

Are You Feeling Sleepy?

A close-up photograph of a small tabby kitten sleeping peacefully. The kitten is curled up, with its head tucked back and its eyes closed. It is partially covered by a light blue, textured blanket. The background is softly blurred, showing more of the blanket and the kitten's fur.

ACCESS: How does Romanticism reflect the push for a distinct American identity?



Imagine reading in the newspaper that someone in your hometown disappeared for twenty years... and then returned. Where had this person been? Asleep? That is extremely hard to believe, don't you think? How would the world be different when that person returned? Think of technology now; smart phones weren't being used twenty years ago. Imagine the surprise.

Well, that is the central plotline of America's first fairytale, "Rip Van Winkle"; a man falls asleep and awakes twenty years later.

Washington Irving, also known as the father of the American short story, was born in New York City in 1783. His first name came from George Washington. Irving had a few pen names for when he wrote, such as Diedrich Knickerbocker, Jonathan Oldstyle, and Geoffrey Crayon.

Short stories in American Romanticism featured a hero that may have youthful qualities, a sense of innocence, a love of nature, a distrust of city or civilization, and a need to make a journey for a higher truth. Washington Irving had a unique knack for incorporating these elements into his protagonists.

Irving never married; however, he was engaged to a woman name Matilda Hoffmann who died before they could marry at age seventeen. He died a bachelor in 1859, and he is buried in the Sleepy Hollow Cemetery in Sleepy Hollow, NY.

"Rip Van Winkle"

"Rip Van Winkle" focuses on the Romantic concept of optimism and individualism. It is often considered to be the first American short story. At the time of its publications in 1819, the short story was not considered a serious art form. Narrative fiction in general was viewed with some suspicion. Irving, therefore, used a frame story to pass the responsibility for his tale on to someone else.



Read the opening lines of the story:

"The following Tale was found among the papers of the late Diedrich Knickerbocker, an old gentleman of New York, who was very curious in the Dutch history of the province, and the namers of the descendants from its primitive settlers..."

The narrative frame works like a picture frame, framing the story of Rip.

Diedrich Knickerbocker is a fictional person created by Irving. Irving is distancing himself from his creation and saying, in effect, "I didn't write this; I just found this story written by Diedrich Knickerbocker." Geoffrey Crayon is the frame narrator, which means he tells the story. *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon* is a collection of essays and short stories by Irving.

The story of "Rip Van Winkle" is a **frame story**.

"Rip Van Winkle" has two pieces of writing before the actual story: a quotation and a note explaining where the story originated. The story also has a postscript (a PS) telling the readers that there is truth to this story "beyond the possibility of doubt."

There are also three parts to the structure of the plot:

- the beginning, Rip is portrayed as a **henpecked** husband;

- the middle, Rip goes on his venture into the **Catskills Mountains about 100 miles north of New York City.**;

- the end, Rip returns from his slumber.

In the last short story, you recognized allegories. "Rip Van Winkle" is an allegory. The character Rip symbolizes the satisfied American at the time of the Revolution because he submits to his wife. As you read the story, think about what his wife would represent.

Read "Rip Van Winkle."



Vocabulary

The vocabulary in "Rip Van Winkle" may seem challenging, but Irving often defines challenging words as part of the story. For example, Irving calls the Kaatskill mountains "barometers," and then defines the term by explaining that the mountain mists forecast the weather. There are two different spellings of the mountain range as well. In Irving story, you will see the mountains spelled as *Kaatskill*, but today, you would see the spelling as *Catskill*.

Read the third paragraph of "Rip Van Winkle." Then look at the highlighted text to locate the following words that describe Rip and his wife. Read the sentence in which it appears, and try to guess the meaning of each word. Then look the words up in a dictionary to check your guesses.

TRY IT!!!

https://accessdl.state.al.us/AventaCourses/access_courses/english_10_ua_v17/03_unit/03-03/03-03_practice/story.html

Review Gameshow below.
[Open Gameshow in new window](#) | [Gameshow text version](#)

3.03 Irving's Hero

Part A

Directions: Read back through Irving's "Rip Van Winkle" noting textual evidence for Romanticism qualities.

Part B

Directions: Imagine that you have heard about someone from your town who fell asleep for twenty years and awoke to a different life. Write about a person who has slept for twenty years and has awoken in present day. In one or two paragraphs, describe life's changes in some of the following areas: the environment, technology, fashion, politics, family, friends, etc. Be creative.