Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves

The story

Ali Baba, a poor woodcutter, had a rich brother, Kasim, who never shared any of his money with his brother. Instead, he treated Ali Baba, his wife and son badly. One day, as Ali Baba finished cutting logs in the forest, he saw lots of men on horses and he hid. He climbed up a tree and watched the forty horsemen. The men had saddlebags full of gold and they took them to a big rock. One of the men cried, ‘Open, Sesame’, and a door in the rock opened and the man entered the cave. The others followed. After a while they came out and the leader cried, ‘Close, Sesame’. When the thieves left, Ali Baba walked to the entrance of the cave. He said the magic words and entered. He was amazed by all the gold, silk, jewels and gold crowns piled up. Feeling it was alright to steal from thieves, Ali Baba decided to take some gold home for himself and his family.

When he got home, he showed the gold to his wife. His wife wanted to know how much gold they had. She went to Kasim’s house to borrow his wife’s scales so she could weigh the gold. She did not want Kasim and his wife to know about the gold, so she said they were weighing meat. Kasim’s wife did not believe Ali Baba’s wife and wondered where they could have got the money to buy meat. She tricked Ali Baba’s wife by putting honey in the bottom of one of the pans. When Ali Baba’s wife returned the scales the next day, a gold coin was stuck to the honey. Kasim’s wife knew their secret. When she told Kasim about his brother’s gold, he was jealous. He went to Ali Baba’s house and asked his brother where he got it. When Ali Baba saw the gold coin, he told his brother about the cave and the forty thieves. The next morning, Kasim went to the cave with ten donkeys carrying ten huge chests. He got inside by saying the password but he forgot the magic words to get back out. The thieves found him inside and killed him.

When Kasim did not come back, Ali Baba went to look for him. He found his brother’s body hanging inside the cave and brought the body home. With the help of Marjaneh, Kasim’s servant girl, they gave Kasim a good burial without anybody wondering about the cause of his death.

The thieves found that the body had gone and soon realized that somebody else must know their secret. They set out to look for him in town. They came up with many plans to find the man. However, each time their plans were foiled by the clever Marjaneh. The thieves eventually found the house of the man they were looking for. They did not know his name, Ali Baba.

The leader of the thieves made a plan to kill the man who had stolen from them. He bought twenty donkeys and forty large clay oil jars with loose lids. He loaded the donkeys with two jars each and filled one jar with oil. He told his thirty-nine men to take their swords and daggers and to hide inside the jars. He gave them orders to be ready to jump out and attack the man who stole from them. The leader filled the fortieth jar with oil. He then went to Ali Baba’s house, pretending to be an oil merchant in need of a bed for the night. Ali Baba gave him food and a bed and a stable for his donkeys. The thief left his forty jars in a long row in the courtyard. Marjaneh discovered his plan and killed all thirty-nine men by pouring boiling oil on them. When the leader came to find why his men were not ready to fight, he saw they were all dead and he ran away.

A few weeks later the leader of the thieves went back to the town, disguised as a merchant. He soon became friends with Ali Baba’s son, Khaled, who took him home for dinner. Ali Baba invited him inside, but Marjaneh soon grew suspicious of the man. After dinner, Marjaneh performed a dance with daggers to entertain the guest. As she finished, she raised her dagger and killed the dinner guest.

All forty thieves were dead and Ali Baba and his family were safe once and for all. Ali Baba was so impressed with Marjaneh that he offered his son to her for her husband. Khaled happily married Marjaneh and they had a baby. Ali Baba decided to show Khaled the cave with the treasure. Khaled promised that he, too, would show his son the cave when he was old enough. And so Ali Baba and his family were never poor again.
Introducing the book

The cover

- Hold up the cover. Read the book’s title to and with the class. Discuss the meaning of thieves with the class.
- Talk about the picture. Tell the children to look at the men’s clothes. Ask Where do you think the story happens? What are the men doing? Who do you think they are? What is the man in the tree doing?

