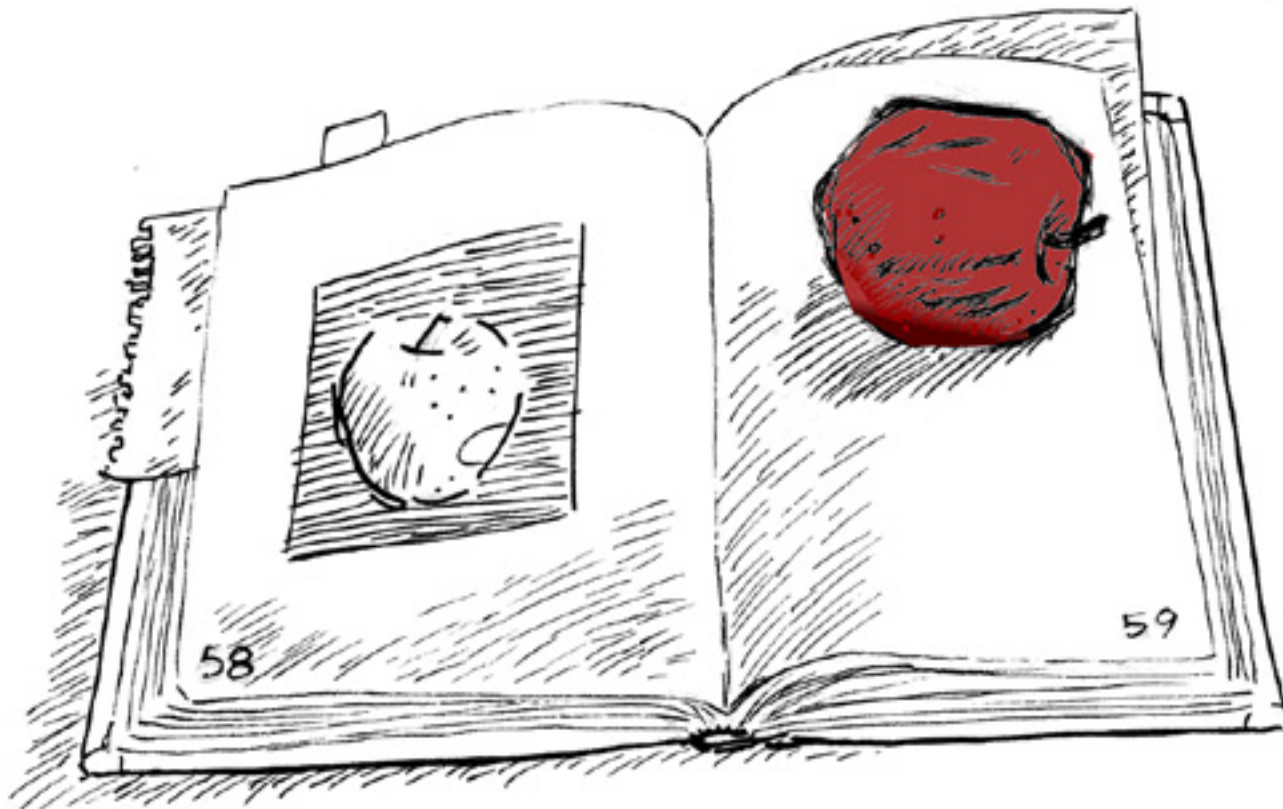


American Fiction



Washington Irving

Biographical Overview

- Named after George Washington due to the fact he was born just after America was liberated from British authority: April 3, 1783.
- Known mainly for the development of two fictional characters: Rip Van Winkle and also the Headless Horseman.
- He is considered one of the first American celebrity writers.
- Under the pseudonym Geoffrey Crayon, he published *The Sketch Book*.
- Also known for his five volume biography of George Washington and his biography of Christopher Columbus.
- The NBA team, New York Knicks, is named after his other pseudonym Diedrich Knickerbocker. The term came to be applied to New York residents.
- His most famous works listed above were given favorable reviews by: Charles Dickens, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Lord Byron, Sir Walter Scott.

Washington Irving

The Legend of Sleepy Hollow manages to express a strong example of the culture of the time; published in 1819-1820.

- It's structure is closely associated with folktales collected in Europe.
- *The Norton Anthology of American Literature* comments how apparently Sir Walter Scott acquainted Irving with German folktales (952). These became an influence on developing works, such as Rip Van Winkle.
- Due to Napoleonic wars and a rise in nationalistic feelings, academic scholars and collectors were gathering as many of the old tales they could find seeking a greater sense of patriotism for their individual countries.
- Notably of course are Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, the Grimm Brothers, who recorded hundreds of the stories, assembled from interviewing women of Hessian descent in various regions of Germany.

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- pattern number of threes: three tasks, three wishes, three journeys

Example of Gruesome Situation

Below is a typical gruesome situation from the Grimm brothers' version of "Little Snow-White" where the story closes with the death of the evil step-mother.

The last paragraph reads:

Then the wicked woman uttered a curse, and was so wretched, so utterly wretched, that she knew not what to do. At first she would not go to the wedding at all, but she had no peace, and must go to see the young Queen. And when she went in she knew Snow-white; and she stood still with rage and fear, and could not stir. But iron slippers had already been put upon the fire, and they were brought in with tongs, and set before her. Then she was forced to put on the red-hot shoes, and dance until she dropped down dead.

Grimm, Jacob and Wilhelm. "Little Snow-White." *Household Tales*. Margaret Hunt, trans. *Surlalunefairytales.com*. Sur La Lune Fairy Tales, October 11, 2007. Web. 01/26/11.