



American Literature

Student Book

Unit 2



Alpha Omega Publications®

AMERICAN LITERATURE LIFE PAC 2 THE ROMANTIC PERIOD

1800–1855

CONTENTS

I.	A NEW NATION 1800–1840	1
	INTRODUCTION	1
	Washington Irving	5
	James Fenimore Cooper	17
	William Cullen Bryant	24
II.	AMERICAN RENAISSANCE 1840–1855	30
	INTRODUCTION	30
	THE FIRESIDE POETS	32
	Henry Wadsworth Longfellow	33
	John Greenleaf Whittier	35
	Oliver Wendell Holmes	40
	THE TRANSCENDENTALISTS	42
	Ralph Waldo Emerson	42
	Henry David Thoreau	45
	Walt Whitman	50
III.	THE POETS OF DESPAIR	56
	Edgar Allen Poe	56
	Nathaniel Hawthorne	60
	Herman Melville	70
	Emily Dickinson	77

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AMERICAN LITERATURE LIFE PAC 2

THE ROMANTIC PERIOD: 1800–1855

OBJECTIVES

1. Gain an overview of influential American events during this period of history.
2. Understand the philosophy of the Romantic writers.
3. Recognize how the Romantic writers departed from biblical Christianity.
4. Identify Romantic characteristics in the writings of major authors.
5. Identify the birth of a distinctively American literature.
6. Understand the philosophy of the transcendentalists.
7. Understand the differences between the biblical view of man and the Romantic view of man.
8. Recognize some of the influences that transcendentalism has had on the modern age.
9. Identify the lingering effects of Puritanism on some of the era's most prominent writers.

VOCABULARY

abolitionist - a person who desired to abolish slavery
adulation - praise
apprehension - to gain understanding through insight
coterie - a group that meets on the basis of similar interests
chaos - absence of order
aversion - dislike
disdain - hate
emaciated - very thin
intuition - knowledge gained apart from reasoning
lustrous - shining
obeisance - a gesture showing respect
omniscient - all knowing
omnipresent - present everywhere
transcend - to exceed the limits of
countenance - expression of the face

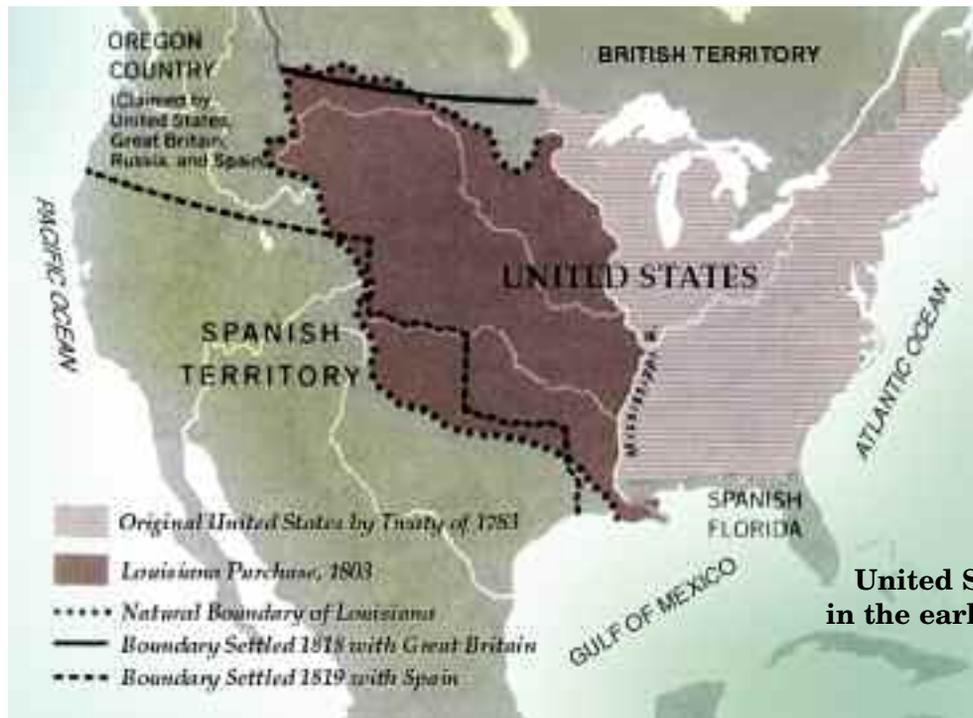
I. A NEW NATION

INTRODUCTION

As the United States entered the nineteenth century, independence had not been completely won. Culturally, Americans still wrote, sang, and painted like Englishmen. There was yet to be a revolution of the arts. The struggle for political freedom which had been long and difficult, solidified only after a “second war for independence” in 1812. Similarly, the birth of a distinctively American culture was not accomplished quickly.

“Our Standard. The Old World ideals—both social and cultural—were still firmly rooted in the minds of every American. European ideals were the standard by which all things were judged. However, wanting full independence, many Americans sought to diassociate themselves from Europe. If there was to be a new nation made up of a new sort of people, then a particular style of expression had to be created. Noah Webster, the father of the American dictionary, declared, “As an independent nation, our honor requires us to have a system of our own, in language as in government. Great Britain, whose children we are, and whose language we speak, should no longer be our standard.”

