



RIP VAN WINKLE

CAST

RIP	<i>Kind but Lazy Fellow</i>
DAME	<i>Rip's Nagging Wife</i>
WOLF	<i>Rip's Dog</i>
WIFE ONE	<i>Woman from Rip's Village</i>
WIFE TWO	<i>Woman from Rip's Village</i>
CHILD ONE	<i>Child from Rip's Village</i>
CHILD TWO	<i>Child from Rip's Village</i>
CHILD THREE	<i>Child from Rip's Village</i>
VEDDER	<i>Inn Owner</i>
TOWNSPERSON	<i>Man from Rip's Village</i>
STRANGER	<i>Mysterious Man</i>
JUDITH	<i>Rip's Daughter</i>
MAN	<i>Local Politician</i>
OLD MAN	<i>Aged Villager</i>

NARRATOR: The Catskill mountains, a dismembered branch of the great Appalachian family, can be seen away to the west of the Hudson River, swelling up to a noble height and lording it over the surrounding country. Every change of

season, every change of weather, and even every hour of the day produces some change in the magical hues and shapes of these mountains.

At the foot of these fairy mountains, smoke curls up from the chimneys of a village, whose shingle-roofs are busy gleaming among the trees. It is a little village of great antiquity, having been founded by some of the Dutch colonists. In that same village, while this country was still a colony of Great Britain, there lived a simple, good-natured fellow by the name of Rip Van Winkle in a very time-worn and weather-beaten home. Rip was a kind neighbor and an obedient, hen-pecked husband.

DAME: (*yelling*) Rip! Has that cow been milked yet?

RIP: (*nervously*) N-n-no. Not yet, my dear.

DAME: And why not? Have you been staring out the window again?

RIP: You know me, dear. I'm something of a daydreamer!

DAME: Next time I find you daydreaming, you will have a rude awakening! Now get out there and milk that cow.

RIP: But it looks like rain, dear!

DAME: Yeah, it's funny how the weather changes every time you have work to do!

RIP: I better stay in today, dear. I'll milk the cow tomorrow.

DAME: (*shrieking*) Now!

(sound of a milk pail smashing against a human skull)

RIP: Ouch! Yes, dear.

NARRATOR: Needless to say, Rip was the victim of a termagant wife. But such a spouse is not always the curse it is thought to be. Men who are melted in a fiery furnace of domestic tribulation at home are often malleable, easy-going, and peaceful to all others in the world.

RIP: Hmph. If a railing, overbearing wife is a blessing...then I am thrice blessed!

DAME: *(yelling from inside)* I heard that!

RIP: Sorry, dear! I'm milking away here!

NARRATOR: Although he was persecuted in his own home, everyone else in the village loved Rip. Not even the neighborhood dogs would bark at him when he would pass through, and he was a great favorite among all the other wives of the village. The good wives employed him to run their errands and do the little odd jobs that their less-obliging husbands would not do for them.

WIFE ONE: You fixed my gate! Oh, thank you, Rip!

RIP: No problem, Dame Vedder! Good day to you!

WIFE ONE: How can that horrible Dame Van Winkle treat her husband so badly?

WIFE TWO: He is such a kind soul!

WIFE ONE: I wish my husband were more like him—so meek and mild!

NARRATOR: As for the children of the village, they would shout with joy whenever Rip approached. He went about surrounded by a troop of them, running at his feet and clambering on his back.

CHILD ONE: Rip, will you teach us to fly a kite today? Or shoot marbles?

CHILD TWO: Tell us another story about ghosts—or witches—or Indians.

RIP: Sure enough, you young 'uns!

NARRATOR: Yet when Rip returned home—late, of course—he had no time to spend with his own family.

JUDITH: Father, will you play with us?

RIP: No time, my dear! No time! My comfy chair is calling my name!

NARRATOR: The great error in Rip's composition was an aversion to all kinds of profitable labor. It wasn't that he lacked perseverance. He could sit all day fishing on a rock without once complaining. Likewise, he could haul a heavy gun through the woods and swamps to shoot a few squirrels or wild pigeons. Work was not the issue either. He would never refuse to assist a neighbor in even the roughest of toil.

