

Ali Baba

A Reading A-Z Level Y Leveled Book
Word Count: 2,093

LEVELED BOOK • Y

Ali Baba

Connections

Writing

Write an essay analyzing how Morgiana's actions influence the series of events in the story.

Drama

Work in a group to rewrite *Ali Baba* as a script for a play. Perform the play for your class.

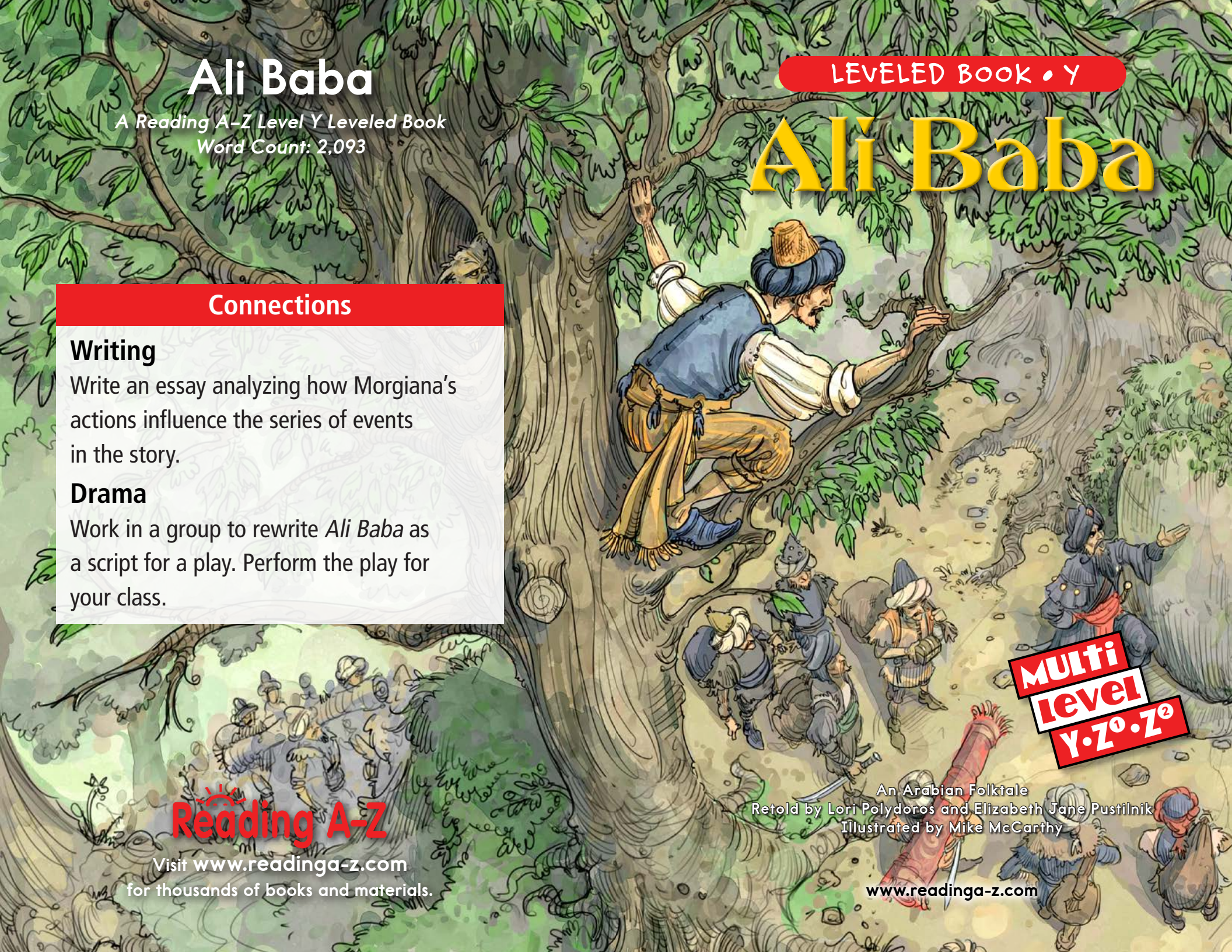
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An Arabian Folktale
Retold by Lori Polydoros and Elizabeth Jane Pustilnik
Illustrated by Mike McCarthy

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Level
Y•Z^o•Z^e**



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Focus Question

Do the intentions of Ali Baba make his actions acceptable as opposed to those of the robbers? Why or why not?

