

**DESCRIPTION OF THE GENRE OF FICTION IN THE WORKS OF  
WASHINGTON IRVING**

*S. Rasulova*<sup>1</sup>, *M. Husanova*<sup>2</sup>

*Abstract:*

This article is about the life and work of Washington Irving and the skillful use of genres in his works, especially the depiction of fiction in Washington Irving's works.

*Key words:* fiction, fantasy, short-stories, humor, gothic

*doi:* <https://doi.org/10.2024/prm8ym37>

---

Currently, in our country, the life and work of many writers and literary experts, as well as representatives of world literature, have been studied on a large scale. For example Washington Irving, he was an American short-story writer, essayist, biographer, historian, and diplomat of the early 19th century. Washington Irving's ancestors were from Holland and moved to the American state of Washington. In the 17th and 18th centuries, thousands of Europeans were brought to America voluntarily, some by force. Irving, was born in New York to a family of merchants with Scottish-English roots, was named after General George Washington, whom his parents admired. Showing literary talent from a young age, he briefly pursued law before finding success with his first book, *A History of New York*, written under the pseudonym Diedrich Knickerbocker. In 1815, he traveled to England to manage his family's business, which eventually failed, leading him to rely on his writing for income. At that time, indigenous tribes lived in most parts of America, and in order to displace them and gain control over the whole of America, it was necessary to transfer European whites and give them some privileges. He wrote the short stories "Rip Van Winkle" and "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" both of which appear in his collection *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.* His historical works include biographies of Oliver Goldsmith, Muhammad, and George Washington, as well as several histories of 15th-century Spain that deal with subjects such as the Alhambra, Christopher Columbus, and the Moors. Irving served as American ambassador to Spain in the 1840s. Born and raised in Manhattan to a merchant family, Irving started his literary career in 1802 with a series of letters to the *Morning Chronicle* under the pen name Jonathan Old style. He moved to England temporarily in 1815 for business, gaining fame with *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.* serialized from 1819 to 1820. Irving continued to publish regularly and finished a five-volume biography of George Washington shortly before passing away at 76 in Tarrytown, New York.

In order to become a writer, young Washington gave up both business and law and left for New York. He was only eighteen years old when he went on a

---

<sup>1</sup> *Rasulova Sokhiba Ulugbekovna, Senior teacher of SamSIFL*

<sup>2</sup> *Husanova Mohiniso, student of SamSIFL*

tour of Europe with New York literary circles. He first went to London, began his career by reading examples of English literature, and established close relations with English literary circles. Washington Irving's position in American literature was firmly established by "The Book of Drawings" published in 1819. This book, which is a collection of stories and essays, will sell quickly and bring the writer both material and spiritual wealth. Inspired by this, the writer completely immerses himself in artistic creation. Washington Irving was loved by all Americans, regardless of race and nationality. He wrote many works not only about the life of the Europeans who moved to America, but also about the indigenous people of America. At that time, many countries in Africa and Asia were under the control of the British, and blacks from Africa and Muslims from Asia were also taken to America. The writer also neglected to describe the life of blacks and Muslims living in America.

He is known as the "Father of American fiction" because he believed that American literature should be seen as a separate art form, not restricted by Puritan ideals of serving morality or telling only truths. He was the first American fiction writer to achieve global recognition. Irving's work, *The Sketch Book, or Geoffrey Crayon (1819-20)* is a compilation of travel sketches, essays, and folktales such as "Rip Van Winkle," authored by Washington Irving using the pseudonym Geoffrey Crayon. Among the tales within the book is one inspired by a German folktale. Washington Irving uses fictional characters like the hesitant historian Diedrich Knickerbocker in his stories, like "Rip Van Winkle", to mock a literary convention created to dispute the idea that fiction is synonymous with lies. The narrative begins in the period before the revolution and concludes post-Independence. It revolves around a troubled marriage where the wife is authoritative and the husband is dysfunctional. The story is recounted by an untrustworthy historian who dug into the tale and penned it down. Framed by the notes of the individual who stumbled upon Knickerbocker's document and presents it to the audience, the story is intricate and open to different interpretations. Joseph Campbell in his book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* explains that the classic hero's journey in myths and legends follows a structure of departure, initiation, and return. The hero leaves his familiar surroundings, faces challenges often involving the supernatural, overcomes them, and then comes back to society with newfound wisdom. These brief fiction pieces by Irving can be seen as a mix of gothic and comedic styles, blending the two to establish a uniquely American genre. Washington Irving was a versatile writer who delved into various genres, including biographies, political essays, travel narratives, and historical accounts. However, he is mostly remembered for his fiction, particularly his humorous and gothic short stories like "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow." Irving expertly blended elements of both genres, creating a uniquely American style. Characters such as Ichabod Crane and Rip Van Winkle, protagonists in some of his most famous works, often find themselves at the center of comical situations, inviting readers to share in their misadventures and laugh at their follies. Irving often blends humor with horror in his writing. Considered a pioneer of the gothic genre in America, Irving often sets his stories in a world where strange and inexplicable events take place. Emotion plays a significant role in fiction writing, which is why Irving incorporates it heavily in his work. He skillfully conveys his characters' feelings through his writing, such as in "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" where Ichabod's emotions for Katrina are as

## **International Conference**

### **HUMANISTIC ROLE OF LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE IN THE CONTEMPORARY GLOBALIZATION**

evident as his fear of a spooky, supposedly haunted road. Irving's short stories are rich in gothic details like vivid descriptions, supernatural occurrences, romance, fiction and intense emotions.