VEDDER: Thank you for helping me mend my rock fence, Rip!

TOWNSPERSON: Thanks for helping me husk my corn, Rip!

NARRATOR: The sad fact was this: Rip was ready to attend to anybody's business but his own. He found it impossible to provide for his own family or keep his own farm in order.

RIP: It's just no use to work on *my* farm. It's the worst little piece of ground in the whole country! Everything is always going wrong! My fences are falling to pieces. My cow is gone missing—or eating up the garden. My fields are full of weeds. (*sigh*) There's only one solution—I must go fishing.

NARRATOR: In fact, under his management, his farm had dwindled away, acre by acre, until there was little more left than a mere patch of Indian corn and potatoes. His children, too, were as ragged and wild as if they belonged to nobody. His son, Rip Jr. had inherited two things from his father—his bad habits and his old clothes. The boy went about struggling to keep his baggy clothes from falling about his ankles.

RIP: Why, Rip Jr., you make those old trousers of mine look fine!

DAME: So you're proud that your son is walking around like he's penniless? Well, he almost is—thanks to you!

RIP: Now, dear. I always say it's better to starve on a penny than work for a pound.

DAME: I'll *pound* you! Get out there and do some work!

NARRATOR: At times like this his only response was to shrug his shoulders, shake his head, cast up his eyes, and say nothing. This only provoked a fresh volley from his

wife, so that Rip often had to beat a hasty retreat outdoors.

DAME: Don't roll your eyes at me, you lazy, no-good loafer! And take this flea-bitten mutt along with you.

WOLF: (*yelping*) Yipe!

NARRATOR: In these trying times Rip's only domestic supporter was his dog, Wolf, who was just as much hen-pecked as his master. Dame Van Winkle regarded them as a duo of duds.

RIP: Her tongue is always going—morning, noon, and night. But you never know, Wolf. The tempers of some women mellow with age. We'll see. We'll see.

WOLF: (*growl of doubt*) Errrr.

NARRATOR: Despite his foolish optimism, things grew worse and worse for Rip Van Winkle as the years of matrimony dragged on.

RIP: Hmmm. Looks like a sharp tongue is the only tool that grows keener with constant use. (*sigh*) Well, there's only one solution—off to the inn!

NARRATOR: On the frequent occasions he was driven from his home, Rip would make his way to the local club for sages, philosophers, and other idle villagers—the local inn.

RIP: Yes, sir! This inn is my home away from home. There's not a face more familiar to me than that portrait of His Majesty, George the Third, hanging on the wall.

NARRATOR: Here Rip and other loaf-about-ers used to sit all through a long lazy summer's day, talking listlessly over village gossip or telling endless sleepy stories about nothing. The inn owner, double-chinned and jolly Nicholas Vedder, presided over these conversations—smoking away at his pipe.

RIP: Tell us a story, Vedder! One about the mountains.

VEDDER: Well, let's see. They say strange things happen up in the mountains. My father claimed once he saw Henry Hudson up there.

RIP: The explorer? He's been dead for over a hundred years!

VEDDER: That's right. That's the strange part of the tale! They say every twenty years the spirits of Henry Hudson and his crew appear there. Since they first scouted out this land, they have the privilege of watching over it.

RIP: I'll be!

NARRATOR: Although the inn was Rip's sanctuary, from time to time its tranquility was routed by his wife.

DAME: Here you are—when there's a roof at home to be mended and a gate to be fixed! Instead you're here gabbing with a bunch of worthless fools!

NARRATOR: Old Nicholas Vedder tried to come to Rip's rescue and do battle with the woman—by smiling and puffing away at his pipe.

VEDDER: (*chuckling*) Now, Dame Van Winkle, Rip here is a grown fellow, and if—

DAME: Don't blow your smoke at me, you old windbag! Or I'll cram that pipe down your throat!

VEDDER: Meep. Yes, ma'am.

