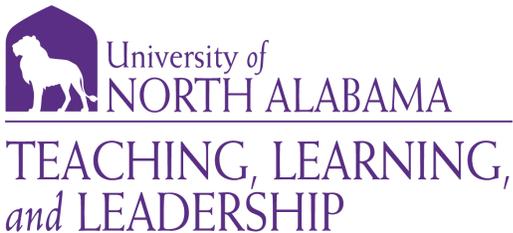


**THE HEADLESS HORSEMAN OF SLEEPY HOLLOW  
LEARNING RESOURCE PACKET:  
SOCIAL STUDIES/HISTORY**



TENNESSEE VALLEY  
ART ASSOCIATION  
TENNESSEE VALLEY MUSEUM OF ART | RITZ THEATRE



A learning resource packet created by the Tennessee Valley Art Association and Department of Teaching, Learning, and Leadership at the University of North Alabama. LibGuide created by Collier Library. **This work is licensed under a [CC BY-NC 4.0 License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/).**

Application of Historical Method and Inquiry  
The Literary Works of Washington Irving

Washington Irving is known as the “first American man of letters” and was the first American author to set his stories in the newly formed United States. He championed the acceptance of author as a profession and argued for stricter copyright laws to protect original works. His most enduring legacies are as an essayist and short story author, penning such classics as “Rip Van Winkle” and “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow” (*The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.*, 1819-20). His first literary success was as a satirist for the *Salmagundi* magazine founded with his brother in 1807 and his first major book, *A History of New York...by Diedrich Knickerbocker*, was published in 1809.

Irving’s influence on American culture is such that New York city is still referred to as “Gotham”, a nickname he coined; “knickerbockers” became a name for the short breeches worn by the character in accompanying illustrations; and the NBA New York Knicks team name is a shortening of the word “knickerbocker”.

**Teaching Ideas for Washington Irving** - Stephanie Vickers, Arts Integration Director, TVAA

Teaching Idea #1

Irving is also known as a historian, and it is this title that is the focus of this study project. Analysis of Irving’s *A History of New York, A History of the Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus Vol. 1*, and “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow” investigate whether or not Irving should be designated as a historian.

- What is a historian?
- How do they differ from other types of writers?
- What are the historian’s responsibilities to the public?

**History and Storytelling:**

*A History of New York...by Diedrich Knickerbocker*

- What genre is this book?
- Who was Knickerbocker?
- What marketing stunt did Irving create to incite interest?
- What were Irving’s research methods? Knickerbocker’s?
- Primary or secondary sources?

“The Legend of Sleepy Hollow”

- What genre is this short story?

- What clues within the text show the story was set in 1798, rather than the year it was published?
- What are the similarities between this story and *A History of New York*?
- Identify instances referring to “history”, “truth”, “accuracy”, etc.
- Primary or secondary sources?

### **History or Storytelling:**

#### *A History of the Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus Vol. 1*

- What genre is this book?
- What were Irving’s research methods?
- Primary or secondary sources?
- Research criticism of Irving’s accuracy, specifically in Chapter IV, “Columbus Before the Council at Salamanca.”  
What untruth did Irving perpetrate?

### Teaching Idea #2

At the end of October 2020, The Tennessee Valley Art Association and The Ritz Theatre are presenting an adaptation of Irving’s “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow”. It is a radio play script, titled “The Headless Horseman of Sleepy Hollow”, written by Anthony Palermo and complete with audio special effects that enhance the listening experience and tone of the story.

Radio plays began their popularity in 1920, with the birth of commercial radio, the first electronic mass medium. Listening to the radio became the dominant cultural at-home entertainment until the rise of television in 1945. Dramatic and comedic scripted programs mixed with news bulletins, commercials, and music on the airwaves.

In 1938, director Orson Welles adapted H.G. Wells’ 1898 novel *The War of the Worlds* into a radio program airing on Halloween of that year. The story’s main plot is an alien invasion of New Jersey and became immediately infamous upon airing. Many in the nationwide radio audience were convinced it was truly happening in real time. Such was the hysteria and panic in the some of the listeners, but exaggerated by newspapers, that in 1960, a lawsuit was brought against CBS (the producing company), seeking to assign responsibility.

