

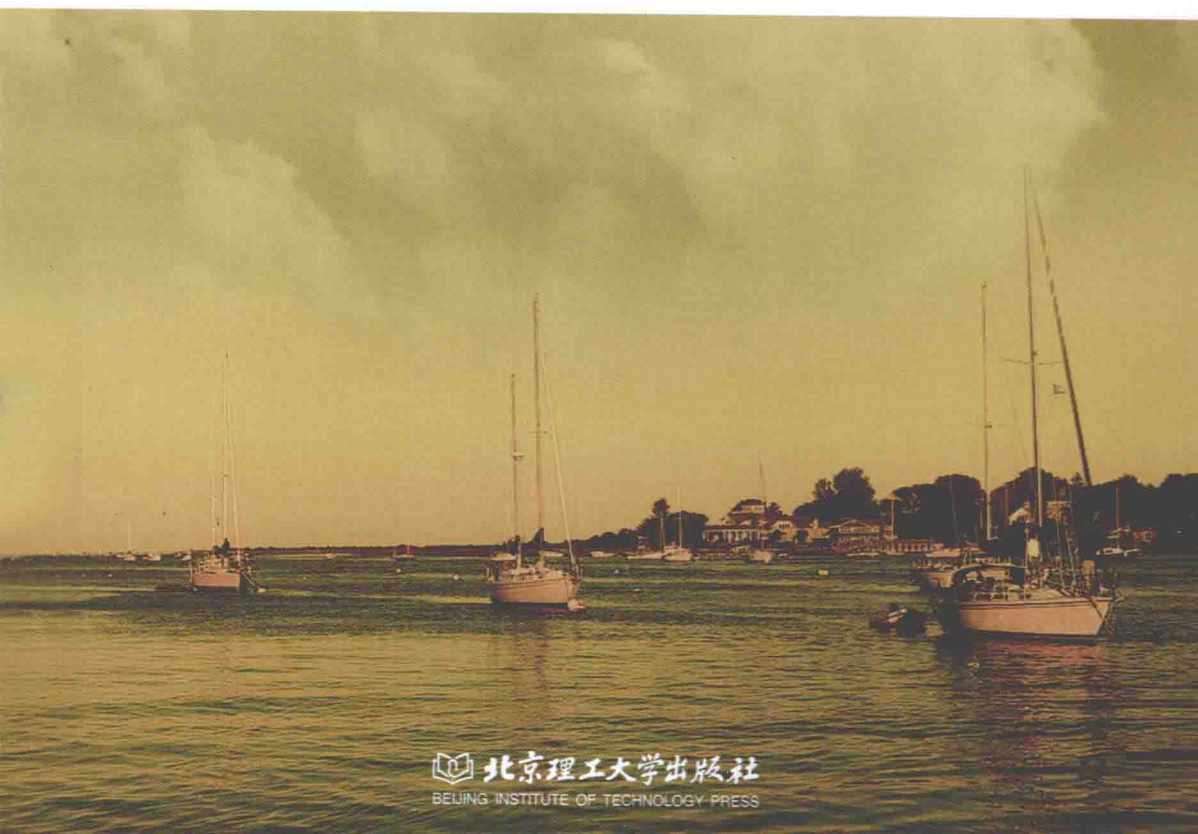


外语教学指导与学术研究系列丛书

Rereading of American Classical Works

美国文学 经典作品重读

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 北京理工大学出版社
BEIJING INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY PRESS

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前言

《美国文学经典作品重读》是一部集作家介绍、作品评论、鉴赏及原作于一身,对美国文学乃至美国文化和社会的学习和研究具有一定指导意义的书籍。该书适合各类文学爱好者的阅读、研究及鉴赏之用。

本书编写的主要特点:

1. 本书主要涉及美国文学史各个时期的著名作家及其经典作品,注重分析和评论这些经典作品所涉及的思想内容、道德情操、艺术特色。
2. 本书中所选的材料大多来自美国文学各个时期著名作家的首次精选作品,具有新颖性和可读性。
3. 对于一些美国著名作家首次入选的经典作品的分析与评论具有独到的见解,文字简练,通俗易懂。

在《美国文学经典作品重读》一书的编写过程中,由于作者水平和经验各有不同,不足之处在所难免,欢迎读者指正。

编 者

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1

1. Washington Irving (1783—1859)



1.1 Introduction of Washington Irving

Washington Irving was the first American author to achieve international renown. To say that he was father of American literature is not much exaggeration. The short story as a genre in American literature began with his *The Sketch Book*, which also marked the beginning of American Romanticism.

