

**Teacher's Guide to  
The Core Classics Edition of**

**Washington Irving's**

***The Legend of Sleepy Hollow  
& Other Tales***

By Lisa Scallet

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## **Publisher's Note**

We are happy to make available this *Teacher's Guide* to the Core Classics version of The Legend of Sleepy Hollow & Other Tales by Washington Irving. We are presenting it and other guides in an electronic format so that is freely accessible to as many teachers as possible. This guide is one teacher's vision of how to make this book both understandable and enjoyable to fourth grade students. The author has provided an abundance of questions in order to guide students through specific elements of the story, but you probably will want to select among them according to the reading levels of your students. Consider them, as well as everything else in the guide, to be an option or a suggestion rather than a requirement or an obligation. No doubt you will strive for a balance between reading for accuracy and promoting an imaginative grasp of the themes and the story line.

We hope that you find the background material, which is addressed specifically to teachers, useful preparation for teaching the book. As always, Core Knowledge prefers to emphasize what to teach rather than how to teach it, but we also are interested in helping teachers share their experience of what works in the classroom. We hope this guide helps make the tales of Washington Irving an adventure in reading for you and your students.

The pages cited in this guide refer to the 1999 Core Knowledge edition of The Legend of Sleepy Hollow and Other Tales.

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## Notes to the Teacher

One of the characteristics of Irving's style is his large vocabulary. Although the abridged version of the Core Classics' text reduces substantially the difficulties created by Irving's complicated syntax and obscure word choice, there are still many words that a fourth grader might not know. It was a challenge, therefore, to decide on the words to be studied in conjunction with each story. A number of the more obscure terms have been defined for students in the notes in the course of the text, so I have not included those terms in the vocabulary exercises. I have tried to select those words that are commonly used in modern writing and should become part of a student's working vocabulary. I also tried to select words that were used frequently in one or more of these stories in order to aid in the student's reading comprehension. However, I did not assume that a teacher would necessarily choose to do all four of the stories or do them in a particular order, so each vocabulary lesson is intended to stand alone.

The student should look up definitions and complete Part I of the Vocabulary Exercises before reading the story. Since the sentences in Part II are taken from the text, and since the last five questions in Part III deal with the story's content, these two vocabulary exercises would presumably be most effective if completed after the student has read the story. The page number for each sentence in Part II is indicated at the end of the sentence and can either be deleted or left as a student aid, based on the teacher's judgment. In Part II, if the word's form was changed in the quotation from the story, the appropriate ending is indicated at the end of the blank (but teachers will need to point out the spelling changes that sometimes result). In Part III, students are asked to apply their knowledge of the word so answers will obviously vary widely.

The Reading Comprehension Questions are intended to guide the student through the story. Some ask merely for understanding of the basics of plot and character, but others require somewhat more analysis. The Discussion Questions are intended to be more open-ended and help students see larger issues raised by the stories. The answers given are obviously in much more depth than those expected from students but are intended to give the teacher a helpful resource. Although a brief analysis of the major aspects of each story is given in the introductory essay about Irving's work, a great deal of the analysis of these stories appears in the answers given to Reading Comprehension and Discussion questions. Since the stories may be relatively difficult for some readers, a lot of questions are provided to help bring out all of the key aspects of the story. Teachers, of course, should feel free to select questions which their students will profit from answering and eliminate the rest.

—Lisa Scalett

## **General Activities**

- I. One of the ways to prepare students for reading Washington Irving's short stories is to engage them in a consideration of the long established tradition of storytelling. A discussion of when and why people told tales in the past and a consideration of the role of storytelling in our modern culture could help prepare them to appreciate Irving's work. Since almost all of them probably enjoyed hearing stories when they were children, they should be able to discuss with ease the entertainment value of stories, pointing out what makes them like one story more than another. They should also be aware of the didactic quality of many of the stories they were told when they were children and should be able to provide examples of stories that teach lessons. From this foundation, students can be led to a consideration of how legends often deal with fundamental truths of human experience as well as provide enjoyment. Since Irving uses elements of the supernatural, part of the discussion should focus on the interest provoked by ghosts and other elements of the unusual in stories. A culminating activity might be for students to write stories of their own and tell them to each other.
  
- II. A number of other stories have been written on the Faustian theme of selling one's soul to the devil which is the focus of "The Devil and Tom Walker". Other stories that students might enjoy on this theme are "The Devil in the Belfry" by Edgar Allan Poe, "The Devil in Manuscript" by Nathaniel Hawthorne, "The Mysterious Stranger" by Mark Twain, and "The Devil and Daniel Webster" by Stephen Vincent Benet.
  
- III. John Quidor was an American painter who lived from 1801-1881 and was a personal friend of Washington Irving. He illustrated seventeen scenes from Irving stories—including images of Rip Van Winkle returning home, Tom Walker meeting the devil, and the headless horseman in pursuit of Ichabod Crane. These paintings, like Irving's stories, are an interesting combination of fantasy and

caricature, and are done in a style that manages to echo the style of the stories, being simultaneously eerie and comic. Images of these paintings are available on the Internet (from the National Museum of American Art) and in numerous art textbooks. A study of them would provide a wonderful way to analyze (through comparison and contrast) elements of the stories.

- IV. The visual arts part of the curriculum includes the Stuart portrait of George Washington, which students should have seen before reading “Rip Van Winkle” in order to appreciate the image of Washington that Irving compares to the image of King George that used to hang above the inn door. The focus on the American Revolution in the American history part of the curriculum dovetails nicely with the allusions to the Revolution found in “Rip Van Winkle”. Students will definitely have a better understanding of the details about how things have changed in the twenty years that Rip has been sleeping if they have previously studied the Revolutionary time period.
- V. Irving uses many sayings and phrases (such as “topsy-turvy”), so it makes sense to incorporate the study of the sayings and phrases included in the curriculum for Language Arts. Students might be asked to find an incident from one of the stories to illustrate each of these sayings.

## **The Life and Works of Washington Irving**

Born on April 3, 1783, Washington Irving was one of the members of the first generation who were natives to the newly created United States of America, so it is fitting that he became known as the first writer to see in the new country the potential for a native literature that could rival that of the Old World. The long struggle for liberty, which finally resulted in a new nation, was echoed in the struggle that ensued over the next century to develop a national literature worthy of the new land. The flowering of Irving's talent made him the first to gain the respect of the literary community in Europe while still being faithful to the seeds he found in his native soil.

When peace came at the end of the Revolutionary War as the British troops were evacuating New York and the Continental Army was taking control of the city, Washington Irving's mother is reported to have said, Washington's work is ended, and [my] child shall be named after him. Later, when the boy was six, the story goes that a family servant found herself and the child in a New York shop in the presence of America's first President. The servant presented her young master, saying, "Please, your honor, here's a bairn named after you", and Washington solemnly gave his blessing to the lad who would one day write his biography.

It is truly appropriate that Irving should have been named after and blessed by this famous Founding Father, since eventually he would himself come to be seen as one of the Founding Fathers of American Literature. Irving was the first American to obtain general praise abroad as a literary artist, yet he was always fascinated by the land of his birth and saw in it a source of inspiration. He took elements of the American experience and wove them into wonderful narratives that helped establish the modern genre of the short story. Known as an incomparable prose

stylist, he wrote in a fresh, charming, picturesque manner that made his stories so memorable that they have become an essential part of American folklore.

Irving was born in New York, the youngest of eleven children. His father was William Irving, a self-made Scotsman who prospered in the hardware business after having immigrated to America only twenty years before. As the baby of the family and often rather sickly, Washington Irving became the spoiled pet whose whims were generally indulged, particularly by his beautiful, vivacious mother, if less so by his more strict, Presbyterian father who insisted on daily prayers and Bible readings (provoking Irving to complain, “When I was young, I was led to think that somehow or other every thing that was pleasant was wicked.”). After the age of sixteen, Washington was not required to go to college as his brothers had done, since it was thought that the confined quarters and close association with books would exacerbate his poor health. Instead, he was encouraged to spend much of his time outdoors, and he eagerly embraced this lifestyle, wandering around the city of New York and the surrounding countryside of the Hudson River Valley. It was during these rambles that his imagination was stimulated and his love of adventure sparked, making him eventually unwilling to settle into the more banal routine of most of his contemporaries. His developing enjoyment of the sensational and unusual is evident in his boyhood claim that he “knew every spot where a murder or robbery had been committed, or a ghost seen.”

He was a precocious child, a sensitive, lovable dreamer, who particularly enjoyed music and drama, slipping out in secret at night to attend plays in New York’s John Street Theater. His romantic desire for adventure was enhanced by his dreamy contemplation of all the foreign ships in the New York docks as well as by his various excursions into the Hudson River area, including an extended stay in 1798 in the peaceful regions of Sleepy Hollow and Tarrytown (which later came to figure prominently as the settings for some of his most famous stories). His love of adventure and his active imagination were also encouraged by his discovery of the

magical world of books, especially travel narratives about exciting journeys to exotic lands: “A book of travel is like a coach at the door,” he once said. “I must jump in and take a ride.”

Eventually his father decided that this sort of desultory training was not preparing his son for a useful life, so Washington was encouraged to study the law as his profession. Although there is record of his reading law with various firms over the next eight years and even being admitted to the New York bar in 1806, he never seems to have developed any real attachment to this profession. He much preferred the life an “idler” and entered with enthusiasm into the pleasures of society, enjoying the reputation he developed for being a genial, generous gentleman. Falling head-over-heels in love with Matilda Hoffman, the beautiful young daughter of his employer, Judge Josiah Hoffman, was the one thing that might have made him embrace the conventional career of practicing law. For several years, he applied himself somewhat more assiduously in the hopes of winning her father’s favor and proving his dedication to the woman he hoped would be his wife. However, when Matilda was suddenly stricken with tuberculosis and died at the age of nineteen in 1809, Irving turned his back on the law forever.

Ironically enough, during his period of depression following Matilda’s death, he was finishing up work on a comic tour de force, The History of New York, which would cement his reputation as an accomplished writer and which is still considered one of the masterpieces of American humor. The popularity of this epic work was increased by a clever promotional scheme in which Irving placed ingenious advertisements seeking information about the mysterious disappearance of the supposed author, Deidrich Knickerbocker. The creation of Knickerbocker as the supposed narrator of this ostensibly serious history of New Amsterdam was a stroke of genius, allowing Irving broad latitude in parodying the early Dutch burghers. Although his clever caricatures were offensive to some, most readers in America and especially in Britain were greatly amused by the parody. In fact, Sir Walter Scott told Irving that it was as

good as the work of Jonathan Swift and that he had read it aloud to his entire family, who had laughed until their sides were sore. This tribute meant a great deal to Irving, since it established him as a player on the world stage and acknowledged the possibility of works of true literary value coming out of America.

The character of Deidrich Knickerbocker became so famous that “The Knickerbocker Group” became the appellation given to the first school of American writers, among whom Irving was the leader. It also became such a part of New York folklore that “Knickerbocker” eventually was used to describe any resident of the city who could trace his roots back to a Dutch ancestor. Now, it is even more commonly synonymous with New York, as evidenced by its use in the names of a wide variety of businesses, including the National Basketball Association franchise—the Knicks.

Although Knickerbocker’s History of New York was Irving’s first big success when it was published in 1809, it was not his first venture into writing. He had begun in 1802 with a series of humorous letters under the pseudonym of Jonathan Oldstyle, Gent. to the Morning Chronicle, a newspaper published by one of his brothers. The name “Jonathan” was commonly used to refer to a stock comic character of a country bumpkin and the last name “Oldstyle” was indicative of the conservative, condescending attitude of many who considered themselves “gentlemen”. The juxtaposition of these two names is indicative of the brash, whimsical social commentary contained in these letters, reminiscent of the anonymous letters that Ben Franklin had written under the equally ironic name of Silence Dogood over fifty years before.

Irving’s satiric genius was given full play in 1807-1808 with the publication of twenty editions of a journal entitled Salmagundi, a term referring to a “stew” made up of disparate elements, originally an Italian dish consisting of chopped meat, eggs, anchovies, onions, and oil. The jesting tone of the publication is indicated by the disclaimer in the first issue: “As everyone knows, or ought to know, what a

salamagund is, we shall spare ourselves the trouble of an explanation; besides, we despise trouble as we do everything low and mean, and hold the man who would incur it unnecessarily as an object worthy of our highest pity and contempt.” In these early writings, Irving adopts an amusing persona to provide an audacious parody of the foibles of contemporary society.

Although the witty satire was sometimes rather brash in these early writings, Irving was already learning the lesson that would shape his future works: “Wit, after all, is a mighty tart, pungent ingredient, and much too acid for most stomachs, but honest good humor is the oil and wine of a merry meeting”. Indicative of the essentially amiable nature of his humor is his willingness to mock even his own pretensions, as he does in the first issue of Salmagundi which ironically sets forward the magazine’s intention as: “simply to instruct the young, reform the old, correct the town, and castigate the age,...interfering in all matters of either a public or private nature.” William Cullen Bryant summed up Irving’s character and contributions by saying: “His was not a nature to pry for faults, or disabuse the world of good-natured mistakes; he looked for virtue, love, and truth among men, and thanked God that he found them in such large measure. If there are touches of satire in his writings, he is the best natured and most amiable of satirists—amiable beyond Horace; and in his irony—for there is a vein of playful irony running through many of his works—there is no tinge of bitterness.”

The success of The History of New York made Irving a minor celebrity, and he greatly enjoyed being toasted by the same society that he had skewered. It did not, however, bring him any real financial remuneration since it was difficult in those days for writers to earn much from sales of their works. A career as a writer was also problematic since Irving found that he could only write when the mood was on him—making the short stories and sketches which often could be completed in a single sitting the ideal form for his talent—and thus suffered throughout his life through long periods in which he produced little work. As a result of his problems with earning his own living, his brothers, who apparently adored and pampered him almost as much as

their mother, made him an essentially inactive partner in the family hardware business in 1810. For the next few years he traveled extensively up and down the East Coast, ostensibly tending to business, but basically just living up to his reputation as a good-spirited man of leisure. During the war of 1812, incensed by the burning of the White House in 1814, he served with the rank of Colonel as a governor's aide and military secretary on the Canadian frontier, but he never actually fought in any battles.

In 1815 Irving sailed for England to help take care of the family import business (now based in Liverpool) because his brother Peter had fallen ill. Although he did his duty and pitched in, Irving was relieved when his brother regained his health. He could then spend most of his time traveling around England, reawakening his love for the culture of Europe that had first been sparked by the Grand Tour of Europe that he had taken eleven years before. Worried by his poor health, Irving's brothers had financed a trip abroad in 1804 that had given him the chance to live for four months in Paris and then in London, meet a number of distinguished artists and writers, and even be captured by pirates while the ship was en route to Sicily. This two-year tour was incredibly stimulating intellectually and imaginatively, as well as salubrious physically, and gave birth to Irving's life-long romance with the traditions of the Old World. In his travels then as well as his return trip in 1815, Irving took extensive notes in his journals in which he developed his eye for picturesque details and his ear for graceful prose.

This happy, relaxed period of discovering his own talents, exploring the world, and forming many warm friendships on both continents came to an end with the failure of the family business in 1818. Without the financial support of his family for the first time, he became severely anxious about making a living and decided to apply himself seriously to the task of commercially successful literary publication. Taking on the persona this time of a genial, self-effacing traveler—much like himself—Irving wrote a series of short, descriptive essays focusing on the charm and quaintness of English scenery and traditions. The result was The Sketchbook of Geoffrey Crayon, Esq.,

which, when it was put out by a British publisher in 1820, established his place as a man of letters with an international reputation. Surprised himself by his new-found fame, Irving joked that the world was shocked to find a native American with a feather in his hand instead of on his head.

Certainly most British readers had never expected an American to be capable of such deft characterization and evocative description, but more than anything they were surprised by Irving's beautiful, polished prose. It was his eloquence as a writer that truly made him stand out; his fresh insights and gentle satire were expressed with a delicacy and exquisite modulation that may have seemed natural and easy but was, in fact, achieved through numerous careful revisions. The simple elegance and fluent grace of the style of The Sketchbook was so esteemed that the book was actually used as the first reader for students of the English language all over the world for almost the next one hundred years. To some, like Ralph Waldo Emerson, Irving was "only a word-catcher" whose lack of philosophical depth was frustrating, but for most readers the leisurely pace, rich atmosphere, and gentle humor of his reminiscences created a distinctive voice that made his work very appealing. What Irving praised in the writing of Oliver Goldsmith—the "whimsical, yet amiable views of human life and nature; the unforced humor, blending so happily with good feeling and good sense, and singularly dashed at times with a pleasing melancholy"—could well have been said of his own work. In fact, Irving made clear his own priorities as a writer when he once said, "I have preferred addressing myself to the feeling and fancy of the reader more than to his judgment...I have attempted no lofty theme, nor sought to look wise and learned."

Although only four of the thirty-four literary sketches in The Sketchbook are about America, the work was enormously popular in the New World as well as the Old. Irving may have revered Europe and its past, but he also felt the need to find traditions and legends that would reflect the emerging American culture. Thus he took classic German folk stories and transposed them to the Hudson River Valley, making the

characters and setting uniquely American in the process. In his 1925 biography of Washington Irving, George Hellman noted that “Irving’s role, as a man, as a writer, as statesman, was to meliorate, to reconcile, to give pleasure, to refine.” Therefore, Irving, who felt the old and new worlds should know each other better and like one another more, adapted the traditions of Europe to fill the cultural vacuum of his homeland. As Hellman goes on to say, “It was Irving, who through his legends and his descriptions developed in his countrymen local sentiment and pride in the natural grandeur of their land.” Although most of The Sketchbook consists of narrative essays, of the six that can be classified as short stories, two are recognized as enduring American classics. “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow” and “Rip Van Winkle” have become fundamental American folktales, whose central characters are as familiar a part of the American heritage as cultural icons such as Pocahontas or Paul Bunyon.

The success of The Sketchbook went beyond Irving’s wildest dreams and established him as an international celebrity. The critic Sydney Smith in 1820 had famously decried the lack of American culture when he declared: “During the thirty or forty years of their independence they have done absolutely nothing for the sciences, for the arts, for literature...In the four quarters of the globe, who reads an American book? or goes to an American play? or looks at an American picture of statue?” Yet even as he was asking these questions, London was eagerly devouring Washington Irving’s seminal work. Although he enjoyed that fame for the rest of his life, he would never again achieve such popular acclaim or critical success. The Sketchbook was followed up by two more miscellaneous collections of studies and stories, Bracebridge Hall in 1822 and Tales of a Traveller in 1824. Even though the third in this series of sketch books contains “The Devil and Tom Walker” and several other excellent stories, it was received so poorly that Irving basically abandoned fiction altogether and turned his attention entirely to history and biography in his subsequent works.

During the next few years, Irving became enchanted with Spanish history and culture. While living in Madrid and Seville from 1826-1829, he researched and wrote a series

of histories (Life and Voyages of Columbus, Voyages and Discoveries of the Companions of Columbus, and Chronicle of the Conquest of Granada), as well as a charmingly romantic series of sketches entitled Alhambra, which was inspired by the architecture and landscape of a Moorish palace in Granada. In 1829, Irving moved back to London to accept a post as secretary of Legation; although he had to be urged by friends to take this position, he turned out to enjoy the job. His amiable nature made him successful as a diplomat, and his wide circle of social acquaintances proved helpful in negotiating trade agreements with England. Best of all, he discovered that the post still allowed him freedom to travel and write.

When he had sailed to England in 1815, Irving had expected to be gone from home only a few months, but he ended up remaining abroad for seventeen years. By the time he returned to America in 1832, his literary reputation was firmly established, and he was honored and even beloved by his countrymen. The persona he had taken on in his sketches, that of the amiable narrator—sauntering through his tales, chuckling as he goes and chatting jovially with characters and readers—became the persona he assumed for the rest of his life. Greatly impressed by the changes that had taken place in his absence, Irving began to travel extensively in the United States and its territories, even venturing as far as the wild Pawnee country in Oklahoma and Arkansas accompanied by the Commissioner of Indian Affairs Henry Ellsworth. His interest in the west led him to produce several works, including A Tour of the Prairies (an account of his travels), Astoria (the history of John Jacob Astor and the fur trade), and Adventures of Captain Bonneville, U.S.A. (the tale of a western explorer).

