



The Complete Tales of Washington Irving

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Washington Irving (1783–1859) was the first American literary artist to earn his living solely through his writings and the first to enjoy international acclaim. In addition to his long public service as a diplomat, Irving was amazingly prolific: His collected works fill forty volumes that encompass essays, history, travel writings, and multi-volume biographies of Columbus and Washington. But it is Irving's mastery of suspense, characterization, tempo, and irony that transforms his fiction into virtuoso performances, earning him his reputation as the father of the American short story. Charles Neider has gathered all sixty-one of Irving's tales, originally scattered throughout his many collections of nonfiction essays and sketches, into one magnificent volume. Together, they reveal his wide range: besides the expected classics like "Rip Van Winkle," "The Spectre Bridegroom," "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow," and "The Devil and Tom Walker," his fiction embraces realistic tales, ghost stories, parodies, legends, fables, and satires. For those familiar only with secondhand retellings of Irving's most famous tales, this collection offers the opportunity to step inside Washington Irving's imagination and partake of its innumerable and timeless pleasures.

The Complete Tales of Washington Irving Details

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treva says

If you decide to read this, you will have to don your Racial and Gender Stereotypes Filter. Because I weary of exoticizing peoples who are not Caucasian and/or not Christian, I was underwhelmed by many of the stories that came from the Alhambra, which often deal with fables or fairy tales about the Moors in Spain. Dusky maids, curses placed on worthy Christian knights, that sort of thing.

I feel Irving is really at his best with things like Sleepy Hollow, Rip van Winkle, and the Knickerbocker tales -- the ghost stories, pirate stories, and legends of the early Dutch settlers of New York. Maybe a good case for the 'write what you know' camp. They are often laced with biting social commentary, and I thoroughly enjoyed the tale of Mountjoy, with its utterly clueless hero.

So there is some good stuff here. It didn't blow my mind or knock my socks off. And be prepared to go head to head with the cultural insensitivities of Irving's time.

Anne says

Along with Poe, good quick short stories to read when you're in the mood for some crafty language and an old-fashioned scare (Legend of Sleepy Hollow). I should have kept my dictionary close-by as I was going through this one, but despite frequency of his 50-cent words, I thoroughly enjoyed these tales and felt very sophisticated when I was finished.

P.S. Winn says

So many stories ranging from 3 stars to many five stars give this collection a four star average. Be prepared to be taken on some amazing and many dark journeys.

Bill says

I am a big fan of the stories from "The Sketch Book," the others that are included here are just as good. "The Student of Salamanca" and "The Devil and Tom Walker" are both particularly good.

Makes me wish that there was still a sitting-around-the-inn-storytelling-culture in the US.

Prmom says

Checked out in anticipation of our trip to Historic Hudson, Sleepy Hollow tour. Saw his grave and home and

the backdrop of his writing. Got the children the graphic novel version of LSH to follow. Will also read Rip Van Winkle and Dolph Heyliger (his most acclaimed short story). Enjoying more while experiencing Irving's home.

Nancy W'f says

I did not read all the stories in this book, but certainly the dozen I did read were worthwhile. Despite the fact that he wrote almost 200 years ago, his stories are still fresh and extremely accessible. He carries over well into modern times, which is not always the case with authors of that era.

John P says

First, this is a BIG collection. There are a lot of stories in here each with a full complement of words.

I had only heard of his two 'major' works - Sleepy Hollow & Van Winkle - and knew of them through seeing the cartoon versions and hearing about them over the years; they are certainly part of our American literary heritage. But I had not read the originals nor had any idea that Irving authored so many other writings.

After reading the introduction (which, by the way, is interesting and educational all on its own), Sleepy Hollow took on a new character for me. It is a tale populated with vividly described characters for sure, but the tale itself lies over an equally vividly described location - a sort of historical document of the tale's locale in the eastern US. It's a region I have just recently visited, in fact, and so the descriptions and landmarks were especially engaging. He reuses this and other nearby locations in a number of additional tales filling out quite a complete overview of the region, its people and their customs, not to mention their folklore.

A point that I had never picked up before about Van Winkle: yes, he fell asleep in the mountains only to return to his town after many years but the fact that he had slept through the revolutionary war was never made clear (at least not to me). A great deal of the tale's charm rests in his discovery of the differences caused by the revolution, and this side of the story was a pleasant surprise.

There are a number of tales set in Europe and these again are very descriptive of the areas, people, and their romantic fairy tales [my description] and lore. Some are a little light on substance but there are enough gems in here for me to strongly recommend this work. Because of this somewhat inconsistent quality, I give only 4 stars to the collection although there is 5-star work within.

Last, I have to say that Irving qualifies as a word-master. It must be discouraging to would-be writers to come across someone who can, without apparent effort, convey the most subtle nuance of feeling, situation, or conflict and do it in a convincing and elegant manner. He reminds me of Hawthorne in this regard.

Audrey says

I could not get 5 pages into this, the way the guy writes is so difficult to read/comprehend. I read a lot of

older literature, but I'd read a whole page of this and realize I hadn't understood a word of what was just said.

Patra says

I hadn't realized Washington Irving had written so many short stories until I came across this book. I'm a huge fan of the short story, so of course I had to try it out. I ended up enjoying Irving's stories, but not loving them. I think he would be very good in small doses, but not all at once. I had several favorites - The Student of Salamanca (a classic love story with a little mystery), The Adventure of the German Student (a scary/horror story) and MountJoy (a cute story about a boy that thinks he knows everything). I actually didn't really care for his most famous stories: Rip Van Winkle and The Legend of Sleepy Hollow. His main topic is the supernatural. He seems to have loved a story that was truly fiction - the less realistic, the better.

Peg says

Great to revisit some of my favorite Washington Irving Tales, but too much to sit and read the book from cover to cover. Have purchased a copy (used Amazon) and look forward to savoring the rest of the stories at a leisurely pace.

Christian says

Fantastic works by the guy who's famous for one or two. What a shame that more people haven't taken the time to become familiar with the rest of his *oeuvre*. Irving's stories show a great sense of pacing and comedic timing, as well as the hallmarks of an expert observer of character and environment. Some readers may find a sense of relief in understanding that we're not so disconnected from our ancestors of 200 years ago, that they wrestled with the same petty troubles we still do, that they reacted the same way we do.

Anyone who's already plowed through Twain, Hawthorne and Wodehouse owes it to themselves to read up on Washington Irving.

Shelley says

Great storyteller!

Heather says

There's a lot more depth to these stories than the kids versions, that's for sure! Sleepy Hollow is haunting, pun intended. Rip Van Winkle is also a little more complicated than I gave it credit.

regina says

Literature from this era isn't for everyone. You have to be willing to fully engage in the wordplay. You must enjoy British humour, for although the author was American, his style was nursed in old Blighty.

Unlike most lit today, Irving's tales shun dialogue in favour of rich, complex and often hilarious narrative.

Slow down, pick a grassy spot under a tree, and allow yourself to be transported.

Barbara says

I don't remember this at all....