NARRATOR: Rip was dragged home by his wife like an errant child. Dame Van Winkle slammed him down on the porch and stormed inside. Inside there was yelp, and Wolf was thrown out onto the porch beside his master.

WOLF: (*yelping*) Yipe!

RIP: That woman treats us both like dogs. You fit the part better than I do, but I still don't like it! As long as I live, you will always have a friend in me, Wolf.

WOLF: Arf!

NARRATOR: Wolf reciprocated the sentiment with a wag of his tail.

RIP: (*sigh*) There's a mountain of work to do, and my wife is on the war path. Wolf, there's only one solution—let's go to the woods and hunt some squirrel!

WOLF: Bark! Bark!

NARRATOR: Rip took his gun in hand and headed into the mountains. As he wandered through the woods, Rip unwittingly made his way to one of the highest parts of the Catskills. At last he grew tired and sat down beneath a tree.

RIP: Just look at that view, Wolf!

NARRATOR: The lordly Hudson River was flowing through the purple mountains. For some time Rip lay musing on this scene. But slowly the mountains began to throw their long blue shadows over the valleys.

RIP: It will probably be dark before we reach the village. Then it will be time to face the terrors of Dame Van Winkle again.

WOLF: (*whimper*) Errrrm.

RIP: (*sigh*) But go home we must!

NARRATOR: As Rip stood, a distance voice hallooing caused him to pause.

STRANGER: (*distantly yelling*) Rip Van Winkle! Rip Van Winkle!

NARRATOR: Rip looked all around but could see no one.

RIP: Did you hear that, boy?

STRANGER: (*distantly yelling*) Rip Van Winkle! Rip Van Winkle!

WOLF: Grrrr.

NARRATOR: Wolf bristled up his back, looking down the valley. Then Rip saw a strange figure slowly toiling up the side of the mountain, bent under the weight of something he carried on his back.

RIP: Another person out here? Maybe he needs our help!

NARRATOR: Rip made his way down the large rocks toward the stranger. He was a short, square-built old fellow with thick bushy hair and a grizzled beard. His

clothing was of an antique Dutch fashion. He bore on his shoulder a stout keg that sloshed like it was full of ale.

STRANGER: (*strangely*) Help me bear this load, Rip Van Winkle.

RIP: Do I know you, friend?

NARRATOR: The stranger did not reply, and the two of them clambered up the mountainside.

RIP: Where are you bound, friend?

NARRATOR: But the stranger continued climbing. Just then a rolling peal like thunder came up from a nearby ravine. (*sound like thunder*)

RIP: Is that thunder? The sky is clear.

NARRATOR: Rip thought the whole thing was so bizarre—a stranger carrying a keg of ale up to this height. But for some reason, he did not speak his reservations but continued his journey.

As the stranger and Rip passed into the ravine, Rip saw that they were no longer alone. Standing there in the midst was a company of odd-looking men playing at nine-pins.

RIP: Ah! It was the sound of their bowling that we heard.

NARRATOR: Although Rip seemed relieved at the solving of such a small mystery, he realized that there was a much larger one before him. These strange men were dressed in an outlandish fashion—frilly collars and puffy pants. They all had beards of various shapes and colors. They

reminded Rip of the type of people he had seen in history books. There was one who seemed to be the commander—a stout old gentleman with an especially frilly collar.

RIP: (*whispering to Wolf*) It's strange, isn't it, boy? Folks up here playing nine-pins on the mountains? But the strangest thing of all is how they look. They're playing a game, but they have the gravest faces.

NARRATOR: It was true. None of them spoke while they bowled. Nothing interrupted the stillness of the scene but the noise of the balls, which, whenever they were rolled, echoed along the mountains like rumbling peals of thunder. (*rumbling like thunder and crack of a ball striking pins*)

RIP: Perhaps I can liven things up! (*loudly*) Care if I join in?

NARRATOR: The men immediately stopped and stared at Rip with fixed statue-like gazes. This caused Rip's heart to go cold.

RIP: (*to Wolf*) Something's not right here, boy.

NARRATOR: The stranger that Rip had first encountered turned to him and pointed to the keg.