During this period, home base became a house called “Sunnyside” which he purchased in 1835. This property on the Hudson River, north of New York City, was the perfect place for Irving to relax from his travels and enjoy his large extended family as well as his constant stream of visitors. Irving had never married, but he was such a congenial companion that he never wanted for company at his rural estate. The lovely old farm with its charming stone cottage was originally the estate of the Van Tassels and clearly

served as the inspiration for the old Dutch farm and house described in such glowing terms of comfort and abundance in “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow.” Sunnyside became almost as famous and popular as its owner, and it remains a popular tourist site to this day.

The only thing that could tempt Irving to leave the peaceful beauty and secluded pleasures of Sunnyside was his appointment by Daniel Webster (then Secretary of State under President John Tyler) to the post of Minister to Spain. Because of his incredible popularity Irving had been urged to accept nominations to run for Mayor of New York and for a seat in Congress in the preceding years, but previously, he had always declined such forays into public life. However, the position of Minister was one he felt he could not turn down. He served with distinction for four years in Madrid before returning in 1846 to embrace once more the quiet country life of Sunnyside.

During the last thirteen years of his life, his most significant literary achievement was the biography of his namesake, the Life of George Washington, a massive undertaking in which he managed to humanize the larger-than-life first President. George Washington had been a seminal figure, not only in the life of Washington Irving, but in the life of his entire generation who had inherited the legacy won by the heroes of the Revolutionary War, but who didn't quite know how to define themselves or the new country that had been created. Irving, however, as a result of his commitment to finding an identity for himself and for America, had managed to help establish a lasting literary tradition, becoming, as William Makepeace Thackeray described him, “the first ambassador sent by the new world of letters to the old.”

The last years of Irving's life were passed in the serene, happy environment of Sunnyside. When he died in 1859 of a heart attack after a period of declining health, he was buried on a little elevation overlooking Sleepy Hollow and with a magnificent view of the Hudson River Valley that his writings had helped to memorialize. He

continued to write until the end—the last of the five volumes of his biography of Washington was published only months before his death—but he also reveled in playing the role he had created through many of his fictional narrators—the relaxed, meditative, amused and amusing, antiquarian storyteller. A description of Irving found in a Harper's Magazine of the day suggests how much beloved he was as a public figure: “He seemed, indeed, to have stepped out of his own books; and the cordial grace and humor of his address, if he stopped for a passing chat, were delightfully characteristic. He was then our most famous man of letters, but he was simply free from all self-consciousness and assumption and dogmatism.” Comfortable with himself and modestly happy with what he had accomplished, Irving's literary aspirations were as unpretentious as he: “If, however, I can by lucky chance, in these days of evil, rub out one wrinkle from the brow of care, or beguile the heavy heart of one moment of sadness; if I can, now and then, penetrate the gathering film of misanthropy, prompt a benevolent view of human nature, and make my reader more in good-humor with his fellow-beings and himself—surely, surely, I shall not then have written entirely in vain.”

Although Irving is not ranked among the greatest of American authors because of the limited scope of his works, he surely did not write in vain; his sketches have indeed given great enjoyment to generations of readers. In addition, his contributions to the development of American literature—and especially to the genre of short fiction that he helped to establish as a respectable artistic form—are truly noteworthy. Up until that time, almost all works written in the new land had been utilitarian and moralistic; literature as such did not really exist. Irving stripped his writing of these didactic qualities and added a humor and lightness of touch, which made reading his work its own reward. The anecdotal, relaxed style—often imitated for its gracefulness—and the warm, gentle nostalgic tone of his narratives are what he is most known for. However, he was also a keen observer of manners and morals whose descriptions of scenery—rich in sensory details—and wonderfully telling physical caricatures—much admired and imitated by Dickens, among others—made the settings and characters of

his stories come to life. His focus on definite localities was the beginning of the local color tradition and showed the world the potential of American materials. The enduring impact of the characters he created is testament to his ability to portray unique individuals—not just types or symbols—to whom readers could relate. His skill in shifting between real and unreal and trademark synthesis of the believable and marvelous gave his stories a mythic quality that has made them a core element of the American cultural heritage.

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## General Introduction to the Core Classic Text

*“I fancy much of what I value myself upon in writing, escapes the observation of the great mass of my readers, who are intent more upon the story than the way in which it is told. For my part, I consider a story merely as a frame on which to stretch my materials. It is the play of thought, and sentiment, and language; the weaving in of characters lightly, yet expressively, delineated; the familiar and faithful exhibition of scenes in common life; and the half-concealed vein of humor that is often playing through the whole;--these are among what I aim at.”*

—Washington Irving

As a writer and as a person, Washington Irving’s aim was always to please, and the stories included in the Core Classic text should indeed be enjoyable to children. They are all ghost stories and thus should appeal to the students’ imagination and desire for thrills, but the stories are more amusing and charming than horrifying. In *Bracebridge Hall* Irving said, “I have always been of the opinion that much good might be done by keeping mankind in good humor with one another,” and the fact that he liked to “see the world in as pleasant a light as circumstance will permit” makes his stories a pleasant experience to read. The narrative voice guides the reader every step of the way, making the stories easy for a child to follow. Each story begins by establishing the time and place and then moves to a depiction of the persons involved—setting up their appearance, the peculiarities of their characters, their manner of life and their relationships. Like a movie camera zooming in, Irving creates a background and atmosphere, often using some local legend as an antecedent, before plunging in to focus on one particular incident. Like most fables, Irving’s stories are told to point to a moral but he manages to make the lesson seem like just an excuse to tell a good tale. He consciously avoids the didactic tone typical of most literature of his day; he includes a moral but then consciously “disguised it as much as possible by sweets and spices, so that while the simple reader is listening with open mouth to a ghost or love story, he may have a bolus of sound morality popped down his throat, and be never the wiser for the fraud.” As a result, readers then and now have found his stories not only palatable, but deliciously delightful.

The Core Classic abridged version of four stories by Washington Irving, in the interest of simplifying and thus making the stories more accessible, basically eliminates one of the distinguishing features of Irving's tales, which is the role of the storyteller.

Although the voice of the narrator is still noticeable in this version, in the original stories the unique perspective given by the narrator is an integral aspect of the reader's understanding of the tale. As in the personal essay from which these stories evolved, in Irving's tales the reader is always conscious of the writer's personality and how that is shaping the view received. The three stories in the Core Class that are set in America were in their original versions all supposedly found among the papers of Deidrich Knickerbocker. The preparatory and concluding remarks in the original version of "Rip Van Winkle" play an especially important role in establishing the "factual" nature of the narrative. This framing device plays an essential role in suggesting the multiple levels of meaning in the story.

Although Irving sometimes claimed that his tales were intended purely for entertainment, deeper truths do indeed run through his work. His most common theme is the mutability of life. His fascination with change and his nostalgia for the past are typical of nineteenth century Romanticism, as are his interest in the individual and distrust of civilization and its constraints. Like most Romantics, Irving had a deep love for the beauties of the natural landscape and a faith in intuition over logic and reasoning. His interest in the supernatural suggests his belief in the possibility of discovering truths through imagination. Although in "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" and "The Specter Bridegroom" the supernatural events are given logical explanations, in "Rip Van Winkle" and "The Devil and Tom Walker" the reader must accept the miraculous as possible. The extent to which students can see the multiple layers of meaning in all of the stories will be determined by their maturity and ability to understand Irving's use of irony. Although the stories can be enjoyed if read purely for their plot, much is gained by an awareness of Irving's gently satirical sense of humor.

"The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" is one of Irving's most popular stories because of the engagingly drawn central character. Ichabod Crane is a memorable comic figure; despite his supposedly superior education, he is a naive dreamer with a penchant for swallowing everything whole—superstitions as well as food. Although he is typically American in his longing for status and his focus on material possessions as a measure of worth, he is not the self-made, wilderness hero but more the effete fool. His dreams of making his fortune on the frontier are just dreams; the images of abundance that figure so prominently in the narrative are in vivid contrast with the meagerness of Ichabod's spirit as well as his body. His large imagination is a way of camouflaging his narrow mind, and this "city slicker" gets his comeuppance at the end of the story from Brom Bones, the daring, practical, "good ol'" country boy. Brom, who is perceived as all brawn and no brains, actually outwits this Yankee intruder with his Puritan superstitions and New England greed, chasing off Ichabod and winning the prize of Katrina Van Tassel for himself. "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" was based

on a German folktale recorded by Karl Musaus, but it was in Irving's decision to give the story a uniquely American flavor through its characters and setting that made it into such a classic.

“Rip Van Winkle” is perhaps Irving's most famous work; there are few people who haven't heard of the title character and his twenty-year sleep. The sleep motif is one that has been popular in folk and fairy tales throughout history. Probably the earliest antecedent appears in Diogenes Laertius, Epimenides (c.200) in which Epimenides is sent by his father to look for sheep. After lying down in a cave and falling asleep for fifty-seven years, he wakes up and, thinking he had only had a short nap, begins looking for the sheep. Irving's story so closely parallels a German version of this enduring legend that he was accused by some of plagiarism. The tale of Peter Klaus, which appeared in almost every collection of German folk stories, including the Brothers Grimm tales published in 1812, has the goatherd entering the cave to find a group of knightly bowlers, for whom he plays pinsetter. Peter Klaus then drinks wine and falls asleep, and when he wakes up twenty years later, he has no goats and no dog, but he does have a foot-long beard. Irving acknowledged that he had borrowed heavily from this version in writing his story, but his defense was that Shakespeare and other masters of the literary tradition had always treated folktales and legends as common property, which it was up to the author to localize and personalize. By setting the story in the Catskill Mountains, focusing on the time period of the Revolutionary War, and creating compelling characters, Irving clearly created a uniquely American story. Irving once said, “When I first wrote the “Legend of Rip Van Winkle” my thoughts had been for some time turned towards giving a color of romance and tradition to interesting points of our national scenery, which is so generally deficient in our country.”

Although Irving may only have intended to give a bit of local color to the story, the mythic quality of the tale he created is so powerful that it has made “Rip Van Winkle” not only an enduring story but also one that has been interpreted in many ways over the past two

centuries. Certainly the plot line follows the basic pattern seen in The Odyssey and numerous other classic myths of a departure, dangerous journey (complete with elements of the supernatural), and return (complete with the recognition scene). Although Rip's adventure isn't exactly heroic and he doesn't bring a "boon" which his society needs, his experience does make him question who he is, evoking the theme of identity and the fear of time passing and finding ourselves in a world we never made.

This was clearly an issue much on the mind of Irving personally since he too was often considered a careerless dreamer like Rip and he feared returning from Europe to a changed America. But it was also an issue on the minds of all Americans as the young country tried to find its identity. The critic Philip Young has suggested that Rip provided for many people the classic image of Americans: "likeable enough, up to a point and at times, but essentially immature, self-centered, careless, and above all—and perhaps dangerously—innocent." The innocent, childlike Rip is presented as the proverbial "good old boy"—a kid with a dog who escapes from the responsibility of growing up by retreating to nature, companions, and beer. Much like Huck Finn, Rip refuses to be civilized, but his story ends happily since upon his return he is able to be idle with impunity and he even gains some degree of fame from his adventure.

Like the new country which had rebelled against the constricting authority of England, Rip rebels against the demands placed upon him by his wife and it is only after her death that he escapes the tyranny of her "petticoat government." The figure of Dame Van Winkle has no parallel in the German folktale, but is clearly central to Rip's story. Irving has sometimes been accused of misogyny because she is presented as such an unappealing figure. Her death is a relief to Rip and a joke to the reader. With no true personality or even a first name, she is seen as merely the enemy, constantly reminding Rip of what he "ought" to do. Although Dame Van Winkle has often been interpreted as an image for Mother England whose unreasonable demands were rejected by America, other critics see the story in deeper psychological terms as representative of the universal human revolt against the superego and its imperatives. Clearly Irving is picking up on the Romantic

distrust of the impulse to domesticate, depicting the lazy, kindly, daydreaming Rip as better off without the constrictions of society and specifically the demands of marriage. Interestingly, in the character of Rip, Irving provides a vivid counterpoint to the Franklinesque image of the self-made man engrossed in lucrative activity. Instead of building a fortune from nothing, Rip is so lacking in ambition that he has even lost what he inherited, and his long sleep is in direct contrast with the famous code of “early to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise” that Franklin presented as the key to success. Rip’s refusal to accept responsibility and desire to escape to an Edenic past clearly resonated with Americans of Irving’s generation who were struggling with creating a new country, but the dream of remaining a child who never has to face the adult world is one that continues to appeal to most people even today.

Although not of the same cultural significance as “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow” or “Rip Van Winkle,” “The Specter Bridegroom” has its own place as an engaging story. The main appeal lies in the twist that turns the whole story into a joke at the end, undercutting the supernatural elements with the revelation that the ghost of the dead fiancé is in fact a living man. Irving’s light-hearted tone when he announces this (“for in truth, as you must have known all the while, he was no goblin”) is consistent with the rather whimsical quality of much of this love story. The Baron’s daughter, whose courtship by the specter forms the basic plot of the story, is never even given a first name. It is instead the pompous but basically lovable Baron and the silly maiden aunts who have been given the charge of raising his daughter on whom Irving focuses the most attention. Although this story is set in Germany rather than America, it too deals with the theme of change as the young Cavalier finds an ingenious way to rescue the girl from the clutches of the quaint old castle and values of the hopelessly out-of-date Baron and his sisters.

Although the supernatural elements in “The Devil and Tom Walker” are not explained away as they are in “The Specter Bridegroom,” this story also has a whimsical tone that undercuts the potentially harrowing nature of its plot and the seriousness of its themes. Irving creates amazingly vivid characters in the miserly Tom Walker and his shrewish wife

(who makes Dame Van Winkle look tame by comparison, thus lending more credence to the charges of misogyny leveled against Irving by some critics), but the delight with which he seems to linger over amusing details of their lives makes it difficult to take either one seriously. Using the basic Faustian notion of the horrific cost of selling one's soul to the devil, Irving manages to create a rather amusing cautionary tale. Although Irving was not a reformer, he was not blind to social and economic abuses and this story provides a scathing satire of colonial society. Students who are not familiar with the Puritan community may need to be given some background before they can appreciate Irving's commentary.

**Reading Comprehension Questions.**  
**“The Legend of Sleepy Hollow”**

1. How did Tarry Town get its name? How did Sleepy Hollow get its name?
2. What mood does the setting of this story create?
3. Who do the villagers believe the headless horseman is? How did he lose his head?
4. What do the villagers think he is doing out at night? Why is he said to be in such a hurry?
5. What is Ichabod Crane’s job? What other job did he do to earn a little more money?
6. Where does Ichabod Crane live? Why does he need to be able to have all of his belongings in a small bundle?
7. What are two things that Ichabod would do to make himself useful to the farmers? How does he help the wives?
8. Why do the women in the countryside think he is an important person? How do the mothers treat him as a result? How do the younger girls respond to him?
9. What subject does Ichabod like to read about? What has increased his interest in this subject?
10. What would happen to Ichabod when he would walk home at night after spending the afternoon reading? How would he handle that?
11. What are the two main things that Katrina Van Tassel is known for? What different things does she wear that demonstrate each of these?

12. The author, Washington Irving says, “When he entered the house, the conquest of his heart was complete.” What does the rest of that paragraph on page 18 tell us about why Ichabod liked Katrina?
13. What two things make it difficult for Ichabod to fulfill his goal of marrying Katrina?
14. Why would it have been crazy for Ichabod to be open about his feelings for Katrina? What gives Ichabod an excuse to visit Katrina at her house?
15. What approach does Brom Bones (Brom Van Brunt) want to take when he discovers Ichabod is interested in Katrina? Why can't he do that?
16. What are two things Brom Bones does to get back at Ichabod for trying to steal Katrina?
17. Ichabod takes great care in his appearance as he gets ready for the party at Baltus Van Tassel's. What is funny about the horse he is riding as he starts off like a “knight in quest of adventures”?
18. How is Brom Bone's horse, Daredevil, similar to him in its appearance and actions?
19. What explanation is given for why there are more ghost stories in a long-settled village?
20. What story is told about Brouwer's encounter with the headless horseman?
21. What story does Brom Bones tell about his encounter with the headless horseman?
22. What mood is Ichabod in when he leaves Katrina's house that night? What evidence is there of his mood? What speculation does the author make as to what happened?
23. What logical explanation is there for three of the things Ichabod sees or hears when he is near the old, large tree?

24. What happens when Ichabod tries to get across the bridge?
25. When Ichabod sees something huge and black by the brook, why doesn't he turn and run away? What two things does he do instead?
26. What happens when Ichabod slows down or speeds up in an attempt to get away from the dark horse and its rider? What does Ichabod see that makes him so terrified that he sends his horse into full flight?
27. Instead of following the road to Sleepy Hollow, where does Gunpowder go? What makes it even harder for Ichabod to hold onto his run-away horse?
28. What four traces of the chase do the searchers find the next day?
29. When news of Ichabod is reported years later, what do we learn about why he left?
30. What makes it seem that Brom Bones knew something about what happened that night?
31. What did the people of the town believe about what happened that night?

## **Discussion Questions**

### **“Legend of Sleepy Hollow”**

1. Compare the school where Ichabod Crane taught with the school you go to. How is your school similar to and different from Ichabod’s school?
2. Contrast Ichabod Crane and Brom Bones. How are they different in physical appearance? How are their actions different? What would have made Katrina attracted to each of them?
3. What evidence is there that Ichabod Crane had an active imagination?
4. What role do Katrina’s parents play in her life? What is her father’s attitude toward his wealth? What is his attitude toward his daughter? What is Katrina’s mother’s attitude toward her?
5. What does the illustration on page 27 show about Ichabod? What other characters are pictured? How can you tell?

## Activities: “Legend of Sleepy Hollow”

1. Find a picture of a crane. What are three ways in which Ichabod Crane’s appearance is similar to that of a crane.
2. Imagine that years after this story takes place, Brom Bones’ grandchildren want to know why he laughs when they mention this tale. Have Brom Bones retell the story from HIS point of view to his grandchildren.
3. Compare the party that Ichabod Crane attends at the Van Tassel’s to a party that people might go to in our times. How would the activities and parties then and now have been similar and different?
4. Design a map of Tarry Town, using your own imagination as well as facts from the story.
5. Draw a charcoal sketch of the bridge scene or a portrait of Icabod or Brom Bones. If it’s around Halloween, these would make good classroom decorations.
6. Divide the tale into three parts, beginning, middle, and end and have the class dramatize their section. This might be a good idea for an afternoon of impromptu drams.
7. Have a brainstorming session on how the plot could be altered.