Words to Know

accomplice	perplexed
condolences	plunder
destitute	prosperous
hospitality	spigot
incensed	suet
loot	visage

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Level Y Leveled Book
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Correlation

LEVEL Y

Fountas & Pinnell	T
Reading Recovery	40
DRA	40



Chapter I

Many years ago in a small town in Persia, a father divided his belongings equally between his two young sons, Cassim and Ali Baba. Although their property was equally divided, in no way would fortune treat them alike.

Cassim married Vashti, a wealthy widow, and worked managing their inn. While husband and wife were **prosperous**, they hardly saw each other in the large mansion they shared in town. Ali Baba, on the other hand, was wed to Fatima, the daughter of a poor shepherd, and was employed as a woodcutter. They lived in a shack but shared a life full of love and happiness.

One summer afternoon in the forest, Ali Baba was cutting wood to sell. As he swung his axe into the trunk of a tree, the ground began to rumble like an earthquake. Startled, Ali recognized the sound of horses—many horses, by the sound of it, and they were approaching fast! Grabbing his axe, Ali quickly scaled a tree and hid in its leafy foliage. There he watched and waited.

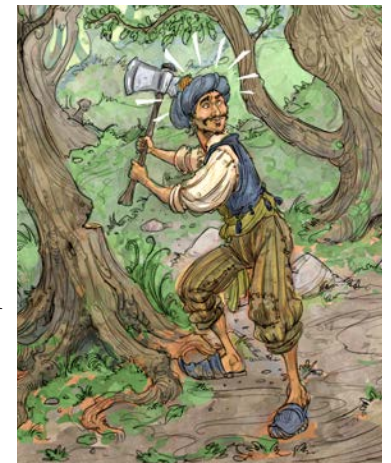


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From his vantage point, Ali saw forty men on horseback come into view, tie up their horses, and lift heavy saddlebags onto their shoulders. Ali thought they looked like robbers with stolen **loot**.

The group convened below a tree that had a large, craggy boulder at its base. Their leader was obvious because he stood taller and looked crueler than the others. Ali heard him utter a strange phrase—“Open, sesame!”

As soon as the man spoke, the boulder slid to the side to reveal a cave. *What kind of magic am I witnessing?* Ali thought as he watched the men disappear inside the cave.

Ali Baba held his breath as his mind raced: *This must be their secret hideaway!*

A short time later, the men and their leader exited the cave. Ali Baba heard the leader call out, “Close, sesame!” and watched as the boulder slid back to mask the cave’s entrance. The men then mounted their horses and galloped away.

Chapter 2

Ali Baba remained in the tree until he felt it was safe to move again, and only then did he gingerly climb down and stand in front of the hidden rock door. Feeling as though he had just sprinted through the forest, sweat dripped down Ali’s face, soaking his tunic.

At last, Ali Baba made himself say the magic words—“Open, sesame.” The boulder slid open, and Ali nearly fell to his knees.



The cave wasn’t gloomy, as he had expected, but instead well lit by a crack in the ceiling. Ali looked around at the bags of gold and silver coins, stacks of fine silk rugs, and chests overflowing with colorful gems. From the amount of treasure in the cave, Ali Baba decided that the robbers must have built up the stash over generations. *They won’t notice a few missing bags of gold and jewels,* Ali thought.

Chapter 3

Ali Baba's wife, Fatima, watched as he carried stuffed bags into their small shack. *These don't look like wood*, she thought.

Fatima's eyes became wide as Ali emptied the bags into a heap of gold coins and glittering jewels on the floor. "Whom did you rob?" she gasped.

Ali Baba replied, "I am no robber, unless one who steals from robbers is also himself a robber." Fatima raised an eyebrow as he began to tell her the whole story.

Ali Baba and Fatima discussed what they should do with their newfound wealth. They couldn't spend it freely without raising suspicions. They would bury it in their garden, but they decided to weigh it first to estimate its worth. So Fatima went to Vashti and Cassim's mansion and asked to borrow a scale to weigh grain.

Vashti was suspicious about how the **destitute** Ali Baba and Fatima would have enough grain to measure with a scale, so she placed a bit of **suet** underneath the scale. Whatever they were weighing would stick to the suet. Later, when Fatima returned the scale, the astonished Vashti discovered a gold coin stuck to the bottom.