STRANGER: (*strangely*) Serve the drink, Rip Van Winkle.

RIP: Well, okay...

NARRATOR: Rip obeyed with fear and trembling. Each of the strange men produced a goblet, and Rip served them

from the keg. Then they quaffed the ale in profound silence.

RIP: It's not exactly the way that it is back at Vedder's Inn, is it?

NARRATOR: Then, having drunk, the men returned to their game. (*rumbling like thunder*)

RIP: Since they seem to be back to their game, and nobody is looking, I guess I will try a bit of this ale. I'm a thirsty soul.

NARRATOR: Rip took a sip, but that sip led to another—and another.

RIP: That is quite the stuff, Wolf!

NARRATOR: Soon Rip's eyes swam in his head.

RIP: Perhaps I should lie down.

NARRATOR: Rip lay down and fell into a deep sleep.

Upon waking, Rip saw it was now morning, and the mountain sun beat down into his eyes.

RIP: Surely, I have not slept here all night! Oh! That drink! That wicked drink! What excuse shall I make to Dame Van Winkle? She will have my hide for sure this time!

NARRATOR: Rip stood, and his joints cracked painfully. (*cracking joints*)

RIP: Sleeping outdoors does not suit me! Come on, Wolf. (*pause*) Wolf?

NARRATOR: The dog was nowhere to be seen.

RIP: Huh. Perhaps he's gone in search of a varmint.

NARRATOR: Rip turned to pick up his gun, but in place of the clean, well-oiled gun he had brought along, he found a rusted piece with a rotten stock.

RIP: Those strangers stole my gun—and swapped it out for this piece of junk! *(pause)* Oh well! I must get home! Wolf! Wolf!

NARRATOR: He whistled and called, but Wolf never came.

RIP: If I see those thieves again, I'll tell them they owe me a gun *and* a dog!

NARRATOR: Heartbroken at Wolf's absence, Rip made his way back through the woods the way he had come, but for some reason, he could not find the path.

RIP: This isn't the way! Where in tarnation is the path? There's not supposed to be a river here! And where did all these blasted trees come from?

NARRATOR: It was as if the entire forest had changed. It was only with great difficulty that Rip finally found his way back to the village. Also, there was such pain in his joints that it made his going slow.

As he approached the village he met a number of people.

RIP: Good morning to you!

NARRATOR: But the first few people Rip met were strangers.

RIP: That's odd. I thought I knew everyone in town. They're dressed funny, too. Must be strangers in town. Ha! I've learned my lesson about cozying up with strangers though! Those bizarre men in the mountains about robbed me blind!

NARRATOR: A troop of children ran up to Rip, and he moved to greet them, but they all had strange faces. *(laughter from the children)*

CHILD THREE: Graybeard! Graybeard!

RIP: What?

NARRATOR: Rip reached up to his chin.

RIP: *(cry of shock)* Ah!

NARRATOR: His beard was about a foot long—and gray!

RIP: *(shocked)* What in tarnation?

NARRATOR: Rip hurried on through the town. The neighborhood dogs all barked and growled at him. Then he noticed there were rows of houses which he had never seen before, and those which had been his familiar haunts had disappeared. Strange names were over the doors—strange faces at the windows. Everything was strange.

RIP: Have I been bewitched? Am I going insane? Maybe it's just the effects of that ale last night!

NARRATOR: At last Rip found his way to the one place he was completely sure of—his very own home. It looked just as it had before—only worse. The roof had fallen in,

the windows were shattered, and the doors were off their hinges.

RIP: Must have been a storm through here. All this extra work to do, and I've been missing! Dame Van Winkle will have my head!

NARRATOR: A half-starved dog that looked like Wolf was skulking around the porch.

RIP: (*cry of happiness*) Wolf!

(*snarl of a dog*)

RIP: My very dog has forgotten me!

NARRATOR: This was an unkind cut indeed. Rip entered the house, which Dame Van Winkle had always kept in neat order. It was empty, forlorn, and apparently abandoned.

RIP: Judith? Rip Jr.? (*long pause*) Dame Van Winkle?