## **Answers to Reading Comprehension Questions “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow”**

1. How did Tarry Town get its name? How did Sleepy Hollow get its name?

The housewives whose husbands tended to linger about the village tavern gave Tarry Town its name. Sleepy Hollow was called that because it was so quiet and tranquil that it lulled people to sleep. (p.1-2)

2. What mood does the setting of this story create?

The area is said to have a “drowsy, dreamy influence” on people, which seems to make them more susceptible to fantasies associated with the night. Many of the inhabitants accepted the idea that the place was bewitched and believed in the local stories about various supernatural happenings. Although they accept these wild superstitions, they do not seem to be unduly frightened but instead think of these strange visions and sounds as natural. In general, the area seems to have a very laid-back, comfortable atmosphere, which allows the story to describe supernatural events without having them seem terrifying. (p.2-4)

3. Who do the villagers believe the headless horseman is? How did he lose his head?

He is supposed to be the ghost of a Hessian soldier who had his head blown off by a cannonball in the Revolutionary War. (p.3-4)

4. What do the villagers think he is doing out at night? Why is he said to be in such a hurry?

He is believed to be riding back to the scene of a battle in search of his head, but (since he is a ghost who can be free to wander only at night) he must hurry to get back to the churchyard where he is buried before daybreak. (p.4)

5. What is Ichabod Crane’s job? What other job did he do to earn a little more money?

Ichabod is the schoolmaster who instructs the children in the area in the basic skills of reading, writing, and arithmetic. He also teaches singing lessons (mostly the singing of church hymns apparently) to individuals for a separate fee. (p.4 and p.7)

6. Where does Ichabod Crane live? Why does he need to be able to have all of his belongings in a small bundle?

It was customary for the local schoolmaster to live in the houses of the farmers whose children attended the school. By providing room and board, the members of the community did not have to pay as much money in salary to itinerant schoolteachers. It was also thought to make the schoolmaster more a part of the community. Since he would live only a week at a time at each place (to lessen the burden on the family), he could only have a few possessions so that he could easily carry them with him as he moved from place to place.

7. What are two things that Ichabod would do to make himself useful to the farmers? How does he help the wives?

Because the local people thought of education as a luxury, they tended to resent the imposition of having to provide room and board in addition to a salary for the schoolmaster. Schoolmasters had the reputation for being lazy since the farmers thought the work of teaching school was quite easy in comparison to the physical labor they had to perform. Thus, Ichabod did whatever he could to keep on the good side of the families with whom he stayed. To win the favor of farmers who thought of him as a burden, Ichabod would do any of the light work around the farm such as caring for livestock or other chores. He also helped the wives with childcare. (p.7)

8. Why do the women in the countryside think he is an important person? How do the mothers treat him as a result? How do the younger girls respond to him?

Schoolmasters were generally more educated than anyone else other than the parson in a rural area like this. Therefore, they were thought to be superior in their tastes and habits and it was considered a privilege to associate with such a learned person. The mothers, therefore, treated him to their finest food and nicest china in an attempt to show him their own refinement. Ichabod spent a great deal of time with the girls, impressing them (and making the boys jealous) with his “superior elegance and way of talking” (p.11).

9. What subject does Ichabod like to read about? What has increased his interest in this subject?

He likes to read about ghosts and spirits. He considered himself a great authority on Cotton Mather’s History of New England Witchcraft (one of the few books he had read all the way through), and believed firmly (as Mather did) that witches indeed did exist. Living in this “spellbound region” had only enhanced his interest in “dreadful tales” (p.11). Irving clearly identifies Ichabod as a Yankee by making him a devotee of this famous Puritan minister.

10. What would happen to Ichabod when he would walk home at night after spending the afternoon reading? How would he handle that?

Because he would read until dusk, he would have to walk in the dark toward the house in which he was currently staying (and since that house changed frequently, the paths were always unfamiliar to him because they were always different) with his mind filled with wild thoughts provoked by his readings. As a result, he would be frightened by almost everything he heard or saw and he imagined himself surrounded by unknown dangers. To stop thinking these wild thoughts and to drive away whatever evil spirits were about, he would sing psalms. (p.11 and p.13)

11. What are the two main things that Katrina Van Tassel is known for? What different things does she wear that demonstrate each of these?

She is known for her beauty and the fortune she will inherit from her prosperous father. Her clothes show that she is a flirt who is proud of her appearance; her short petticoat which displayed “the prettiest foot and ankle”(p.15) would have been considered fairly racy for the time. Her wealth is indicated by the pure gold jewelry she wears, brought over from Holland by an ancestor. (p.14-15)

12. The author, Washington Irving says, “When he entered the house, the conquest of his heart was complete.” What does the rest of that paragraph on page 18 tell us about why Ichabod liked Katrina?

It is clearly Katrina’s wealth that most entices Ichabod. It is suggested that he only becomes interested in her “after he had visited her in her father’s mansion” (p.15) because it is there that he sees evidence of just how prosperous her father is. It is not her personal charms that have won him over; instead, “his heart yearned after the damsel who was to inherit these fields” (p.17). The paragraph referred to in the question describes the various furnishings of the house, which would all have been considered quite luxurious for the time. The next paragraph restates this theme again by beginning, “From the moment Ichabod laid eyes upon these things his peace of mind was at an end” (p.19). His desire to gain her affections arises mostly from the fact that she is the daughter of Van Tassel and will thus inherit this remarkably abundant lifestyle.

13. What two things make it difficult for Ichabod to fulfill his goal of marrying Katrina?

Katrina is described as a “coquette” who is a “maze of whims” (p.19), so it is difficult to win a commitment from her to give her heart to any one man. She also has a “host of rustic admirers” (p.19) who will join together to defeat any competitor who seems to be gaining an advantage on the others in the contest to win her. Thus, Ichabod is said (rather ironically, to be sure) to have more difficulties to face than a “knight of

old, who seldom had anything but giants, sorcerers, fiery dragons, and other easily conquered adversaries to contend with” (p.19).

14. Why would it have been crazy for Ichabod to be open about his feelings for Katrina? What gives Ichabod an excuse to visit Katrina at her house?

One of Katrina’s admirers is Brom Van Brunt, who is powerfully built, handsome, and full of high spirits. Most of the other young men did not even think about going up against such a strong, confident competitor. They did not dare “cross a lion in his affections” and would not even try to approach Katrina when Brom was around. Ichabod, however, is able to make frequent visits to her house without openly courting her because he has been hired to teach her to sing. (p.21)

15. What approach does Brom Bones (Brom Van Brunt) want to take when he discovers Ichabod is interested in Katrina? Why can’t he do that?

Brom is willing to do battle for his ladylove and let the better man (in physical terms) win. He has even been heard to utter threats about what he would do to the schoolmaster in a physical competition. Ichabod, however, realizing he has no chance in this sort of “open warfare,” does not give Brom any opportunity to get into a fight with him. (p.22)

16. What are two things Brom Bones does to get back at Ichabod for trying to steal Katrina?

Brom resorts to playing practical jokes on Ichabod in an attempt to humiliate him. He messes up the schoolhouse and stops up the chimney while Ichabod is teaching singing. But the worst thing he does is to make fun of Ichabod in front of Katrina. (p.22-23)

17. Ichabod takes great care in his appearance as he gets ready for the party at Baltus Van Tassel’s. What is funny about the horse he is riding as he starts off like a “knight in quest of adventures”?

Although he spends half an hour trying to make himself look good, putting on his best suit and combing his hair, Ichabod is forced to borrow a horse on which to ride to the party. Although Gunpowder may once have had a “spark” in him which gave him his name, he is now a “broken-down plow horse” (p.24). With his skinny body, tangled mane, and one eye, this horse is not at all like the steed of a hero in a romantic story. Irving may have intended comparisons with Don Quixote and his horse Rocinante. Certainly this amusing description of Ichabod (with his “knees nearly up to the pommel of the saddle, and his sharp elbows stuck out like grasshoppers’... and as his horse jogged on, his arms flapped like a pair of wings”(p24)) is one of the more memorable passages in the story.

18. How is Brom Bone's horse, Daredevil, similar to him in its appearance and actions?

Brom's horse is described as "a creature, like himself, full of mischief, which no one else could manage" (p.26). The horse is clearly large and powerful and wild. Like Brom, it seems to be an impressive physical specimen, full of high spirits and difficult for an ordinary person to control. The contrast between Brom's steed and Ichabod's is another way of portraying the differences between the two men.

19. What explanation is given for why there are more ghost stories in a long-settled village?

Because many settlements at the time were filled with people who would quickly move on when an opportunity to make their fortune elsewhere presented itself, ghosts would not have had anyone whom they knew when they were alive to visit. In a long-settled community, however, ghosts would have many friends and family still living in the area upon whom they could go calling. (p.29)

20. What story is told about Brouwer's encounter with the headless horseman?

Brouwer was the rare exception in this community—a person who did not believe in ghosts. He, however, was apparently convinced of the reality of the headless horseman at least as a result of his own experience. He was supposedly forced to ride behind the horseman who suddenly turned into a skeleton, which threw him into the brook and then disappeared in a clap of thunder.

21. What story does Brom Bones tell about his encounter with the headless horseman?

Brom tops this story with one in which he seems to have gotten the better of the ghost. Rather than being intimidated when he encounters the "midnight trooper" (p.31), he brazenly challenges the specter to a race. He even claims that he and Daredevil would have beaten the headless horseman whose "rushing speed" had earlier been described as a "midnight blast" (p.3) if the Hessian had not vanished as they approached the end of the race.

22. What mood is Ichabod in when he leaves Katrina's house that night? What evidence is there of his mood? What speculation does the author make as to what happened?

Clearly the time spent telling ghost tales, which "sank deep in the mind of Ichabod" have had their usual effect of heightening his imagination. Although he had happily spent most of the evening with the group of folks listening to and telling tales (which he found attractive enough to have left Katrina after only one dance), he had stayed after the party, confident that he would have a romantic "tête-à-tête" with Katrina.

Irving then succinctly tells us “Something, however, must have gone wrong, for he soon came out, quite desolate”(p.31). Irving goes on to ask, “Was the girl’s encouragement of him a mere sham to win her conquest of his rival?”(p.32). Although Irving answers his own question, “Heaven only knows!”(p.32), our assumption is that it is a rhetorical question and that Ichabod has indeed been disappointed in his attempt to win Katrina for she had never seriously been interested in him. The evidence of the frustration of his hopes comes from the fact that he takes no notice of the “scene of rural wealth on which he had so often gloated”(p.32).

23. What logical explanation is there for two of the things Ichabod sees or hears when he is near the old, large tree?

Local superstitions abound about this tree where Major Andre was taken captive (see note on p.29), so when Ichabod approaches it his imagination goes wild. Yet each thing he hears or sees, he himself realizes is nothing supernatural. The whistle he thinks he hears answered is just a blast of wind in the branches. The white he sees hanging in the tree (which presumably calls to mind the stories he heard that evening of a woman in white who haunted the region) turns out to be a place where the tree has been stripped of its bark by lightning. When he hears a groan he becomes very frightened, but then he decides it was just caused by branches rubbing against each other in the breeze. In this passage Irving seems to be continuing the theme of Ichabod’s overactive imagination and how it creates perils for him that do not actually exist.

24. What happens when Ichabod tries to get across the bridge?

Ichabod is clearly terrified since the bridge which leads into the swamp is encompassed by the “cavernous gloom” of large trees “matted thick with wild grape vines”(p.35). As a result, “his heart began to thump”(p.35) and he expresses his anxiety by kicking his horse repeatedly. Instead of dashing quickly across the bridge as he had hoped, the horse freaks and “ran broadside against the fence”(p.35). Jerking the reins, kicking with his other foot, and using his whip only cause the poor horse first to plunge into a “thicket of brambles and bushes” on the opposite side of the road and then come to a dead stop by the bridge “with a suddenness that nearly sent his rider sprawling over his head”(p.35).

25. When Ichabod sees something huge and black by the brook, why doesn’t he turn and run away? What two things does he do instead?

Ichabod is so terrified by this “misshapen,” “towering” figure that looks like “some gigantic monster ready to spring upon the traveller” that his “hair rose upon his head with terror”(p.35). However, realizing that it was too late to try to escape (especially a ghost “which could ride upon the wings of the wind”(p.35)), he gathers up the courage

to twice ask, “Who are you?”(p.36). When he receives no reply, he “beat the sides of Gunpowder, and shutting his eyes, began singing a psalm with fervor”(p.36).

26. What happens when Ichabod slows down or speeds up in an attempt to get away from the dark horse and its rider? What does Ichabod see that makes him so terrified that he sends his horse into full flight?

Whenever Ichabod either slows down or speeds up, the phantom keeps pace. This silence of the strange figure in the dark is most ominous; when Ichabod finally catches a full view of the horseman silhouetted against the sky and realizes that he is headless, “his terror rose to desperation”(p.37).

27. Instead of following the road to Sleepy Hollow, where does Gunpowder go? What makes it even harder for Ichabod to hold onto his run-away horse?

Gunpowder takes an opposite turn and heads down the road, which eventually comes to the famous bridge leading to the church. This is the church, which “seems to have been a favorite haunt of troubled spirits” (p.30) and had been the locus of many of the ghost stories told in the region. That reputation, along with the fact that the area was “thickly shaded by overhanging trees, which cast a gloom even in daytime and caused a fearful darkness at night” (p.30), made it a terrifying place. To heighten Ichabod’s troubles, the girth of the saddle breaks and the saddle falls off; thus, Ichabod is forced to hold on by clinging to the panicked horse’s neck. Amusingly enough, even in the midst of this frenzied flight from a phantom, “the terror of Hans Van Ripper’s anger passed across his mind, for it was his Sunday saddle”(p.38), suggesting the petty thoughts that hold sway over Ichabod’s consciousness. However, Ichabod banishes these thoughts and tries to hold on until they get to the bridge, where he hopes the horseman will disappear as he did in Brom Bones’ story.

28. What four traces of the chase do the searchers find the next day?

The next morning, Gunpowder turns up at his master’s gate, calming eating grass and apparently no worse for the wear. When the schoolmaster does not show up for school, Hans Van Ripper goes in search (although apparently more out of concern for his lost saddle than the lost schoolmaster). They find the saddle, “trampled in the dirt,” and tracks of horses which “deeply dented the road, evidently at furious speed”(p.41). On the bank of the brook over which the bridge crosses, the hat of Ichabod is found near a shattered pumpkin. The body of Ichabod is not discovered.

29. When news of Ichabod is reported years later, what do we learn about why he left?

A farmer runs into Ichabod in New York. He has become a Justice of the Court after years of studying law, serving as a politician, and writing for a newspaper (all occupations which the residents of Sleepy Hollow would probably have been as

suspicious of as they were of being a schoolmaster). He had left because of his fear of the goblin but also his fear of Van Ripper, and the “humiliation at having been suddenly dismissed by Katrina”(p.42) apparently was a factor as well.

30. What makes it seem that Brom Bones knew something about what happened that night?

Whenever the story of Ichabod’s adventure with the headless horseman is told, Brom would “burst into a hearty laugh at the mention of the pumpkin”(p.42). This line is clearly a key twist to the story, since it leads to the logical conclusion that the “phantom” was actually Brom with his cloak pulled up over his head. The “head” which he throws at Ichabod turns out to be merely a pumpkin, but it does the trick of scaring off his rival so that he can marry Katrina (which he does shortly after Ichabod disappears). That Brom is planning this trick is suggested by the fact that he is quick to chime in with his story of his encounter with the fearful horseman at the Van Tassel party. Although this elaborate ruse may not have been necessary (given Katrina’s dismissal of Ichabod), it is certainly in keeping with the other practical jokes that Brom had played on his rival.

31. What did the people of the town believe about what happened that night?

Rather than coming to the logical conclusion that we as modern readers do that this was all just Brom’s joke played on his disdained rival, the “old country wives” clearly prefer to believe that supernatural forces were at work. Irving playfully asserts that they are “the best judges of these matters”(p.43), but clearly it is more their desire for an entertaining story than their rational judgment that keeps the story a favorite.

## Answers to Discussion Questions-“Legend of Sleepy Hollow”

1. Compare the school where Ichabod Crane taught with the school you go to. How is your school similar to and different from Ichabod’s school?

Students will probably see differences in the building itself (which was just one large room, set in the countryside, made out of logs, with patched windows (p.4)) as well as the method of instruction (all ages taught together, most time spent reading and reciting lessons, students punished with a whip which was viewed as “encouraging” them to learn (p.6)). They might notice that the teacher was considered knowledgeable because he had actually read several books and that children were not required to go to school (Hans Van Ripper decides at the end (p.41) that “he never knew any good to come of reading and writing”). They might also pick up on how the schoolmaster had a close relationship with students (acting like a playmate for the older boys and living in the homes of his students). Despite these differences, they should also note the list on page 23 of confiscated items as evidence that children misbehaved and wanted to play with their toys then just as they do now. They might also note the way the children react when they are released from school early that day with the same sort of pleasure students feel today for an unexpected holiday such as a “snow day.”

2. Contrast Ichabod Crane and Brom Bones. How are they different in physical appearance? How are their actions different? What would have made Katrina attracted to each of them?

The description of Ichabod on page four gives many good physical details. His awkward, skinny body which makes him look like a scarecrow is a dramatic contrast with the “burly, dashing” Brom Bones whose appearance and general behavior are described on page 19. Students should look at how Brom and his “gang” are always looking for fights and fun. He is physical, rather than intellectual and appears most interested in having a good time, whereas Ichabod takes himself and life in general much more seriously.

3. What evidence is there that Ichabod Crane had an active imagination?

Although tales were a common way to spend long evenings entertaining themselves, Ichabod seems to have an especially great interest in alarming stories (“no tale was too monstrous for him” (p.11)) and unusual facts (“the world turns round and that half the time they were topsy-turvy”(p.13)). After spending time reading, listening to, or telling tales, everything he sees and hears seems to come to life on his walks home in the dark (p.11-14). That is why he is so frightened at the end and so willing to believe that it was indeed the headless horseman that he has encountered. The other field in

which his imagination is given full sway is in his fantasies about owning great wealth. When he sees the animals on Van Tassel's farm, he vividly pictures them as various delicious dishes of food (p.17). He also had a very clear image of his future with Katrina (p.17-18).

4. What role do Katrina's parents play in her life? What is her father's attitude toward his wealth? What is his attitude toward his daughter? What is Katrina's mother's attitude toward her?

Students might be surprised by the freedom that Katrina is given by her parents. Her father seems a very laid-back man, who is "satisfied with his wealth, but not proud of it" (p.15). He seems to be quite contented with his daughter as well as with his possessions. He apparently loves his daughter and "let her have her way in everything"(p.21). Although her mother may not be quite as "indulgent" as her father, Katrina apparently is trusted by her mother who believed that "ducks and geese are foolish things, and must be looked after, but girls take care of themselves" (p.21).

5. What does the illustration on page 27 show about Ichabod? What other characters are pictured? How can you tell?

Ichabod prides himself on his dancing as well as his singing, but clearly both are made fun of in this story. His vanity leads him to take a prominent position in the front of the church, but his voice stands out mostly for its "peculiar" (p. 7) noticeably "nasal" (p.13) quality. The illustration shows Ichabod's style of dancing is equally flamboyant and equally graceless. His legs and arms seem to be flailing about wildly, but he is clearly enjoying himself and his smile suggest how pleased he is with himself. Katrina, his dancing partner, seems well dressed and attractive. Although she too seems to be having a pleasant time, her smile and look are not directed at Ichabod, whereas he is clearly devoting all of his attentions to her. If they haven't noticed, students' attention should be directed to the figure sitting in the back left of the scene, which is presumably that of Brom Bones, who is described as "brooding by himself in one corner" (p.28).

## Reading Comprehension Questions

### “Rip Van Winkle”

1. What is the setting of this story? What feature of the place seems to be the most memorable? What details suggest when the story takes place?
2. What has made Rip Van Winkle so kind, meek, and patient?
3. How do the children react when they see Rip? (What are three things they do?)  
Why do they react this way? (What are three things he does with the children?)
4. Why do the women of the village like him and take his side?
5. What proof is offered that Rip is willing to work long and hard at some things?  
What sorts of work does Rip not like to do?
6. Why does Rip think there is no point in working on his farm? What are we told to prove that Rip’s farm is the “worst farm in the neighborhood”?
7. What about Rip’s personality would have made him contented if he hadn’t had a family?
8. What did Rip’s wife complain to him about? How would Rip respond?
9. Where would Rip go when he wanted to escape his wife? Why did he like the men he met there?

