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THE FIRST AMERICAN STORYTELLER

Washington Irving, along with **James Fenimore Cooper**, is one of the founding fathers of American literature. He was the first American author to reach international literary success. He was also one of the first great American short story writers. The stories in his collection *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent* (which includes *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* and *Rip Van Winkle*) are written in elegant, informal prose and provided a model for all American writing that followed. His delicate mixture of humour and horror along with his descriptions of simple American community life helped to create a distinctive American literary culture.

A NEW LITERATURE FOR A NEW NATION

Irving grew up in post-Revolutionary America. The country was divided between its democratic hopes for the future and its memories of the colonial era. The early republic was becoming independent in politics but it was still haunted by its British colonial past. A distinctively American literature was essential for the success of the nation. The new nation needed a **collective memory**, and Irving had a decisive role in proving that America could produce its own unique literature, and not an imitation of English or European literature.

Collective memory is the shared memory, knowledge and information of a given group. It includes the group's feelings about historical events.

 In groups think about the collective memory of your country or region.

LITERATURE AS EDUCATION

In eighteenth-century America, it was generally believed that literature should be educational: a means of teaching its readers about morals or politics. Literature was considered to be part of public life rather than the work of individual artists. Poetry and fiction were inspired by ideas of community life and writers were expected to produce stories that were morally useful. The aim of most literature was to educate the readers to see themselves as citizens of a new country. This was important, because in the newly formed republic new ways of life and new law practices had to be promoted and shared across regions with very different beliefs and social customs, from **puritan** New England to the **plantation**-based southern states.

From puritans to plantations



In groups, find out more about the Puritans of New England and the plantations of the southern states online. Share your findings in class.

- **democratic:** that has a government chosen by all the people
- **distinctive:** special; recognizable
- **essential:** necessary
- **founding fathers:** people who help to start something
- **haunted:** filled with memories
- **imitation:** copy
- **prose:** writing (not poetry or drama)
- **unique:** that only they have

THE LEGEND OF SLEEPY HOLLOW



Ichabod Crane



Gunpowder

Brom
Van Brunt



Daredevil



Baltus Van Tassel



Katrina Van Tassel

The Headless
Horseman



BEFORE READING

1 Match the words and the pictures.

a



b



c



d



e



f




- 1 ghost 2 dragon 3 giant 4 witch
5 goblin 6 headless horseman

2 Complete the sentences with the words above.

- a A mixes ingredients in a big pot or cauldron to make magic potions.
- b A is huge. It has got wings and a long tail.
- c A is an enormous person.
- d The was killed on the battlefield and his ghost still rides his horse.
- e A appears after death and usually haunts old castles.
- f A is a bold little creature that plays tricks on people.



- 3  Look at these pictures from the story. Write six questions about them. Exchange questions with your partner. Write answers to your partner's questions. Keep your answers in a safe place until after you read the story.




- 4 **WEB** You are going to read about the following places in the story. Do some research online and write a sentence about each of them.

Tarry Town The Hudson River Sleepy Hollow

- 5 What do you think 'The Legend of Sleepy Hollow' will be about? Tick (✓) the boxes below.
- a A place where people keep falling asleep.
 - b A poor man who becomes rich.
 - c A ghost story.
 - d A war story.
 - e A story about love and romance.
 - f A story about people who tell stories.

A QUIET VALLEY

 The following account• was found among the papers of the late• Diedrich Knickerbocker.

On the eastern shore of the Hudson River there is a small town called Greensburgh. This place is better known as Tarry Town. It was given this name by the wives of that area because on market days their husbands ‘tarried,’ or wasted time, at the local tavern•. I cannot confirm this myself but I mention• it just to be precise.

There is a little valley surrounded by high hills about two miles from here. This is one of the quietest places in the whole world. A small stream glides• through it so silently that it could lull• one to sleep. Only the sound of the birds ever interrupts this tranquility.

I remember that, when I was very young, I once wandered into a grove• of trees. It was noon, when all nature is strangely quiet. The trees shaded one side of the valley. I couldn’t think of a better place than this little valley where I could escape from the world and its distractions, and quietly dream away the remnants• of a troubled• life.

