives in the early medieval period?
- Discuss Shahrazad’s character and relationships.

- How do the stories of the female characters in this unit relate to the frame story?
- Find examples of transformation – social or physical – in this story. How are they related?
- What clues in the stories suggest that they were designed for a general audience – not just to amuse the rich and powerful?
- Consider the absolute power of the rulers in the stories. How do the tales seek to subvert that power?
- Consider the idea of justice in the *Nights*. What sort of justice is promoted in the tales? What sort of punishment? How are rulers called upon to administer justice?
- In general, what sort of view do you think the *Nights* presents on women, slaves and the poor?

Assignment and Project Ideas:

- Ask students to reflect, in a journal entry or essay, on gender roles in *The Arabian Nights*.
- Ask students to write an essay on transformation – physical and social – in the *Nights*.
- Ask students to collect images of Arab women in the media. What sort of view is being promoted here? How accurate is it?

Suggestions for expanding this unit

An excellent supplement to this unit would be a look at contemporary Muslim feminism. Here are some resources to draw on:

Article on Islamic feminism: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/in_depth/7689897.stm

Two Muslim women discuss stereotypes:

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4505480.stm>

“They Hate Women, Don’t They?” by Arzu Merali:

<http://www.islamfortoday.com/women01.htm>

“My Body Is my Own Business” by Naheed Mustafa: reflections of a young Canadian

Muslim woman: <http://www.jannah.org/sisters/naheed.html>

“Whether we are western, Muslim, both or neither, we must wake up to the possibility that what we see as problematic for women is much the same whoever and wherever we are. Plastered over billboards, or banished from view, women are subjugated by patriarchy. Demeaning Islam excludes the voices of Islamic women and that liberates no one.”

--Arzu Merali

Unit 5: Romance

There are many meanings of the word “romance.” This unit uses the word to refer to the genre of stories which arose in medieval times. As some of the preparatory readings point out, many of the ideals we associate with this genre – such as generosity, leniency to conquered enemies, and courtly love – have their roots in Arab traditions of the Middle Ages. The Story of the Two Viziers in *The Arabian Nights* shows several elements of this genre. Thus, it is not only delightful in itself, but useful as a starting point for discussions of the genre of medieval romance.

Stories:

The Story of the Three Apples; The Story of the Two Viziers, Nur al-Din Ali al-Misri and Badr al-Din Hasan al-Basri

Objective:

To examine medieval romance as a genre and the way it relates to *The Arabian Nights*

Preparatory Reading:

- “A Comic Romance from *The Thousand and One Nights: The Tale of Two Viziers*” by Andras Hamori, Norton Crit., p. 453
- “Muru’ah and the Code of Chivalry” by Habeeb Salloum:
<http://chivalrytoday.com/arabian-knights/>
- Article on the concepts of chivalry and courtly love, noting their Arab roots:
http://members.tripod.com/aaron_neilson/romance.html
- Characteristics of medieval romance:
<http://www.loyno.edu/~MidAges/medievalromance.html>
- “Arab Civilization: Influence on the West” by M. Kent Mayfield:
<http://secondwindarabians.net/images/ArabCivilization.pdf>

Handouts/presentation materials:

What is Romance?

Lecture points:

- Present the characteristics of the medieval romance and note how it differs from the contemporary romance novel genre.
- Show how Arabic literary traditions influenced Europe during the Middle Ages
- Discuss romantic elements in The Story of the Two Viziers, including:
 - The idea of “true love,” expressed in the poem on p. 216, Norton
 - Imaginary setting – while names of cities are mentioned, the story is not in any sense realistic
 - Supernatural elements, such as the two demons
 - Disguised identity: Badr al-Din becomes a cook

- Discuss the relationship of the romance genre to the gender issues discussed in the previous unit
- Discuss the relationship of Badr al-Din to his son 'Ajib
- Discuss the role of fate in The Story of the Two Viziers

Discussion Questions:

- What is romance? How is the word used differently in different contexts?
- Physical beauty is often stressed in medieval romances (see Norton p. 205-213). Do you consider this a positive or negative trait? Why?
- How does the concept of chivalry relate to gender issues? Can chivalry and feminism coexist?
- How is the relationship of Badr al-Din and his son 'Ajib romantic?
- Prophecy and fate play a part in many Arab and European medieval romances. What role does fate play in The Story of the Two Viziers?

Assignment and Project Ideas:

- Have students compare The Story of the Two Viziers to another medieval romance with which they are familiar, such as one of the King Arthur stories.
- As a creative writing exercise, have students write a modern romance story that challenges the genre in some way.
- Ask students to find material from contemporary life (films, magazines, advertising) that conforms to the ideals of medieval romance.

Suggestions for expanding this unit

There are many medieval Arabic romances that would make great topics for further study, if you have the time and inclination. Perhaps the most famous is the *Romance of Antar*. The complete text is available online here:

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/isl/arp/arp088.htm>

Unit 6: Humor

Humor is used in various ways in both literature and life. It can provide mild entertainment, as with puns, or pursue a political aim, as with many forms of satire. We have come across humorous incidents in *The Arabian Nights* already, such as the episode of Badr al-Din's wedding (Norton, p. 213 – 219). In *The Story of the Hunchback* and the tales embedded in it, several types of humor are brought into play: the absurdity of the behavior of the steward's bride (Norton, p. 284), the ironic name of "the Silent One" by which the barber is known in *The Tailor's Tale*, and the slapstick incidents of the frame story of the hunchback. Humor entertains in these stories, but it also serves a moral function by poking fun at undesirable characteristics such as intolerance, the inability to perceive one's own failings, and the desire to escape justice.

