

A sudden puff of glittering smoke

These questions will help you practise:

- ★ retrieving and recording information
- ★ explaining how meaning is enhanced through choice of words
- ★ making comparisons
- ★ giving/explaining the meaning of words in context
- ★ making and explaining inferences.

'Who can name somewhere else really hot?' asked Mr Piper.

'Where are you from?' Jeanie whispered to the genie.

'Baghdad,' he replied, idly crossing one leg over the other and picking at a loose thread in his silver slipper. 'It was the shining jewel of all Arabia.'

'Baghdad!' called out Jeanie, and added without thinking, 'It was the shining jewel of all Arabia.'

Mr Piper's eyes widened.

'Well done! And can you tell us anything more about it?' She glanced down at the genie, still lazing on the desk. Could she?

The genie smiled. Then, gently, he blew. A stream of glittering mist flew up from his mouth and swirled around Jeanie like rings around a planet.

'In the good old days,' she heard herself saying, 'Baghdad was truly a city of marvels. Mere words cannot describe its mysteries or its wonders.'

Everyone stared. Mr Piper's mouth dropped open. The genie shut his eyes till his dark lashes fluttered on his cheeks, and blew and blew, and Jeanie began to speak of the most magnificent palace from which four highways ran out through massive gateways in high walls, and stretched to the corners of the old Arab empire. She spoke of merchants travelling east and west, and of enormous wealth and terrible poverty. She used words she had never used before – words she had never even heard! She told them about the ruler – Caliph, she called him. She told them about mosques made of finely patterned tiles where Muslims gathered to worship Allah. She spoke of vast bazaars humming with people buying and selling.

'Jeanie!' cried Mr Piper. 'You must have spent the whole weekend locked in the library, to know so much!'

Jeanie tried to stop. But the genie still blew. The glittering rings still circled round her head. Without wanting to keep on, she found herself telling Mr Piper all about houses built of sun-dried bricks, white-washed to hurl the heat of the fierce sun back in its face. She told him about cool hidden courtyards and wooden shutters that kept out the sun by day and the desert winds by night.