The title page

- Look together at the title page. Point out that this is a classic tale (one that has been popular for a long time) that has been re-told and simplified. Ask Where does this tale (story) come from?
- Ask Why do you think there is no author’s name? (There is some information on the origin of the story on page 96.) Ask Who adapted the story?

- Talk about the picture. Ask What is the man looking at? (a huge rock) What has he got in his hand? (an axe) How many donkeys has he got? What are the donkeys pulling? (wood) What is on their backs? (baskets)

The contents page

- Ask the children to turn to the contents page. Explain that the Contents list tells us what is in the book. Explain that the story is divided into chapters.
- Ask How many chapters are there? Read the chapter titles to and with the class. Briefly explain any unfamiliar words (most will be covered in the chapter notes). Ask the children what page each chapter starts on.
- Point out that the names Ali Baba, Mustafa and Marjaneh are Arab names.
- Point out that at the end of the book there is a poem (on pages 90 and 91) and some information about making clay pots (beginning on page 92), as well as information about where the story of Ali Baba comes from (on page 96).
- Ask questions about each chapter title to stimulate the children’s interest, for example:
  - Chapter 3: What is found in the cave?
  - Chapter 4: Who gets more gold?
  - Chapter 9: Who dances?
  - In which chapter do we read about someone who cannot get out?
– *In which chapter is someone in great danger?*

- Tell the children to do the related activity on page 1 of their Workbook.

You can play the audio download of the story at any time you choose.
See [www.macmillanenglish.com/younglearners](http://www.macmillanenglish.com/younglearners)
Chapter 1
Treasure in a cave
Pages 4 to 13

Active vocabulary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>word</th>
<th>notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>believe</td>
<td>follows the rule of ‘i’ before ‘e’ except after ‘c’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cave</td>
<td>remember the phrase: you must be brave inside a cave!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gallop</td>
<td>note the ‘ll’ in the middle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>merchant</td>
<td>the second syllable ‘chant’ is pronounced ‘chent’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>promise</td>
<td>‘mise’ is pronounced ‘miss’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>secret</td>
<td>a two-syllable word; tap out the syllables to check</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thieves</td>
<td>note how the spelling of thief changes in the plural: ‘f’ changes to ‘v’ before adding ‘es’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>treasure</td>
<td>people are sure when they find treasure</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Passive vocabulary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>word</th>
<th>notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>amazed</td>
<td>axe bars basket bury donkeys dragged frowned log password pile saddlebags scales shared successful</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Before reading

- Pre-teach the active vocabulary (see Teacher’s Notes Introduction page 13 and the Glossary on page 50). Use the notes in the table to discuss any interesting features of the words.
Ask the children to do the activities on page 2 of their Workbook to practise the new vocabulary.

Read the title of Chapter 1. Ask Where is the treasure? Who do you think put it there?

Tell the children to look at the picture on page 5. Ask Do you think the men riding the horses are good or bad men? Who do you think the man in the tree is? Why do you think the men have stopped in front of the big rock? Ask the children to describe the scene.

Tell the children to look at the picture on page 7. Ask Where is the man now? What is he doing? How do you think he feels?

Tell the children to look at the picture on page 9. Ask Where is the man now? What has he put in the baskets? What is the man doing with the wood?

Tell the children to look at the picture on page 12. Ask Where do you think the man and woman are? How does the man feel? What is the woman showing him? What do you think the woman is saying to him?

Tell the children that Persia is the old name for Iran. Show them on a map where Iran is. Ask the children if they know anything about this country and the people.

Optional suggestion: you may wish to give the children an appropriate amount of time, for example five minutes, to look quickly through the chapter to find (and perhaps underline or copy) the active vocabulary they have been introduced to.

Stage 1 comprehension (literal)
Ask the questions orally, or set them as a written activity. You can also ask the children to do the activity on page 3 of their Workbook.