Stories:

The Story of the Hunchback; The Christian Broker's Tale; The Steward's Tale; The Tailor's Tale

Objective:

To examine the role of humor in *The Arabian Nights*, and form ideas about the use of humor in literature

Preparatory Reading:

- Web page on humor in literature, with ideas for lessons: <http://www.brighthub.com/education/k-12/articles/29069.aspx>
- Web page on humor theory: <http://www.humorthory.com/index.php/humor-of-the-mind/3669>
- Fun article on Juha, a comical character from Arabic folklore: <http://www.internationalstudentjournal.com/vnews/display.v/ART/2004/04/01/406dd9e7619ee>

Lecture points:

- Using the resources above, discuss different types of humor.
- Note that humor is often the last thing people can "get" in a foreign language, and discuss the implications for reading humorous works in translation.
- Discuss the humorous incidents in the stories for the unit. What purpose do they serve?
- Discuss the limits of humor, in terms of both subject matter and style.
- Explore examples of humor in life as well as literature, and the aims behind them.

Discussion Questions:

- How well does humor move across time, space and language? Are the stories in *The Arabian Nights* funny?

- Go back to the “Adventures in Translation”” handout from Unit 1. Which style lends itself most easily to humor? Which translation would you guess is the funniest? What sorts of problems does this raise?
- How can humor be used to achieve a purpose? Are there some goals that cannot be accomplished through humor?
- Are some forms of humor unacceptable? How do we view the use of “hunchbacks” as comic characters?
- Why would humor be used to deliver a moral message? Why not just state the message directly?

Assignment and Project Ideas:

- Have students reflect on a funny story or joke. What makes it funny?
- You could also have them analyze a joke that fell flat. What makes humor fail?
- Skits: Divide students into groups and give them a few minutes to develop short skits in which they must use props you provide. Giving them props that don’t fit together, or incongruous roles, will generate funnier skits.

Suggestions for expanding this unit

Comedy in the Arab/Muslim world: Muslim societies are often viewed as intolerant and humorless. A good way of expanding this lesson would be to have your students look for Arabic comedy skits on Youtube. There are many short videos with English subtitles. Comedy can yield surprising insights and provide a starting point for discussions of culture – although, of course, you should make sure your students keep in mind that people in funny shows are trying to be funny, not represent their societies!

Unit 7: The Uses of Wonder: Elements of Fantasy in *The Arabian Nights*

In contemporary times, fantasy fiction is often viewed as escapist. Much category science fiction and fantasy contributes to this view. However, fantasy as a genre has a long and complex history, going back to our earliest myths and stories. At its best, fantasy employs the possibilities of an alternate universe to explore, challenge and redefine the world we live in.

Fantastic elements abound in *The Arabian Nights*, but the long Story of Jullanar of the Sea is particularly rich in this type of material.

Stories:

The Story of Jullanar of the Sea

Objective:

To explore the use of fantasy in *The Arabian Nights* as a gateway to understanding the place of the fantastic in literature and the enduring appeal of fantasy stories

Preparatory Reading:

- “Fantasy Fiction: the battle for meaning continues” by Damien G. Walter:
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/booksblog/2010/apr/20/fantasy-fiction-battle-meaning>
- “The Fantastic Appeal of Fantasy” by Mark Chadbourn:
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/3672513/The-fantastic-appeal-of-fantasy.html>
- Resource guide for teaching fantasy and science fiction:
<http://www.42explore.com/fantscifi.htm>

Handouts/presentation materials:

Fantasy: A Guide to Terms

Lecture points:

- Define any literary terms unfamiliar to your students
- Examine different types of fantasy literature, including but not limited to myth, fairy tale and modern science fiction
- Discuss the difference between fantasy as genre (such as folklore and myth) and category fantasy fiction (such as *Twilight* and the Harry Potter books)
- Be sure to leave room for students to explore and try out aesthetic judgments
- Fantastic elements in the *Nights* in general and The Story of Jullanar of the Sea in particular, with attention to:
 - Jullanar’s sea-kingdom (p. 472 – page numbers here are for Norton)
 - Jullanar performs magic (473)
 - The penciling of the child’s eyes, and the jewels from the sea (478)
 - Princess Jauhara’s magic (494)
 - The powers of Queen Lab (502)

- Lab's transformation (509)
- The old man's magic (512)
- The demon (515)
- Fantasy as symbol or allegory
- Compare the love stories in this tale to those in *The Story of the Two Viziers*
- You will now have completed enough of the stories to look closely at motifs. Explain what a motif is and trace repeated images of transformation, infidelity, disguise, etc. in the *Nights*

Discussion Questions:

- What is fantasy? How does it differ from "realistic" fiction?
- What are some different types of fantasy?
- What makes fantasy appealing?
- Is fantastic literature necessarily escapist?
- Do you read fantasy? Why or why not?
- Can fantasy ever be great literature? What criteria make a text "great?"
- What purposes does fantasy serve in *The Arabian Nights*?
- What is a motif?
- What are some motifs in *The Arabian Nights*?
- Based on these motifs, what sort of topics are most common in the *Nights*? How do they relate to the frame story of Shahrazad?

