

EARLY AMERICAN
ROMANTICS:
WASHINGTON IRVING & JAMES
FENIMORE COOPER



American Romantic Literature

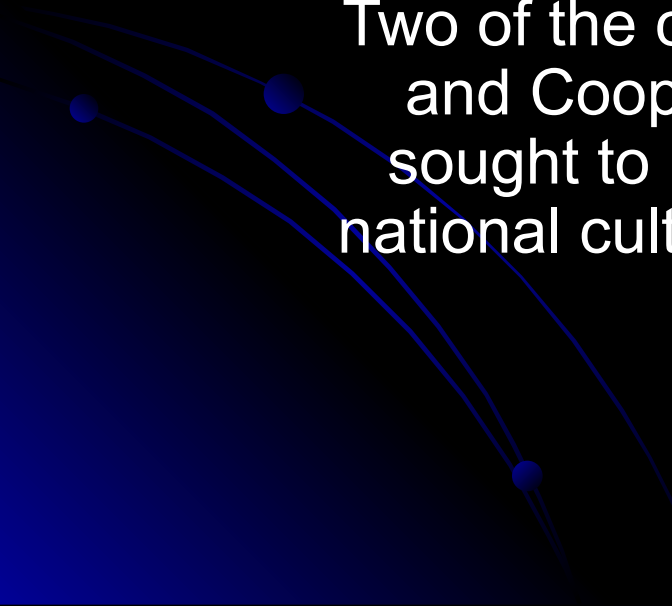
- a time of rapid expansion and growth in the United States that fueled intuition, imagination, and individualism in literature
- the American Romantic movement challenged the very rational thinking of the Age of Reason during the Revolutionary War. This period produced fewer instructional texts and more stories, novels, and poetry.

five characteristics to identify American Romantic literature

- **Imagination and Escapism**: Characters taking a journey from the dirty city into the supernatural countryside.
- **Individuality**: Individuals embracing freedom by following intuition and going exploring.
- **Finding spirituality in nature**: Reflections on nature and how it can bring people closer to God.
- **Looking to the past for wisdom**: Settings that reflect times past and plots that show how legends fit in today.
- **Finding a hero in the common man**: Characters who are flawed but whose innocence and strong morals give them good hearts.

THE NEW LITERATURE - NEW YORK AND THE KNICKERBOCKER GROUP

Two of the century's greatest writers - Irving and Cooper - the Knickerbocker writers sought to promote a genuinely American national culture and establish New York City as its literary centre.





Washington Irving 1783 - 1859

WASHINGTON IRVING

- considered the father of American literature because it is his writing that began shaping the American identity
- because he is writing in the early years of the 19th century, at the beginning of the American experiment, his work sheds an interesting light on the cultural anxieties of the young nation

- was born in New York / April 3, 1783 - the year which marked the end of the long struggle for liberty and the beginning of peace
- "Washington's work is ended, and the child shall be named after him," said Mrs. Irving.
- grew up in Manhattan, New York and was a pretty goofy, adventurous kid
- Made several trips to England (his writing and his education are profoundly Anglophile in character because he spent much of his life in England)
- In 1817 - befriends Sir Walter Scott, who gives him some advice about writing. Scott tells him to begin reading the German Romantic authors and to consider folklore and legends for some inspiration

