

Rip Van Winkle by Washington Irving

Directions: On a separate sheet of paper, answer the following questions. To receive credit, you must write complete, thoughtful sentences.

1. "Rip Van Winkle," which was published in 1819, is set just before and a few years after the Revolutionary War of 1775–1783. The story is presented as a recovered text, meaning that someone has found this account in the papers of a fake expert historian named Diedrich Knickerbocker. This technique is still used today in many supernatural and horror stories, including modern films such as *Cloverfield*



(2008), *Paranormal Activity* (2007), and *The Blair Witch Project* (1999). What does the recovered text/found footage technique add to a story? Do you like this approach? Why or why not?

2. Give three adjectives to describe Rip Van Winkle in the beginning of the story. What has made him this way?

3. Rip Van Winkle's devoted dog is named "Wolf." What's interesting, or even ironic, about this dog's name? How might the dog be symbolic of a deeper message?

4. When Rip awakens from his 20-year nap and is still in the woods, what three things show us that a significant amount of time has passed?



Rip Van Winkle statue in Irvington, New York

5. Several symbols of the newly created United States of America confuse Rip, who still thinks he's under the rule of King George III when he walks back into town. Name two patriotic items that confuse Rip but would likely delight a reader of this story in 1819.

6. How did Dame Van Winkle die? How is this consistent with what we know about her from earlier in the story and what message is Irving delivering to the reader here?

7. This story is supposed to have a light-hearted tone and entertain the reader. Find and write down a line where Irving uses humor.

8. The rocky relationship between Rip and Dame Van Winkle can be read as an allegory for America's battle with Great Britain. Take another look at the opening paragraph that begins with the words, "Whoever has made a voyage up the Hudson..." Write down two elements from this paragraph that support the argument that this humorous domestic tale is actually symbolic of the larger events that led to the Revolutionary War.



Palenville, New York