Assignment and Project Ideas:

- Have students write an essay comparing *The Story of Jullanar of the Sea* to another fantasy text.
- Stage a debate on whether fantasy can be considered great literature.
- Have students work in groups to create visual representations of the motifs in the *Nights*.

Suggestions for expanding this unit

"Demons" in *The Arabian Nights*:

Haddawy uses the word "demon" for what in Arabic would be a *jinni* (English "genie," sometimes spelled *djin*) or *ifreet*. This unit could be expanded by looking more closely at these demons and their features according to Muslim tradition. Keeping in mind that for Muslim students jinn are real and not fantasy (like angels or Satan for Christian students), you might start with the following web sources:

- Web page on Islamic cosmology: <http://www.sentex.net/~tcc/guran-cosmol.html>
- Web page on the jinn: <http://muttagun.com/jinn.html>
- "Jinn: What Really Lives in the Bottle" by Fazile Zahir Mugla: <http://www.todayszaman.com/tz-web/detaylar.do?load=detay&link=168268>
- Jinn, Jinnee, Genie: a site tracing the evolution of the jinn from traditional sources to Disney's *Aladdin*: <http://www.freewebs.com/jinnjinneegenie/index.html>

Unit 8: The Impact of *The Arabian Nights*

The influence of *The Arabian Nights* in both Eastern and Western literature and film has been enormous. While a complete survey of works influenced by the *Nights* is logistically impossible in a unit of this size, students should gain an understanding of the power of the text throughout its long history. Early Western adaptations tended to focus on Orientalist stereotypes (and too many still do); in more contemporary times, writers and filmmakers from various parts of the world have been intrigued by the structure of the *Nights*. This unit should introduce students to some of the different ways – both admirable and unfortunate – in which *The Arabian Nights* continues to live.

Stories:

The Story of Sindbad the Sailor

Objective:

To examine the impact of *The Arabian Nights* as a starting point to a discussion of literary influences and intertextuality

Preparatory Reading and Resources:

- “The *Thousand and One Nights* in European Culture” by Francesco Gabrieli, Norton Crit., p. 426
- “The Thousand-and-Second Tale of Scheherazade” by Edgar Allan Poe, Norton Crit., p. 356
- Excerpt from *Remembrance of Things Past* by Marcel Proust, Norton Crit., p. 372
- Excerpt from *The Dreams of Scheherazade* by Taha Hussein, Norton Crit., p. 375
- “Semiotics for Beginners” by Daniel Chandler (discusses intertextuality):
<http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Documents/S4B/sem09.html>
- List of fiction influenced by the *Nights*:
<http://journalofthenights.blogspot.com/2009/05/fiction-based-on-nights.html>
- List of film and television influenced by the *Nights*:
<http://journalofthenights.blogspot.com/2009/05/filmtv-1001-nights.html>

Lecture points:

- Define intertextuality and literary influence
- Examine the ways the *Nights* is incorporated into “The Thousand-and-Second Tale of Scheherazade,” *Remembrance of Things Past* and *The Dreams of Scheherazade*
- Discuss the relationship between Orientalism and the use of *The Arabian Nights* in Western literature and film
- Discuss the implications of using material from another culture.

- Discuss different ways works of literature reference one another:
 - Continuing stories (as in much “fan fiction”)
 - Involving the perspective of a maligned character to challenge the assumptions of the text (*Wide Sargasso Sea* by Jean Rhys and *Grendel* by John Gardner are two famous examples)
 - Parody (as in the recent bestseller *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*)
- In some ways, the Norton Critical edition is a Western adaptation. The Story of Sindbad the Sailor did not form part of Shahrazad’s story in the Arabic text, and nor did other famous tales associated with the *Nights*, such as Aladdin and the Magic Lamp and Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves. Discuss the implications of this.
- Discuss the motifs in The Story of Sindbad the Sailor and the reasons why it might have been included in the Norton Critical edition.

Discussion Questions:

- Does the use of *The Arabian Nights* in the examples from Western literature differ from its use in Taha Hussein’s *The Dreams of Scheherazade*? If so, how?
- How are Orientalist stereotypes perpetuated through new adaptations of *The Arabian Nights*?
- What is involved in producing a creative project based on material from another culture? How can it be done well?
- Is it possible to steal ideas? What considerations impact the use of other people’s ideas?
- Should moral issues – such as the use of negative stereotypes – affect how art is judged?
- The Story of Sindbad the Sailor did not form part of Shahrazad’s story in Arabic. Should it have been included in the Norton Critical edition? Why do you think the editor chose to include it?
- How does The Story of Sindbad fit into the text? What motifs might link it to the other stories?

Assignment and Project Ideas:

- Have students critique a book or film based on *The Arabian Nights*. Lists of such works can be found under “Preparatory Reading and Resources.”
- Watch a film based on *The Arabian Nights* and critique it as a class.
- Ask students to produce their own work of art – writing, visual art or video – that references the *Nights* in some way.

