

In the western world we have our 12 signs of the zodiac: Aries, Taurus, Gemini, Cancer, Leo, Virgo, Libra, Scorpio, Capricorn, Sagittarius, Aquarius and Pisces.

The Chinese also have 12 astrological signs, but a very different system – instead of lasting a month each, they run for a whole year! Each of the 12 years belongs to a particular animal and the Chinese have a story to explain how the animals were chosen and why they are placed in a certain order:

The Jade King lived in Heaven and had servants to do everything for him. He got rather bored and, to amuse himself and because he had never been down to Earth, he summoned one of his advisers and asked him what the animals on earth looked like. When his adviser told him there were very many animals, the King said he would like to see just a few of them, and sent his adviser to choose the 12 most interesting.

The adviser decided to invite the rat and ask him to pass on an invitation to his friend the cat. After some thought, he also sent invitations to the ox, the tiger, the rabbit, the dragon, the snake, the horse, the ram, the monkey, the rooster and the dog, telling them all to be at the Jade King's palace at six o'clock the next morning.

The rat was very proud to be the first to be asked and went off to tell the cat. The cat was afraid he might oversleep and made the rat promise to give him an early morning call. That night the rat began to imagine how ugly he would look in comparison to the sleek and handsome cat, and he decided to let the cat oversleep.

So the next morning the King inspected the animals, but then turned to his adviser and asked why there were only 11. Having no answer, the adviser quickly sent a servant down to Earth to catch the first animal he could – it turned out to be a pig.

OX

Practical, down-to-earth and patient sometimes to the point of being stubborn! But the ox is very honest and loyal and has an excellent memory.

牛

TIGER

Quick-witted, energetic, brave and passionate! The tiger likes to take risks and to show off a bit...

虎

RABBIT

Cautious, sensible, reserved and thoughtful. The rabbit has expensive tastes and appreciates things which are rare, beautiful and good.

兔

DRAGON

Stylish, charming with a magnetic personality. The dragon likes to attract attention and to be admired.

龍

SNAKE

Elegant and refined, the snake has a taste for the mysterious. Rather lazy, but also ambitious – if a snake really wants something, he'll probably get it!

蛇

HORSE

Fierce, impetuous and unpredictable, but the horse can change his mood in a flash and become calm, serene and full of charm and good humour.

馬

GOAT

Sensitive and tender. A gentle, dreamy nature gives the goat a delicate, changeable, temperamental character.

羊

MONKEY

Blessed with a thousand and one talents and hardly time to use them all, the monkey loves being talked about by other people!

猴

ROOSTER

Proud, loyal and determined, roosters don't beat about the bush and sometimes end up with their foot in their mouth!

雞

RAT

A real party animal! Sociable but also cheeky, choosy and calculating. The rat has a nose for business and a way of finding simple solutions to difficult problems.

鼠

DOG

Faithful, positive, spontaneous and always on the go. Dogs don't like to be alone and their devotion to those they love knows no bounds.

狗

PIG

Cheerful, easy-going and pleasure-loving, pigs are also brave, sturdy and tough.

豬

Animals

Here are the tables from 2001-2015 to help you:

24 January 2001 to 11 February 2002	SNAKE
12 February 2002 to 31 January 2003	HORSE
1 February 2003 to 21 January 2004	GOAT
22 January 2004 to 8 February 2005	MONKEY
9 February 2005 to 28 January 2006	ROOSTER
29 January 2006 to 17 February 2007	DOG
18 February 2007 to 6 February 2008	PIG
7 February 2008 to 25 January 2009	RAT
26 January 2009 to 13 February 2010	OX
14 February 2010 to 2 February 2011	TIGER
3 February 2011 to 22 January 2012	RABBIT
23 January 2012 to 9 February 2013	DRAGON
10 February 2013 to 30 January 2014	SNAKE
31 January 2014 to 18 February 2015	HORSE
19 February 2015 to 7 February 2016	GOAT

Meanwhile, at the Jade King's palace in Heaven, the rat was afraid he was so small that the King wouldn't notice him, so he sat on the ox's back and played a flute! The King was so delighted that he awarded the rat first place, and the ox second. The tiger was placed third for his courage and the rabbit fourth because of his fine white fur. Then followed the dragon, the snake, the horse, the goat, the monkey, the rooster and the dog. The latecomer, the pig, was put in twelfth place.

The Chinese New Year doesn't begin on the same date every year, although it always falls between 20 January and 20 February, so if you were born between those dates you need to look at a table of dates to work out which Chinese year you belong to.