### **News and Storytelling:**

- How did news journalists research the reach and effect of the radio program?
- What responsibilities do historians share with news journalists?
- Does mass media pose a greater danger of misused information than books?

- Imagine if “The Headless Horseman of Sleepy Hollow” listeners had the same reaction as those who heard “War of the Worlds”. Who would be responsible?
- What are the similarities between Irving and Welles in public reception? Differences?

### **Additional Teacher Resources**

#### **Category: Website (Text-Based)**

[Background: Irving the "Historian"](#) – Biography

[Biography of Washington Irving, Father of the American Short Story](#) - Biography

I would recommend this source being used at the beginning or near the start of the lesson. It gives readers a general feel of who Washington Irving was before diving too deep into the study.

[Washington Irving Background](#) - American Society of Authors and Writers

The purpose of this article is to provide students with the life story of Washington Irving and how he came to be one of the most influential writers in American history. Teachers can use this article as another introductory assignment to Washington Irving. Teachers could have students read the article and create a timeline of Irving’s life to show major developments that led him to becoming an influential author in American history. In lieu of having students complete the assignment individually, teachers could have students highlight what they believe is important on the timeline then create it as a class on the board in the front of the classroom.

[What Inspired 'The Legend of Sleepy Hollow'?](#)

[Reviewing the Legacy of Washington Irving’s Work](#)

This article discusses the legacy and impact of Washington Irving. It lists the best publications made by Irving; along with this, the author of the article notes the great influence that Irving had on authors to follow. The article displays the great love that Irving got from many of his companions as well as fans.

[How Washington Irving Shaped Christmas in America.](#)

This web article talks about the impact that Irving had on the Christmas culture in the United States and around the world.

### [Washington Irving: Lawyer, Author, and Copyright Advocate](#)

This web article provides information about Irving's legacy and teaches students that he was not just a writer but also an advocate. It says that Irving studied for a time to become a lawyer but pursued becoming a writer instead. His background in law gave him knowledge to help in his advocacy for copyright laws. This could be used to meet the 11th standard for 10th grade history, or it could be used in a government or law class while talking about copyright laws.

### [New York Doughnut History](#)

Irving is "credited with the first mention of the doughnut in print in 1809".

## **Category: Map**

### [Washington Irving's Gravesite](#)

Interactive website to view Irving's burial site which relates to his writings and the end of his life. Irving was buried in "Sleepy Hollow Cemetery" and this website allows the viewer to see pictures first hand as well as information about the end of his life. Irving wrote his last book right up until a few months to the end of his life.

## **Category: Video**

### [Washington Irving: Biography, Works and Style](#)

A simple overview that I would use to get the students engaged with visuals.

### [Sleepy Hollow Background Information](#) - From National Geographic.

The purpose of this video is to provide students with background information about *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* and the effects on the area to this day. Teachers can use this source with an introductory assignment for students to understand who Washington Irving was and why he is important.

### [History of New York – Launching - The Curious Case of Diedrich Knickerbocker - 'City Full of History' Episode 11](#)

Penguin Classics on Air: The Birth of the Knickerbocker - [Part 1](#), [Part II](#)

## Category: Pictures

Impact of Irving Pictures

[Jack-o'-Lantern](#) - Famous from *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*.

[Gotham](#) - Gotham City: DC Comics, TV show Gotham - Washington Irving was the first to reference NYC as Gotham city.

[New York Knicks Logo](#) - The Knickerbocker name comes from Washington's Irving's *History of New York*...

The pictures above are to be used by the teacher to show students the effects of Washington Irving that we see in today's society. These pictures could be used at the beginning of the lesson to peak interest. The teacher could play a guessing game with the students by showing the picture to the class then having students guess how the modern relevance came from Washington Irving, then tell the actual facts behind the influence.

[Washington Irving, 1783-1859](#)

Library of Congress Photo of Irving

Photo of Irving sitting around the time period of 1873 when the photo was officially published.