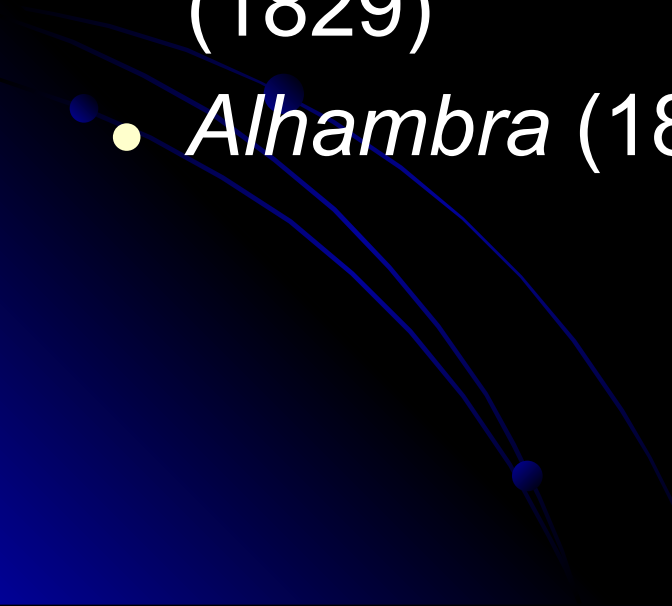
First publications

- journal entitled **Salmagundi** (January, 1807, to January, 1808) - satirical pamphlets on the faults of New York society, published together with his intimate friend, James K. Paulding, and his brother, William Irving
- Its modest programme was announced in the first number. "Our intention is simply to instruct the young, reform the old, correct the town, and castigate the age."
- *Diedrich Knickerbocker: A History of New-York from the Beginning of the World to the End of the Dutch Dynasty* - a political satire

The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Esq.

- published in America in 1820
- 27 stories – most of them related Irving's impressions of England, & only 6 – dealt with American subjects
- greatly influenced by German folk tales
- included '*The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*' and '*Rip Van Winkle*' - recognize as two masterpieces, & most popular classics in the field of the short story
- A sequel to *The Sketch-Book* – *Bracebridge Hall* was published in 1822
- *Tales of a Traveler*, which included the short story '*The Devil and Tom Walker*' - another piece heavily influenced by the German legends.

Later works -historical records of Spain

- *Life and Voyages of Columbus* (1828)
 - *Voyages and Discoveries of the Companions of Columbus* (1831),
 - *Chronicle of the Conquest of Granada* (1829)
 - *Alhambra* (1832)
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- In May, 1832, Irving returned to America, distinguished and admired abroad, to find himself honored and beloved by his countrymen at home.
- hearty welcome - a public banquet tendered by the city of New York to her own humorous historian, "the Dutch Herodotus, Diedrich Knickerbocker" - as he was named in a toast.
- The literary work of these ten years is comparatively unimportant
 - *Life of Goldsmith* (1849),
 - *Mahomet and his Successors* (1850),
 - *Life of Washington* (1855-59)

Irving's Style

- the sources of Irving's material are almost entirely in the past, in history, biography, and tradition;
- the subjects which attracted his attention are romantic
- Irving's use of imagery - using words to create a picture in the reader's mind to create long descriptions of the American landscape - set his work apart from those of the European writers
- Through the use of irony (*saying the opposite of what you really mean*) he is able to poke fun at his characters and their situations
- Irving introduced the idea of the modern short story to the United States (prior to this period, people were writing instructional, political documents and lots of religious-based poetry)

'The Legend of Sleepy Hollow



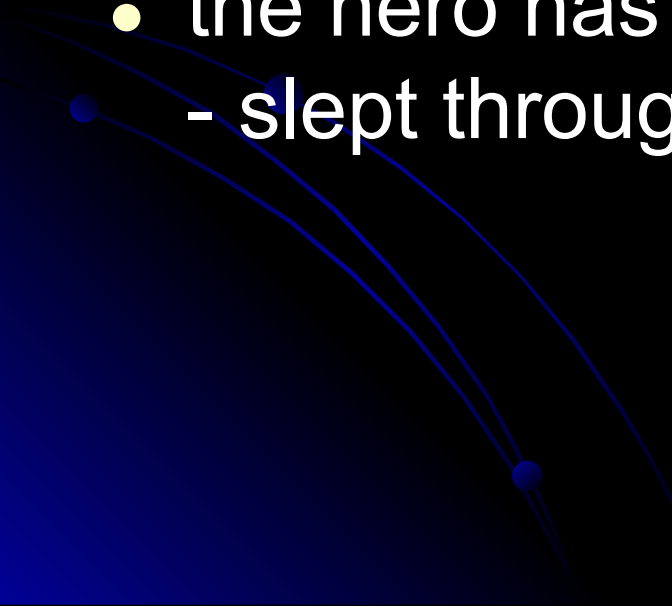
- **Ichabod Crane** (the main character) - "our man of letters," "traveling gazette" - a grotesque figure, ravenous in his hunger for material success
- **Katrina Van Tassel**
- Abraham Van Brunt, known as **Brom Bones** - Ichabod's rival - strong, brash, and fearless, personifies a figure who will be known as the "b'hoy," who challenges all niceties and pieties
- **Headless Horseman** - a Hessian soldier whose head was blown off by a cannonball during the American Revolution
- Sleepy Hollow itself is presented as a sort of refuge from the bustling America, a haven where "romance" is still possible