10. Since his wife would come and take him away from the men, where was the only place he could go to escape her? Whom would he take with him?
11. What is Wolf's reaction when a voice is heard calling "Rip Van Winkle! Rip Van Winkle!"? What two emotions does Rip feel?
12. What does the stranger want Rip to do? What is Rip's response?
13. Where is Rip when he wakes up? What time of day is it? What does he think has happened? What is he worried about?
14. What has happened to Rip's gun? What explanation does he come up with to explain that?
15. What has happened to Wolf? What different things does Rip do in response?
16. What does Rip notice when he starts to walk? What worries him about this?
17. When Rip returns to his village, what has changed about its appearance? What makes Rip certain that it must be the same village even though it looks so different?
18. What are two things that surprise Rip when he gets to his own home?
19. What are two symbols of the newly created United States of America that Rip does not recognize?
20. What are two things people are talking about that make no sense to Rip?
21. What happens when Rip mentions his own name? Why does this confuse Rip so much?
22. What do the people in the crowd do and say that shows they think Rip is crazy?
23. When his daughter Judith tells what happened to her father, what question does Rip ask before he reveals who he is?

24. How had Dame Van Winkle died? How is that consistent with her character?
25. Where does Rip end up living? Why is Rip now able to spend time with the men at the inn?

### **Discussion Questions: “Rip Van Winkle”**

1. What characteristics do you associate with a wolf? Why is “Wolf” an amusing name for Rip’s dog?
2. How does Irving characterize the newly born country of America? What do the hotel, the image of George Washington, the behavior of the crowd, and Rip’s attitude toward these changes show us about the new nation?
3. What evidence is there that Rip’s encounter with the men in the mountains was all just part of a dream that he had when he fell asleep while in the mountains hunting?

## Activities: “Rip Van Winkle”

1. Find a picture of a sundial. What is a sundial supposed to do? Why is Nicholas Vedder compared to a sundial?
2. Find a picture of an amphitheater. How is the place where Rip finds the men in the mountains like an amphitheater?
3. Describe a familiar place. Now imagine how it would look if you returned in ten years? How would it have stayed the same? How would it have changed? How would you feel when you returned? (see p. 131)
4. Tell this same story from the point of view of Dame Van Winkle. How would her descriptions of characters and version of events probably have differed from the ones you got in this story?
5. Sketch or watercolor Rip’s before and after portraits. Comparisons might be made more easily if you use the same paper.
6. Make a chart showing which parts of the story could be factual and which fictional.

## Answers to Reading Comprehension Questions “Rip Van Winkle”

1. What is the setting of this story? What feature of the place seems to be the most memorable? What details suggest when the story takes place?

The story takes place in a small village on the Hudson River. The Catskill Mountains to the west dominate the scenery. The detailed description of how the housewives use the mountains like a barometer to indicate every change in the weather suggests how prominent the mountains are. Students might also note the houses in the village, which are built out of yellow bricks brought over from Holland. Since Peter Stuyvesant was Governor from 1646-1664, those houses were at least 100 years old, which was fairly remarkable. We are told that the story starts “many years ago, when the country was still a province of Great Britain”(p.46), but by the time Rip returns to the village at the end after sleeping twenty years the Revolutionary War is over. Therefore, the story must take place sometime in the 1760’s-1780’s. If students want to figure out the exact date for the story, they can do so by starting with Henry Hudson’s arrival in 1609. Since Hudson’s crew supposedly returns every year, simple arithmetic says that the story begins in 1769 and ends in 1789 (the year that Washington is elected president).

2. What has made Rip Van Winkle so kind, meek, and patient?

Rip has been strictly disciplined by his wife and has learned to respond to her scoldings with meekness. In order to endure his wife’s temper, he has become patient and obedient to her. Presumably because he receives only hostility from her, he makes an extra effort to be kind to others. (p.46)

3. How do the children react when they see Rip? (What are three things they do?) Why do they react this way? (What are three things he does with the children?)

They “shout for joy” and surround him in large numbers, “clambering on his back and playing a thousand tricks on him”(p.48). They are so fond of him because, unlike most adults, he never hesitates to participate fully in all of their pastimes: “He assisted at their sports, made their playthings, taught them to fly kites and shoot marbles, and told them long stories of ghosts, witches and Indians”(p.47). Clearly one of the main traits suggested is how Rip is just like a kid himself and enjoys the activities of childhood much more than those associated with adulthood.

4. Why do the women of the village like him and take his side?

Although you would expect the women to be more sympathetic toward their fellow housewife, we are told that they take Rip’s part and “lay all the blame on Dame Van Winkle”(p.47). Presumably, this is largely because Rip is more than willing to

perform whatever service he can for his neighbors (“He would never refuse to assist a neighbor even in the roughest toil”(p.48), so they have never experienced Dame Van Winkle’s frustration with her “do-nothing” husband. Of course, the irony is that their own husbands respond to their requests for help less than eagerly. Therefore, they are quite thankful when Rip volunteers “to do odd jobs their less obliging husbands would not do for them”(p.48).

5. What proof is offered that Rip is willing to work long and hard at some things? What sorts of work does Rip not like to do?

In addition to helping out in the community (building stone fences, for instance, which is incredibly difficult work), Rip “did not lack diligence or perseverance” when it came to activities such as hunting or fishing. Although Irving’s description is presumably a bit tongue in cheek (“he would sit on a wet rock holding a long and heavy rod and fish all day even without the encouragement of a single nibble. He trudged for hours through woods and swamp to shoot a few squirrels or pigeons), clearly Rip did throw himself into labors that he chose for himself. However, he did not like any work that he was supposed to do: The great error in Rip’s composition was his strong dislike of profitable labor....Rip was ready to attend to anybody’s business but his own. As to keeping his farm in order, he found it impossible”(p.48). This natural human tendency to resist doing work that is assigned is one that most students related to easily.

6. Why does Rip think there is no point in working on his farm? What are we told to prove that Rip’s farm is the “worst farm in the neighborhood”?

Rip has decided that the piece of land is jinxed because “everything about it went wrong in spite of him”(p.48). Of course the things he complains about—fences falling down, cows going astray, weeds growing quickly, rain starting just as he is about to go to work—happen to everyone, but he sees himself as hopelessly unlucky. The disrepair in the physical state of his farm indicated in the examples above and the fact that his “estate had dwindled away under his management until there was little more left than a mere patch of Indian corn and potatoes” shows that it could no longer even support his family.

7. What about Rip’s personality would have made him contented if he hadn’t had a family?

He seems to be the happy-go-lucky type with very little ambition to “get ahead” in the world. He doesn’t want much out of life and would be perfectly content with very few possessions. He is described as “one of those happy fools who take the world easy, eat white bread or brown, whichever can be got with least thought or trouble, and would rather starve on a penny than work for a pound”(p.49). Although he is called a “fool” for taking this attitude, Rip’s laid-back approach is presented very

sympathetically. Rip is just like a kid who lives for the moment and is happy with the smallest sorts of pleasures. As a result he has none of the worries that adults have about consequences in the future, and Irving seems to suggest that this makes Rip a person to be envied by those suffering the burdens of adulthood.

8. What did Rip's wife complain to him about? How would Rip respond?

Unfortunately for Rip, he is not a child. He is a grown man with a wife and children, and his wife is understandably frustrated by his lack of effort to provide for his family. Although she is not presented sympathetically—in the original version she is labeled a “termagant” and described even more scathingly—it is important for students to see that her concerns are legitimate. We are told that his “wife continually complained in his ears about his idleness, his carelessness, and the ruin he was bringing on his family”(p.49). In response Rip always just “shrugged his shoulders, shook his head, cast up his eyes, but said nothing”(p.49). Although he passively takes her abuse and puts on the air of being a long-suffering victim of outrageous demands which he cannot possibly fulfill; in fact, it is fairly reasonable for her to be upset over the fact that he has let his own farm go to ruin while he happily performs tasks for anyone else in the neighborhood who might ask for his assistance. He is irresponsible, and that is understandably upsetting to his wife who must suffer the consequences for his behavior.

9. Where would Rip go when he wanted to escape his wife? Why did he like the men he met there?

He would go into the village and join the group of men who hung around on a bench in front of the inn “talking about village gossip, or telling endless sleepy stories about nothing”(p.51). He obviously feels at home with them for they are as averse as he to “profitable labor.” Although the men are not accomplishing anything useful, they see themselves as philosophers engaged in profound discussions. Presumably he was able to “console himself” with them because it made him feel important to join their company.

10. Since his wife would take him away from the men, where was the only place he could go to escape her? Whom would he take with him?

Rip would flee into the woods with his dog Wolf. Nature is presented as a salubrious influence—a place where one can escape the incessant demands of civilization. Man and his best friend—dog—are presented as creatures at home in nature, whereas woman is presented as the civilizing influence that restricts man's freedom and thus makes him miserable. (p.52-53)

11. What is Wolf's reaction when a voice is heard calling "Rip Van Winkle! Rip Van Winkle!"? What two emotions does Rip feel?

"Wolf bristled up his back, and giving a low growl, skulked to his master's side, looking fearfully down into the glen"(p.54). Clearly the dog is afraid, which it might well be at an unfamiliar voice. However, the description of him seeking refuge in Rip's presence reminds the reader of the earlier description of Wolf's fearful reaction to Dame Van Winkle's tirades (see p.50). This reinforces the interpretation that the voice Rip hears calling him is really his subconscious bringing to life the nightmare of being called once again by his wife to attend to his adult responsibilities. Rip's first reaction, like Wolf's, is one of fear. He is anxious until he sees only the figure of a stranger. Then his reaction becomes one of surprise to see any other human being in this place (again suggesting that the fear he felt was fear of Dame Van Winkle, since otherwise the appearance of this strange little man would not have quieted his concerns). Finally, he hurries down to offer his assistance, as was his usual habit when anyone (other than his wife) needed help.

12. What does the stranger want Rip to do? What is Rip's response?

Without using any words, he communicates through gestures his desire for Rip to help him carry the keg that he is bending under the weight of. Although Rip is "rather shy and distrustful of this new acquaintance"(p.54) who is dressed so strangely and is behaving so oddly, he doesn't hesitate to help out with this rather difficult labor.

13. Where is Rip when he wakes up? What time of day is it? What does he think has happened? What is he worried about?

Rip is back on the knoll where he had been when he first saw the little man. It is morning, so he assumes he slept through the night after passing out. His first thought is: "What excuse shall I make to Dame Van Winkle?"(p.57). The fact that he is back to the place in which the whole episode began with the appearance of the little man and the fact that his thoughts are exactly what they were when it began reinforce the idea that everything that took place was a fantasy that enabled him to avoid reality.

14. What has happened to Rip's gun? What explanation does he come up with to explain that?

He cannot find his "clean, well-oiled fowling piece" and instead sees only an old gun with "the barrel encrusted with rust, the lock falling off and the stock worm-eaten"

(p.56). He assumes that the little men from the night before stole his gun after he passed out. This is the first piece of evidence that, in fact, a great deal of time has passed since he fell asleep.

15. What has happened to Wolf? What different things does Rip do in response?

Wolf has disappeared, but Rip assumes the dog has just wandered off in pursuit of game. He whistles and shouts Wolf's name. When the dog still does not come, he assumes that the little men have the dog as well as his gun, so he sets off in search of

16. What does Rip notice when he starts to walk? What worries him about this?

Rip is very stiff. He assumes that his hard bed in the mountains have made his rheumatism act up. If he is laid up and can't work for awhile because of the aching in his joints, he knows that he will get in even more trouble with Dame Van Winkle than he would have for just staying out all night.

Rip's statement ("if this frolic should lay me up with a fit of rheumatism, I shall have a blessed time with Dame Van Winkle" (p.58)) is a good example of irony for students to examine since it should be fairly clear that Rip means he will be cursed rather than blessed.

17. When Rip returns to his village, what has changed about its appearance? What makes Rip certain that it must be the same village even though it looks so different?

The village is much more populated, with rows of houses he has never seen before in place of familiar spaces he had known. Many of the houses have strange names over the door and he sees more strange faces. However, when he looks to the distant Catskill mountains and Hudson River, they look exactly as they had when he left. Nature remains untouched and reveals herself in all her glory, but civilization has dramatically altered its appearance, suggesting the more transitory quality of mankind's work. Irving is setting up one of his key themes about the way life in America has changed after the Revolution with all of the new people and new activity. (p.59)

18. What are two things that surprise Rip when he gets to his own home?

It takes Rip some effort to even find the house, and when he finally does come to it he hardly recognizes it because it has fallen into decay--"the roof fallen in, the windows shattered and the doors off the hinges"(p.61). Even though he had dreaded encountering the "shrill" reprimands of his wife, her absence is evident in the fact that the house, which she had "always kept in neat order", is now in such a sorry state. The description of the house-- "empty, forlorn, and apparently abandoned"-- is a

poignant evocation of Rip's own feelings. As much as he had always tried to evade the responsibilities of his home before, now that he no longer has a home he feels very alone and depressed. To make things worse, a dog that looks a lot like Wolf snarls at him, leading Rip to say with a sigh, "My very dog has forgotten me!"(p.61). Since Wolf had been his closest friend, this is a particularly hard blow. Students may enjoy debating whether this could indeed be Rip's original companion (which would make the dog over twenty years old—possible, but unlikely in those rough times for a pet to live that long) or a descendant of the original Wolf.

19. What are two symbols of the newly created United States of America that Rip does not recognize?

There is a flagpole outside the inn with a flag of stars and stripes, which Rip finds quite strange. The other symbol that he thinks he recognizes at first as a portrait of King George (that used to hang at the inn's door) turns out to be a portrait of General Washington. A blue coat has replaced the red (an allusion to the nickname for British soldiers of "Redcoats" based on their apparel), a sword has replaced the scepter (General Washington was commonly known as the "Sword of the Revolution" for his military leadership), and a cocked hat has replaced the crown, but the suggestion is that otherwise these two leaders look much the same. Irving seems to be picking up on the tendency of Americans to view their new leader as surrogate royalty. Despite their supposed disdain for the monarchy and embrace of democracy, many colonists did indeed look to Washington as a royal figure and followed him with the same sort of unquestioning loyalty they had once had for British royalty. This is one of the ways Irving suggests that human nature has stayed essentially the same, despite all the superficial changes. (p.62)

20. What are two things people are talking about that make no sense to Rip?

The fellow with handbills is "ranting" about the "rights of citizens, elections, members of Congress, liberty, Bunker Hill"(p.62). Another fellow asks Rip whether he is a Federal or Democrat. Later when he asks about his former friends, the answers include references to "matters he could not understand—war, Congress, Stoney Point" (p.64). These are all terms that students should be familiar with and will enjoy recognizing after their study of the Revolutionary War.

21. What happens when Rip mentions his own name? Why does this confuse Rip so much?

Rip has reached a point of despair when he discovers that all of his old friends who might identify him are gone, so he cries out, "Does nobody here know Rip Van Winkle?" (p.64). But this question meets with an unexpected response, for the people quickly point to a person leaning against a tree who is "a precise copy of himself the

day he went up the mountain, apparently as lazy and certainly as ragged” (p.65). Understandably, Rip is bewildered and “doubted his own identity” (p.65). His halting speech (“That’s me yonder—no—that’s somebody else got into my shoes—I was myself last night, but I fell asleep on the mountain, and they’ve changed my gun, and everything’s changed—and I’m changed—and I can’t tell what’s my name, or who I am!”) shows just how tenuous his grasp on reality is and how little confidence he has in who he is. He has indeed come to doubt his own sanity. This fear of a loss of identity is a central theme of the story.

22. What do the people in the crowd do and say that shows they think Rip is crazy?

The people “look at each other, nod, wink, and tap their fingers against their foreheads” (p.65). Students might act out these motions and interpret the “sign language” that is used to indicate how the townspeople confirm with each other the “secret” that Rip doesn’t have it together mentally. The later description of how they “winked at each other and put their tongues in their cheeks” might lead to a discussion of the common expression of being “tongue in cheek” when making a remark that is not intended to be taken seriously (a tactic often used by Irving in his narration).

23. When his daughter Judith tells what happened to her father, what question does Rip ask before he reveals who he is?

As happy as he must be to have discovered his own daughter and to have someone who would actually know him, Rip does not leap at the chance to identify himself until he has reassured himself that his wife is no longer around to nag him. Before he will reveal his true identity, he wants to know “Where’s your mother?” (p.66). The reader is left to wonder whether he would ever have identified himself if, in fact, his wife had still been alive.

24. How had Dame Van Winkle died? How is that consistent with her character?

We are told that Dame Van Winkle “broke a blood vessel in a fit of passion at a peddler” (p.66), which suggests that her virulent temper, which had made Rip so miserable ended up being her own undoing as well. If she had been more easy-going and less critical, presumably she would not have died in a paroxysm of rage at being ripped off by an itinerant salesman.

25. Where does Rip end up living? Why is Rip now able to spend time with the men at the inn?

Rip’s daughter takes him home to live with her. Since she has a “stout, cheery farmer for a husband” to take care of all the work around the house, Rip is free to resume “his old walks and habits” (p.69). One of the main themes of the story seems to be how Rip

manages to resume his childlike approach to the world now that he has returned as an old man. He can take his place once again on the bench outside the inn and now even be “revered as one of the patriarchs of the village and a chronicle of the old times before the Revolutionary War”(p.70). By sleeping for twenty years he has managed to escape all of the responsibilities of adulthood since he returns “at that happy age when a man is allowed to be idle”(p.70).

## Answers to Discussion Questions: “Rip Van Winkle”

1. What characteristics do you associate with a wolf? Why is “Wolf” an amusing name for Rip’s dog?

Wolves are usually thought of as ferocious, wild animals, which are fearless and cannot be domesticated. Rip’s dog, on the other hand, is a fellow sufferer of Dame Van Winkle’s abuse and he accepts this treatment with passivity equal to his master’s. In the house “his tail drooped to the ground or curled between his legs. He sneaked about, casting many a sidelong glance at Dame Van Winkle, and at the least wave of a broomstick or ladle he would fly to the door with a yelp” (p.50). It is suggested that the true nature of both the dog and the man have been thwarted by the oppressive rule of Dame Van Winkle just as society restricts the freedom of all creatures and forces them to conform to rules against their nature.

2. How does Irving characterize the newly born country of America? What do the hotel, the image of George Washington, the behavior of the crowd, and Rip’s attitude toward these changes show us about the new nation?

The inn has been replaced by a “large, rickety wooden building...with great gaping windows, some of them broken and mended with old hats and petticoats”(p.61). It is now called the Union Hotel, by Jonathan Doolittle. What had once been a sturdy country inn made out of solid bricks with a great tree outside the door has been transformed into something much larger but much less solid. There is the feeling that the building was put up quickly and its owner (hence the name) has little interest in taking care of it. The people gathered around the inn, like the building itself, reflect this new nation, which has been thrown together in a slap-dash, way yet seems quite full of itself. The “drowsy tranquility” of the men with whom Rip used to spend many a lazy hour in “profound” discussion has been replaced by a “busy, bustling quarrelsome tone”(p.62). The man with handbills who is “ranting about the rights of citizens” is described as “lean, disagreeable”--a far cry from the rotund Nicholas Vedder who let his pipe do his talking for him. The changes in the sign from King George to George Washington are described in reading comprehension question 29. Rip is, of course, confused by all of these changes. His dismay seems to reflect Irving’s own nostalgia for the simpler, quieter past which had much greater stability and made fewer demands on people. However, Irving is also suggesting that despite all of these superficial changes, human nature does not really change all that much. The inn may look somewhat different, but a crowd of people does still gather outside it to gossip. The monarchy may have been overthrown, but people still look to their leader as a kingly power. And Rip sees an exact image of who he used to be in his son, leaning idly against a tree. To

Rip, the only meaningful change is not that the country has been freed from the monarchy, but that he has been freed from the demands of his wife. As Irving says of Rip and implies is true of most people, “The changes of states and empires made little impression on him. There was just one type of despotism under which he had long groaned, and that was petticoat government”(p.70).

3. What evidence is there that Rip’s encounter with the men in the mountains was all just part of a dream that he had when he fell asleep while in the mountains hunting?

The answers to reading comprehension questions 14-19 discuss these clues.