Chapter 4

That evening, Vashti said to Cassim, "Your poor brother's wife came here to borrow a scale. What could they have to weigh? I stuck some suet to the bottom of the scale to find out. Guess what I discovered after Fatima returned the scale?"

Cassim watched Vashti draw a gold coin from her pocket and immediately snatched it from her hand, holding it up in the candlelight. "My little brother is up to something, this much is sure. How did a poor woodcutter manage to acquire a gold piece of such quality?"

"There must be more," Vashti said. "Think about it—you only count your money, but he has so much that he has to weigh it. Find out where the rest of the gold is hidden."

The next morning while Fatima was out, Cassim pushed open the door to Ali's shack. Grabbing his brother by his tunic, Cassim roared, "Tell me, Ali Baba! Do not keep secrets from your brother!" He threw the gold coin at Ali and spat, "I know all about your gold. You can blame your foolish wife for that."

Beside himself with shock, Ali started telling Cassim about the hidden cave. Cassim interrupted him and barked, "Take me there *now*."

Chapter 5

Ali spoke the magic words, “Open, sesame,” and the door to the cave slid open. After a moment of shock, Cassim ran inside. With a shake of his head, Ali headed home. Inside the cave, Cassim rolled around on the luxurious carpets, tossed handfuls of gold coins in the air, and draped himself in silk robes. He filled his bags with loot. When he was ready to leave, he paused and said, “What was that phrase again? Oh, yes, ‘Open, barley.’” Nothing happened.

“I could have sworn those were the words Ali spoke to open the cave. Was it a different grain, or was it a spice?” he wondered aloud. “Open, ginger,” he cried. Again, nothing happened.



Growing frantic, he yelled, “Open, cinnamon! Open, paprika! Open, rice!” Still, nothing happened. Cassim panicked and clawed at the cave door like a tiger imprisoned in a cage.

At dusk, the robbers returned to the cave with more riches. They found a surprise—the desperate Cassim! The leader immediately put an end to him. As a warning to other potential looters, they left his body inside the cave.

Chapter 6

That same evening, Fatima and Ali Baba ate dinner together. They had argued but soon realized that Cassim was to blame for their quarrel.

Vashti burst through the door with a concerned expression clouding her **visage**. “Is Cassim here?” she asked.

Ali and Fatima looked at each other. “No,” Ali answered. “I last saw him in the forest.”

Ali knew that Vashti was more concerned about the treasures Cassim was to bring than Cassim himself, but Ali was still loyal to his family, so he set out for the forest.

The moon was high when Ali came home. Vashti looked up from her tea. “Have you found him?” she asked.

Ali replied in a low voice, “Vashti, he has departed this life for the next.”

Ali took Vashti back to her home that night, where her dedicated maid, Morgiana, awaited. Once Morgiana put Vashti to bed, she brought Ali a cup of tea with her **condolences**.

“Thank you,” Ali Baba said. They sat in silence for a moment before Ali spoke again. “My brother and Vashti trust you, and so I must, too.” With that, he told her the entire story. Morgiana saw an opportunity.

“I will help you,” Morgiana said, “but not for free. Will you give me enough gold so that I may go back to my homeland?”



Ali quickly agreed, and Morgiana suggested that their first step be making Cassim’s fate seem accidental so as not to draw attention. The next day, Morgiana went to the marketplace to spread the news that a donkey had kicked Cassim in the head and he had died.

That evening when the robbers returned to their cave to stash more **plunder**, they were **perplexed** to find Cassim’s body missing. Fury clouded the leader’s eyes as he exclaimed, “Now we can be certain that someone else knows about the cave.” **Incensed**, he turned to one man. “You, find out the identity of the man we killed. We must learn who his **accomplice** is!”

Chapter 7

The next day, the robber, pretending to be a holy man, went to the marketplace asking the names of families who had suffered the loss of a loved one. Dismissing the deaths of unlikely people, he focused on one man named Cassim.

Vashti was in mourning, but Morgiana allowed the holy man inside the mansion to say a prayer over Cassim’s body. The robber immediately recognized Cassim, and in his excitement (paying no mind to the servant watching him) said a few words before turning to leave.

His prayer seemed strange to Morgiana, so after walking him back to the front door, she peered from behind a curtain and watched as the robber drew a giant X on the front door. Morgiana sighed and shook her head. *Simple tricks for simple men*, she thought. Grabbing some chalk, she ran outside and drew an X on each of the houses on the street.