Romantic Characteristics

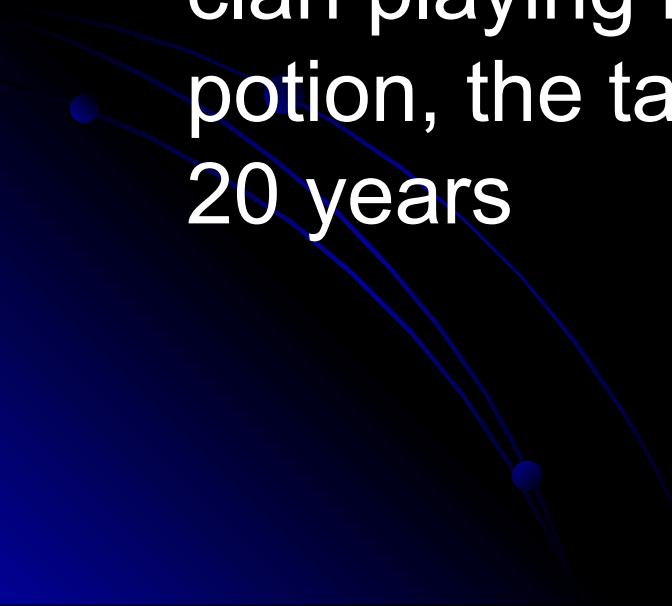
- **Imagination** - Ichabod has a wild imagination
- element of the **supernatural** - ghost stories, wild chases of the headless horseman
- wisdom from the past - citizens of Sleepy Hollow are eager to hear the bewitching stories from the past, Ichabod has a habit of carrying Cotton Mather's writing *History of New England Witchcraft*

Rip Van Winkle



- inspired by German folklore
 - a great story: a nagging wife, dogs, guns, ghosts, liquor and of course, long, gray beards
 - the hero has fallen asleep for twenty years
 - slept through the American Revolution
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Romantic Characteristics - 1

- The Romantic element of the supernatural is the basic essence of this story.
 - Mystical elements: sleep for 20 years, the presence of what seems to be the Hudson clan playing nine-pins (ghosts), a sleeping potion, the tale of Hudson's return every 20 years
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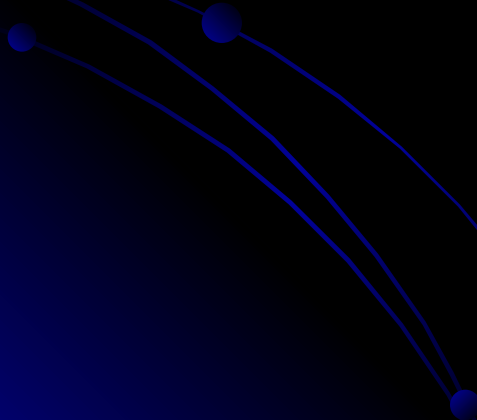
2 - imagery

- Irving's flowering language creates a beautiful picture of the setting in the reader's mind.
- 'Kaatskill Mountains' and the village at its foot:
'Every change of season, every change of weather, indeed, every hour of the day, produces some change in the magical hues and shapes of these mountains...they are clothed in blue and purple, and print their bold outlines on the clear evening sky.'
- the town : *'...there were some of the houses of the original settlers standing within a few years, built of small yellow bricks brought from Holland, having latticed windows and gable fronts, surmounted with weather-cocks.'*

- Like most Romantic writers, Irving glorifies the rural setting as opposed to the city life. This Romantic element drives the story, giving it supernatural qualities and a place for Rip to escape this horrible marriage
- **theme** - sometimes we must escape the harshness of our lives and to do so, the countryside is always welcoming
- supernatural fuels the theme of escapism - two monster characteristics of Romantic writing

The Devil and Tom Walker

- the story's plot is based on a very famous German legend about a man called **Faust** , who makes a deal with the Devil in order to gain knowledge and wealth



Characters

- **Tom Walker**, the story's main character, is a miser.
- **Tom's wife** is as miserly as he is but with a temper, verbally abusive, and the townspeople suspect she is even physically abusive toward Tom.
- **Old Scratch** or wild huntsman or black woodsman - the Devil; described as a black man, but neither Negro nor Indian. He has a dirty, soot-covered face and carries an axe.