Irving was born in New York City in 1783, the youngest of 11 children. His father was a wealthy merchant, and his mother, an English woman, was the granddaughter of a clergyman. Early in his life Irving developed a passion for books. He studied law at private schools, but practiced only briefly. From 1804 to 1806 he traveled widely Europe, visiting Marseilles, Genoa, Sicily. After returning to the United States, Irving was admitted to New York bar in 1806. He was a partner with his brothers in the family hardware business, and representative of the business in England until it collapsed in 1818. During the war of 1812 Irving was a military aide to New York Governor Tompkins in the U. S. Army.

Irving's career as a writer started in journals and newspapers. He contributed to *Morning Chronicle* (1802—1803), and published *Salmagundi*

(1807—1808), writing in collaboration with his brothers. From 1812 to 1814 he was an editor of *Analectic* magazine in Philadelphia and New York. After the death of his mother, Irving decided to stay in Europe, where he remained for seventeen years from 1815 to 1832. In 1832 Irving returned to New York to an enthusiastic welcome as the first American author to have achieved international fame. Between the years 1842—1845 Irving was U. S. Ambassador in Spain. Irving spent the last years of his life in Tarrytown. From 1848 to 1859 he was President of Astor Library, later New York Public Library.

Irving's literary career can be roughly divided into two phases. The first phase stretched from 1809 to 1832, which was predominantly "English." He found value in the past and in the traditions of the Old World. In this period, he wrote his first book *A History of New York*, which won him wide popularity. During his stay in Europe, he published his master piece *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.* (1819—1820), a collection of short stories. In *The Sketch Book*, there are two immortalized tales, *Rip Van Winkle* and *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*.

In *Rip Van Winkle*, Irving successfully created a protagonist Rip, the idler, good-natured, hen-packed man. One afternoon, he stays out late and meets a group of dwarfs playing ninepipes. Rip helps a dwarf and is rewarded with a draught of liquor. He falls into an enchanted sleep. When he awakens, 20 years later, the world has changed. He is an old man with a long, white beard.

Irving is a conservative writer. His literary achievement is mainly gained in his various genres of writings, such as history, biography, short story, essay and travel account. He dreams of "the good old days"—the peaceful and harmonious rural life and he dislikes embracing the mode of modern life.

Irving's short story is written with a style that is humorous. He is good at creating richness of atmosphere and unity of tone and creating characters of village teachers and villagers. In his satire and humor, there is always a kind-

ness, an understanding. Beneath his comic materials, there is passion for life. In this way, Irving is at times known as “the father of American literature.”

1.2 Appreciation and Analysis of *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*

As the first American story teller, Washington Irving creates a lot of remarkable short stories. *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* and *Rip Van Winkle* are included in his masterpiece, *The Sketch Book* which brings him the international fame. *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* is one of Irving's best short stories. The story tells about the protagonist Icabod Crane, a school master's experience in the Sleepy Hollow based on the old German folk tales. The inhabitants of Sleepy Hollow believe their village is bewitched by a German Doctor or an Indian Prophet. Many legends relevant to Ghost amuse villagers in their gossip. The primary ghost is the Headless Horseman, which is rumored to be a soldier who lost his head in a combat during the Revolution War. Icabod Crane, the main character comes from Connecticut and becomes a school master of the village children. The school master meets Katrina Van Tassel, a charming girl and falls in love with her. But a strong young fellow named Abraham Broom Van Brunt also loves Katrina, so he intends to play a prank joke on Icabod to intimidate his rival. One afternoon Icabod is invited to a party, at Katrina's farm. The schoolmaster has a good time in the party. At the dread midnight on his way home, Icabod is followed by the Headless Horseman. The schoolmaster is scared and races for the church bridge. But the Headless Horseman throws his head at Icabod. Next morning Icabod doesn't appear in the schoolroom. Villagers find his horse is grazing nearby. A broken pumpkin is scattered about the bridge. The schoolmaster is believed to fall in the stream and drown to death. Then the legends of Icabod are widespread. But some villager has met him in another area, teaching his pupils.

Brom Bones can heartedly harvest his love.