*What makes people at first disbelieve Rip’s story? What “facts” does Peter Vanderdonk present to confirm the truth of Rip’s report? What does Irving later say about Rip’s own telling of his story? What comment does Irving seem to be making about history?*

The basic premise of the story, that Rip sleeps away twenty years as if they were only one night, is as hard for the villagers to believe as it is for us to accept. However, they are quick to accept the verdict of the local authority, old Peter Vanderdonk, whose claim to fame is being the “descendant of the historian who wrote one of the earliest accounts of the province” and who is himself “well versed in all the wonderful events and traditions of the neighborhood”(p.68). When he assures them of the “fact” that the Catskill Mountains “had always been haunted by strange beings”(p.68), they apparently accept that without question. He goes on to affirm the legend of Henry Hudson returning with his crew every twenty years based on his father’s report of once seeing the strange company of men in their antique Dutch clothes playing ninepins. The fact that Rip “was observed at first to vary on some points” every time he told the story of his adventure was excused as a result of “his having so recently awakened” (p.71). However, with this comment, Irving seems to suggest that Rip’s difficulties in keeping his story consistent do make us doubt its credibility. Irving goes on to say that eventually the story “settled down precisely to the tale I have related” (p.71), perhaps suggesting that history and legends both are just stories that we agree to accept as “truth” because they have been told so many times.

## Reading Comprehension Questions

### “The Specter Bridegroom”

1. What is the setting of the story? (Where and when does it take place?)
2. What had Baron Von Landshort inherited from his ancestors?
3. Who is in charge of raising the Baron’s daughter? Why are they well suited to the task?
4. What other family does the Baron have besides his daughter and her two aunts? How do these relatives treat the Baron? How does he seem to feel about them?
5. How had the husband-to-be of the Baron’s daughter been selected?
6. What happens when the girl is getting dressed? What does this show about the aunts? What does it show about the girl?
7. What does the Baron do while everyone is getting ready for the big occasion? What does this show about him?
8. What causes confusion and concern at the Baron’s palace?
9. What does Count Von Altenburg’s attitude toward marrying the Baron’s daughter seem to be?
10. Whom does the Count meet on his journey? Why do they decide to travel together? What do they talk about?
11. How is the Count killed? What is his last request as he is dying?
12. How does Starckenfaust feel about the favor he has been asked to perform? What different emotions does he have as he approaches his task?
13. When night comes, what does the Baron decide to do? Why?
14. What mixed feelings does the Baron have when he meets the stranger at the gate? Why?
15. How does the Baron treat the stranger? How does the young man respond?
16. What happens when the Baron’s daughter and the young man first see each other? What can we tell about their feelings from their reactions?
17. How do the young man and the Baron’s daughter act during dinner?
18. What effect does the young man have on the rest of the people at the banquet?

- What are the other guests talking about by the end of the meal?
19. What surprising announcement does the young man make at the end of the banquet? How does the Baron respond?
  20. What does the Baron tell the guests when he returns to the hall that makes some of the ladies faint?
  21. How do the Baron and his daughter feel about what happened? What does the attitude of the rest of the guests seem to be?
  22. On the second night after the disastrous banquet, what makes the daughter's aunt shriek? What does the girl make her aunt promise? Why? When does her aunt break this promise?
  23. What is the Baron's reaction when the aunt tells him what must have happened to his daughter?
  24. What does the daughter do when she returns? Why? What surprises the Baron about the appearance of her companion?
  25. How is the Baron responsible in two ways for his own mistaken belief that the strange young man was a ghost?
  26. How would the Baron usually have responded to Starkenfaust's desire to marry his daughter? Why? Why does he respond differently now?
  27. For what two reasons are the aunts upset?

## **Discussion Questions: “The Specter Bridegroom”**

1. What sorts of skills were girls taught in the past? What was their education supposed to accomplish?
2. When the Baron’s daughter sees the figure of the strange cavalier in the garden below her window, Irving writes, “Heaven and earth! She beheld the Specter Bridegroom!” What does Irving’s use of interjections and exclamatory sentences suggest about her reaction? What clues are we given that her feelings are actually somewhat different from those of her aunt when she sees the figure in the moonlight?
3. At what point in the story does the Baron’s daughter realize who the young cavalier really is?

## Answers to Reading Comprehension Questions: “The Specter Bridegroom”

1. What is the setting of the story? (Where and when does it take place?)

The castle of Baron Von Landshort is situated in the mountains near where the Rhine and Main rivers join in Germany. We are told that the story takes place “many, many years ago” since all that is left of the castle is the old watchtower. The time of the story is peaceful, but it follows some long period of great war (not specifically identified), which had led all of the German nobles to build castles high in the mountains that could serve as fortresses. (p.73)

2. What had Baron Von Landshort inherited from his ancestors?

He is described as inheriting “the property, and all the pride of his ancestors” (p.73). Apparently the family’s wealth had been decimated by the long war, but the other mark it had left on the Baron was hostility toward his fellow nobles “on account of disputes that happened between their great-great-grandfathers”(p.74). Unlike most of the other German nobles who had built new homes in the valleys, the Baron remained “proudly drawn up in his little fortress, cherishing the old family feuds”(p.74). Teachers might want to note to students that the Baron was a member of the larger Katzenellenbogen family (a name which we are told in a footnote in the original story roughly means “cat’s elbow” and was supposedly given in compliment to a “peerless dame of the family, celebrated for her fine arm”). The name “Katzenellenbogen” is used at points throughout the story and might produce some confusion if not pointed out to students ahead of time.

3. Who is in charge of raising the Baron’s daughter? Why are they well suited to the task?

The Baron’s isolationist tendencies are clearly displayed in his attempt to keep his daughter protected from the dangers of the outside world. We are never told what has happened to her mother. She is raised by two maiden aunts, “who were skilled in all the branches of knowledge necessary to the education of a fine lady”(p.74). In addition to teaching her actual skills, the aunts are also in charge of monitoring her behavior. Since they had both been “great coquettes in their younger days” (p.75), they are presumably well versed in the flirtatious ploys of young girls. They are consequently on their guard to ensure that the Baron’s daughter has absolutely no unauthorized contact with any young men. Since the Baron’s daughter is described as a “miracle of accomplishments” p.74) and “a pattern of mildness and correctness” (p.75), they seem to have done a fine job. They are reported to be quite satisfied with their results: Her aunts looked upon her with pride, and believed that though all the other young ladies in the world might go astray, nothing of the kind could happen to

the heiress of Katzenellenbogen.

4. What other family does the Baron have besides his daughter and her two aunts? How do these relatives treat the Baron? How does he seem to feel about them?

The Baron is “blessed” with a lot of poor relatives. We do not know how close or distant the kinship, but they apparently live close enough to be able to take advantage of the relationship whenever and however they can. With his usual gentle irony, Irving depicts them as possessing “the affections common to humble relatives: they were wonderfully attached to the Baron, and took every possible occasion to come in swarms” (pp.75-76). Since hosting them was a relatively expensive proposition, the Baron might have been expected to resent these relatives. However, he enjoys the way the relatives are so grateful to be able to enjoy his largess that they are incredibly obsequious and put up with his long and rather incredible stories (“They listened to every tale of wonder with open eyes and mouth, and never failed to be astonished, even when they were repeated for the hundredth time”(p.76).). Irving, with his tongue firmly planted in his cheek, sums up his main character: “The Baron, though a small man, had a large soul, and it swelled with satisfaction at knowing he was the greatest man in the little world about him”(p.76). Clearly, the Baron needs their subservient attention in order to feel important, and the relatives are quite willing to put up with his pomposity in order to partake in the food and drink at the Baron’s expense.

5. How had the husband-to-be of the Baron’s daughter been selected?

Following the traditions of the times, the families of the two young people arranged the marriage. The Baron and another noble “had agreed to unite their houses by the marriage of their children”(p.76). Students need to be made aware of the fact that in the past people rarely married because of physical attraction or as a result of emotional attachment. Marriages were generally decided on by the parents for political and economic reasons with no regard for the wishes and feelings of those who were about to be married. In fact, in this case, “the young people were betrothed without seeing each other”(p.77) and would not have any contact with each other until the day they marry.

6. What happens when the girl is getting dressed? What does this show about the aunts? What does it show about the girl?

Everything is “in a tumult of preparation” as they get ready for the arrival of the bridegroom. Wanting to make a good impression on the groom, “the fair bride had been decked out with uncommon care”(p.78). Amusingly, the aunts, at the most important moment—the culmination of their stewardship—cannot agree on anything and have spent the whole morning quarreling about what she will wear. Once she gets dressed, they “hovered around her, telling her how to behave, what to say, and how to

receive her expected lover”(p.78). Of course, the irony is that neither one of them has ever been married and yet they are both acting like they know it all. The Baron’s daughter shows her independence, sense, taste, and tact by calmly and quietly “taking advantage of their contest to follow her own taste, and fortunately it was a good one” (p.78). Not only has she taken care of her own outfit, she patiently puts up with the aunts even though she clearly has more important things on her mind. She is understandably nervous-- “her blush, the gentle heaving of her bosom, the eye now and then lost in reverie—all betrayed the excitement in her little heart”(p.78)-- but she controls her emotions and conducts herself with her usual charm and grace. Despite having been pampered and protected for her entire life, she seems to have turned out quite well.

7. What does the Baron do while everyone is getting ready for the big occasion? What does this show about him?

Like the aunts, the Baron has to feel important and at the center of all activity, so he officiously bustles about telling everyone what to do. The humorous mention of how he “called the servants from their work to tell them to be diligent” p.78) and the comparison of him to a fly show just how absurdly useless and annoying he is.

8. What causes confusion and concern at the Baron’s palace?

After hustling around all morning, finally everything is ready for the arrival of the bridegroom. However, he is late, and as hour after hour passes, the Baron becomes so concerned that he personally keeps watch from the highest tower. Several false alarms only heighten his worries when the Count still has not appeared by nightfall.(p.78)

9. What does Count Von Altenburg’s attitude toward marrying the Baron’s daughter seem to be?

The Count is in the same situation as the Baron’s daughter: he has been given no choice in the matter. He has been brought home from the army and is obediently going to wed the girl who has been selected, but he does not seem exactly eager for the event. Irving ironically expresses the state of the young man’s mind by describing him as pursuing his route in that sober way in which a man travels toward matrimony when his friends have taken all the trouble and uncertainty of courtship off his hands (p.79). Clearly, Irving is suggesting that he might have been more excited and enthusiastic if the path laid out before him had been less certain and trouble-free and if he had had more to do with winning the young girl’s heart.

10. Whom does the Count meet on his journey? Why do they decide to travel together? What do they talk about?

He meets Herman Von Starckenfaust, a fellow soldier with whom he has served and of whom he thinks highly. Herman is a neighbor of the Baron; thus, since he and the Count are going in the same direction, they decide to travel together. The Count also seems eager for company, perhaps to give him something else to think about besides his upcoming marriage. As they ride along, they catch each other up on past adventures, and the Count repeats the things he has heard about how wonderful his bride-to-be is. The fact that “the Count was apt to be a little tedious, now and then, about the reputed charms of his bride and the happiness that awaited him”(p.81) suggests that he is trying desperately to convince himself as well as his companion that the marriage is really a good thing.

11. How is the Count killed? What is his last request as he is dying?

The Count had directed the rest of his retinue to come along after them, so the Count and Herman are riding alone as they enter a thickly wooded pass in the mountains. The war mentioned at the beginning of the story comes into play again, for apparently there are a number of soldiers who had turned to robbery to support themselves now that their services are no longer needed. When a gang in the forest attacks the two young cavaliers, they fight back bravely. Eventually the Count's men arrive and the robbers flee, but the Count has been mortally wounded in the attack. He is carried back to the nearest city, but it is clear his death is near. Ever the proper gentleman, his main concern is to be sure that his bride does not think she has been stood up. Whatever hesitations he might have had about the marriage, he clearly takes the responsibility very seriously and tells his friend Herman that “Unless this is done...I shall not sleep quietly in my grave!”(p.83).

12. How does Starckenfaust feel about the favor he has been asked to perform? What different emotions does he have as he approaches his task?

There is no question that he will fulfill his mission since he has given a dying man both his word and his handshake in solemn pledge to do as he has been asked. However, he is deeply saddened by the loss of his companion, and may even feel a little guilty that he had survived the attack that had killed the Count. He is also disturbed because his family is one with whom the Baron is still feuding, so he worries about calling on people he knows to be hostile to him. Of course, he also knows that they will not welcome the news he will bring. However, he is also curious because there has been so much talk of the Baron's daughter. Not only is she reported to be beautiful, but also the fact that she has been secluded from the world makes her even more appealing. Never one to pass up an adventure or a beautiful woman, Starckenfaust undertakes his task with a bit more eagerness than might have been supposed initially.

13. When night comes, what does the Baron decide to do? Why?

The Baron has basically given up on the bridegroom. Since the food is already overcooked and is all going to go bad if he waits any longer, he bows to the practical pressures exerted by his cook and the hungry faces of his guests and decides to go ahead with the feast.(p.85)

14. What mixed feelings does the Baron have when he meets the stranger at the gate? Why?

When the guest is finally announced the Baron hurries to the gate, relief winning out over whatever anger he might have been presumed to feel over being kept waiting so long. He has to be impressed by the “stately air” of the “tall, gallant cavalier” (p.85) that he sees. However, he is taken aback by the fact that the bridegroom has come alone. He might well have taken it as an insult that the young man has not shown “proper respect for the occasion, and the important family with which he was to be connected”(p.85), and indeed it is reported that “his dignity for a moment was ruffled”(p.85). However, his eagerness for the marriage to take place makes him quick to make up an excuse for his guest (even though his willingness to forgive the “youthful impatience that made him spur on sooner than his attendants”(p.86) doesn’t make a lot of sense since the bridegroom is so late to begin with).

15. How does the Baron treat the stranger? How does the young man respond?

The stranger starts to offer an apology, but the Baron cuts him off and then won’t let him get a word in edge wise. The Baron overwhelms his guest “with a world of compliments and greetings, for he prided himself on his courtesy and eloquence” (p.86). The guest does try to interject a few times, but finally gives up and seems to be waiting for his opportunity to speak without interrupting the Baron.

16. What happens when the Baron’s daughter and the young man first see each other? What can we tell about their feelings from their reactions?

The young man had been about to try to explain his mission once again, but when he sees the bride-to-be he can only gaze at her entranced. The girl, prompted by one of her aunts, also starts to say something, but ends up speechless as well. While he can’t seem to take his eyes off of her, she is the proper young lady and after one, shy glance at him she keeps her eyes averted. Apparently, however, one look is enough since there is a “sweet smile playing about her lips”(p.86). As the aunts later declare, this does indeed seem to be a description of love at first sight.

17. How do the young man and the Baron’s daughter act during dinner?

The cavalier continues to be completely entranced by the girl, hardly paying any attention to the entertainment or the food. He speaks to her quietly and intently, with a “mingled tenderness and gravity in his manner”(p.87). The girl seems equally absorbed in him, listening with such deep attention that his words cause the color of her complexion to come and go as she makes blushing replies. She was also seen to “steal a sidelong glance at him and heave a gentle sigh of happiness” (p.87) whenever he was not looking at her, a clear indication that she is pleased by this gallant cavalier.

18. What effect does the young man have on the rest of the people at the banquet? What are the other guests talking about by the end of the meal?

At first the banquet is quite festive, with the Baron telling stories to the appreciative audience of sycophantic relatives. However, the serious, sad demeanor of the young man, which seems to deepen as the evening goes on, and the “earnest and mysterious” (p.88) conversations with the Baron’s daughter eventually have an effect on the rest of the guests. No one understands what is the matter, but inevitably their songs and laughter begin to seem out of place and are replaced with dismal tales of supernatural happenings.

19. What surprising announcement does the young man make at the end of the banquet? How does the Baron respond?

The bridegroom announces that he must bid the group farewell for “I must lay my head in a different chamber tonight!” (p.89). The Baron is understandably shocked that he would want to leave at all, much less at that time of night. Eventually he is dismayed when his repeated offers of hospitality have no effect on the young man’s determination to leave.

20. What does the Baron tell the guests when he returns to the hall that makes some of the ladies faint?

The Baron had taken hope when the cavalier had said he had an engagement, which he had to attend in person in Wurtzburg cathedral. He had assumed that the young man was referring to his wedding in the cathedral the next day. However, the young man goes on to say that the appointment he must keep is with his grave, for he is dead and scheduled to be buried at midnight. When the Baron tells this to the rest of the guests, they are understandably alarmed. It is interesting, however, that someone suggests that the young man might just have been trying to get out of marrying the girl. Irving is always suggesting logical explanations to undermine the supernatural interpretation of events.

21. How do the Baron and his daughter feel about what happened? What does the attitude of the rest of the guests seem to be?

The Baron locks himself away in what is labeled “dismay” (p.91). He is so taken aback at the disruption of his plans and the supposedly supernatural events of the night before that he cannot interact with anyone, even his daughter who would presumably need his support and sympathy. The girl was also understandably upset. The night before when he left the banquet so unexpectedly, she “hung her head and a tear stole to her eye”(p.89), and now “ filled the house with sorrow” (p.92). To have such a “gracious and noble” husband taken from her before she even has a chance to embrace him makes everyone pity her. Although the guests have to be moved by the distress of the Baron and his daughter, Irving amusingly describes their response as more motivated by their own selfish desires than any selfless concern for others. Although the description “the guests who had come to rejoice with him could not think of abandoning him in his distress” (p.91) can be read straight, Irving’s use of irony cannot be ignored when he describes how “they sat longer than ever at table, and ate and drank more than ever, in order to keep up their spirits”(p.91). Irving’s scathing, ironic commentary on these self-serving relatives continues when they are described as pausing only “for a moment from the meal” even when confronted by one of the aunts shrieking about how a goblin has carried away the Baron’s daughter, and at the end of the story when they “overwhelmed this new member of the family with loving kindness. He was so gallant, so generous, so rich”(p.97).

22. On the second night after the disastrous banquet, what makes the daughter’s aunt shriek? What does the girl make her aunt promise? Why? When does her aunt break this promise?

The aunt was spending the night in the daughter’s room to presumably give her comfort and support, but she has fallen asleep in the middle of telling one of her long ghost stories (not exactly the most effective way to soothe the fears of someone who has supposedly just had dealings with the ghost of her fiancé!). When the aunt wakes up to the sound of music and follows the Baron’s daughter to the window, she sees below the figure of the young cavalier-- “the specter bridegroom.” The aunt shrieks and collapses in the daughter’s arms, even though she is supposed to be the strong adult in this situation. The daughter, who found “something endearing even in the ghost of her lover” (p.92), makes the aunt promise not to tell what she has witnessed that night. With a little dig at women and their pleasure in sharing gossip, Irving notes that it was a “memorable instance of female secrecy that she had kept it to herself for a whole week” (p.94). However, when it is reported one morning that the daughter has disappeared, she tells the whole story and gives her conclusion that the specter has carried off his bride.

23. What is the Baron’s reaction when the aunt tells him what must have happened to his daughter?

When the aunt's speculation is confirmed by servants who heard the clatter of horse's hoofs, the Baron is understandably bewildered and upset. As usual, he seems to think that his "position" in life should have protected him from such a thing. His situation is described as a "heartrending dilemma for a fond father" but Irving completes the line by saying "and a member of the great family of Katzenellenbogen" (p.94) as if the trauma of having his daughter carried off by a demon would be an even greater hardship—even an indignity!--for a man of his status to have to suffer. However, it must be said in his behalf that the Baron does not stand on ceremony, but immediately gets his sword and prepares to go out in search for his daughter.

24. What does the daughter do when she returns? Why? What surprises the Baron about the appearance of her companion?

The daughter immediately gets down from her horse and prostrates herself at her father's feet, embracing his knees in a gesture of supplication. She knows that she is in trouble for having acted without the consent of her father, so she immediately throws herself on his mercy. Although the Baron is surprised by the return of his daughter, he is even more amazed at the improved appearance of the "specter" who is "no longer pale and melancholy" but instead is "flushed with the glow of youth and his dark eyes were filled with joy" (p.95).