Moral, Allegory And Symbols

- a **moral** - greed and moral corruption leads us down the wrong path
- variety of symbols:
- the Devil is *temptation*
- Tom and his wife represent *greed*.
- Later in the story, Tom symbolizes *hypocrisy* .
- The **swamp** is described as a shortcut - an 'ill-chosen' route, because it cost him eternal damnation. So here, the swamp symbolizes the *wrong path*.
- **The Indian fort** is a representation of *hell*.
- Tom's **Bible** represents *the chance for salvation*.



JAMES
FENIMORE
COOPER

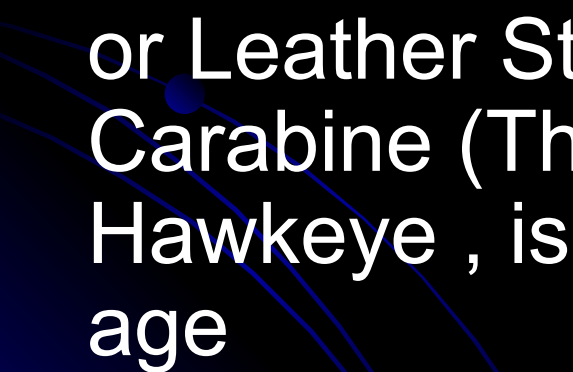
1789-1851

"the
American
Scott"

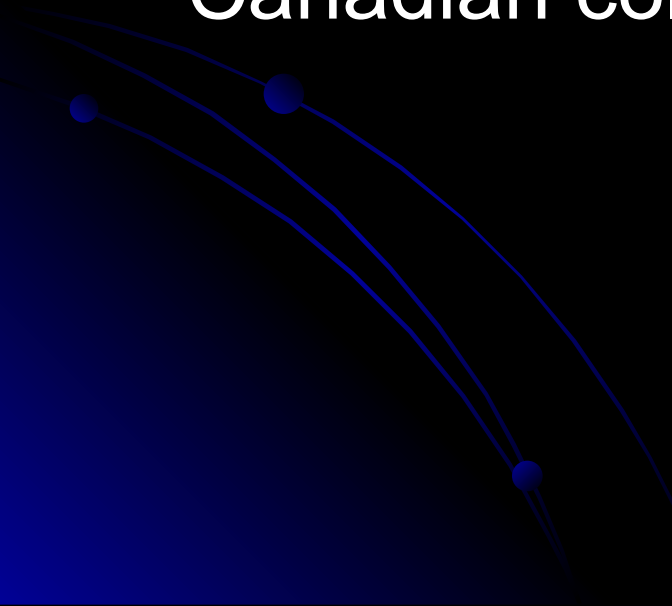
- born in New Jersey, September 15, 1789
- before he was quite one year old his father removed his family to the shore of Otsego Lake in central New York - the frontier of civilization in that day, and on the very edge of the interminable forest that stretched out over the western wilderness
- Yale College
- sailed on board of the merchant ship Sterling
- secured a commission as midshipman in the United States Navy
- resigned from the Navy in 1811
- James Fenimore Cooper was thirty years old when he began to write
- essential gift of a great novelist

- 1820, the novel *Precaution*
- 1821, *The Spy*, a tale of the Revolution - had some foundation in historical fact/ The story appealed to the patriotism of readers and permitted comparison with Scott. Its success was immediate and unprecedented.
- **The Pioneers** (1823) - sea novel written after publication of Scott's novel *The Pirate*
- Other sea stories - *The Red Rover*, *The Water-Witch*, *The Two Admirals*, *Wing-and-Wing*

The Leather Stocking Tales

- Indian tales
 - The Deerslayer, The Last of the Mohicans, The Pathfinder, The Pioneers, and The Prairie
 - The character of the hero, Natty Bumppo, or Leather Stocking or La Longue Carabine (The Long Rifle) or the scout or Hawkeye , is portrayed from youth to old age
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The Last of the Mohicans

- written in 1826
 - takes place in 1757 during the French and Indian War, when France and England battled for control of the American and Canadian colonies.
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Themes, Motifs & Symbols

- *The Last of the Mohicans* is a novel about race and the difficulty of overcoming racial divides
- Hawkeye is both a character and a symbol. He symbolizes the mixing of European and Indian cultures. Hawkeye also symbolizes the myth of the hero woodsman.
- description of Uncas as “the last of the Mohicans” symbolizes the death of Indian culture at the hands of the European civilization