The Legend of Sleepy Hollow interprets Washington Irving's viewpoint on the social change taking place in his country. The author uses two images of Icabod and Brom Bone to symbolize the new power from the outside world represented by Icabod, the schoolmaster and the traditional value for love. The outcome reflects on Irving's conservative point of view. He evidently cherishes the good old days and enjoys that kind of peaceful and harmonious life in the country.

In this short story, Irving places it a home-like surrounding which confers his story a kind of vitality. He details the scene in the story and lays the shadowing of the climax coming. In addition, Irving applies his great humor and prose style to the story writing, which makes his story more vivid and amusing. To present the theme of this story, Irving depicts his main character as a figure in comics. Icabod is portrayed as "some scarecrow eloped from a corn-field" sometimes. On some other occasions, he looks like "a wind vane to tell which way the wind blew." Such description and metaphor draw a clear picture of Washing Irving's typical characterization which becomes the highlight of the story.

1.3 Reading of *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*

The Legend of Sleepy Hollow

Found Among *The Papers of The Late Diedrich Knickerbocker*

A pleasing land of drowsy head it was,
Of dreams that wave before the half-shut eye;
And of gay castles in the clouds that pass,
For ever flushing round a summer sky.
Castle of Indolence.

In the bosom of one of those spacious coves which indent the eastern shore of the Hudson, at that broad expansion of the river denominated by the ancient Dutch navigators the Tappan Zee, and where they always prudently shortened sail, and implored the protection of St. Nicholas when they crossed, there lies a small market-town or rural port, which by some is called Greensburgh, but which is more generally and properly known by the name of Tarry Town. This name was given, we are told, in former days, by the good housewives of the adjacent country, from the inveterate propensity of their husbands to linger about the village tavern on market days. Be that as it may, I do not vouch for the fact, but merely advert to it, for the sake of being precise and authentic. Not far from this village, perhaps about two miles, there is a little valley, or rather lap of land, among high hills, which is one of the quietest places in the whole world. A small brook glides through it, with just murmur enough to lull one to repose; and the occasional whistle of a quail, or tapping of a woodpecker, is almost the only sound that ever breaks in upon the uniform tranquillity.

I recollect that, when a stripling, my first exploit in squirrel-shooting was in a grove of tall walnut-trees that shades one side of the valley. I had wandered into it at noon time, when all nature is peculiarly quiet, and was startled by the roar of my own gun, as it broke the Sabbath stillness around, and was prolonged and reverberated by the angry echoes. If ever I should wish for a retreat, whither I might steal from the world and its distractions, and dream quietly away the remnant of a troubled life, I know of none more promising than this little valley.

From the listless repose of the place, and the peculiar character of its inhabitants, who are descendants from the original Dutch settlers, this sequestered glen has long been known by the name of SLEEPY HOLLOW, and its rustic lads are called the Sleepy Hollow Boys throughout all the neighboring country. A drowsy, dreamy influence seems to hang over the land, and to

pervade the very atmosphere. Some say that the place was bewitched by a high German doctor, during the early days of the settlement; others, that an old Indian chief, the prophet or wizard of his tribe, held his pow-wows there before the country was discovered by Master Hendrick Hudson. Certain it is, the place still continues under the sway of some witching power, that holds a spell over the minds of the good people, causing them to walk in a continual reverie. They are given to all kinds of marvellous beliefs; are subject to trances and visions; and frequently see strange sights, and hear music and voices in the air. The whole neighborhood abounds with local tales, haunted spots, and twilight superstitions; stars shoot and meteors glare oftener across the valley than in any other part of the country, and the nightmare, with her whole nine fold, seems to make it the favorite scene of her gambols.

The dominant spirit, however, that haunts this enchanted region, and seems to be commander-in-chief of all the powers of the air, is the apparition of a figure on horseback without a head. It is said by some to be the ghost of a Hessian trooper, whose head had been carried away by a cannon-ball, in some nameless battle during the revolutionary war; and who is ever and anon seen by the country folk hurrying along in the gloom of night, as if on the wings of the wind. His haunts are not confined to the valley, but extend at times to the adjacent roads, and especially to the vicinity of a church at no great distance. Indeed, certain of the most authentic historians of those parts, who have been careful in collecting and collating the floating facts concerning this spectre, allege that the body of the trooper, having been buried in the church-yard, the ghost rides forth to the scene of battle in nightly quest of his head; and that the rushing speed with which he sometimes passes along the Hollow, like a midnight blast, is owing to his being belated, and in a hurry to get back to the church-yard before daybreak.