- **account:** story; report
- **glides:** runs or moves smoothly
- **grove:** small wood
- **late:** (here) dead
- **lull:** relax

- **mention:** say
- **remnants:** the remainder; what is left
- **tavern:** an inn or bar where people can eat and drink
- **troubled:** difficult; with problems

COUNTRY LIFE AND CITY LIFE

Do you live in the country or in a city?

Where would you prefer to live – the countryside or the city? Why?

Because of the lazy atmosphere of the place and the character of its inhabitants, who are descended from the original Dutch settlers, this valley has been known for a long time by the name of Sleepy Hollow[•]. The young men who live here are called the Sleepy Hollow Boys. A drowsy[•], dreamy influence seems to hang over the land. Supposedly, a German doctor put a spell[•] on the place during the early days of the settlement.

According to another story, an old Indian chief held his powwows[•] here. Certainly something seems to have cast[•] a spell over the minds of the good people. They have all kinds of strange beliefs. They go into trances[•], have visions, frequently see strange sights, and hear music and voices in the air. The whole neighborhood is full of stories of superstitions[•] and haunted[•] places.

However, one dominant spirit haunts this magical region. It is the apparition[•] of a figure on horseback, without a head. Some people think it is the ghost of a soldier whose head was carried away by a cannon ball in a battle during the Revolutionary War. The local people often see him hurrying along in the dark of night. He haunts not just the valley, but the adjacent[•] roads and a nearby church.

- **adjacent:** nearby
- **apparition:** something that appears
- **cast:** (here) put
- **drowsy:** sleepy
- **haunted:** inhabited by ghosts
- **hollow:** valley
- **powwows:** meetings of Native Americans
- **spell:** magic formula
- **superstitions:** beliefs in unreal things
- **trances:** states like sleep

According to historians the soldier's body was buried in the churchyard and his ghost now rides to the scene of battle in a nightly search for his missing head. It seems he sometimes rushes with great speed through the Hollow because he is in a hurry to get back to the churchyard before daybreak.

This legend has provided material for many wild stories, and at all the country firesides he is known by the name of the Headless Horseman of Sleepy Hollow.

THE HEADLESS HORSEMAN

How did the horseman lose his head?

Which places does he haunt?

What is he searching for?

When must he return to the churchyard?





AFTER READING VOCABULARY

1 Use five of the words in the box to complete the sentences.

petty buckles cider cricket
bachelor limbs drowsy nap

- a The arms and legs of a person or animal can also be called
- b is an alcoholic drink made from apples.
- c A is a short sleep, usually during the day.
- d A makes loud noises by rubbing its wings together.
- e means not important or not worthy of attention.

2  In pairs, create three sentences with the words left out in Exercise 1.

3 Complete the word formation table below with words from the text.

 Make sentences with a partner.

ADJECTIVE	NOUN
EMPTY	EMPTINESS
MENACING
.....	EAST
AMUSING
.....	PRECISION
LUXURIOUS
.....	ATTRACTION
LONG
.....	USE
AMAZING
.....	MYSTERY
EAGER
.....	MASS

P B1 Preliminary English Test Reading Part 5

1 Complete the sentences taken from the book by choosing the correct answer.

- 1 In Brom's opinion, a well-behaved horse was unworthy a lad of spirit.
A with **B** of **C** to **D** for
- 2 The night grew darker and the clouds hid the stars from his
A look **B** sight **C** scene **D** glasses
- 3 A drowsy, dreamy influence seems to over the land.
A hang **B** be **C** flow **D** ride
- 4 This legend has material for many wild stories.
A risen **B** made **C** preserved **D** provided
- 5 Ichabod was terrified by the sound of his own steps. He to look over his shoulder in case he saw somebody walking close behind him.
A avoided **B** tried **C** dreaded **D** stopped
- 6 The schoolhouse into decay, and was reported to be haunted by ghosts.
A was **B** turned **C** dropped **D** fell
- 7 Brom every opportunity to ridicule Ichabod in Katrina's presence.
A knew **B** took **C** had **D** let
- 8 Katrina was a bit of a flirt, you could tell from the way she dressed.
A which **B** and **C** that **D** because
- 9 Ichabod's heart longed for the young woman who to inherit all these lands.
A was **B** went **C** would **D** had
- 10 He rode with short stirrups, which his knees up to the top of the saddle.
A left **B** brought **C** made **D** put
- 11 Each storyteller exaggerated his story with a fiction, and, in this way, made himself the hero of every adventure.
A little **B** real **C** true **D** bit