1. What was Ali Baba’s brother’s name and what was his job?
2. Why was Ali Baba’s brother not a good brother?
3. Why did Ali Baba go every day to the forest?
4. Where did Ali Baba hide when he saw the horsemen?
5. How many horsemen were there?
6. What did the horsemen have in the bags?
7. What did the first man say to open and shut the rock?
8. Why could Ali Baba see clearly inside the cave?
9. What did Ali Baba see inside the cave?
10. What did Ali Baba decide to do?
11. Why did he get his three donkeys from their hiding place?
12. How much gold did he take? Why?
13 Where did Ali Baba go instead of to the market?
14 Why did he wait until dark to go into his house?
15 What did Ali Baba tell his wife they could do?
16 How did Ali Baba’s wife feel when she saw the gold?
17 Why did Ali Baba think it was all right to steal the gold?
18 What did Ali Baba’s wife borrow from Kasim’s wife? Why?
19 Why did Kasim’s wife think it was strange that Ali Baba’s wife wanted to weigh some meat?
20 What did Kasim’s wife put in the bottom of one of the scale pans? Why?
21 What did Ali Baba’s wife tell her husband after she weighed the gold?
22 What didn’t Ali Baba’s wife see when she returned the scales?
23 What did Kasim say when he showed him the gold coins and told him what had happened?
24 What did Kasim say he would do in the morning? Why?

After reading

Stage 2 comprehension (extension)
Ask these questions orally, or set them as a written activity for the more able. Answers will vary. Encourage the children to give reasons for their suggestions, and accept any answer they can justify.

1 How were Kasim and Ali Baba’s lives different?
2 Why do you think Kasim’s work paid better than Ali Baba’s?
3 Why was Ali Baba worried that the men on horses would try to kill him?
4 Why do you think the thieves hid their treasure in the cave?
5 How did Ali Baba know the men were thieves?
6 How do you think finding the treasure could change Ali Baba’s life?
7 Why did Ali Baba take some of the gold?
8 How do you think Ali Baba felt when he was putting the gold into his donkey’s baskets?
9 Why do you think Ali Baba did not want anyone to see his treasure?
10 What kinds of things did Ali Baba think his wife would want to buy?
11 How do you think that Ali Baba’s wife felt when she saw the gold?
12 Why did Ali Baba’s wife want to weigh the gold and then bury it in the ground?
13 Why did Ali Baba’s wife say she was weighing meat?
14 What kind of woman was Kasim’s wife?
15 How do you think Kasim felt when he heard that his brother was weighing gold?

Stage 2 comprehension (extra)

Characterisation Discuss Ali Baba’s feelings of jealousy when he saw how much treasure the thieves had. Ask Was it alright for Ali Baba to steal from the thieves? Why did he tell his wife they must keep it a secret? What did Ali Baba want to do with the gold? Discuss how Ali Baba’s discovery may change him and his wife.

 Discuss how finding the gold has changed Ali Baba’s feeling about his life. Ask How will Ali Baba live now? What will change in his life? How will his brother feel, now that they are both rich?

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Write Open, Sesame! on the board. Say it commandingly and with a loud voice. Ask the children to repeat it in the same way. Play an Open, Sesame! game. Ask the children to say the magic word Close Sesame! as they close their books. Write the following words and gaps on the board: wood___ (cutter), horse___ (men), saddle ___ (bags), sun ___ (light), every ___ (thing), pass ___ (word), and any ___ (one). Tell the children to fill in the second half of each compound word from the chapter. If they cannot remember it, they must say Open Sesame! and open their books to find the compound word. The first to complete them is the winner.

Play a rhyming game. Write these words from the chapter on the board: son, poor, red, gold, cry, honey, meat. Brainstorm as a class, and write down on the board, as many words as possible that rhyme with each word.

Write some of the words from the chapter on the board and ‘forget’ to put in the vowels. Leave spaces for them, for example st___ck (stuck). Ask the children to supply the missing vowels.

If appropriate, try some Extension Activities (see Teacher’s Notes Introduction page 19).

Ask What do you think will happen next in the story?