Suggestions for expanding this unit

The Arabian Nights in the visual arts: The stories of *The Arabian Nights* and the writings of European travelers in the East had an enormous influence on European painting of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Attention to some of these pictures would help stimulate further discussion of Orientalism. Here are some useful links:

Web page on Orientalist artists: <http://www.orientalist-art.org.uk/>

Art history page with slide show:

http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/euor/hd_euor.htm

Web page for the Tate's exhibition "The Lure of the East":

<http://www.tate.org.uk/britain/exhibitions/britishorientalistpainting/default.shtm>

***The Arabian Nights* in Wisconsin**
Project Guidelines for the Spring Student Conference
April 6, 2011 at the University of Wisconsin-Madison

Your work with ***The Arabian Nights* in Wisconsin** culminates in a Spring Student Conference, at which students from around the state will meet to share their perspectives and interpretations of the text, giving presentations and displaying their work in an academic setting. You will also attend a keynote presentation by the producers and creators of the new animated series “1001 Nights,” Shabnam Rezaei and Aly Jetha.

Productive projects combine imagination and intellect and are multi-faceted and multi-layered. They are serious and academic as well as creative and inventive, and should be viewed as a chance to demonstrate the “final” product of all your classroom and individual efforts. Above all, the projects should reflect the students’ **critical interpretations** of the text, and give you a chance to ask questions, engage with students from other schools, and discuss the range of interpretations represented at the conference. Students are encouraged to make creative use of their own skills and talents to come up with a project that meets the following criteria:

- The project should reflect a **critical interpretation of the literary work**. While there is no limit to how creatively one might approach this project, it should relate directly to the actual text and demonstrate rigorous literary analysis. Remember that projects should be polished and professional. Presentations should be practiced in advance; art projects should be complete and accurately labeled; written projects should be edited and reviewed.
- Each student should be able to summarize his or her interpretation, and explain how the project relates to the text in a relevant and meaningful way. **Each project must be accompanied by a description which identifies the following:**
 - **Name(s) of student(s)**
 - **Name of your school, teacher and class**
 - **Title** of the project
 - **Summary/description** of the project. In one or two paragraphs, the student(s) should describe the project. Explain how and why you conducted this project, and how it reflects your own critical interpretation of the text. These summaries will be posted in the Great Hall viewing area. *Due in Madison by March 15, 2011.*

We look forward to seeing many original and engaging projects this year! Get creative! How can you bring your unique point of view to the conference? How can you keep other students interested? What does this text mean to you?

Getting Started: Brainstorming Ideas

The grid below features some suggestions to get you thinking about possibilities for the spring projects, either with a group or individually. These are just ideas to get you thinking – you might consider combining suggestions from different boxes, or come up with an idea all your own.

Whatever style of presentation you choose, your presentation should demonstrate critical reflection on, and interpretation of, *The Arabian Nights*. You might consider exploring a theme, image or motif. You might think about the effect of the structure of the collection. You might think about the many versions of the stories in print and film and how you might produce these differently. Whatever you choose, you should be able to articulate the connection between your project and the book that is meaningful to you.

**Be creative with this project and express your own unique point of view -
the interpretive possibilities are endless!**

Art Book cover Painting Sculpture Drawing Mixed Media	Music and Drama Composition CD compilation Musical/song performance Mini opera or musical Play or sketch performance	Web Podcast Website Wiki entry Blog Interactive map (Flash)
Creative Writing Poetry Collection Travel Diary or Reading Journal Children's Book Graphic novel/comic	Academic Writing Literary Analysis Speech Close Reading Essay Comparison Essay	Print Journalism Interview Magazine article Newspaper Travel guide Yearbook
Broadcast Journalism Investigative Interview or profile News broadcast	Movies, TV, Radio Sitcom episode TV talk show Scene from a film Radio program	Other Puzzle Diagram Research Project

Remember: Successful projects are both creative and critical, imaginative and intellectual.

***The Arabian Nights* in Wisconsin**
Student Conference Project Proposal

Major projects are a process, not just a final product. They require planning, discussion, revision, debate, trial and error. A **Project Proposal** is a way of getting started that allows you to explore ideas, get feedback, and decide on a course of action. Your finished product might look very different from what you imagine at this stage, but that's part of the process. Your teacher will be a part of that process by keeping you on track in terms of budgeting your time, exploring critical possibilities, and challenging you to be thoughtful and creative in your work.

All project proposals must be approved by your teacher before you begin. After your teacher approves your proposal, you will work on also preparing the short description of your project (see Guidelines) that will be posted for all to see at the Student Conference. Your teacher will mail or fax (608-262-4970) these descriptions to the Great World Texts coordinator by March 21, 2011.

Group Member(s)

Project Title

Project abstract (1-2 paragraph description of the project. *What are your goals? What will you do? Use additional paper or back side of sheet if needed.*)

Who will do what? Describe the role each group member will play.

Project timeline (*What will happen when? Ask your teacher for specific deadlines*).

What equipment or materials do you need to complete your project?

What resources or materials are you expecting your teacher to help provide?

What equipment will you need to present your project at the conference? Be specific.

The Arabian Nights Online: **Recommended Web Resources, Teaching Materials and Study Guides**

On the context:

The University of Georgia's Islam Resource Page

<http://www.uga.edu/islam/home.html>

This Webby-nominated site is the best place to start for all topics related to Islam and Muslim societies through the ages.