NARRATOR: Up until now Rip had taken all of this in stride, but fear came into his heart at last. He hastened to his old haunt, the village inn—but it too was gone. A large rickety wooden building stood in its place.

RIP: (*reading*) The Union Hotel? No!

NARRATOR: Flying from the roof was a strange-looking flag with an assemblage of stars and stripes.

He looked inside the hotel's dirty window. Where was old Nicholas Vedder? The people inside looked unfamiliar, and everything about the place had changed. Rip searched frantically for one detail to be

the same. What about the portrait of King George hanging above the fireplace? There was a portrait hanging there, but it was of a different man. Letters beneath indicated it was someone named General Washington.

RIP: General Washington? Who in tarnation? What have they done with His Majesty?

NARRATOR: Inside a lean fellow with a pocket full of papers was addressing a crowd.

MAN: It's one of our rights as citizens! It's part of our liberty! We hold elections, and those elected go to congress! That's what the heroes of '76 fought for! That is what those at Bunker Hill died for! Liberty!

NARRATOR: The man's words were like Babylonian gibberish to Rip.

RIP: What nonsense is this? Bunker Hill? Congress? Liberty?

NARRATOR: Rip couldn't help himself. He burst inside the inn. The appearance of Rip with his long grizzled beard, his rusty gun, and his uncouth dress caused everyone to turn.

MAN: You there, my rustic friend! Which side do you vote on?

RIP: Vote? Side?

MAN: Of course, man! Are you a Democrat or Federal?

RIP: Alas, gentlemen! I don't know. All I know is that I'm a loyal subject of King George, God bless him!

NARRATOR: The crowd grew suddenly quiet and then erupted with rage. (*shouts and insults*)

MAN: (*angrily*) King George? This man's a Tory! A spy! Get away from this place, you traitor!

RIP: No! No! I am not a spy. I am a faithful citizen of the British colonies!

MAN: So, he admits it! Let's show him what we do with traitors!

NARRATOR: Luckily for Rip, some men among the crowd could see the confusion on his face and pressed for order.

RIP: I only came here looking for my friends.

MAN: A Tory will find no friends here!

OLD MAN: Let the man speak! Who are your friends? Name them.

RIP: Nicholas Vedder?

OLD MAN: Why, he's been dead and gone for eighteen years! Even his wooden tombstone has rotted by now.

RIP: Dead? What about Brom Dutcher?

OLD MAN: Oh, he went off to the army in the beginning of the war. Some say he was killed at the storming of Stony Point. He never came back again.

RIP: Where's Van Bummel, the schoolmaster?

OLD MAN: He went off to the wars, too, and became a general. Now he is in congress.

NARRATOR: Rip's heart died away at hearing of these sad changes in his home and friends and finding himself thus alone in the world. Every answer puzzled him, too. They referenced such great amounts of time and matters which he could not understand: war, congress, Stony Point.

RIP: What has happened to this place? Does nobody here know Rip Van Winkle?

MAN: Oh, Rip Van Winkle! Of course! That's Rip Van Winkle yonder, leaning against the tree outside.

NARRATOR: Rip looked and about died of shock. There leaning against a tree outside was himself—just like he had been when he gone up into the mountains.

RIP: There I am. So who am I then?

OLD MAN: That's what we'd like to know.

RIP: (*crying out*) Only God knows! I'm not myself! I'm somebody else! That's me yonder! I was myself last night, but I fell asleep on the mountain, and they've changed my gun, and every thing's changed, and I'm changed, and I can't tell what's my name or who I am!

NARRATOR: The by-standers began now to look at each other knowingly—tapping their fingers against their foreheads.

MAN: Perhaps we should keep this gun for you, old timer.

NARRATOR: Rip stumbled outside, and the crowd followed him in amazement. At this critical moment a comely young woman was walking along the street. She had a chubby child in her arms, which began to cry. (*cry of a child*)

JUDITH: Hush, Rip! Hush!

NARRATOR: Rip stopped short. The name of the child, the tone of her voice—they awakened a train of recollections in his mind.

RIP: Woman, what is your name?