Aladdin...

...the lad with the lamp

The story of *Aladdin* and his wonderful lamp is one of the most popular tales of all time. Here we find out where the story came from and how it has grown into the famous pantomime show.

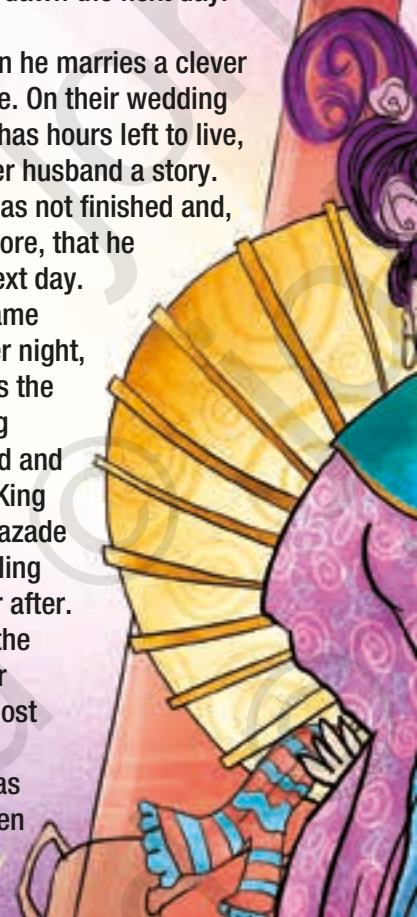
Where does Aladdin come from?

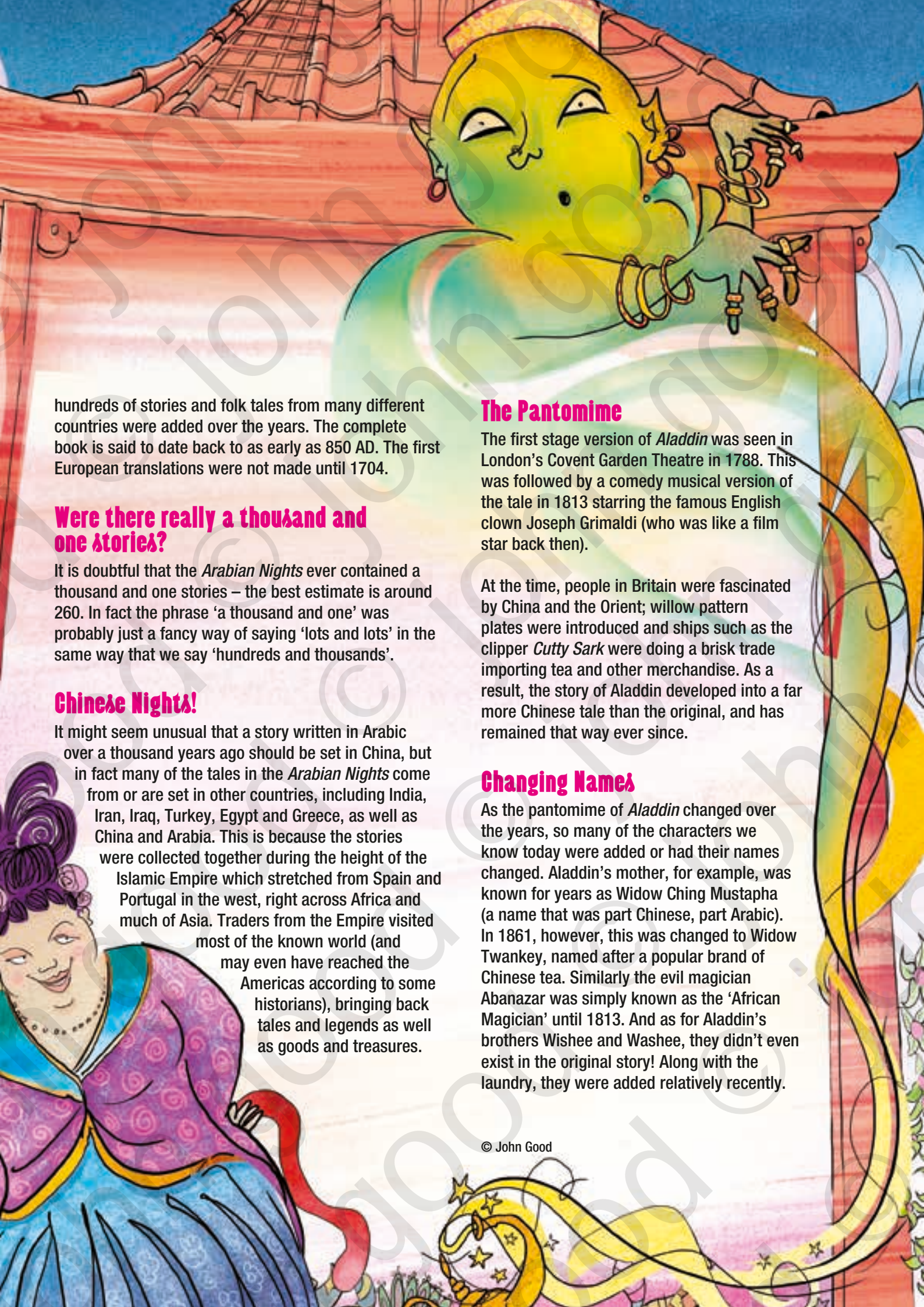
Although most modern pantomime versions of *Aladdin* are set in a Chinese background, the story originated in another part of the world, the Middle East. The basic tale is many hundreds of years old, although much of the modern version has been added in more recent times. Like the adventures of *Sinbad the Sailor* and *Ali Baba*, the story of Aladdin can be found in the famous collection of old Arabian and Eastern tales, the *One Thousand and One Nights*, also known as the *Arabian Nights*.