Al-Bab: An Open Door to the Arab World

<http://www.al-bab.com/default.htm>

Excellent site on Arab culture, supported by the British-Yemen Society and maintained by Brian Whitaker, Middle East editor for the Guardian newspaper.

1001 Inventions

<http://medievalnews.blogspot.com/2010/02/1001-inventions-discover-muslim.html>

This is the link to a web page on the recent British exhibition "1001 Inventions: Discover the Muslim Heritage in Our World." The host site, medievalists.net, contains a wealth of articles on the Middle Ages.

Inside Islam: Dialogues and Debates

<http://insideislam.wisc.edu/>

A collaboration of the UW-Madison's National Resource Centers and WPR's "Here on Earth: Radio without Borders." Includes links to radio programs on Islam.

Islam for Today

<http://www.islamfortoday.com/>

Web site by Muslims designed "for Westerners seeking a knowledge and understanding of Islam." Contains helpful articles on religion, history and women in Islam.

(Re)embracing Diversity: Educational Outreach for Muslim Sensitivity

<http://www.outreachworld.org/resource.asp?curriculumid=174>

Curriculum unit with **twelve fifty-minute lessons** and an **instructor's guide**. Description: "This curriculum unit combines a wealth of information about Islam and Muslims with interactive classroom activities that foster tolerance and respect for ethnic and religious diversity."

On the text:

Arabian Nights Books

<http://www.arabiannightsbooks.com/main.do>

Information on the origins, illustrators and translators of the *Nights*.

Sir Richard Burton's translation online

<http://www.library.cornell.edu/colldev/mideast/arabnit.htm>

Arabian Nights Study Guide

<http://novaonline.nvcc.edu/eli/eng251/arabstudy.htm>

From Northern Virginia Community College. Includes some ideas for activities.

The Electronic Literature Foundation's Arabian Nights Page

<http://www.arabiannights.org/index2.html>

Selected tales in Andrew Lang's translation.

Journal of the 1001 Nights

<http://journalofthenights.blogspot.com/>

Resource for scholarship on *The Arabian Nights*. Maintained by Michael Lundell, a PhD candidate in English Literature, this is probably the most comprehensive source of information on the text available online.

Scheherazade's Web: The Arabian Nights and Comparative Literature

<http://www.dinarzade.blogspot.com/>

Literary site maintained by Jack Ross of Massey University. Contains articles on the links between *The Arabian Nights* and Western literature.

Teaching *The Arabian Nights*: Arabic Storytelling and American Orientalism

<http://www.digitalinnovations.ucla.edu/2007/ccp/projects/Slyomovics.htm>

Website of a UCLA course on the *Nights*. Includes link to a video of Arabic storytelling.

Course Guide to "Whose Arabian Nights? Islamic, Arab, Persian and Western Visions"

<http://faculty.ccp.edu/dept/humanities/humanitiesf/giddle.htm>

Designed for college students at the Community College of Philadelphia, this course guide contains ideas that could be adapted for high school students.

***The Arabian Nights*: A Play by Mary Zimmerman** (pamphlet)

<http://www.openstagetheatre.org/images/piece/arabiannights.pdf>

A pamphlet on the play prepared by the Open State Theatre and Company. Contains concise background information on the text of *The Arabian Nights*, the play based on it, and the playwright.

Resources on the Issue of Explicit Language/Content in the Classroom

Here are some links that may be helpful in dealing with the occasionally explicit language and content of *The Arabian Nights*.

Dealing with Selection and Censorship: A Handbook for Wisconsin Schools and Libraries

http://www.dpi.wi.gov/pubsales/library_1.html

Cooperative Children's Book Center, School of Education, UW-Madison
Intellectual Freedom Services

<http://www.education.wisc.edu/ccbc/freedom/default.asp>

American Library Association, Office for Intellectual Freedom

<http://www.ala.org/ala/aboutala/offices/oif/index.cfm>

Current debates on the text of *The Arabian Nights* in Egypt may also be of interest:

<http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2010/06/09/110883.html>

Films, Videos and Interviews

General Resources:

Islam: Empire of Faith (PBS, 2005). A PBS documentary series that traces the history of Islam, with a focus on the contributions of Islamic cultures to the world. There is a companion website: <http://www.pbs.org/empires/islam/>
There is also a site designed specifically for educators using the series: <http://www.pbs.org/empires/islam/educ12plan.html>

Inside Islam (The History Channel, 2002). Documentary on Islamic history and practice, focusing on the links between Christianity, Judaism and Islam.

Out of Place: Memories of Edward Said (2005). Documentary exploring the life of Edward Said, author of *Orientalism*. Includes interviews.

***The Arabian Nights* in Film and Television: A Selection**

One Arabian Night (1921). A hunchback hunts down a murdering sheikh in this silent Orientalist fantasy.

The Thief of Baghdad (1940). Teeming with Orientalist imagery.

Arabian Nights (1942). Like *The Thief of Baghdad*, an excellent choice for a critique of Orientalism.

Legends of *The Arabian Nights* (2006). A&E documentary examining the tales, with analyses by authors and historians.

