

Rip Van Winkle

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"**Rip Van Winkle**" is a short story by the American author Washington Irving, first published in 1819. It follows a Dutch-American villager in colonial America named Rip Van Winkle who meets mysterious Dutchmen, imbibes their liquor and falls asleep in the Catskill Mountains. He awakes 20 years later to a very changed world, having missed the American Revolution.

"Rip Van Winkle" is set in the years before and after the American Revolutionary War in a village at the foot of New York's Catskill Mountains where Rip Van Winkle, a Dutch-American villager, lives. One autumn day, Van Winkle wanders into the mountains with his dog Wolf to escape his wife's nagging. He hears his name called out and sees a man wearing antiquated Dutch clothing; he is carrying a keg up the mountain and requires help. Together, the man and Wolf proceed to a hollow in which Rip discovers the source of thunderous noises: a group of ornately dressed and bearded men who are playing nine-pins.

Van Winkle does not ask who they are or how they know his name. Instead, he begins to drink some of their liquor and soon falls asleep. When he awakens on the mountain, he discovers shocking changes: his musket is rotting and rusty, his beard is a foot long, and his dog is nowhere to be found. He returns to his village, where he recognizes no one. He arrives just after an election, and people ask how he voted. Never having cast a ballot in his life, he proclaims himself a faithful subject of King George III, unaware that the American Revolution has taken place, and nearly gets himself into trouble with the townspeople until one elderly woman recognizes him as the long-lost Rip Van Winkle.

King George's portrait on the inn's sign has been replaced with one of George Washington. Van Winkle learns that most of his friends were killed fighting in the American Revolution. He is also disturbed to find another man called Rip Van Winkle; it is his son, now grown up. Van Winkle also discovers that his wife died some time ago, but he is not saddened by the news. He learns that the men whom he met in the mountains are rumored to be ghosts of the crew of the *Halve Maen*, captained by English sea explorer Henry Hudson. He also realizes that he has been away from the village for at least 20 years. His grown daughter takes him in and he resumes his usual idleness. His strange tale is solemnly taken to heart by the Dutch settlers, particularly by the children who say that, whenever thunder is heard, the men in the mountains must be playing nine-pins.



Rip Van Winkle statue in Irvington, New York (a town named for Washington Irving), not far from the Tarrytown location of Sunnyside, Irving's final home