About the Arabian Nights

Most people are familiar with the structure of the *Arabian Nights*. It features a powerful, but terrible king called Shahriyar who discovers that his wife has been unfaithful to him and, in his rage, vows to marry a new wife every day and kill her at dawn the next day.

However, things change when he marries a clever young girl called Sheherazade. On their wedding night, knowing that she only has hours left to live, Sheherazade begins to tell her husband a story. When dawn comes she still has not finished and, so keen is the King to hear more, that he decides not to kill her until next day. But the following night the same thing happens and, night after night, the inventive young girl keeps the King entertained with exciting tales. Finally, after a thousand and one nights have passed, the King realises that he loves Sheherazade too much to ever consider killing her and they live happily ever after. No one knows exactly when the *Arabian Nights* was written or who the authors were. It is most likely that the linking story of Sheherazade and the King was created by one author and then





hundreds of stories and folk tales from many different countries were added over the years. The complete book is said to date back to as early as 850 AD. The first European translations were not made until 1704.

Were there really a thousand and one stories?

It is doubtful that the *Arabian Nights* ever contained a thousand and one stories – the best estimate is around 260. In fact the phrase ‘a thousand and one’ was probably just a fancy way of saying ‘lots and lots’ in the same way that we say ‘hundreds and thousands’.

Chinese Nights!

It might seem unusual that a story written in Arabic over a thousand years ago should be set in China, but in fact many of the tales in the *Arabian Nights* come from or are set in other countries, including India, Iran, Iraq, Turkey, Egypt and Greece, as well as China and Arabia. This is because the stories were collected together during the height of the Islamic Empire which stretched from Spain and Portugal in the west, right across Africa and much of Asia. Traders from the Empire visited most of the known world (and may even have reached the Americas according to some historians), bringing back tales and legends as well as goods and treasures.

The Pantomime

The first stage version of *Aladdin* was seen in London’s Covent Garden Theatre in 1788. This was followed by a comedy musical version of the tale in 1813 starring the famous English clown Joseph Grimaldi (who was like a film star back then).

At the time, people in Britain were fascinated by China and the Orient; willow pattern plates were introduced and ships such as the clipper *Cutty Sark* were doing a brisk trade importing tea and other merchandise. As a result, the story of *Aladdin* developed into a far more Chinese tale than the original, and has remained that way ever since.

Changing Names

As the pantomime of *Aladdin* changed over the years, so many of the characters we know today were added or had their names changed. *Aladdin*’s mother, for example, was known for years as *Widow Ching Mustapha* (a name that was part Chinese, part Arabic). In 1861, however, this was changed to *Widow Twankey*, named after a popular brand of Chinese tea. Similarly the evil magician *Abanazar* was simply known as the ‘*African Magician*’ until 1813. And as for *Aladdin*’s brothers *Wishee* and *Washee*, they didn’t even exist in the original story! Along with the laundry, they were added relatively recently.