25. How is the Baron responsible in two ways for his own mistaken belief that the strange young man was a ghost?

When Starkenfaust first appears at the gate and tries to tell him why he has come, the Baron is so intent on showing off what a genial host he is that he cuts off what he assumes is the stranger's apology and then rambles on with greetings that don't let the stranger say anything at all. Then, at the banquet, it is the Baron's own story about the "goblin horseman that carried away the fair Leonora" (p.88) that gives the cavalier his idea for what to say as he is leaving. The Baron is also responsible for holding a grudge against Starkenfaust's family that made the young man fear a hostile reception both initially and when he returns at night to court the daughter.

26. How would the Baron usually have responded to Starkenfaust's desire to marry his daughter? Why? Why does he respond differently now "The Specter Bridegroom"

In addition to stubbornly keeping alive these old family feuds, the Baron is also a proud man who clearly likes to feel important and expects people to be obeisant toward him (like his relatives) rather than defying his authority as his daughter has now done by choosing her own mate (a radical breach of her proper role). The Baron is also a bit chagrined that he has been tricked, for he does not like being made a fool.

However, he is calmed down by several “old friends who had fought in wars” who “assured him that every strategy was excusable in love” (p.97) so he is able to keep his dignity intact. He also does love his daughter, and having just thought her carried off by a demon or even dead, he is relieved to find her alive and married to a respectable young nobleman. Since her intended bridegroom is actually dead, it is actually convenient that another acceptable young cavalier has taken his place. Rather than having the ugly conflict which might well have resulted from Starkenfaust’s deception of the Baron, Irving gives the reader a pat, happy ending (even going so far as to joke with the reader “for in truth, as you must have known all the while, he was no goblin” (p.95)).

27. For what two reasons are the aunts upset?

They were disconcerted that their attempts to keep the daughter away from any strange men had been circumvented, and “blamed themselves for not putting bars on the windows” (p.97). Ironically, the aunt who had seen the “specter” was even more upset about her story being ruined and her embarrassment and frustration that “the only specter she had ever seen should turn out to be a fake”(p.97). Irving’s wonderful use of humor is evident when he contrasts the aunt’s disappointment with the girl who “seemed perfectly happy that he turned out to be real flesh and blood”(p.97).

## Answers to Discussion Questions: “The Spectre Bridegroom”

1. What sorts of skills were girls taught in the past? What was their education supposed to accomplish?

Most of the skills have less to do with academics than with the fine arts. The Baron’s daughter can read, spell, and sign her own name legibly, and in having these skills she is seen as far superior to most young ladies. However, most of her time seems to have been spent learning to embroider, dance, play musical instruments, and learn ballads to sing. The fact that she “excelled in making little elegant knick-knacks of all kinds” (p.74) sums up nicely the idea that she was expected to attain a certain artistic sensibility rather than learn to perform practical tasks or do any real analytical thinking. This question can lead to a more general discussion of how girls really were not educated in the same way as boys (no girls attend Ichabod Crane’s schoolhouse) in the past, but were instead merely trained to develop talents (such as sewing, music, and art) that would make the lives of their families more aesthetically pleasing.

2. When the Baron’s daughter sees the figure of the strange cavalier in the garden below her window, Irving writes, “Heaven and earth! She beheld the Specter Bridegroom!” What does Irving’s use of interjections and exclamatory sentences suggest about her reaction? What clues are we given that her feelings are actually somewhat different from those of her aunt when she sees the figure in the moon?

Irving is trying to keep the “supernatural” interpretation of the story alive by using exclamation points to express her shock and horror. However, there are a number of details that suggest she was well aware of the true identity of the “ghost.” The fact that the aunt “insisted on sleeping with her” rather than the girl desiring it, and the fact that she is awake at midnight are both suggestive. Then the music she hears begins just after the clock has struck midnight, which indicates it was probably a pre-arranged signal. When she “rose hastily from her bed, and stepped lightly to the windows” (p.92), our suspicions that she is in on this plan are confirmed; she presumably would not be so eager to go to the window if she did not know what she was going to see, and rather than waking her aunt, she tries to make as little noise as possible. Although Irving’s style suggests that the daughter is frightened and surprised, it is the aunt who shrieks and who “now required the most soothing, for she was perfectly beside herself with terror” (p.92). Although this aunt declares she will never sleep in that room again, the daughter is unusually stubborn (almost to the point of being disobedient, which she never is!) and insists on sleeping only there. To top things off, she swears the aunt to secrecy in the hopes of being able to encounter the figure again. It is also interesting to note that the illustration on p.93 depicts the daughter with her arms outstretched as if in welcome rather than in a gesture of fear.

3. At what point in the story does the Baron's daughter realize who the young cavalier really is?

This question obviously has no definitive answer, but it should prove interesting for students to speculate when she discovered the identity of the cavalier. The previous discussion question asks students to look for clues that the daughter is not shocked by the appearance of the young man's figure in the garden at midnight, but instead has arranged with him to return in this way. But that still leaves the question of whether she thought she was entertaining a ghost, or if she knew sometime during the first evening at the banquet that he was not Count Von Altenburg. The two lovers do have deep conversation during the banquet and it would be fun for the students to speculate on what they actually talked about.

## **Reading Comprehension Questions: “The Devil and Tom Walker”**

1. What is the setting for this story?
2. What is supposed to be hidden under one of the big trees beside the inlet? Why is that a good hiding place?
3. What happened to the person who hid it there? Who supposedly watches over the money?
4. What bad trait do both Tom Walker and his wife have? How is this trait shown in the way they collect eggs?
5. What evidence is there that Tom and his wife are always fighting?
6. Why does Tom walk through the swamp on the way home one day? Why does the author say it was an “ill-chosen route”?
7. Where does Tom pause to rest? Why would most people not have stopped there?
8. What does Tom discover in the ground at his feet? What happens when he kicks it?
9. What two things surprise Tom about the figure seated on the stump of the tree?
10. Why does the devil say that Deacon Peabody will be damned? What else do we learn Deacon Peabody has done which might be seen as a sin?
11. What does the tree with Deacon Peabody’s name on it show about him? (How is it used as a symbol of his character?)
12. After the devil cuts down a tree, what does he do with it? What is that a symbol of?
13. What sorts of activities does the devil describe himself doing? What do those activities show about him?
14. What would most people’s reaction have been to meeting this stranger? Why doesn’t Tom react this way?
15. What does the devil offer Tom? What does the devil want in exchange?
16. What proof does the devil give Tom that what he has said is true? What does his

wife tell him that convinces Tom that “all he had heard and seen was no illusion” (p.105)?

17. When his wife hears Tom’s story, what is her reaction? How does this change Tom’s attitude?
18. What happens in Tom’s wife’s first encounter with the devil? What does she take the second time?
19. What does Tom see up in a tree when he is looking for his wife? What is his reaction? Why?
20. What different clues does Tom find of what happened to his wife?
21. How does Tom feel about the devil after this incident?
22. How does the devil play hard to get? How is that different from the image generally presented of how the devil operates?
23. What different ideas does the devil suggest for how the money should be used? What is Tom’s response to each?
24. Why is it a particularly good time for Tom to undertake his new career?
25. How does Tom become rich? How does he spend his money? What shows he is still a miser?
26. When he gets old, what different things does he do to avoid keeping his end of the bargain he had made with the devil?
27. What favor does a customer ask on Tom’s last day of life? Why does he think Tom might grant it?
28. What is Tom’s response to this customer’s request? What happens immediately after? Why?
29. What is the last anyone sees of Tom?
30. What has happened to Tom’s wealth by the end of the story?

### **Discussion Questions: “The Devil and Tom Walker”**

1. How do Tom Walker’s possessions show what sort of a person he is?
2. What shows that Tom isn’t really sincere in the changes he makes near the end of his life?
3. What is the lesson that the story teaches?
4. Do you believe that money is the most important thing in life? If so, why? If not, what is more important?

## **Answers to Reading Comprehension Questions: “The Devil and Tom Walker”**

1. What is the setting for this story?

The story takes place in the area near Boston, Massachusetts about the year 1727. The time is identified in the story as one “when earthquakes were common in New England and shook many tall sinners down upon their knees” (p.99). Although this detail can be taken literally, Irving is presumably referring to the atmosphere in Puritan settlements around the time of the Great Awakening. As they had watched their strength and prosperity grow immeasurably over the previous eighty years, members of the Puritan community had gradually become complacent, at least in the eyes of some of the more strongly committed religious leaders. The Great Awakening in the early 1700’s was a period of religious fervor in which Puritanical principles took on evangelical overtones as ministers threatened hellfire and damnation for all who did not receive the grace of God. Even those who were successful economically and important members of the church community—traditionally seen as signs that they were among God’s chosen elect—were frightened into believing that their salvation was in question if their commitment to God was not genuine and total. In this story, Irving seems to be commenting on this religious revival, which was essentially the last gasp of Puritanism in American history.

2. What is supposed to be hidden under one of the big trees beside the inlet? Why is that a good hiding place?

A great treasure buried by Captain Kidd the pirate is supposed to be under one of the huge old oaks on the high ridge. The site was selected because it was easily accessible by water (the money was brought directly to the foot of the hill by boat at night), it afforded a good lookout because of the elevation, and the trees were easily identifiable landmarks because they were so few and so large. (p.98)

3. What happened to the person who hid it there? Who supposedly watches over the money?

The legend is that Captain Kidd was taken captive shortly after hiding the money. Kidd never returned to retrieve the treasure because he was sent to England, tried, and hanged for being a pirate. The devil supposedly was present when the money was hidden and has taken it under his care. This is presumed to be the case since the devil would lay his claim to any money gotten by evil means. (p.99)

4. What bad trait do both Tom Walker and his wife have? How is this trait shown in the way they collect eggs?

Tom and his wife are both misers. They are so intent on hanging on to every little bit of wealth they might acquire that they are even in competition against each other and plot and plan to steal from each other. As soon as a hen cackles, indicating it has laid an egg, Dame Walker would pounce on the “treasure” and hide it away. Then Tom would go rooting about trying to find her secret hiding places. Instead of working together and sharing their resources as two people should in a marriage, they are constantly in conflict with each of them wanting everything for himself or herself.

5. What evidence is there that Tom and his wife are always fighting?

Dame Walker is described as a “nagging woman with a fierce temper, a loud tongue, and a strong arm”(p.100). Whenever anyone happened to pass by their house, evidence of their miserliness was clear in the run-down condition of the house itself and of the poor, starving livestock. But further evidence of their stormy relationship came from the sounds of “wordy warfare”(p.100). In addition to engaging in loud quarreling, apparently his wife often actually physically attacked Tom for “his face sometimes showed signs that their conflicts were not confined to words”(p.100).

6. Why does Tom walk through the swamp on the way home one day? Why does the author say it was an “ill-chosen route”?

In keeping with his miserliness, Tom is taking a route that he thinks will be shorter and thus save him precious time. However, the route leads through a dark, overgrown swamp, full of quagmires of “smothering mud” and “dark and stagnant pools” (p.100). Tom has to pick his way carefully because the path is so precarious, and it clearly was foolish to subject himself to all of these dangers just to satisfy his need to feel he has gotten the best of any situation. Irving extends this lesson about considering the consequences of our choices with the wonderfully wise commentary, “like most shortcuts, it was an ill-chosen route” (p.100).

7. Where does Tom pause to rest? Why would most people not have stopped there?

It is getting late in the evening and Tom is growing tired from his journey, so he rests when he gets to a firm piece of ground. This peninsula of earth in the midst of the swamp had been where the Indians had retreated in their wars against the colonists. There had once been an Indian fort on that spot, but only a few mounds of earth remained. However, everyone knew about this place and stories were told in the area of how the Indians had “made sacrifices to the evil spirit here” (p.101), so most people would have been frightened to stay there. Tom thinks himself superior to any such concerns and seems unaffected by the frightening, melancholy atmosphere of the

place.

8. What does Tom discover in the ground at his feet? What happens when he kicks it?

Tom had been entertaining himself by prodding at the earth with his walking stick when he discovers something hard. When he uncovers it, he finds a skull with a tomahawk buried in it. Rather than feeling frightened by this sight or at all reverential about the human life it represents, Tom just lets out a “humph!” and kicks at the skull. As soon as he kicks it, he hears a voice saying, “Let that skull alone!” (p.102) and looks up to discover a large black figure sitting on a tree stump directly across from him.

9. What two things surprise Tom about the figure seated on the stump of the tree?

First he is surprised because he had assumed he was alone and had not heard or seen anyone approaching. Although the man is described as black, the darkness of his skin turns out to be from soot “as if he toiled among fires and forges” (p.102). The fact that he has “a pair of great red eyes” completes the depiction of this figure as the devil. Although Irving identifies him as the devil for the reader, Tom apparently has not yet figured out who this is; however, it is quite possible that Tom would not have treated him with any more respect even if he had known that he was the devil.

10. Why does the devil say that Deacon Peabody will be damned? What else do we learn Deacon Peabody has done which might be seen as a sin?

When the devil says “What are you doing on my grounds?” (p.102), Tom claims that he has as much right to be there as the devil since the property actually belongs to the Deacon rather than to either of them. However, the devil suggests that the land will soon be his because the Deacon will soon die and go to hell. This is a shocking statement, since the Deacon is an important officer of the church. However, the devil suggests that the Deacon is a hypocrite, who concerns himself with the sins of others while he has sins of his own for which he should repent. This sort of attempt to prove your own virtue by pointing out the failings of others had traditionally plagued the Puritan community and was largely behind the Salem Witch trials in the 1690’s. Irving also notes that Deacon Peabody’s wealth had largely come as a result of “driving shrewd bargains with the Indians”(p.103). Clearly the Deacon has not earned his status through hard work and devotion to God, but instead by taking advantage of other people. The fact that Irving sympathizes with the plight of the Native Americans at this early date is interesting, since most people at the time would have dismissed them as savages with no real right to ownership of the land in the first place.

11. What does the tree with Deacon Peabody's name on it show about him? (How is it used as a symbol of his character?)

When the devil says, "Look yonder and see how Deacon Peabody is faring" (p.102), he points toward one of the great trees which Tom notes has the Deacon's name carved on it. Although it is a large tree and appears to be flourishing, when looked at more closely, it is evident that the tree is "rotten at the core" and that it has been nearly chopped through "so that the first high wind was likely to blow it down" (p.103). This is a wonderful use of symbolism to show that the Deacon is not the strong, solid, good citizen he appears to be on the outside. Despite his wealth and importance, he is really a secret sinner and the weakness inside him will cause him to collapse under the least bit of pressure from external forces.

12. After the devil cuts down a tree, what does he do with it? What is that a symbol of?

The devil is depicted as a woodsman ("he carried an axe on his shoulder" (p.102)) who cuts down trees for firewood. Most of the tall trees in the area have the name of some great man of the colony carved into them. When a tree is cut down, that represents the death of that person. Presumably when the tree is burned for firewood, that represents that person's soul burning in hell for the sins he/she has committed.

13. What sorts of activities does the devil describe himself doing? What do those activities show about him?

The devil's catalogue of his activities gives Irving a chance to comment on human behavior that he sees as motivated by evil. The devil proudly suggests that the savagery of the Native Americans was inspired by a worship of him: "The Indians made this spot sacred to me, and they now and then roasted a white man in sacrifice" (p.104). Although this depiction of the Native Americans as evil would have been commonly accepted by contemporary readers, Irving then goes on to comment on the behavior of the white settlers, which he clearly found no less evil. The devil refers to the settlers as "white savages" and specifically describes their treatment of the Native Americans as "extermination." Then the devil goes on to claim that he is the one behind the persecution of Quakers and Anabaptists. Irving's rather radical commentary is that the intolerance of many of the early settlers (especially the Puritans) was as evil as anything the Indians practiced. Irving's criticism of intolerance and depiction of the evil of abusing anyone who is different is reinforced when the devil claims to have been the "patron of slave dealers and the grand master of the Salem witches" (p.104).

14. What would most people's reaction have been to meeting this stranger? Why doesn't Tom react this way?

Meeting someone who gleefully claims credit for causing so much pain and suffering would certainly have intimidated most people. In addition, the fact that the meeting takes place "in this wild, lonely place would have shaken any man's nerves" (p.104). Tom, however, is so full of himself that he is not frightened of anything. He also has been toughened by the abuse he has taken from his wife over the years and believes he can suffer through anything: "Tom was a hard-minded fellow, and he had lived so long with a scolding wife that he did not even fear the devil" (p.104).

15. What does the devil offer Tom? What does the devil want in exchange?

The devil offers Tom access to all of the money buried by Captain Kidd in the swamp. He definitely has conditions that he requires be met before he will give Tom the money, but the exact nature of those conditions "Tom never disclosed." All we are told is that "they must have been very hard, for [Tom] required time to think of them, and he was not a man to hesitate where money was in view." (p.104-105). Later, when Tom actually negotiates his deal with the devil, we are told "there was one condition, which need not be mentioned, being generally understood in all cases where the devil grants favors" (p.109). The note on that page explains to students the basic Faustian principle that whatever you get from the devil is gained at the price of losing your own soul, but this idea may need to be explained in more detail to students.

16. What proof does the devil give Tom that what he has said is true? What does his wife tell him that convinces Tom that "all he had heard and seen was no illusion" (p.105)?

In answer to Tom's query as to proof, the devil presses his finger to Tom's forehead and makes a mark, which he refers to as his signature. The devil then walks away, and as Tom watches he seems to disappear down into the earth. When Tom gets home, he finds he cannot remove the black fingerprint from this forehead. This mark on Tom's forehead (which indicates he has been touched by evil) may well be an allusion to the mark that God places on Cain to identify him as evil after killing his brother. If Tom had any lingering doubts about the devil's identity, they are removed when his wife tells him the news that Absalom Crowninshield has just suddenly died. Since Tom had seen in the swamp the devil sitting on the stump of a tree that he had just cut down and which bore the name of Crowninshield (who not only had earned his riches by buccaneering but who also "made a vulgar display of wealth" and was thus doubly sinful) and the devil had triumphantly proclaimed the wood ready for burning, he is convinced of the devil's agency at work.

17. When his wife hears Tom's story, what is her reaction? How does this change Tom's attitude?

Tom's wife is excited by the mention of all that gold and tells Tom he should do whatever the devil asks so that they can be wealthy. Tom's response shows the depth of the antagonism between them: "although Tom might have felt willing to sell himself to the devil, he was determined not to do so to please his wife" (p.106). He has no real qualms about a pact with the devil that presumably would cost him his soul, but the very fact that his wife wants him to do so makes him determined not to comply. It is ironic that his decision not to embrace evil comes not out of any good inside of him but rather out of his stubborn, spiteful refusal "to be damned to please her"(p.106).

18. What happens in Tom's wife's first encounter with the devil? What does she take the second time?

It is interesting that Irving chooses a third person limited narration and doesn't actually depict either of Dame Walker's actual meetings with the devil. We are only told that "when she came back after many hours she was reserved and sullen in her replies" (p.106). Apparently the devil would not give her what she wants unless she brings him something, but she won't tell Tom what that something is. The second time she goes off "with her apron heavily laden" (p.106), presumably with whatever the devil has asked for. Sometime later Tom discovers that she has taken the silver teapot and spoons and anything else that was valuable that she could carry. His concern about her safety when she doesn't return after a full day seems to arise mostly out of his concern for the missing valuables.