Such is the general purport of this legendary superstition, which has furnished materials for many a wild story in that region of shadows; and the spec-

tre is known, at all the country firesides, by the name of the Headless Horseman of Sleepy Hollow.

It is remarkable that the visionary propensity I have mentioned is not confined to the native inhabitants of the valley, but is unconsciously imbibed by every one who resides there for a time. However wide awake they may have been before they entered that sleepy region, they are sure, in a little time, to inhale the witching influence of the air, and begin to grow imaginative—to dream dreams, and see apparitions.

I mention this peaceful spot with all possible laud; for it is in such little retired Dutch valleys, found here and there embosomed in the great State of New York, that population, manners, and customs, remain fixed; while the great torrent of migration and improvement, which is making such incessant changes in other parts of this restless country, sweeps by them unobserved. They are like those little nooks of still water which border a rapid stream; where we may see the straw and bubble riding quietly at anchor, or slowly revolving in their mimic harbor, undisturbed by the rush of the passing current. Though many years have elapsed since I trod the drowsy shades of Sleepy Hollow, yet I question whether I should not still find the same trees and the same families vegetating in its sheltered bosom.

In this by-place of nature, there abode, in a remote period of American history, that is to say, some thirty years since, a worthy wight of the name of Ichabod Crane; who sojourned, or, as he expressed it, “tarried,” in Sleepy Hollow, for the purpose of instructing the children of the vicinity. He was a native of Connecticut; a State which supplies the Union with pioneers for the mind as well as for the forest, and sends forth yearly its legions of frontier woodsmen and country schoolmasters. The cognomen of Crane was not inapplicable to his person. He was tall, but exceedingly lank, with narrow shoulders, long arms and legs, hands that dangled a mile out of his sleeves, feet that might have served for shovels, and his whole frame most loosely hung

together. His head was small, and flat at top, with huge ears, large green glassy eyes, and a long snipe nose, so that it looked like a weather-cock, perched upon his spindle neck, to tell which way the wind blew. To see him striding along the profile of a hill on a windy day, with his clothes bagging and fluttering about him one might have mistaken him for the genius of famine descending upon the earth, or some scarecrow eloped from a cornfield.

His school-house was a low building of one large room, rudely constructed of logs; the windows partly glazed, and partly patched with leaves of old copy-books. It was most ingeniously secured at vacant hours, by a withe twisted in the handle of the door, and stakes set against the window shutters; so that, though a thief might get in with perfect ease, he would find some embarrassment in getting out; an idea most probably borrowed by the architect, Yost Van Houton, from the mystery of an eel-pot. The school-house stood in a rather lonely but pleasant situation just at the foot of a woody hill, with a brook running close by, and a formidable birch tree growing at one end of it. From hence the low murmur of his pupils' voices, conning over their lessons, might be heard in a drowsy summer's day, like the hum of a bee-hive; interrupted now and then by the authoritative voice of the master, in the tone of menace or command; or, peradventure, by the appalling sound of the birch, as he urged some tardy loiterer along the flowery path of knowledge. Truth to say, he was a conscientious man, and ever bore in mind the golden maxim, "Spare the rod and spoil the child."—Ichabod Crane's scholars certainly were not spoiled.

I would not have it imagined, however, that he was one of those cruel potentates of the school, who joy in the smart of their subjects; on the contrary, he administered justice with discrimination rather than severity; taking the burthen off the backs of the weak, and laying it on those of the strong. Your mere puny stripling, that winced at the least flourish of the rod, was passed by with indulgence; but the claims of justice were satisfied by inflicting a

double portion on some little, tough, wrong-headed, broad-skirted Dutch urchin, who sulked and swelled and grew dogged and sullen beneath the birch. All this he called "doing his duty by their parents"; and he never inflicted a chastisement without following it by the assurance, so consolatory to the smarting urchin, that "he would remember it, and thank him for it the longest day he had to live." When school hours were over, he was even the companion and playmate of the larger boys; and on holiday afternoons would convoy some of the smaller ones home, who happened to have pretty sisters, or good housewives for mothers, noted for the comforts of the cupboard. Indeed it behooved him to keep on good terms with his pupils. The revenue arising from his school was small, and would have been scarcely sufficient to furnish him with daily bread, for he was a huge feeder, and though lank, had the dilating powers of an anaconda; but to help out his maintenance, he was, according to country custom in those parts, boarded and lodged at the houses of the farmers, whose children he instructed. With these he lived successively a week at a time; thus going the rounds of the neighborhood, with all his worldly effects tied up in a cotton handkerchief.

