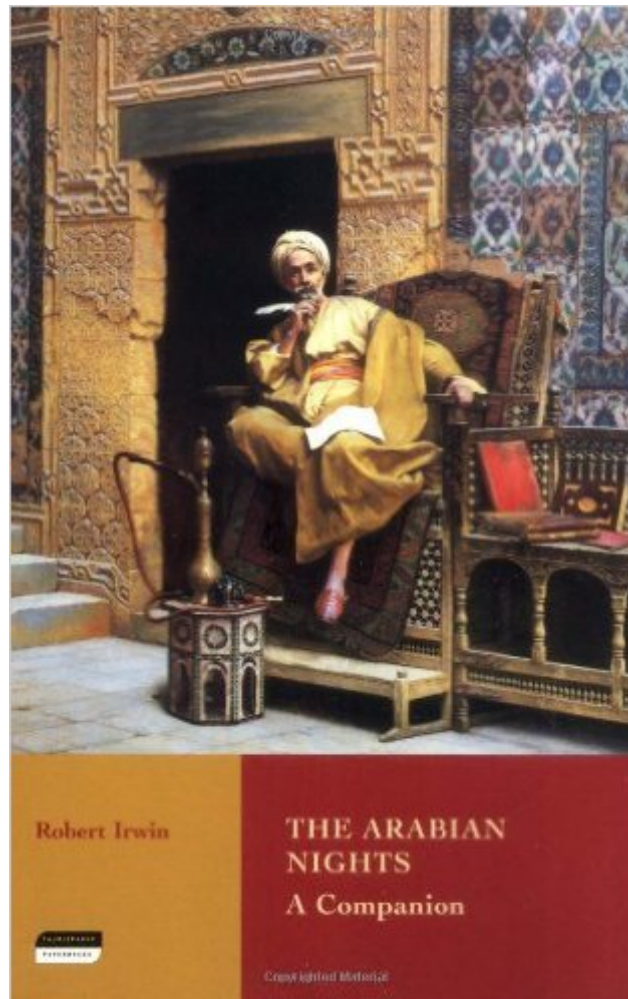


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The Arabian Nights: A Companion (Tauris Parke Paperbacks)



Synopsis

The Arabian Nights: A Companion guides the reader into this celebrated labyrinth of storytelling. It traces the development of the stories from prehistoric India and Pharaonic Egypt to modern times. It explores the history of the translation, and explains the ways in which its contents have been added to, plagiarized and imitated. Above all, the book uses the stories as a guide to the social history and the counterculture of the medieval Near East and the world of the storyteller, the snake charmer, the burglar, the sorcerer, the drug addict, the treasure hunter and the adulterer.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This excellent book by Robert Irwin is essential reading for anyone who really wants to understand "The Thousand Nights and One Night", also known as "The Arabian Nights", "The Arabian Tales", and "The 1,001 Nights". As you probably know, these famous stories were supposedly told by Scheherazade to King Shahriyar over the course of 1,001 nights. Scheherazade kept the King enthralled with cliffhanger endings each night, postponing his plans to execute her until he grew to love her and changed his mind. This book will do several things for readers interested in these stories. First, the introduction and first chapter will help discerning readers decide which edition to read. That doesn't mean that you necessarily have to follow Irwin's recommendations, but you'll be able to make an informed decision. For instance, while he rightly criticizes the accuracy of the Mardrus/Mathers edition, that is the most readable "complete" version; I read it and enjoyed it very

much and would recommend it to those who are more focused on reading something entertaining than on authenticity. But if you do read Mardrus/Mathers, you'll know it's only a loose adaptation of the original Arabic sources. This brings up another point which Irwin makes, which is that there is no authentic version even in Arabic; in reality there are multiple Arabic editions in which different stories occur in different versions. The book will also give readers a much better understanding of the stories themselves and the cultures from which they originated. Note that more than one culture was involved since there are Indian, Persian, Syrian, and Egyptian sources.

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