[John Quidor - The Headless Horseman Pursuing Ichabod Crane](#) - Google Art Project By John Quidor - aQHCpewsbaMXQA at Google Cultural Institute maximum zoom level, Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=22126482>

This painting depicts a romanticized version of The Legend of Sleepy Hollow. Utilizing sharp contrasts in shadows and colors, John Quidor portrays the horseman as a devilish figure covered in black shadow and riding a black horse. In contrast, Quidor illustrates Crane in full moonlight, so bright that it imitates the sun. Crane also beholds a white horse, a symbol of moral purity, as he rides into shadow. This picture gives students a visual reference of the climax of The Legend of Sleepy Hollow.

[Diedrich Knickerbocker](#)

By Felix O.C. Darley - Irving, Washington; Diedrich Knickerbocker's A History of New-York New York: G.P. Putnam, 1849; frontispiece, Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=6628752>

[Washington Irving and his literary friends at Sunnyside](#)

## Category: Journal Articles

McGann, J. (2012). Washington Irving, A History of New York, and American history. *Early American Literature*, 47(2), 349.

The purpose of this article is to give not only background information on Washington Irving but explore techniques he used to promote his History of New York. This article is a good resource for teachers. The article gives details of the Knickerbocker hoax, what happened and how Irving pulled it off. It also explains Irving's use of satire in his works. It shows Irving's use of enlightenment ideas to form his work. This resource could be used to give students "chunk" readings or just as a resource to give teachers new ideas to present to the class.

Myers, A. (1976). The New York Years in Irving's "The Life of George Washington". *Early American Literature*, 11(1), 68-83. Retrieved October 21, 2020, from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25070760>

Piacentino, E. (1997). "Sleepy Hollow" comes south: Washington Irving's influence on Old Southwestern humor. *The Southern Literary Journal*, 30(1), 27.

Ronda, J. (2004). Washington Irving's West. *The Historian*, 66(3), 546-551. Retrieved October 21, 2020, from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24453053>

## Category: Podcasts

[Episode 035: Michael Lord, Historic Hudson Valley & Washington Irving](#)

This podcast explains the history of the Hudson River Valley, the area in which Washington Irving lived. The guest on the podcast relates the area to some of Irving's short stories and the inspiration for many of his characters. The podcast also illustrates in what ways Irving has had such a profound impact. This podcast can be used to give students a better understanding of the area that Irving lived. Students can use their imagination to picture the setting in which his stories took place.

[The Halloween Haunt: About "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" by Washington Irving](#)

This podcast gives a brief summary of Washington Irving "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" in a fun way that students may find interesting. The podcast also gives some information about Irving and his short stories. This podcast could be used to introduce students to Irving and the "Legend of Sleepy Hollow".

## Category: Historical Writing

### [What is a Historian?](#)

This is a website that talks about what a historian actually is. It also talks about the history of history. Students can use this to try and decide if Washington Irving was a storyteller or a historian.

### [Historians as Storytellers](#)

This post with a linked-in video can be used to help students understand the difference between the works of a historian vs. the works of a storyteller. It provides a video address as well from William Cronon. Most importantly it can be used to draw connection to the historical aspects of Washington Irving's work.

### [The Present State of Historical Writing](#)

This is a website with historians discussing how historical writing should be viewed, though exploring past historians and what interacts with learners.

### [Story vs. History](#)

The source provided insight on how historical writing and storytelling differ. This is beneficial for teachers to show their students so they understand the meaning of each.

### [What is Historical Fiction?](#)

This website article tackles the question, what is historical fiction? The article describes several different types of historical fiction, such as historical fantasy, historical romance, and historical adventures. This directly ties in to Washington Irving's "The History of New York. This piece can serve as an introductory piece of content in order to build on the students' understanding of the genre. Teachers can use the article to engage students' prior knowledge by encouraging the class to give examples of historical fiction, either in literary form, or in other forms of media if necessary.

### [What is Satire?](#)

This video, produced by Oregon State University, defines and gives examples of the literary tool, Satire. As explained by Professor Evan Gottlieb, Satire is the technique of subtly making fun of the subject of a particular media. The video gives different historical examples, as well as contemporary examples, and briefly discusses the history of the technique. This video can help students understand the writing method employed with Washington Irving's "The History of New York".

**RESOURCE:** UNA Collier Library Lib Guide <https://libguides.una.edu/sleepy-hollow>