Scooby-Doo in *Arabian Nights* (1994). Hanna-Barbera takes wild liberties with the text, mixing Yogi Bear and Sinbad in an exoticized cartoon stew. Begs for a critique.

Aladdin (1992). The animated Disney adventure opens with the controversial “Arabian Nights” song.

Sinbad of the Seven Seas (1989). Adaptation of the Sindbad story.

Books and Articles: A brief review

I. Scholarly Works

World Literature/s Research Workshop

<http://global.wisc.edu/worldlit/>

An excellent resource for teaching world literature, with pdf files of articles for downloading.

The Arabian Nights in English Literature: Studies in the Reception of The Thousand and One Nights into British Culture. Peter L. Caracciolo (ed.) (Macmillan, London, 1988). A useful companion to a study of British Orientalism and the influence of the *Nights*.

The Encyclopedia of Fantasy. John Clute and John Grant (eds.) (Orbit, London, 1997). A guide to the literature of the fantastic, with explanations of different types of fantasy.

A Motif Index of The Thousand and One Nights. Hasan M. El-Shamy (Indiana University Press, Bloomington, Indiana, 2006). A guide to the motifs of *The Arabian Nights*, particularly helpful for the study of structure.

Night and Horses and the Desert: The Penguin Anthology of Classical Arabic Literature. Robert Irwin (Penguin, London, 2000). An insightful and highly readable anthology offering a broad view of Arabic literary traditions.

The Art of Story-Telling: A Literary Study of The Thousand and One Nights. Mia I. Gerhardt (Leiden: Brill, 1963). Classic study with attention to structure; see excerpt in the Norton edition.

“Performing A Thousand and One Nights in Egypt.” Susan Slyomovics (*Oral Tradition*, 9/2 (1994): 390-419). Comparative study of oral and written forms of the text. Available here: http://journal.oraltradition.org/files/articles/9ii/11_slyomovics.pdf

Story-Telling Techniques in The Arabian Nights. David Pinault (Leiden: Brill, 1992). Literary study with particular attention to the following: The Story of the Fisherman and the Demon; The Story of the Three Apples; Harun al-Rashid and his vizier; the role of demons and hunchbacks.

New Perspectives on Arabian Nights: Ideological Variations and Narrative Horizons. Wen-chin Ouyang & Geert Jan van Gelder (eds) (London: Routledge, 2005). Collection of essays with an interdisciplinary approach. Includes essays on *The Arabian Nights* in

different cultural settings (France, Argentina, Southeast Asia) and media (film, popular literature, contemporary fiction).

The Arabian Nights in Transnational Perspective. Ulrich Marzolph (ed.) (Detroit, Michigan: Wayne State University Press, 2007). This collection includes essays on a variety of topics, including frame narratives, political thought in *The Arabian Nights*, translation, and modern oral performance of the *Nights* in Afghanistan.

The Arabian Nights Reader. Ulrich Marzolph (ed.) (Detroit, Michigan: Wayne State University Press, 2007). This collection includes good background essays, several of which are found in the Norton Critical Edition. One article which unfortunately did not get into Norton is “Shahrazad Feminist” by Fedwa Malti-Douglas.

Sheherazade Through the Looking Glass: The Metamorphosis of The Thousand and One Nights. Eva Sallis (Richmond: Curzon, 1999). Historical study placing *The Arabian Nights* in context and tracing its changes through translation into European languages.

The Thousand and One Nights: Space, Travel and Transformation. Richard van Leeuwen (London: Routledge, 2007). Discusses the themes of space and travel in *The Arabian Nights*.

II. Selected Fiction Influenced by *The Arabian Nights*

Haroun and the Sea of Stories. Salman Rushdie (Penguin, 1991). Magical tale of a storyteller inspired by the stories Rushdie used to tell his nine-year-old son. Also available is the **Haroun and the Sea of Stories Study Guide:**
<http://www.leasttern.com/Haroun/haroun.htm>

When Dreams Travel. Githa Hariharan (Picador, 2000). Beautifully written and well-received novel that imagines the lives of the main characters in *The Arabian Nights*: the sultan, his brother, Shahrazad and her sister.

The Dreams of Scheherazade. Taha Hussein (General Egyptian Book Organization, 1974). Imaginative response to *The Arabian Nights* by one of Egypt’s greatest writers. An excerpt is included in the Norton edition.

Arabian Nights and Days. Naguib Mahfouz (Anchor, 1995). A series of linked tales set in the court of Shahrayar after Shahrazad succeeds in saving her life.

In Arabian Nights: A Caravan of Moroccan Dreams. Tahir Shah (Bantam, 2007). In this sequel to his memoir *The Caliph’s House*, Tahir Shah weaves his personal search for identity into his family’s tradition of storytelling and the larger Arabic oral tradition.