A is for our hero, **A**laddin is his name,
A likely lad, but rather lazy— isn't that a shame!
B is for his **B**usiness-minded Mum, she's on her own;
And **C** the **C**lean and lovely **C**lothes—her laundry is well known!
D is the **D**ilemma when a stranger calls one day:
Is he Aladdin's uncle from a country far away?
E is for his **E**agerness to claim the family tie,
Widow Twankey isn't sure at first and wonders why!
F is for the **F**east they make for Abanazar's visit,
He has a plan to get rich quick, Aladdin says 'What is it?'
G is for the **G**enie who appears to help and save,
When wicked Abanazar leaves Aladdin in the cave,
H is for the **H**elplessness, Aladdin full of fears,
Thinks his **I**ncarceration will go on for many years.
J is for the **J**ewels that sparkle all around
And **K** is the **K**ing's Ransom, which is what he's really found.



A to Z

L is for the **L**amp where the Genie waits to serve,
M is for the **M**aster from whose will he cannot swerve.
N is for the **N**ew-found wealth Aladdin has acquired,
O the **O**pportunities his heart has long desired.
P is for the **P**rincess who he wins to be his bride,
Q her **Q**ueenly beauty as she takes her place with pride.
R is for the **R**iches they're enjoying day by day,
But **S** is for their **S**orrows when the lamp gets thrown away.
T is for the **T**roubles that fall on Aladdin's head,
And he must **U**ndergo a fearful trial full of dread.
V is for the **V**ictory, against evil he wins out,
W the **W**iles that he outwits without a doubt.
X the **eX**-magician Abanazar soon becomes,
Y the **Y**ears of good life for Aladdin and his chums!
And now at last we come to **Z** and, after all this strife,
Aladdin's finally 'in the **Z**one' and stays there all his life!

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Double Trouble!

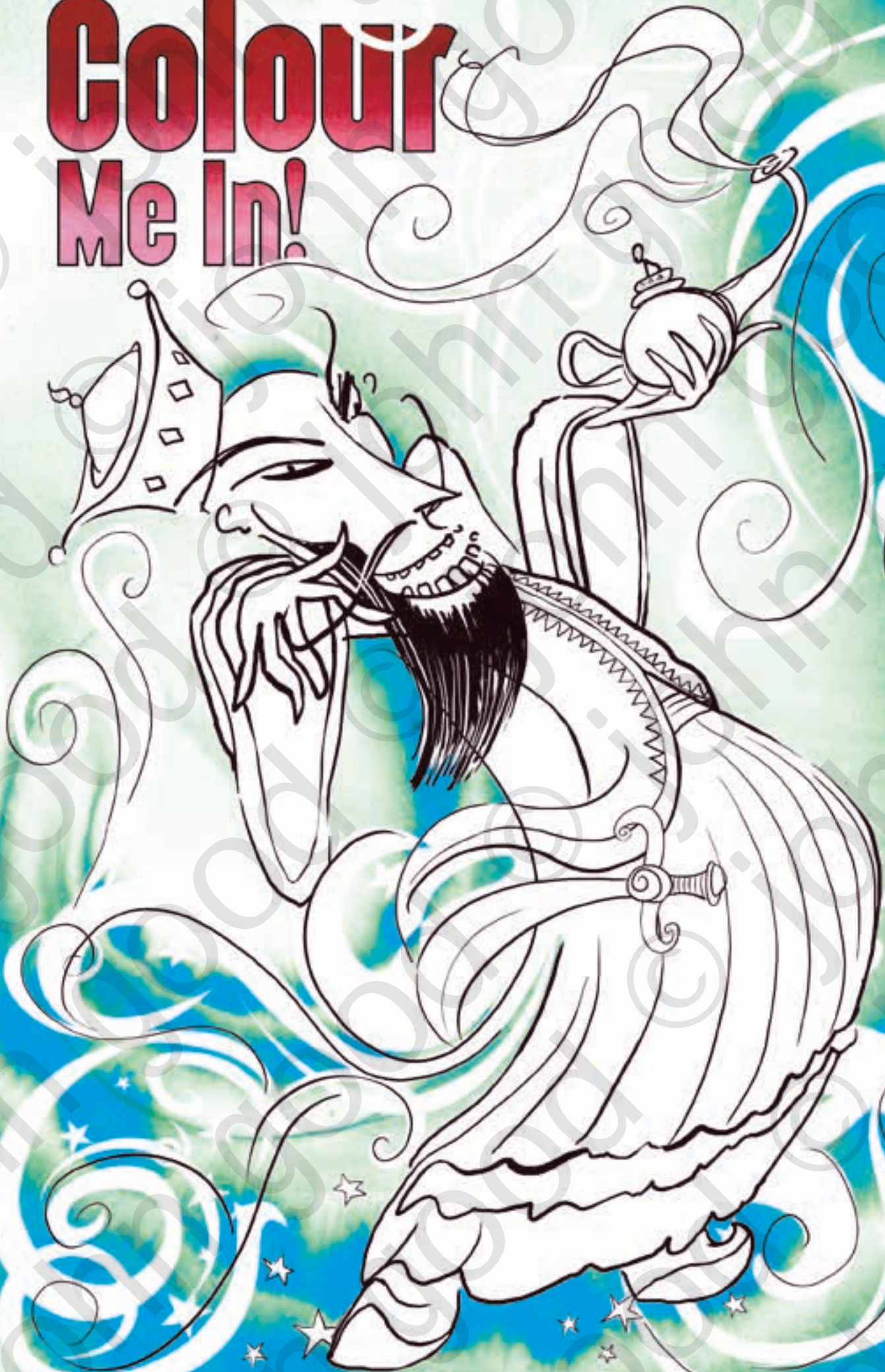
Two genies have appeared from Aladdin's lamp! They seem identical but can you spot the 10 differences between them?