Washington Irving is best known for his fantastical short stories about American history and culture, but his biography of George Washington also highlighted his skill in presenting history in an engaging way. Published in several volumes between 1855 and 1859, Irving's biography became one of the most significant works of the nineteenth century. It offered a detailed and readable account of Washington's military career, presidency, fantasy and personal life, portraying the legendary figure as a relatable human being. Washington Irving mastered the use of fiction in his works, and it is very easy to fall into the world of fantasy while reading his works. But Washington Irving used more Romantic genre in some of his works. In 1815 Irving traveled to Liverpool to oversee his brothers' business affairs. While in London, he met Sir Walter Scott, who encouraged him to continue writing. This led to the publication of *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent* (1819-20), a collection of stories that blend satire, whimsicality, fact, and fiction. While most of the pieces in the book focus on Irving's experiences in England, some chapters cover American subjects. Among these, "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" and "Rip Van Winkle" are considered the first American short stories, inspired by German folktales. The latter tells the story of a man who sleeps for two decades, only to wake up an old man in a changed America. The success of *The Sketch Book* in both the UK and the US confirmed Irving's writing talents. He followed up with *Bracebridge Hall* in 1822, and continued traveling extensively throughout Europe and America. Rip Van Winkle is an amiable farmer who wanders into the Catskill Mountains, where he comes upon a group of dwarfs playing ninepins. Rip accepts their offer of a drink of liquor and promptly falls asleep. When he awakens, 20 years later, he is an old man with a long white beard; the dwarfs are nowhere in sight. Washington Irving's short story *Rip Van Winkle* falls into the fantasy genre due to its impossible events and unrealistic characters, such as encountering people who have been deceased for centuries. The character of Rip in the story mirrors Irving's own personality to a significant extent, with shared traits, beliefs, and attitudes regarding marriage, politics, and the environment. This connection between Irving and Rip gives the impression that "Rip Van Winkle" could be an autobiographical representation of Irving's life through his fictional protagonist. Even if Irving did not intentionally create an autobiographical work, the similarities between him and Rip are noteworthy as they highlight how Irving uses his story to illustrate his own character and disposition. Scholars and critics have observed how Irving's writing serves as a means for him to express his personal thoughts and beliefs, with some, such as Winifred Romney in her 1908 essay, proposing that familiarity with Irving the person is key to comprehending Irving the writer, as his literary works reflect his personality. Romney suggests that Washington Irving's writings reflect his charming personality and gentle nature. She highlights the humor evident in works like "Knickerbocker's History," "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow," and "Rip Van Winkle," and points to a resemblance between Irving and the character Rip Van Winkle. Romney primarily focuses on Irving's qualities, literary style, and his impact on American literature, rather than delving deeply into biographical evidence of his similarities to Rip. Irving employs the alias of Geoffrey Crayon to record his experiences objectively, allowing him to analyze and contemplate their

significance from a distance. By creating this fictional persona, Crayon acts as a shield between Irving and the world, fulfilling an emotional need and marking the beginning of a new literary genre in America. This pseudonym not only serves Irving's emotional purposes but also gives his sketches a more profound aesthetic quality than traditional travel accounts. Critics like Richard Ellmann suggest that Irving's tales, such as "Rip Van Winkle," serve as a reflection of his personal experiences, emotions, and psychological needs. While Irving's use of these stories to convey his feelings has been noted, there has been less focus on analyzing the autobiographical elements within them, particularly the aspects that reflect Irving's morals, intellect, and behavior through characters like Rip. Like his fictional hero Rip, Irving is also known for his generosity. In the story, Rip's kind nature is highlighted by the fact that he never turns down a neighbor in need of assistance, whether it be hard labor or helping out at village events. Even though Rip may be lazy and avoid work, he always readily lends a helping hand when asked by the women in the village. His compassionate nature is highlighted by his willingness to help not just his acquaintances, but also strangers. This is exemplified in Irving's account of Rip assisting a stranger carrying a heavy keg in the Catskill Mountains. Despite his reservations, Rip quickly agrees to help the man and assists him in moving the keg to the intended destination. In this setting, Rip's compassionate nature shines through as he bravely serves drinks to the strange and mysterious characters, despite feeling scared and uneasy. The story is filled with instances that showcase Rip's generosity and selflessness, indicating that Rip is more concerned about helping others than himself. Much like Rip, Irving was known for his kindness and willingness to help others, demonstrating some of his most notable characteristics.

### **References:**

- [1]. Adams, Charles, D. D. *Memoir of Washington Irving: With Selections from His Works, and Criticisms*, New York: Carlton & Lanahan, 1870.
- [2]. Axson, Stockton. "Washington Irving and the Knickerbocker Group." *Rica Institute Pamphlet 20*, no. 2 (April 1933): 178-95.
- [3]. Ed. Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock. *Cambridge: Cambridge University Press*, 2017. 31-43
- [4]. Jones, Brian Jay. *Washington Irving: An American Original*. New York: Arcade, 2008.
- [5]. Rosenblum, Joseph. "Washington Irving (1783-1859)." *Writers of the American Renaissance: An A-to-Z Guide*. Ed. Denise D. Knight. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2003. 210-17.