Graphic Novels:

- ***Our Kingdom – Arabian Night*** by **Naduki Koujima:**
<http://www.animecastle.com/p-127584-our-kingdom-arabian-nights-graphic-novel.aspx>
- ***Fables: Arabian Nights and Days*** by **Bill Willingham:**
http://www.dccomics.com/vertigo/graphic_novels/?gn=5273
- ***Fables: 1001 Nights of Snowfall*** by **Bill Willingham**

Literary Terms to use in your analysis papers:

Image	A “moment” or “snapshot” in the text that stands out; a particularly vivid description (character, event, scene, or object)
Theme	(1) central idea or main point (2) A way of articulating and understanding a recurring image or motif. <i>Example:</i> the motif of the unlikely hero overcoming obstacles reveals the story’s theme of man’s struggle against his own nature.
Symbol	A textual element (image, character, object, etc) that stands for or represents something larger than itself. Symbols are a type of metaphor.
Metaphor	A direct or indirect comparison between two things (similes are a type of metaphor, comparisons using “like,” “as” or “than”).
Irony	Language and situations that are inappropriate, unexpected or opposite from what one expects; saying one thing and meaning another, “double meaning.”
Satire	Satire is the use of irony to comic effect, and is generally intended as a sort of commentary or critique.
Personification	Giving human characteristics to non-human things (animals, objects, etc)
Motif	A repeated image with symbolic meaning. Through repetition, a motif can affect atmosphere or give clues to a theme.

Adventures in Translation

Compare these translations of an excerpt from *The Arabian Nights*.

1. Edward Lane (1859)

Now the Sultan Schahriar had a wife whom he loved more than all the world, and his greatest happiness was to surround her with splendour, and to give her the finest dresses and the most beautiful jewels. It was therefore with the deepest shame and sorrow that he accidentally discovered, after several years, that she had deceived him completely, and her whole conduct turned out to have been so bad, that he felt himself obliged to carry out the law of the land, and order the grand-vizir to put her to death.

2. Richard Burton (1885)

On the fourth day [Shahzaman] made ready for wayfare and got together sumptuous presents befitting his elder brother's majesty, and stablished his chief Wazir Viceroy of the land during his absence. Then he caused his tents and camels and mules to be brought forth and encamped, with their bales and loads, attendants and guards, within sight of the city, in readiness to set out next morning for his brother's capital. But when the night was half-spent he bethought him that he had forgotten in his palace somewhat which he should have brought with him, so he returned privily and entered his apartments, where he found the Queen, his wife, asleep on his own carpet bed embracing with both arms a black cook of loathsome aspect and foul with kitchen grease and grime. When he saw this the world waxed black before his sight and he said: "If such case happen while I am yet within sight of the city, what will be the doings of this damned whore during my long absence at my brother's court?" So he drew his scimitar, and cutting the two in four pieces with a single blow, left them on the carpet and returned presently to his camp without letting anyone know of what had happened.

3. Husain Haddawy (1990)

For ten full days [Shahzaman] prepared himself for the journey; then he appointed a chamberlain in his place, and left the city to spend the night in his tent, near the vizier. At midnight he returned to his palace in the city, to bid his wife goodbye. But when he entered the palace, he found his wife lying in the arms of one of the kitchen boys. When he saw them, the world turned dark before his eyes and, shaking his head, he said to himself, "I am still here, and this is what she has done when I am barely outside the city. How will it be and what will happen behind my back when I go to visit my brother in India? No. Women are not to be trusted." He got exceedingly angry, adding, "By God, I am king and sovereign in Samarkand, yet my wife has betrayed me and has inflicted this on me." As his anger boiled, he drew his sword and struck both his wife and the cook. Then he dragged them by the heels and threw them from the top of the palace to the trench below. He then left the city and, going to the vizier, ordered that they depart that very hour.

Orientalism

Edward Said's evaluation and critique of the set of beliefs known as Orientalism forms an important background for postcolonial studies. His work questions stereotypes and patterns of thought which are accepted on individual, academic, and political levels.



The Terms

The Orient is not a real place. Rather, it is an idea of what the East is. The Orient exists for the West, and is constructed by and in relation to the West. It is a mirror image of what is inferior and alien (“Other”) to the West.

Orientalism is a Western manner of seeing, discussing, writing about and relating to the Orient. It is the image of “the Orient” expressed as an entire system of thought.

The Oriental is the person represented by such thinking. The man is depicted as feminine, weak, yet strangely dangerous because poses a threat to white, Western women. The woman is both eager to be dominated and strikingly exotic. The Oriental is a single image, a sweeping generalization, a stereotype that crosses countless cultural and national boundaries.

Latent Orientalism is the unconscious, untouchable certainty about what the Orient is. The Orient is seen as separate, eccentric, backward, silently different, sensual, and passive. It has a tendency towards despotism and away from progress. Its progress and value are judged in terms of, and in comparison to, the West, so it is always the Other, the conquerable, and the inferior.

Manifest Orientalism is what is spoken and acted upon. It includes information and changes in knowledge about the Orient as well as policy decisions founded in Orientalist thinking. It is the expression in words and actions of Latent Orientalism.



Earlier Orientalism

The first 'Orientalists' were 19th century scholars who translated the writings of 'the Orient' into English, based on the assumption that a truly effective colonial conquest required knowledge of the conquered peoples. This idea of knowledge as power is present throughout Said's critique. By knowing the Orient, the West came to own it. The Orient became the studied, the seen, the observed, the object; Orientalist scholars were the students, the seers, the observers, the subject. The Orient was passive; the West was active.

