

**ARTISTIC ROMANCE OF THE AMERICAN PAST IN THE WORK OF  
WASHINGTON IRVING (AS AN EXAMPLE OF RIP VAN WINKLE)**

*S. Rasulova <sup>1</sup>, O. Khamiddinov <sup>2</sup>*

*Abstract:*

In this article, we delve into Washington Irving's classic story, "Rip Van Winkle." We explore how Irving portrays nostalgia, transformation, and folklore, and how these themes make the tale timeless. Through a mix of theory, examples, and expanded historical context, we help readers grasp Irving's impact on American literature and the enduring appeal of "Rip Van Winkle."

*Key words:* Washington Irving, Rip Van Winkle, American folklore, artistic romance, literary analysis

*doi:* <https://doi.org/10.2024/9n6phd04>

---

---

Introduction

Washington Irving's *Rip Van Winkle* stands as a quintessential example of the artistic romance of the American past. Through the lens of this timeless tale, we embark on a journey through the enchanting landscapes of the Hudson Valley and encounter the whimsical characters that populate Irving's imagination. This article seeks to unravel the layers of meaning woven into the narrative, shedding light on Irving's portrayal of a bygone era infused with both nostalgia and myth.

The theme of historical identity is a prevalent subject in American Romanticism, which can be observed in both "Young Goodman Brown" and "Rip Van Winkle." In the former, America's historical identity is explored through Brown's reconciliation with his family and puritanical past. The devil elucidates his association with Brown's ancestors by stating, "I helped your grandfather, the constable when he lashed the Quaker woman so smartly through the streets of Salem. And it was I that brought your father a pitch-pine knot...to set fire to an Indian village in King Philip's war"(P 113). Washington Irving's *Rip Van Winkle* was first published in 1819; this year marked the end of predecessors for American short stories before American Romanticism commenced. The story quickly gained fame due to its use of literary forms that other predecessors frequently lacked. Many early American stories had undeveloped characters and plotlines that often gave a didactic tone; however, "Rip Van Winkle" is written more eloquently and stylistically than these works as it can easily be identified as part of American Romanticism - especially when compared to Nathaniel Hawthorne's story, "Young Goodman Brown," as they share common romantic elements like themes regarding historical identity and fantastical settings found within nature.

The Background of the Story

---

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

<sup>2</sup> *Khamiddinov Oyatillo, student of SamSIFL*

The classification of “Rip Van Winkle” as a romantic sketch is due to its roots in the folklore of the romantic era (Callow and Reilly 76). While in Europe, Irving encountered the German tale of “Peter Klaus”, which served as a model for his short story “Rip Van Winkle” (Zobel 210). By setting “Rip Van Winkle” against the backdrop of New York’s Catskill Mountains, Irving aimed to imbue the young nation with folk traditions that were central to romanticism (Dawson 251). However, because there was a striking resemblance between “Peter Klaus” and “Rip Van Winkle,” some accused Irving of plagiarism (cf. Kuczynski 296). Nonetheless, by personalizing and localizing his version through elements such as a Diedrich Knickerbocker framework, Hudson River setting, and New World Dutch characters (Callow and Reilly 78/79), he created an American legend that had specific correspondences to American life and thought. These changes even gave it historical dynamics completely separate from those found in its source material (Kuczynski 297). Thus, despite being based on an old antiquarian folk tale from Europe, Irving’s adaptation succeeded in creating an inherently American tale that has continued to inspire multiple interpretations up until this day (cf. Callow and Reilly 79).).

“In addition to perpetuating various Old-World legends within the realm of popular antiquities or folklore during the Romantic period [Irving] also made significant contributions by discovering new ones for America thereby enriching it with ‘associations’ (ibid.76)

#### Literary Analysis

Drawing on elements of American folklore and legend, Irving paints a vivid picture of colonial America, capturing the essence of a bygone era. Rip Van Winkle, the protagonist, becomes a symbol of the restless spirit of the new nation, seeking solace in nature and escaping the pressures of modernity. Through Rip's encounter with the mystical figures of the Catskill Mountains, Irving explores themes of transformation and rebirth, inviting readers to ponder the passage of time and the cyclical nature of history.

The character of Rip Van Winkle embodies the romantic ideal of the rustic, carefree wanderer, whose adventures blur the lines between reality and fantasy. As he awakens to find himself a stranger in his land, Rip's journey becomes a metaphor for the ever-changing landscape of America, where tradition and progress intersect in unexpected ways. Irving's masterful use of language and imagery evokes a sense of wonder and nostalgia, transporting readers to a world where legends come to life and the past is alive with possibility.

#### Practical Insights

For readers seeking to explore the artistic romance of Rip Van Winkle further, engaging with supplementary materials such as historical texts, critical analyses, and visual adaptations can provide valuable context and deepen understanding. Additionally, visiting sites associated with Irving's life and work, such as Sunnyside in Tarrytown, New York, offers a tangible connection to the author's legacy and the landscapes that inspired his imagination.

#### Conclusion

Washington Irving's Rip Van Winkle stands as a testament to the enduring power of artistic romance in American literature. Through its exploration of nostalgia, transformation, and the allure of folklore, the story continues to captivate readers of all ages, inviting them to embark on a timeless journey through the heart of the American past.

#### References:

- [1]. Irving, Washington. *Rip Van Winkle*. 1819.
- [2]. Foster, Edward Halsey. *Washington Irving: Rip Van Winkle's New York*. Twayne Publishers, 1978.
- [3]. Franklin, Wayne. *The New World of Washington Irving*. University of Illinois Press, 1982.
- [4]. "Washington Irving's Sunnyside." *Historic Hudson Valley*, [www.hudsonvalley.org/historic-sites/washington-irvings-sunnyside](http://www.hudsonvalley.org/historic-sites/washington-irvings-sunnyside).
- [5]. <https://papersowl.com/examples/washington-irvings-rip-van-winkle/>
- [6]. <https://www.grin.com/document/148711?lang=en>