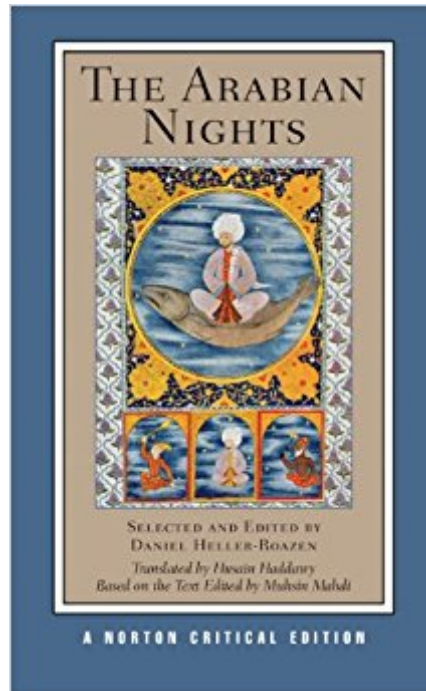




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# **The Arabian Nights (Norton Critical Editions)**



## Synopsis

This Norton Critical Edition includes twenty-eight tales from *The Arabian Nights* translated by Husain Haddawy on the basis of the oldest existing Arabic manuscript. Few works of literature are as familiar and beloved as *The Arabian Nights*. Yet few remain also as unknown. In English, *The Arabian Nights* is a literary work of relatively recent date—the first versions of the tales appeared in English barely two hundred years ago. The tales are accompanied by a preface, a note on the text, and explanatory annotations. *Contexts* presents three of the oldest witnesses to *The Arabian Nights* in the Arabic tradition, together in English for the first time: an anonymous ninth-century fragment, *Al Mas'ûdi's Muruj al-Dhahab*, and *Ibn al-Nadim's The Fihrist*. Also included are three related works by the nineteenth- and twentieth-century writers Edgar Allan Poe, Marcel Proust, and Taha Husayn. *Criticism* collects eleven wide-ranging essays on *The Arabian Nights's* central themes by Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Josef Horowitz, Jorge Luis Borges, Francesco Gabrieli, Mia Irene Gerhardt, Tzvetan Todorov, Andras Hamori, Heinz Grotzfeld, Jerome W. Clinton, Abdelfattah Kilito, and David Pinault. A Chronology of *The Arabian Nights* and a Selected Bibliography are also included.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I will say that Husain Haddawy's translations of "The Arabian Nights" are the best you'll read for quite some time. I've had these books for awhile now and they're great. Haddawy has done a

remarkable job and provides great introductions for both books. A map is also provided in each book showing the locales mentioned in the stories. There are really two volumes you will need to get the complete collection. This volume has the earlier stories as told by Shahrazad, classic tales of mystery, fun, and excitement. The second book "The Arabian Nights II" has the more popular stories most people are familiar with. Sinbad the Sailor, Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves, Ala al-Din (Aladdin) and the Magic Lamp. Be sure to get them both and you'll be transported to the mystical lands of Arabian Nights. Enjoy.

I really had no idea how much I would enjoy this! I came to it with some vague recollections of some of the tales as they had been adapted into children's stories, but I soon discovered I actually knew almost nothing about the Arabian Nights. The introduction was extremely helpful in explaining the history of the Arabian Nights, why there are different versions, and why those different versions may contain different tales. This volume collects the oldest, "original" tales. More familiar stories that were added later--such as Sinbad and Aladdin--are collected in a separate volume, Arabian Nights II. This translation is an absolute joy to read. The language is vivid and alive--thoroughly modern, yet (judging from the effect on me as a reader) certainly successful in conveying the nuances of the original text. I glanced at the Modern Library Burton edition after reading this. It reads like a King James Bible. Why subject yourself to a translation that you have to re-translate in order to read--especially with a wonderful modern translation like this available? How terribly that must choke the pace of the stories! I felt like the King himself as I read this, knowing that I needed to put it down to go to sleep, but constantly telling myself, "Well, maybe I'll push on for just one more night..." Funny, sexy, violent, and packed with magic and adventure, it really had it all. Except for children, for whom the original tales are too sexual and violent, I can hardly imagine an audience this WOULDN'T appeal to!

I have loved the Arabian Nights since I was a kid. But its fame as a "children's book" has often been a disadvantage -- most editions are simplified, hobbled and sanitized. The unedited versions geared more for adults are a hundred years old, and often show their age. Burton, for example, is an impressive edition but the language is almost a parody of High Victorian English. This edition by Haddawy is almost as perfect as it could possibly be. First, the introduction is wonderful and definitely worth reading on its own -- how many times can you say *that* about a book? It sets the stage for understanding the work, the problems in translating it, and the world the Nights came from. It is clearly, smoothly written. These strengths are carried over to the main text as well. The writing

is so direct, modern, vivid, and thrilling! It effortlessly takes you into this vanished world of danger, love, magic and adventure. Many expressions are modernized, such as "demon" for "genie" or "God" for "Allah," which work well, although I wouldn't have minded the more "romantic" terms. Haddawy explains his choice of stories... the full original text only contains about 300 nights worth of tales. Most of the famous stories were added later (Aladdin, Sindbad, etc.) in response to greater interest in the work. Readers looking for these stories should check out Haddawy's companion volume, "Arabian Nights II," which has these famous stories and shares almost all the virtues of this volume. Finally, these books are wonderfully put together: great paper, type, binding... very satisfying just as a physical form. For those who loved these stories, or anyone with a sense of adventure, buy this! Buy it now!

I thoroughly enjoyed reading Haddawy's translation of "The Arabian Nights". It has a feeling of authenticity, as if it is truly an oral story being passed down through the ages, as it once was. The whole concept of the book is mind-boggling, with stories within stories so many times over that half the fun of reading the book is trying to follow the winding path that the stories lead you down. The physical book itself is also top-notch, as the Everyman's Library editions always are. For me, investing the few extra dollars for such a beautiful edition is well worth it. This book may not be what you expect. It is not the Disney-fied, watered-down version that most of us were introduced to as children. Several of the more famous stories that most Americans would associate with "The Arabian Nights", such as Ali Baba or Aladdin, are actually not part of the work. They were added much later, by the early European translators. Also, the book contains bawdiness and violence (particularly towards women) that may not be appropriate for young children, so be forewarned. Overall, I feel that this is an authentic, lucid translation of a fantastic story, wrapped in the most beautiful of packages. Highly recommended.

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