Image: French harem fantasy with a black eunuch servant. "Les petits voyages de Paris-Plaisirs."--Paris Plaisir, Feb. 1930. (Image and text from Jan Nederveen Pieterse's White on Black: Images of Africa and Blacks in Western Popular Culture. New Haven: Yale UP, 1992)

One of the most significant constructions of Orientalist scholars is that of the Orient itself. What is considered the Orient is a vast region, one that spreads across a myriad of cultures and countries. It includes most of Asia as well as the Middle East. The image of this single "Orient" which can be studied as a cohesive whole is one of the most powerful accomplishments of Orientalist scholars. Since the notion of the Orient is created by the Orientalist, it exists solely for him or her. Its identity is defined by the scholar who gives it life.

Contemporary Orientalism

Said argues that Orientalism can be found in current Western depictions of "Arab" cultures. The depictions of "the Arab" as irrational, menacing, untrustworthy, anti-Western, dishonest, and – perhaps most importantly – always the same, comes from Orientalist scholarship.

Said's Project



Said calls into question the underlying assumptions that form the foundation of Orientalist thinking. A rejection of Orientalism entails a rejection of biological generalizations, cultural constructions, and racial and religious prejudices. It is a rejection of greed as a primary motivating factor in intellectual pursuit. It is an erasure of the line between "the West" and "the Other." Rejection of Orientalist thinking does not mean a denial of the differences between "the West" and "the Orient," but rather an evaluation of such differences in a more critical

and objective fashion. Scholars must study more focused and smaller culturally consistent regions. The person who has until now been known as “the Oriental” must be given a voice.

Adapted from Emory University’s Orientalism home page:

<http://www.english.emory.edu/Bahri/Orientalism.html>

Author: Danielle Sered, Fall 1996

What is Romance?

There are several types of romance in literature. Note the contrast between medieval and modern romance:

Medieval Romance

In medieval use, **romance** referred to poetry dealing with chivalry and the adventures of knights in warfare as they rescue fair maidens and confront supernatural challenges. These poems are often **episodic**, meaning that they are made up of a number of short stories rather than one long narrative. They represent a courtly or chivalric period of history involving highly developed manners and civility. Their standard plot involves a single knight seeking to win a scornful lady's favor by undertaking a dangerous quest. Along the way, this knight encounters mysterious hermits, confronts evil blackguards and brigands, slays monsters and dragons, competes anonymously in tournaments, and suffers from wounds, starvation, deprivation, and exposure in the wilderness. He may incidentally save a few extra villages and pretty maidens along the way before finishing his primary task.

Medieval romances often focus on the supernatural. A secondary concern is **courtly love**. In a typical story of courtly love:

- A knight or nobleman worships a noblewoman from afar, seeking to win her love by valorous deeds.
- He falls ill with love-sickness.
- The woman chastely or scornfully rejects him in public, but encourages him in private.
- The relationship remains chaste: it is a “higher love,” not a physical one.

The stories of King Arthur are a typical example of medieval romance.

Modern Romance

In contrast with medieval romance, the meaning of a modern romance has become more restricted in the 20th century. The conventional plotline involves a third-person narrative or a first-person narrative told from the viewpoint of a young woman between the ages of eighteen and her late twenties. She encounters a potential paramour in the form of a slightly older man. The two are prevented from forming a relationship due to social, psychological, economic, or interpersonal constraints. The primary plot involves the two overcoming these constraints through melodramatic efforts. The story conventionally ends happily with the two characters professing their love for each other and building a life together.

Adapted from the glossary of literary terms at the website of Kip Wheeler, Carson-Newman College. Find the full site here: <http://web.cn.edu/kwheeler/index.html>

Fantasy: A Guide to Terms

Fantasy

A genre not based in reality presupposing that magic and mythical/supernatural creatures exist.

Myth

A traditional tale of deep cultural significance to a people. The myth often (but not always) deals with gods, supernatural beings, or ancestral heroes.

Fairy Tale

A tale about elves, dragons, hobgoblins, sprites, and other fantastic magical beings set vaguely in the distant past ("once upon a time"). Fairy tales include magic, charms, disguises, talking animals, and a hero or heroine who overcomes obstacles to "live happily ever after." Examples from the European tradition include the tales of Red Riding Hood, Puss in Boots and Cinderella.

Science Fiction

A genre that extrapolates from current scientific trends. The technology of a science fiction story may be either the driving force of the story or merely the setting for a drama, but all science fiction tends to predict or define the future.

Epic Fantasy

Sweeping in scope, epic fantasy usually concerns a battle for power over a country, empire or entire world. Drawing heavily upon archetypal myths and the struggle of a few good people against overwhelming forces of evil, epic fantasy is best represented by author J. R. R. Tolkien's classic **The Lord of the Rings** trilogy.

Speculative Fiction

A catchall term for science fiction and fantasy. It applies to work that answers the question "What if...?" Sometimes it is also applied to fiction considered more "literary" in nature that includes elements of SF or fantasy. Gabriel Garcia Marquez's **One Hundred Years of Solitude** is an example. Within science fiction, the term speculative fiction refers to novels that focus less on advances in technology and more on issues of social change, such as Aldous Huxley's **Brave New World**, George Orwell's **1984** and Margaret Atwood's **The Handmaid's Tale**.

Adapted from:

Amy Goldschlager, Avon Eos, 1997: <http://www.sfsite.com/columns/amy26.htm>

Kip Wheeler: <http://web.cn.edu/kwheeler/index.html>