19. What does Tom see up in a tree when he is looking for his wife? What is his reaction? Why?

Tom searches in the area of the Indian fort in vain for several hours, but then the caw of crows directs his eyes to this tree. When he sees his wife's apron tied in a bundle hanging in the branches, he is overjoyed (even though the bundle is guarded by a vulture) because he assumes he has found the household valuables (which were all he really cared about finding).(" Let us get hold of the property and we will do without the woman.")(p.107)

20. What different clues does Tom find of what happened to his wife?

When Tom opens up the bundle, rather than finding all of the household silver he finds a heart and liver—presumably those of his wife. This gory finding seems to have no effect on Tom (although it tends to shock readers). He just assumes that the devil would not put

up with her abuse; “though a female scold is generally considered a match for the devil, in this instance she appears to have had the worst of it” (p.108). Tom also, however, finds evidence that she at least put up a good fight for he finds many prints of the devil’s cloven feet suggesting a prolonged contest and he even finds handfuls of hair that looked like they had belonged to the devil. Amusingly, Irving has Tom commiserate with the devil’s plight: “Egad! He must have had a tough time of it!” (p.108)

21. How does Tom feel about the devil after this incident?

In addition to sympathizing with the devil because of the fight he had on his hands, he respects the devil for getting the better of Dame Walker (which Tom had never been able to do). Tom’s main feeling is gratitude because he is so glad to be rid of his shrewish wife. As Irving amusingly puts it, “Tom consoled himself for the loss of his property with the loss of his wife, for he was a man of fortitude” (p.108). Apparently thinking of the devil as a kindred spirit who has done him a favor, he tries to “cultivate a further acquaintance with him” (p.108). This depiction of Dame Walker as the main source of suffering in Tom’s life evokes comparisons to Dame Van Winkle as the bane of Rip’s existence, and sometimes leads critics to charges of misogyny against Irving.

22. How does the devil play hard to get? How is that different from the image generally presented of how the devil operates?

Despite Tom’s attempts to become better acquainted, the devil makes himself scarce. This, of course, just has the effect of making Tom even more eager for a relationship. As Irving says, “whatever people may think, the devil is not always easy to call upon. He knows how to play his cards when pretty sure of his game”(p.108). Like a good flirt, he knows how attractive what he has to offer is to Tom, so he withholds his presence until “delay had whetted Tom’s eagerness to the quick and prepared him to agree to anything to gain the promised treasure” (p.108). The usual image of the devil is one of actively tempting (even forcing) people to sin; the classic excuse is “the devil made me do it!” However, Irving is clearly suggesting that it is people who pursue evil and choose to sin on their own.

23. What different ideas does the devil suggest for how the money should be used? What is Tom’s response to each?

The devil insists that the money “be employed in his service”(p.109); in other words it should be actively used to promote evil. It is not enough just to be rich; Tom must use the money to make other people miserable. The devil’s first suggestion is that Tom become a slave trader, but surprisingly Tom refuses to do this. Clearly Irving is making the rather radical comment for the time that slavery is evil—in fact, so heinous that even Tom Walker won’t allow himself to sink to it (“He knew he was already bad enough as he was” (p.109)). Of course, historically many Puritans were rather self-righteous in their condemnation of the slave trade even though their own treatment of the Native Americans

could have been considered a comparable injustice. Tom Walker is being just as hypocritical as the Puritans in condemning one wrong and not the other. The devil, however, is quick to suggest a more “socially acceptable” way of enslaving people—through the lending of money. To the devil’s suggestion that he become an usurer, Tom has no objections. In fact, he is quick to say he will take even more advantage of those to whom he lends money than the devil originally proposes. He volunteers to charge a more onerous four percent than the two percent interest the devil had suggested and claims that he will not merely drive people to bankruptcy but actively drive them to the devil, presumably by making them do evil things in order to recoup their losses and get out of debt. This scathing portrayal of the corrupting effects of money and especially of money lending is as close to social criticism as this genial storyteller Irving ever gets.

24. Why is it a particularly good time for Tom to undertake his new career?

Tom sets up shop during hard times when many people are “driven to raise money by desperate means and desperate sacrifices” (p.111) and so are willing to pay his high interest rates. Of course, inevitably they are unable to make their payments and then Tom forecloses on the loan and takes all of the assets that they have left. The reason that so many people are in debt is that there has just been a period of land speculation, in which everyone had been buying land like crazy, hoping to get lucky and make a fortune from a small investment. Irving’s reference to these investment schemes as “speculating fever” (p.111) makes clear his feeling that the desire for wealth is a dangerous disease. Greed is portrayed as a sickness that consumes people and destroys their lives as well as their values.

25. How does Tom become rich? How does he spend his money? What shows he is still a miser?

Tom takes advantage of the number of people desperately needing loans to make a healthy profit: “He always demanded good pay and good security. The more distressed the applicant, the harder Tom’s terms” (p.111). Because they are so desperate, his customers will agree to anything to get the loan. Then, when they cannot keep up with their payments, Tom gets all of the other assets they have given him as their security as well as the payments (on the capital and interest) that they had made so far. Tom shows off his new wealth with a very large house and other fancy displays of his status, such as a carriage. However, he leaves the house “unfinished and unfurnished” (p.112) because he is too stingy to spend the money necessary to complete it, and he starves the poor horses and doesn’t take care of maintenance on the carriage. These are wonderful images to show how empty and incomplete his life is; even though he has the money he has always craved, it can only provide him with a hollow show that does not satisfy and life (like the wheels) still does not run smoothly.

26. When he gets old, what different things does he do to avoid keeping his end of the

bargain he had made with the devil?

As he approaches death, Tom becomes more and more aware of the consequences he will soon suffer. In an attempt to save himself from burning in hell, he undergoes a sudden, violent conversion and becomes intensely religious. Irving's portrait of Tom's attempts to prove how religious he is are a scathing commentary on all religious hypocrites who concern themselves more with outward shows of their devotion than with true belief. Tom becomes a "violent" churchgoer, loudly professing his faith (in marked contrast with the 'good Christians who had been modestly and steadfastly making their way toward heaven' (p.112)). He seems to see salvation as a competition with his neighbors rather than a result of his own actions, thinking "every sin in their account became a credit on his own side of the page" (p.112). Irving's criticism seems to be directed at the tendency (especially among Puritans) to be more concerned with the morality of others than with living up to high moral standards in your own conduct. Tom also makes sure that he always has a Bible easily accessible, as if to suggest that the power of its physical presence would be enough to thwart the devil (rather than realizing that only by following the teachings of the Bible could he be saved). Perhaps the most bizarre detail, that even those at the time thought proved he had grown "a little crack-brained in his old days" (p.113) was that he buried his horse upside down. Following the common superstition that at the end of the world everything would be turned topsy-turvy, he has gotten his horse ready so that he can jump on and take off when the apocalypse occurs.

27. What favor does a customer ask on Tom's last day of life? Why does he think Tom might grant it?

One day when Tom is sitting in his counting house (evoking the classic image of the miser counting his money over and over), a customer approaches whose mortgage Tom is about to foreclose. "The poor man begged him for a few more months to pay off his debt" (p.114), but Tom is unwilling to give the man even one more day to make his payment. In the past, Tom "had professed the greatest friendship" (p.114) for this man, but his reaction is one of annoyance rather than the sympathy the man might have expected from these past avowals of friendship.

28. What is Tom's response to this customer's request? What happens immediately after? Why?

When the man pitifully proclaims, "My family will be ruined" (p.114), Tom replies "Charity begins at home...I must take care of myself in these hard times" (p.114). It will probably be necessary to explain that the actual intention of the old saying "Charity begins at home" is that you should be more concerned with helping those who are close by, rather than salving your conscience by sending money to people suffering far away. It is much harder to make the commitment to help those whose suffering close to home because you cannot choose to limit your attention to what is convenient for you and ignore their needs at other times. Irving's rather heavy-handed use of irony in this reversal of meaning (as

well as the reversal earlier of the meaning of being “a friend in need” (which Tom twists to mean his own needs)) may be lost on students who don’t understand the original saying. However, students should be able to see Tom’s hypocrisy in crying poverty when he actually is profiting handsomely during “these hard times”(p.114). When the man goes on to point out, “You have made so much money out of me,” Tom blatantly lies by denying that he has done so. However, by saying “The devil take me if I have made a penny” he goes one step too far and seals his own doom with the oath. With sophisticated students teachers might point this out as a wonderful example of dramatic irony in which a character inadvertently speaks the truth, foreshadowing events of which he is unaware. The Bibles Tom had counted on to protect him are not accessible—one is deep in the pocket of his coat (abandoned on this hot day) and the other is “buried under the mortgage he was about to foreclose” (p.114). Clearly, despite all of his superficial precautions, he has brought his own fate upon himself.

29. What is the last anyone sees of Tom?

The devil grabs Tom, who is taken totally unaware, and puts him on the back of his horse. The last the clerks see of him is galloping away, totally out of control, out of town. A countryman later reports seeing this same wild figure on a horse that “galloped like mad” (p.115) heading into the swamp, which was then set ablaze by a thunderbolt.

30. What has happened to Tom’s wealth by the end of the story?

When the trustees go to administer his estate, they find that all his wealth has disappeared. The bonds and mortgages in his vault have turned into ashes. The gold and silver has been transformed into chips of wood. The half-starved horse are now just skeletons, and his house burns to the ground the next day. (p.116)

## **Answers to Discussion Questions “The Devil and Tom Walker”**

1. How do Tom Walker’s possessions show what sort of a person he is?

Reading questions 4, 5, and 25 all deal with this topic. Students should be able to point to details taken from the wonderful paragraph describing the Walker home on p.99: “They lived in a forlorn-looking house that stood alone and had an air of starvation. A few straggling trees grew near it; no smoke ever curled from its chimney; no traveler stopped at its door. A miserable horse, whose ribs were as plain to see as the bars of a grill, stalked about a field where a thin carpet of moss tantalized his hunger. Sometimes he would lean his head over the fence, look sadly at the passerby, and seem to ask deliverance from this famine.”

2. What shows that Tom isn’t really sincere in the changes he makes near the end of his life?

The hypocrisy of his actions is pointed out in the answer to Reading Comprehension question 26. The fact that all that he does is merely for show is made most clear by the fact that his attitudes and practices do not really change at all despite all he does to give the appearance of being religious. He would often be found reading the Bible, but it had no effect on his morality; when customers would come, he would “take advantage” of them as he had always done rather than practice the Christian charity he was presumably reading about.

3. What is the lesson that the story teaches?

Since all of the things he has worked for have simply disappeared, one of the obvious lessons is that money won’t give you anything real or of substance. Irving specifically directs the tale at those who make their living from loaning money, saying, “Let all money brokers take this story to hear. The truth of it is not to be doubted” (p.116). Another lesson would seem to be that you cannot get out of a deal with the devil, no matter what you do. The only way to escape the clutches of the devil is to avoid evil and truly embrace good.

4. Do you believe that money is the most important thing in life? If so, why? If not, what is more important?

Answers will vary, but students who have understood the point of the story will presumably not pick money as the most important thing in life.

## **VOCABULARY EXERCISES**

### **“The Legend of Sleepy Hollow”**

Look up each of the following words in a dictionary. Be sure to choose the definition that fits the part of speech indicated for each word. Write the definition next to each word.

1. CONQUEST - noun -
2. DILIGENT - adjective -
3. DROWSY - adjective
4. HAUNT - verb -
5. LINGER -verb -
6. PERCEIVE - verb -
7. PSALM - noun -
8. QUEST - noun -
9. RIVAL - noun -
10. RUSTIC - adjective
11. SPECTER - noun -
12. SPECULATE - verb -
13. SUFFICIENT - adjective -
14. SUPERSTITION - noun -
15. VICINITY - noun

## Part I: MATCHING DEFINITIONS

Write the letter of the correct definition in the blank next to each word.

- |                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| 1. ____ CONQUEST      | A. to remain; to stay awhile; to put off leaving   |
| 2. ____ DILIGENT      | B. to visit or appear often in the form of a ghost: to be continually present; to reappear continually |
| 3. ____ DROWSY        | C. ready to fall asleep; sleepy; half-asleep; dull with sleepiness                                     |
| 4. ____ HAUNT         | D. the area near or about a place; neighborhood; surrounding area; nearby region                       |
| 5. ____ LINGER        | E. a search to find something; an adventure by a knight  |
| 6. ____ PERCEIVE      | F. a ghost; a phantom; a visible, disembodied spirit   |
| 7. ____ PSALM         | G. enough to accomplish a purpose; adequate; as much as needed   |
| 8. ____ QUEST         | H. having to do with the country; typical of country unpolished, or unsophisticated                    |
| 9. ____ RIVAL         | I. a sacred song; a hymn for church  |
| 10. ____ RUSTIC       | J. to guess; to think about using reason; to come up with a theory                                     |
| 11. ____ SPECTER      | K. to become aware of; to take notice of; to observe; to understand; to form an idea of                |
| 12. ____ SPECULATE    | L. a competitor; someone who tries to equal or outdo another   |
| 13. ____ SUFFICIENT   | M. a belief about the fearful nature of something; a belief based on faith in magic rather than reason |
| 14. ____ SUPERSTITION | N. hard-working; constant in effort to do something  |
| 15. ____ VICINITY     | O. the act of winning something; something gotten by force; victory                                    |

## Part II: SENTENCE COMPLETION

The sentences below are all taken from the story. Fill in each blank with a word from the list. Each word will only be used once. If the word changes form, the correct ending for the word is indicated in brackets ([ ]) at the end of the blank.

1. When they are telling tales at Van Tassel's party "most of the stories turned upon the favorite \_\_\_\_\_ of Sleepy Hollow, the headless horseman." (p.30)

2. The dominant spirit that \_\_\_\_\_[s] this enchanted region is a headless figure on horseback. (p.2)

3. The headless horseman's "haunts are not confined to the valley, but extend at times to the adjacent roads, and especially to the \_\_\_\_\_ of a local church."(p.3)

4. "Indeed, some local historians claim that the body of the [headless horseman] was buried in the churchyard and the ghost rides to the scene of battle every night in \_\_\_\_\_ of his head."(p.3)

5. Irving explains that the people who lived in Sleepy Hollow had lots of wonderful ghost stories because "local tales and \_\_\_\_\_[s] thrive best in these sheltered, long settled retreats."(p.29)

6. "All these tales, told in that \_\_\_\_\_ undertone with which men talk in the dark, sank deep in the mind of Ichabod." (p.31)

7. "In addition to [Ichabod's] other work, he was the singing master, and picked up many bright shillings by instructing the young folks in singing \_\_\_\_\_[s]." (p.7)

8. "The income from his school was small, and would have been scarcely \_\_\_\_\_ to furnish him with daily bread, for he was a huge feeder."

(p.7)

9. The name of the port known as Tarry Town "was given, we are told by the housewives of the nearby country, from the habit of their husbands to

\_\_\_\_\_ about the village tavern on market days." (p.1)

10. Ichabod is very attracted to Katrina because of her father's wealth, so "when he entered the house, the \_\_\_\_\_ of his heart was complete." (p.18)

11. In trying to win the heart of Katrina, acknowledged belle of the countryside, Ichabod "had to face a host of \_\_\_\_\_ admirers who kept a watchful and angry eye upon each other, ready to fly in common cause against any new competitor." (p.19)

12. "When Brom's horse was seen tied to Van Tassel's fence on a Sunday night, all other suitors passed by in despair. Such was the \_\_\_\_\_ with whom Ichabod Crane had to contend." (p.20-21)

13. When Ichabod approaches Major Andre's tree, he thinks he sees "something white hanging in the midst of the tree. He paused and ceased whistling, but on looking more closely, he \_\_\_\_\_[ed] that it was a place where the tree had been scathed by lightning, and the white wood laid bare." (p.33)

14. When his horse returns without him and Ichabod himself does not show up the next day to teach school, "Hans Van Ripper now began to feel uneasy about the fate of poor Ichabod and his saddle. In a \_\_\_\_\_ search on foot, they came upon his traces." (p.40)

15. When Ichabod disappears, “the mysterious event caused much  
\_\_\_\_\_ [ion] at church the following Sunday.” (p.42)

### **Part III: APPLICATION**

#### **“The Legend of Sleepy Hollow”**

Use a complete sentence to answer each of the questions below in the blank provided.

1. If you are being DILIGENT in school, what grade would you get for effort?
2. Where would you see a RUSTIC building?
3. Describe some landmark in the VICINITY of your school.
4. What is the name of the biggest RIVAL of your favorite sports team?
5. Where would you be most likely to hear a PSALM?
6. How would you react if you saw a SPECTER?
7. Lots of people have superstitions, like rubbing a rabbit’s foot for good luck. What is one other SUPERSTITION that you have heard of?
8. If you are feeling DROWSY, what are you about to do?
9. Describe some place that you like to LINGER.

10. If you have a SUFFICIENT amount of food on your plate, what would you do if food is passed to you?
  
11. What CONQUEST does Ichabod hope to make at Van Tassel's party?
  
12. What does Ichabod's horse PERCEIVE when it gets to the bridge leading into Wiley's Swamp?
  
13. What QUEST does Hans Van Ripper go on after Ichabod disappears?
  
14. What SPECULATION can you make about the smashed pumpkin that is found beside Ichabod's hat?
  
15. What specific place did Major Andre's SPECTER HAUNT?

## Answers to Vocabulary Exercises: “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow”

### Part I:

1. O
2. N
3. C
4. B
5. A
6. K
7. I
8. E
9. L
10. H
11. F
12. J
13. G
14. M
15. D

### Part II:

1. specter
2. haunt[s]
3. vicinity
4. quest
5. superstition[s]
6. drowsy
7. psalm[s]
8. sufficient
9. linger
10. conquest
11. rustic
12. rival
13. perceiv[ed]
14. diligent
15. speculat[ion]

Part III:

(answers will vary for most; those left blank are entirely up to the individual student)

1. an "A"
2. in the country
- 3.
- 4.
5. in church
6. probably scared
- 7.
8. fall asleep
- 9.
10. probably not take any
11. Katrina's heart
12. something that frightens him
13. a search for his saddle
14. thrown by Brom
15. the tree where he was captured

## VOCABULARY EXERCISES

### “Rip Van Winkle”

Look up each of the following words in a dictionary. Be sure to choose the definition that fits the part of speech indicated for each word. Write the definition next to each word.

1. ALLY -noun -
2. ANTIQUE - adjective -
3. BEWILDER - verb -
4. CONTENTMENT - noun -
5. DESPAIR - noun -
6. DREAD - verb
7. GRAVE - adjective -
8. IDLE - adjective -
9. MEEK - adjective -
10. MISCHIEF - noun -
11. PRECEDE - verb -
12. RECOLLECT - verb -
13. STOUT - adjective -
14. TOIL - verb -
15. VIGIL - noun -

## Part I: MATCHING DEFINITIONS: “Rip Van Winkle”

Write the letter of the correct definition in the blank next to each word.

- |                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| 1. _____ ALLY        | A. to remember; to recover knowledge; to recall to mind                             |
| 2. _____ ANTIQUE     | B. harm or trouble; a cause of minor injury or annoyance                            |
| 3. _____ BEWILDER    | C. gentle; mild; without spirit or courage; humbly patient                          |
| 4. _____ CONTENTMENT | D. an act of wakeful watching (often when sleep is customary, a period of observing |
| 5. _____ DESPAIR     | E. modest satisfaction; happiness with what one has; ease of mind                   |
| 6. _____ DREAD       | F. to confuse or puzzle entirely  |
| 7. _____ GRAVE       | G. someone on your side; someone united with another; a friend                      |
| 8. _____ IDLE        | H. to fear greatly; to feel extreme reluctance to meet face to face                 |
| 9. _____ MEEK        | I. not working; not active; worthless; useless; lazy                                |
| 10. _____ MISCHIEF   | J. to come before; to be or go ahead of or in front of                              |
| 11. _____ PRECEDE    | K. loss of hope; depression; feeling of being defeated; hopelessness                |
| 12. _____ RECOLLECT  | L. serious; weighty or important; solemn or somber; threatening harm or danger      |
| 13. _____ STOUT      | M. to work hard and long; to put in great effort                                    |
| 14. _____ TOIL       | N. ancient; belonging to the past; old-fashioned                                    |
| 15. _____ VIGIL      | O. thick or bulky in figure; solid and heavy; sturdy; strong; plump                 |

## Part II: SENTENCE COMPLETION

### “Rip Van Winkle”

The sentences below are all taken from the story. Fill in each blank with a word from the list. Each word will only be used once. If the word changes form, the correct ending for the word is indicated in brackets ([ ]) at the end of the blank.