That night, the robber who had posed as the holy man led the group to Cassim’s street. He stopped abruptly in his tracks. Now all the front doors had an X. Which house had he been to earlier? Frustrated, the leader declared that he would have to find another way to identify the accomplice.

Chapter 8

The next day, the leader of the thieves posed as an oil merchant, and the robber who had posed as the holy man was disguised as his helper. They spent the day knocking on the doors of all the houses on Cassim's street. When Morgiana answered the door to Cassim's home, the robber nudged the leader.

"May I see the master of the house?" the leader asked.

Ali Baba came to the door and said, "I am the brother of Cassim. How can I help you?"

"I have oil for sale." The merchant gestured to the many barrels loaded on carts in the street. Morgiana looked at the barrels. Something about them and these men made her uneasy.

"Yes, we will take a few barrels," Ali said. "Thank you, kind sir."

"May I make another request?" the leader asked. "May we stay here tonight and store our wares in your yard?"

Ali, feeling bound by the rules of **hospitality** and interested in the stories of an oil merchant, ignored Morgiana's concerned expression as he replied, "You may stay here, my friend."

Chapter 9

As Morgiana made dinner that night, her lantern went out. She went to the yard and turned the **spigot** of a barrel. No oil. She tried the next barrel and was pleased to find oil. As she finished filling her lantern, she heard a cough from inside another barrel.

Like puzzle pieces falling into place, Morgiana realized that the oil merchant was a thief, and the other thieves were hidden inside the barrels!

Morgiana and the other servants silently glued the barrels closed. Then they rolled the barrels down the hill to where the city soldiers stood guard.

Morgiana told the soldiers about the thieves. The soldiers laughed at first, but then they opened one of the barrels and found a confused, and dizzy, robber armed to the teeth. As one group of soldiers set about arresting the robbers, Morgiana led the captain and his men to the mansion.



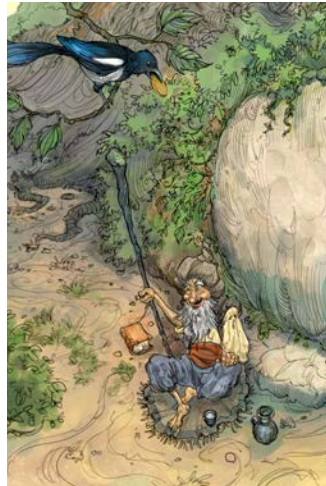
Chapter 10

The thieves were tried and sent to faraway prisons, where their stories of a magical cave filled with treasure were treated as fairy tales.

As promised, Ali Baba gave Morgiana more than enough gold to return to her homeland. She used the gold to start a business that kept her family wealthy for generations.

Ali Baba, Fatima, and Vashti returned to the cave again and again, taking more and more riches. They passed its secret location and the magic words needed to enter it on to their children, who lived comfortably enough with what was left of the treasure. By the time their great-grandchildren were born, there was no treasure left.

One great-grandchild made some money by showing people the wondrous moving rock, but the novelty soon wore off. He spent the rest of his days living in the empty cave. When he passed on, there was no one left to remember the magic words, and the rock never moved again.



Glossary

accomplice (<i>n.</i>)	someone who helps another person to do something wrong or illegal (p. 11)
condolences (<i>n.</i>)	expressions of sympathy or comfort, especially after the death of a loved one (p. 10)
destitute (<i>adj.</i>)	very poor or lacking resources such as food, shelter, or clothing (p. 7)
hospitality (<i>n.</i>)	the friendly, welcoming treatment of guests or strangers (p. 13)
incensed (<i>adj.</i>)	extremely angry (p. 11)
loot (<i>n.</i>)	goods or valuables that have been taken by force or stolen (p. 5)
perplexed (<i>adj.</i>)	confused (p. 11)
plunder (<i>n.</i>)	items of value stolen or taken (p. 11)
prosperous (<i>adj.</i>)	having success; well-off (p. 4)
spigot (<i>n.</i>)	a device like a faucet that can start or stop the flow of liquid (p. 14)
suet (<i>n.</i>)	a hard fat around the kidneys of some animals that can be used in cooking or in making products such as soap (p. 7)
visage (<i>n.</i>)	a person's face, expression, or appearance (p. 10)