That all this might not be too onerous on the purses of his rustic patrons, who are apt to consider the costs of schooling a grievous burden, and schoolmasters as mere drones, he had various ways of rendering himself both useful and agreeable. He assisted the farmers occasionally in the lighter labors of their farms; helped to make hay; mended the fences; took the horses to water; drove the cows from pasture; and cut wood for the winter fire. He laid aside, too, all the dominant dignity and absolute sway with which he lorded it in his little empire, the school, and became wonderfully gentle and ingratiating. He found favor in the eyes of the mothers, by petting the children, particularly the youngest; and like the lion bold, which whilom so magnanimously the lamb did hold, he would sit with a child on one knee, and rock a cradle with his foot for whole hours together.

In addition to his other vocations, he was the singing-master of the neighborhood, and picked up many bright shillings by instructing the young folks in psalmody. It was a matter of no little vanity to him, on Sundays, to take his station in front of the church gallery, with a band of chosen singers; where, in his own mind, he completely carried away the palm from the parson. Certain it is, his voice resounded far above all the rest of the congregation; and there are peculiar quavers still to be heard in that church, and which may even be heard half a mile off, quite to the opposite side of the mill-pond, on a still Sunday morning, which are said to be legitimately descended from the nose of Ichabod Crane. Thus, by divers little make-shifts in that ingenious way which is commonly denominated "by hook and by crook," the worthy pedagogue got on tolerably enough, and was thought, by all who understood nothing of the labor of headwork, to have a wonderfully easy life of it.

The schoolmaster is generally a man of some importance in the female circle of a rural neighborhood; being considered a kind of idle gentlemanlike personage, of vastly superior taste and accomplishments to the rough country swains, and, indeed, inferior in learning only to the parson. His appearance, therefore, is apt to occasion some little stir at the tea-table of a farmhouse, and the addition of a supernumerary dish of cakes or sweetmeats, or, peradventure, the parade of a silver tea-pot. Our man of letters, therefore, was peculiarly happy in the smiles of all the country damsels. How he would figure among them in the churchyard, between services on Sundays! Gathering grapes for them from the wild vines that overrun the surrounding trees; reciting for their amusement all the epitaphs on the tombstones; or sauntering, with a whole bevy of them, along the banks of the adjacent mill-pond; while the more bashful country bumpkins hung sheepishly back, envying his superior elegance and address.

From his half itinerant life, also, he was a kind of travelling gazette, carrying the whole budget of local gossip from house to house; so that his ap-

pearance was always greeted with satisfaction. He was, moreover, esteemed by the women as a man of great erudition, for he had read several books quite through, and was a perfect master of Cotton Mather's history of New England Witchcraft, in which, by the way, he most firmly and potently believed. He was, in fact, an odd mixture of small shrewdness and simple credulity. His appetite for the marvellous, and his powers of digesting it, were equally extraordinary; and both had been increased by his residence in this spellbound region. No tale was too gross or monstrous for his capacious swallow. It was often his delight, after his school was dismissed in the afternoon, to stretch himself on the rich bed of clover, bordering the little brook that whimpered by his school-house, and there con over old Mather's direful tales, until the gathering dusk of the evening made the printed page a mere mist before his eyes. Then, as he wended his way, by swamp and stream and awful woodland, to the farmhouse where he happened to be quartered, every sound of nature, at that witching hour, fluttered his excited imagination: the moan of the whip-poor-will from the hill-side; the boding cry of the tree-toad, that harbinger of storm; the dreary hooting of the screech-owl, or the sudden rustling in the thicket of birds frightened from their roost. The fire-flies, too, which sparkled most vividly in the darkest places, now and then startled him, as one of uncommon brightness would stream across his path; and if, by chance, a huge blockhead of a beetle came winging his blundering flight against him, the poor varlet was ready to give up the ghost, with the idea that he was struck with a witch's token. His only resource on such occasions, either to drown thought, or drive away evil spirits, was to sing psalm tunes;—and the good people of Sleepy Hollow, as they sat by their doors of an evening, were often filled with awe, at hearing his nasal melody, "in linked sweetness long drawn out," floating from the distant hill, or along the dusky road.

Another of his sources of fearful pleasure was, to pass long winter evenings with the old Dutch wives, as they sat spinning by the fire, with a row