Colour Me In!



Colour Me In!



Aladdin's Hidden Message

Cross out all the words from the list below when you find them in the grid. The letters you are left with will spell out Aladdin's message to you.

R	A	R	A	B	I	A	G	E	M	S	M	O	K	E
G	U	S	A	P	P	H	I	R	E	S	N	S	Y	I
N	O	B	A	Z	A	A	R	U	R	I	Y	L	O	N
I	W	I	T	L	A	M	P	S	D	H	E	A	L	E
R	A	N	I	H	C	N	H	D	N	I	K	V	D	G
P	A	L	A	C	E	M	A	S	E	S	N	E	P	O
S	E	E	D	I	H	L	I	B	I	S	A	N	E	P
E	M	M	Y	C	A	O	A	M	A	W	W	I	K	R
I	M	S	P	E	L	L	A	M	N	D	T	G	I	I
B	N	E	M	E	C	I	L	O	P	O	W	H	N	N
U	M	T	E	P	R	A	C	A	V	E	O	T	G	C
R	E	V	O	L	C	O	M	M	A	N	D	S	A	E
Y	R	D	N	U	A	L	R	S	T	H	I	E	F	S
T	E	R	U	S	A	E	L	P	J	E	W	E	L	S
C	I	G	A	M	E	D	I	A	M	O	N	D	S	R