JUDITH: Me? Judith Gardenier.

RIP: And your father's name?

JUDITH: Ah, poor man, Rip Van Winkle was his name, but it's been twenty years since he went away from home with his gun. He's never been heard from since. His dog came home without him. Maybe he shot himself. Maybe he was carried away by Indians. Nobody can tell. I was just a little girl then.

NARRATOR: This was his very own daughter standing before him. Rip wanted to cry out in joy, but he had one more question to ask.

RIP: (*nervously*) Where's your mother?

JUDITH: Oh, she died a short time afterward. She burst a blood-vessel while bawling out a peddler.

RIP: Joy! Rapture! (*sigh*) Well, at least there is a drop of comfort at least.

NARRATOR: Rip caught his daughter and her child up into his arms.

RIP: I am your father! Young Rip Van Winkle once—old Rip Van Winkle now! Don't you remember me?

NARRATOR: All stood amazed.

MAN: Impossible!

NARRATOR: An old woman, tottering out from among the crowd, peered into Rip's face for a moment.

WIFE ONE: (*old voice*) Sure enough! It is Rip Van Winkle! Welcome home again, old neighbor! Why, where have you been these twenty long years?

NARRATOR: Rip's story was soon told, for the whole twenty years had been to him but as one night. The neighbors stared when they heard it. Some were seen to wink at each other and put their tongues in their cheeks.

MAN: So you slept for twenty years? Sure thing, Rip.

OLD MAN: I think there is truth in his tale. Those mountains have always been haunted by strange beings.

MAN: Bah! We don't have time to listen to silly stories! There are elections and political parties to discuss!

NARRATOR: The crowd soon dispersed.

JUDITH: You'll come home with me. You have missed quite a lot in the last twenty years.

RIP: Apparently. It will take me some time to get used to all of this. Our country is no longer part of Britain?

JUDITH: You're a free citizen of the United States. Isn't that exciting?

RIP: Eh. *(pause)* What about His Majesty, George the Third?

JUDITH: George was a tyrant, and we're lucky to be rid of him!

RIP: Well, he wasn't *all* bad.

NARRATOR: The changes of states and empires did not make much impression on Rip. Whenever he felt befuddled by the new state of things, he rejoiced in his own personal liberty. He had thrown off the yoke of matrimony, the despotism of the petticoat, and the tyranny of Dame Van Winkle.

RIP: *(laughing)* This is true liberty!

NARRATOR: Whenever his wife's name was mentioned, Rip would cast up his eyes and shrug his shoulders.

Rip's daughter took him home to live with her. She had a snug, well-furnished house and a stout, cheery farmer for a husband, whom Rip remembered as one of the children that used to climb upon his back. And there was Rip's son and heir, Rip Jr., who was the ditto of himself he had seen leaning against the tree. Rip Jr. was supposed to work on the family farm but had the same hereditary disposition as his father—to attend to anything else but his own business.

As for Rip, having nothing to do at home and being now at a happy age when a

man is free to be idle, he took his place as a village patriarch and storyteller.

CHILD THREE: Rip, did you ever meet George Washington? Can you tell us about the Revolutionary War that won our freedom?

RIP: No, I can't. It must not have been that exciting. I slept right through it! But let me tell you about the old days—before the war!

NARRATOR: Rip told the story about his magical twenty-year sleep so often that every person in the village knew it by heart. It became a common wish of all the hen-pecked husbands in the neighborhood, when life was hanging heavily on their heads, that they might have a drink of the same ale as Rip Van Winkle.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Is Rip sorry that he missed twenty years of his life? Explain.
2. If you had the chance, would you travel twenty years into the future? Explain.
3. How are women portrayed in this story? Is the negative portrayal of Dame Van Winkle fair? Explain.
4. What statement is the author trying to make about America's change from British colonies to independent states?
5. What type of people might Rip Van Winkle represent? Explain.
6. What important American values are missing from Rip's personality? Explain.
7. How does Rip's personality compare to that of Benjamin Franklin or George Washington?
8. How could America change drastically in the next twenty years?