1. Rip Van Winkle is described as “a kind neighbor and an obedient, henpecked husband. He had a \_\_\_\_\_[ness] of spirit which gained him wide popularity, for the men most likely to be pleasing abroad are under the strict discipline of wives at home.”(p.46)

2. “If left to himself, he would have whistled away his life in perfect \_\_\_\_\_, but his wife continually complained in his ears about his idleness, his carelessness, and the ruin he was bringing on his family.”(p.49)

3. Rip’s only \_\_\_\_\_ at home was his dog Wolf, who was as much henpecked as his master, for Dame Van Winkle regarded them as companions in idleness. (p.49)

4. When Rip hears his name called in the mountains, he “saw a strange figure slowly \_\_\_\_\_[ing] up the rocks and bending under the weight of something he carried on his back.” (p.54)

5. One of the things that makes this figure so unusual is that “his dress was of \_\_\_\_\_ Dutch fashion: a cloth jerkin strapped round his waist, and breeches decorated with rows of buttons down the side.” (p.54)

6. The commander of the group of little men playing ninepins was “a \_\_\_\_\_ old gentleman, with a weatherbeaten face.” (p.55)

7. “What seemed particularly odd to Rip was that though these folks were amusing

themselves, they maintained the \_\_\_\_\_[est] faces, the most mysterious silence, and were, in fact, the most melancholy party he had ever witnessed.”(p.56)

8. When Rip wakes up and tries to find the little men again, “he found the gully up which he and his companion had climbed the \_\_\_\_\_[ing] evening, but to his astonishment a mountain stream was now foaming down it, leaping from rock to rock, and filling the glen with babbling murmurs.”(p.58)

9. Even though he cannot find the little men, Rip didn’t want to go home since he grieved to give up his dog and gun; he \_\_\_\_\_[ed] to meet his wife; but it would not do to starve in the mountains. (p.59)

10. Rip is confused when he returns home because he doesn’t meet anyone he knows: “there was as usual a crowd of folk about the door [of the inn], but none that Rip \_\_\_\_\_[ed].”(p.62)

11. When all of the people he asks about turn out to be long gone, eventually Rip had no courage to ask after any more friends, but cried out in \_\_\_\_\_, “Does nobody here know Rip Van Winkle?”(p.64)

12. When people point to the figure leaning against the tree who looks just like himself, Rip was “completely confounded. He doubted his own identity. In the midst of his \_\_\_\_\_[ment] the man in the cocked hat demanded who he was and what was his name?”(p.65)

13. After Rip tells his story, the people in the village think he has gone crazy, so they whisper among themselves “about securing the gun and keeping the old fellow from doing \_\_\_\_\_.”(p.65)

14. Although Rip’s story of meeting this company of little men bowling in the mountains seems crazy to the people in the village, old Peter Vanderdonk “affirmed

that the great Henry Hudson, the first discoverer of the river and country, kept a kind of \_\_\_\_\_ there every twenty years, with the crew of his ship, the Half Moon.”(p.68)

15. By the end of the story Rip is quite contented, for “having nothing to do at home, and having arrived at that happy age when a man is allowed to be \_\_\_\_\_, he took his place once more on the bench at the inn door.”(p.70)

### **Part III: APPLICATION: “Rip Van Winkle”**

Use a complete sentence to answer each of the questions below in the blank provided.

1. What letter PRECEDES the letter “F” in the alphabet?
  
2. On what night would you be likely to keep a VIGIL for Santa Claus?
  
3. What is one time in the past when you were MEEK? Why?
  
4. If a person feels CONTENTMENT, would he/she want things to change?
  
5. What country was an ALLY of America during the Revolutionary War?
  
6. Are you IDLE while you are doing these vocabulary exercises?
  
7. Why might you not want to sit on an ANTIQUE chair?
  
8. In what situation might a person have a GRAVE look on his/her face?
  
9. Whom do you know who is STOUT?
  
10. What is one example of MISCHIEF that would get you in trouble at school?

11. What is one time in the story that Rip is willing to TOIL?
12. When does Rip feel DESPAIR?
13. What does Rip DREAD?
14. Why does Rip feel BEWILDERMENT when he strokes his chin?
15. What does Rip's daughter RECOLLECT about what happened to her father?

## Answers to Vocabulary Exercises: “Rip Van Winkle”

### Part I:

1. G
2. N
3. F
4. E
5. K
6. H
7. L
8. I
9. C
10. B
11. J
12. A
13. O
14. M
15. D

### Part II:

1. meek[ness]
2. contentment
3. ally
4. toil[ing]
5. antique
6. stout
7. grav[est]
8. preced[ing]
9. dread[ed]
10. recollect[ed]
11. despair
12. bewilder[ment]
13. mischief
14. vigil
15. idle

### Part III:

(answers will vary for most; those left blank are entirely up to the individual student)

## **VOCABULARY EXERCISES: “The Specter Bridegroom”**

Look up each of the following words in a dictionary. Be sure to choose the definition that fits the part of speech indicated for each word. Write the definition next to each word.

1. APPARENT - adjective -
2. APT - adjective -
3. ASSURE - verb -
4. ASTONISH - verb -
5. DECORUM - noun -
6. DILEMMA - noun -
7. ELOQUENCE - noun -
8. FATAL - adjective -
9. FEUD - noun -
10. GALLANT - adjective -
11. HASTEN - verb -
12. HOSTILE - adjective -
13. INHERIT - verb -
14. PERPLEX - verb -
15. PROLONG - verb -

**Part I: MATCHING DEFINITIONS; “The Specter Bridegroom”**

Write the letter of the correct definition in the blank next to each word.

- |                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| 1. _____ APPARENT  | A. to receive from an ancestor  |
| 2. _____ APT       | B. a long-standing, bitter fight between two enemies; a lasting conflict                                  |
| 3. _____ ASSURE    | C. polite behavior; proper actions; the observance or the requirements of society                         |
| 4. _____ ASTONISH  | D. easily seen; plain; obvious; evident; appearing to be true or real; seeming                            |
| 5. _____ DECORUM   | E. to fill with wonder; to surprise; to amaze   |
| 6. _____ DILEMMA   | F. a problem with no solution; a choice between equally undesirable alternatives                          |
| 7. _____ ELOQUENCE | G. to confuse or puzzle; to trouble with doubts or uncertainty  |
| 8. _____ FATAL     | H. unfriendly; feeling or showing deep seated hatred  |
| 9. _____ FEUD      | I. likely; having a tendency; inclined; exactly suitable appropriate                                      |
| 10. _____ GALLANT  | J. capable of causing death; deadly; mortal; disastrous; causing ruin or destruction                      |
| 11. _____ HASTEN   | K. to hurry; to move or act quickly   |
| 12. _____ HOSTILE  | L. skill in speaking or writing; the ability to persuade with well-chosen words                           |
| 13. _____ INHERIT  | M. noble; dashing; high-spirited and brave;   |
| 14. _____ PERPLEX  | N. to lengthen; to make something last longer; to extend  |
| 15. _____ PROLONG  | O. to promise or guarantee; to cause to feel sure; to convince; to give confidence; to inform confidently |

## Part II: SENTENCE COMPLETION: “The Specter Bridegroom

The sentences below are all taken from the story. Fill in each blank with a word from the list. Each word will only be used once. If the word changes form, the correct ending for the word is indicated in brackets ( [ ] ) at the end of the blank.

1. “The Baron had \_\_\_\_\_[ed] the property, and all the pride of his ancestors,” so he had both a large estate and a lot of confidence in himself. (p.73)
2. One of the things of which he is proud is his daughter, for “all the nurses, gossips, and country cousins \_\_\_\_\_[ed] her father that she had no equal for beauty in all Germany.”(p.74)
3. The Baron’s daughter was very well-behaved because she had been raised under the strict supervision of her two aunts and she often “had lectures read to her about \_\_\_\_\_ and obedience.”(p.75)
4. “The good effects of this system were wonderfully \_\_\_\_\_. The young lady was a pattern of mildness and correctness.”(p.75)
5. “[Sir Herman Von Starkenfaust’s] father’s castle was not far distant from the old fortress of Von Landshort, although an ancient \_\_\_\_\_ caused the families to be hostile, and strangers to each other.” (p.81)
6. When Starkenfaust and the Count begin to travel together, “along the way they recollected their military adventures, but the Count was \_\_\_\_\_ to be a little tedious, now and then, about the reputed charms of his bride and the happiness that awaited him.”(p.81)
7. Starkenfaust’s “heart was heavy and his head \_\_\_\_\_[ed]”(p.83) when he accepts the dying wish of this friend the Count because he doesn’t know how he can deliver the news that the bridegroom has died.
8. Because of the feud between the two families, he knew he would have to “present himself an

uninvited guest among \_\_\_\_\_ people.”(p.83)

9. To make matters worse, not only was he their enemy, he had horrible news to tell them about the death of the Count that he knew would “dampen their festivity with tidings \_\_\_\_\_ to their hopes.”(p.83)
10. The Baron thinks the bridegroom is coming because “the sound of horns came floating from the valley, \_\_\_\_\_[ed] by the mountain echoes”(p.79); however, when the sound finally dies down and the young man still hasn’t appeared, the Baron decides to start the banquet without him.
11. Just when everyone has gotten seated to begin the meal, they hear that the guest has arrived and “the Baron \_\_\_\_\_[ed] to receive his future son-in-law” for whom he had been waiting. (p.85)
12. Starkenfaust tries to tell his host his bad news about the death of the Count, but “the Baron interrupted him with a world of compliments and greetings, for he prided himself on his courtesy and \_\_\_\_\_.” (p.86)
13. The Baron’s daughter smiles shyly and seems pleased when she meets the handsome young man who is supposed to marry her; “it was impossible for a girl of eighteen ready for love and matrimony not to be pleased with so \_\_\_\_\_ a cavalier.”(p.86)
14. When it is reported that the Baron’s daughter has disappeared, “the news was received with \_\_\_\_\_[ment]”(p.94), but the aunt thinks she knows what has happened.
15. Because the Baron thinks his daughter is either dead or married to a demon, his sad situation is described as a “heartrending \_\_\_\_\_ for a fond father.”(p.94)

### **Part III: APPLICATION: “The Specter Bridegroom”**

Use a complete sentence to answer each of the questions below in the blank provided.

1. If you are involved in a FEUD with someone, would you invite that person to your next party?
2. What is one of the rules of DECORUM at your school?
3. If you were to INHERIT one thing from your parents, what would you like it to be?
4. What it isn't APPARENT which horse crossed the finish line first, how do they decide which horse won the race?
5. What is one DILEMMA that you have faced recently?
6. When you are PERPLEXED about how to do a homework assignment, what do you need to do?
7. Would you want to work on a project with someone who is HOSTILE to you?
8. How would someone with ELOQUENCE do in a public speaking contest?
9. What is a disease that is sometimes FATAL?
10. Are you APT to get a good grade on your vocabulary test if you have studied hard?
11. Why doesn't Starckenfaust HASTEN to the banquet at the Baron's palace?

12. What is one thing Starkenfaust does that makes him GALLANT?

13. Why would the Baron's daughter have wanted to PROLONG the banquet?

14. What does her aunt ASSURE the Baron's daughter after they see the specter at midnight?

15. When is the Baron ASTONISHED?

## Answers to Vocabulary Exercises: “The Specter Bridegroom”

### Part I:

1. D
2. I
3. O
4. E
5. C
6. F
7. L
8. J
9. B
10. M
11. K
12. H
13. A
14. G
15. N

### Part II:

1. inherit[ed]
2. assur[ed]
3. decorum
4. apparent
5. feud
6. apt
7. perplex[ed]
8. hostile
9. fatal
10. prolong[ed]
11. hasten[ed]
12. eloquence
13. gallant
14. astonish[ment]
15. dilemma

### Part III:

(answers will vary for most; those left blank are entirely up to the individual student)

1. no
2. 3.
4. use a photo to determine order of finish
- 5.
6. ask for help
7. no
8. well (win?)
9. cancer
10. yes

11. he has bad news
12. he is handsome and brave to come to the hostile Baron's palace
13. she is enjoying her conversation with the gallant stranger
14. that she won't tell anyone what they saw
15. when his missing daughter appears

## VOCABULARY EXERCISES: “The Devil and Tom Walker”

Look up each of the following words in a dictionary. Be sure to choose the definition that fits the part of speech indicated for each word. Write the definition next to each word.

1. BARGAIN - noun -
2. CHARITY - noun -
3. CLAMOR - noun -
4. CONSPIRE - verb -
5. DISCLOSE - verb -
6. EXTERMINATE - verb -
7. ILLUSION - noun -
8. MEMENTO - noun -
9. MISER - noun -
10. PERSECUTE - verb -
11. PRECARIOUS - adjective -
12. REFUGE - noun -
13. SCOWL - verb -
14. TANTALIZE - verb -
15. ZEAL - noun -

## Part I: MATCHING DEFINITIONS: “The Devil and Tom Walker”

Write the letter of the correct definition in the blank next to each word.

- |                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| 1. _____ BARGAIN     | A. a greedy person; one who hoards all his/her money  |
| 2. _____ CHARITY     | B. a reminder of the past; a keepsake   |
| 3. _____ CLAMOR      | C. to look at with anger or disapproval; to draw down eyebrows in a displeased manner                       |
| 4. _____ CONSPIRE    | D. to bother persistently; to treat unfairly; to harass; to cause to suffer because of a belief; to oppress |
| 5. _____ DISCLOSE    | E. a faulty perception of reality; a false belief   |
| 6. _____ EXTERMINATE | F. a loud noise; a persistent uproar; a prolonged public outcry   |
| 7. _____ ILLUSION    | G. something bought at a low price; a deal; an agreement involving the purchase of something                |
| 8. _____ MEMENTO     | H. enthusiastic devotion to a cause; intensity; passion   |
| 9. _____ MISER       | I. generosity toward the poor; something given to the   |
| 10. _____ PERSECUTE  | J. to make known; to reveal; to expose to view  |
| 11. _____ PRECARIOUS | K. dangerously insecure or unstable; uncertain or risky   |
| 12. _____ REFUGE     | L. to get rid of by destroying completely   |
| 13. _____ SCOWL      | M. protection or shelter from danger; a place of safety   |
| 14. _____ TANTALIZE  | N. to plan or plot secretly; to work together (usually to accomplish something bad)                         |
| 15. _____ ZEAL       | O. to tempt; to torment with something that cannot be had   |

## Part II: SENTENCE COMPLETION: “The Devil and Tom Walker”

The sentences below are all taken from the story. Fill in each blank with a word from the list. Each word will only be used once. If the word changes form, the correct ending for the word is indicated in brackets ([ ]) at the end of the blank.

1. Tom, who loved money more than anything else in the world, has found the perfect mate

because “he had a wife as \_\_\_\_\_[ly] as himself.” (p.99)

2. Tom and his wife were always quarreling and getting into fights over money; in fact,

“they were so miserly that they even \_\_\_\_\_[ed] to cheat each

other.” (p.99)

3. Tom and his wife “lived in a forlorn-looking house that stood alone and had an air of

starvation....A miserable horse, whose ribs were as plain to see as the bars of a grill, stalked

about a field where a thin carpet of moss \_\_\_\_\_[ed] his hunger.”

(p.99)

4. “Tom had been picking his way cautiously through this treacherous forest, stepping from

tuft to tuft of rushes and roots which gave \_\_\_\_\_ footholds, or

pacing carefully, like a cat along the fallen trunks of trees.” (p.100)

5. Tom rests on a piece of firm ground in the middle of the swamp where the Indians “had

thrown up a kind of fort which they had used as a place of \_\_\_\_\_ for

their squaws and children” during the wars with the colonists. (p.101)

6. The skull Tom finds near the old Indian fort “was a dreary \_\_\_\_\_ of the fierce struggle that had taken place in this last foothold of the Indian warriors.” (p.101)

7. When Tom kicks the skull, the devil angrily demands, “Let that skull alone!” and “\_\_\_\_\_ [ed] at Tom with a pair of great red eyes.” (p.102)

8. The devil claims that Indians used to worship him and make sacrifices to him, but recently the devil has been more involved in the affairs of the white settlers, “since the red men have been \_\_\_\_\_ [ed] by you white savages.” (p.104)

9. When he tells Tom his history, the devil claims credit for all sorts of intolerance including the “\_\_\_\_\_ [ions] of Quakers and Anabaptists.” (p.104)

10. The mark on his forehead that cannot be washed off as well as the news that the man whose stump he saw in the swamp has since died are enough to make Tom finally “convinced that all he had heard and seen was no \_\_\_\_\_.”(p.105)

11. The devil promises to give Tom the buried treasure but only in exchange for certain things, but we do not know the exact nature of the arrangement, for “what these conditions were Tom never \_\_\_\_\_ [ed].” (p.104)

12. When Tom grows old and begins to think about dying and going to hell, “he thought with regret on the \_\_\_\_\_ he had made with the devil and set his wits to work to cheat him out of the conditions.” (p.112)

13. One way Tom tries to prove he is a good, religious man is by praying very loudly; “indeed, one might always tell when he had sinned most during the week, by the \_\_\_\_\_ of his Sunday devotion.”(p.112)

14. At the end of his life he was so enthusiastic about demonstrating his devotion to his religion that his religious “\_\_\_\_\_ became as notorious (famous) as his riches.” (p.113)

15. When one of his customers begs for a little more time to pay his loan, Tom refuses to be generous, saying “\_\_\_\_\_ begins at home... I must take care of myself in these hard times.” (p.114)

### **Part III: APPLICATION: The Devil and Tom Walker”**

Use a complete sentence to answer each of the questions below in the blank provided.

1. Describe one MEMENTO you have and when you got it.
2. What would make your teacher SCOWL at you?
3. If there is a CLAMOR in the classroom, what will the teacher probably ask the students to do?
4. What ILLUSION might you be trying to create by showing your parents only the tests with good grades?
5. For which subject in school do you have the most ZEAL?
6. When should you DISCLOSE a secret?
7. Why would an EXTERMINATOR be hired to come to your home?
8. What is one PRECARIOUS thing your parents have told you not to do?
9. Where should you not seek REFUGE during a thunderstorm?
10. How was Tantalus TANTALIZED in Greek mythology?  
(or) Why is a piece of chocolate cake TANTALIZING to someone on a diet?

11. What do the devil and Tom CONSPIRE about?
  
12. Would a miser like Tom be likely to give money to a CHARITY?
  
13. What BARGAIN does Tom make with the devil?
  
14. Whom does the devil say he had helped to PERSECUTE in the past?
  
15. How does the carriage Tom buys show he is still a MISER even when he has lots of money?

## Answers to Vocabulary Exercises: “The Devil and Tom Walker”

### Part I

1. G
2. I
3. F
4. N
5. J
6. L
7. E
8. B
9. A
10. D
11. K
12. M
13. C
14. O
15. H

### Part II:

1. miser[ly]
2. conspir[ed]
3. tantaliz[ed]
4. precarious
5. refuge
6. memento
7. scowl[ed]
8. exterminat[ed]
9. persecut[ions]
10. illusion
11. disclos[ed]
12. bargain
13. clamor
14. zeal
15. charity

### Part III:

(answers will vary for most; those left blank are entirely up to the individual student)

- 1.
- 2.
3. to be quiet
4. that you are doing better in school than you are
- 5.
6. if it puts someone in danger
7. to kill the bugs
- 8.
9. not under a tree

10. in Hades, as punishment for trying to fool the gods into eating human flesh, whenever he tries to drink, the pool of water disappears; whenever he tries to eat, the wind blows the fruit out of his reach
11. what Tom should do with the money
12. no
13. to give him his soul in exchange for the money
14. Quakers and Anabaptists
15. the horses that drew it were nearly starved to death, and he didn't grease the wheels so they screeched