ABANAZAR
ALADDIN
ARABIA
BAZAAR
CARPET
CAVE
CHINA
COMMAND

DIAMONDS
EMPEROR
GEMS
GENIE
HIDE
JEWELS
KIND
LAMP

LAUNDRY
LOVE
MAGIC
NIGHTS
OLD PEKING
OPEN SESAME
PALACE
PLEASURE

POLICEMEN
PRINCESS
RING
RUBIES
RUB THE LAMP
SAPPHIRES
SLAVE
SMOKE

SPELL
THIEF
WIDOW
TWANKEY
WISH

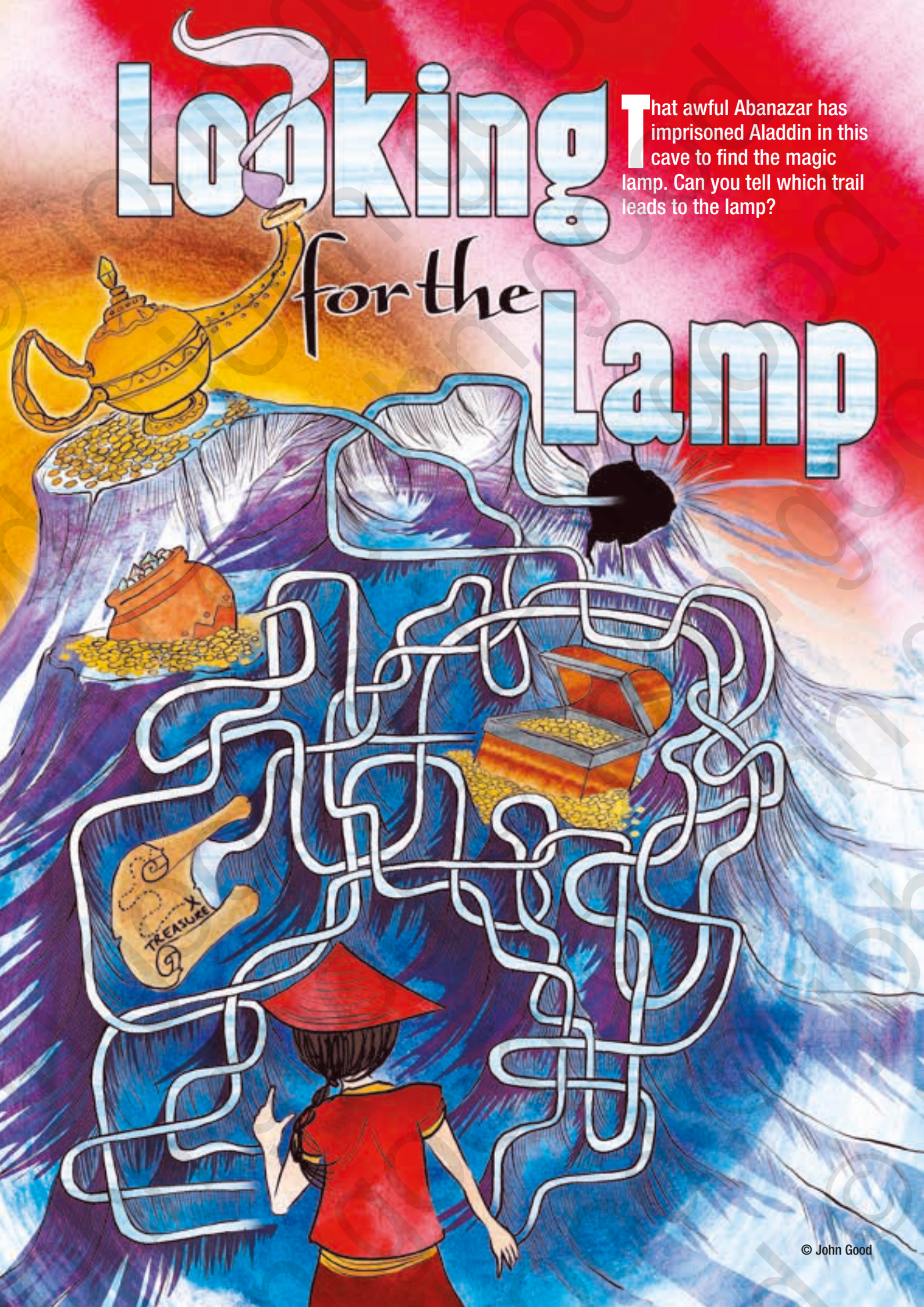


Looking

That awful Abanazar has imprisoned Aladdin in this cave to find the magic lamp. Can you tell which trail leads to the lamp?

for the

Lamp



Secret socks

When Aladdin is out and about, and Widow Twankey wants to tell him something, she leaves a message on the washing line! Can you find out what she is trying to tell him?



A B C D E F G H I
J K L M N O P Q R
S T U V W X Y Z

Join the Dots

Uh-oh! That wicked Abanazar has changed himself into something terrible! Join up the dots to find out what he has turned himself into.



Answers

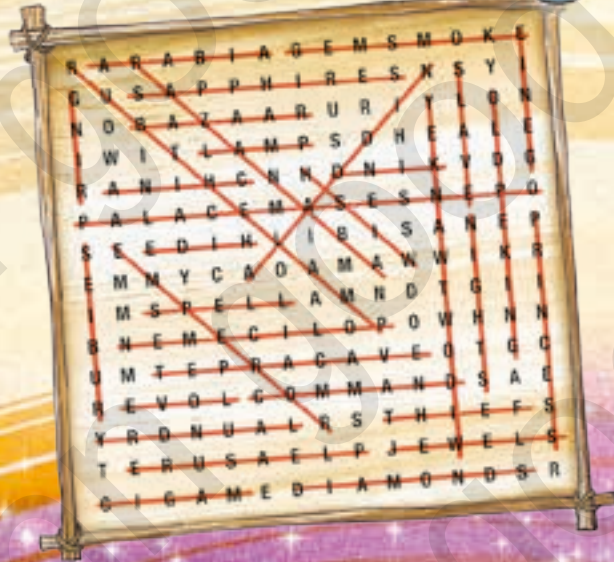
Double Trouble!



Looking for the Lamp



Aladdin's Hidden Message



'YOUR WISH IS MY COMMAND, O MASTER'

Secret Socks



'Aladdin, hurry up and get more soap from Mr Wong, we've run out.'

Answers