As “children” of the Old World, Americans needed to gain respect from the older European nations. America had yet to grow into the world power that it is today. Its expanding borders and ever-increasing population caused constant change. With the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, the United States was suddenly larger than most European countries. The addition opened up a new frontier. The prairie, with its flat fertile land, presented the young country with a wealth of resources. From 1815–1860, five million immigrants poured into the country. For the most part, they were hopeful farmers from Britain, Ireland, and Germany. The optimistic spirit that they brought helped to fuel advances in farming, transportation, and industry. The reaping machine and the steel plow quickened the cultivation of soil and helped to feed the booming numbers of people who came to depend on the new technologies. Canals and railroads united distant communities by establishing transportation routes between the states. With the invention of the telegraph, news spread quickly from distant lands. Distance was no longer so formidable a barrier to the exchange of information.



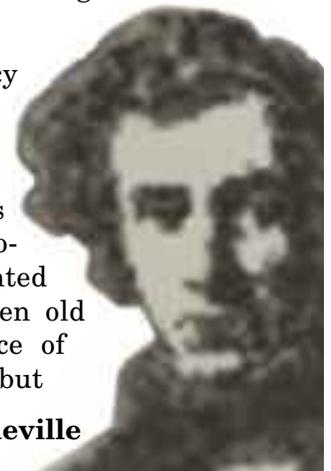
**United States
in the early 1800s**

Democracy in America. America was the land of possibilities. Equipped with the Yankee virtues of hard work and determination, even the most destitute person of Europe could live like a king, or even become president. One such person did. Known as the “People’s President,” Andrew Jackson was elected in 1828. He fought for the rights of the common man. During his term of office, legislation was passed awarding nonproperty-owning white men the right to vote. This law was a seemingly small yet significant change in America’s political structure.



**Andrew
Jackson**

However, the shift toward a more pure democracy was not immediately welcomed. Some people feared that the ignorance of the urban masses might lead to impulsive rather than intelligent choices. Alexis de Tocqueville, a Frenchman that toured the United States in 1831, recognized the pains and the benefits of a democratic society. In his book *Democracy in America*, he commented on the struggle within the American political system between old forms and new forms of leadership. He wrote, “The surface of American society is covered with a layer of democratic paint, but



Alexis de Tocqueville

from time to time one can see the old aristocratic colors breaking through." The elite worried about whether the populace would know how to handle their freedom.

Whatever the far-reaching concerns about the new political system, the common man could see a future filled with unlimited possibilities.

"Who reads an American book?" While America seemed to be flourishing in the political and economic realms, its artistic development seemed rather stunted. In 1820, a British writer, Sydney Smith, taunted, "In the four quarters of the globe, who reads an American book, or goes to an American play, or looks at an American picture or statue?" The standard held by the Europeans seemed unapproachable by most American artists. Who of the Americans would ever rival the likes of Shakespeare or William Wordsworth?

The paintings that hung on the walls of American sitting parlors and the books that filled the shelves of American homes were not from New York and Boston but from England, France, Germany, and Italy.

Feeling the pressure to conform to European standards, American writers struggled to find their own voice. The vast open landscape, they complained, put limitations on the topics about which they could write. America had no castles from which to make legends, nor did the people have a common mythology. The newness of the land and the people presented many difficulties for writers who thought that they had nothing on which to build and nothing to manipulate. James Fenimore Cooper wrote of America's literary "poverty of materials," "There is scarce an ore which contributes to the wealth of the author, that is found, here, in veins as rich as in Europe."

Romanticism. In search of "materials," authors such as Washington Irving, James Fenimore Cooper, and William Cullen Bryant traveled to Europe. What they gained was a Romantic view of the world that went hand in hand with the optimistic spirit that was already present in America. Although the word *romantic* did emphasize feelings, in this context it was not concerned solely with the love between a man and a woman. It was very subjective in its approach, focusing on the individual's imagination and feelings. This thinking was a complete turnaround from the age of reason. Man was no longer guided by his mind but by his heart. Romanticism as a movement in art and thought lasted from 1750–1870.

On a philosophical level, Romanticism rejected biblical revelation on several accounts. First, it replaced God's Word with man's intuition or feelings. Second, Romanticism did not see man as sinful and tainted by original sin; man just made wrong decisions. Third, the individual had the power to overcome whatever circumstances were placed before him.

Because the Romantics favored the imagination over facts, they did not retell history in the "plain style." Unlike William Bradford's *Of Plymouth Plantation*, Washington Irving's retelling of the history of New York was not concerned with truth. It was a tale meant to entertain, rather than to inform.

Nature also took on a different significance for the Romantics. Whereas the Puritans viewed nature as a reflection of the Creator, the Romantics elevated it to an almost godlike position. They saw it as innocent, untouched by the evils of society.

As a part of nature, the Romantics looked upon man as good. His faults were not a result of original sin; they were brought about by institutions and traditions. Society was the great evil. The Romantic also believed that the farther man was from society, the better his life would be. Man should strive to emulate nature in its beauty and harmony.



Samuel F. B. Morse

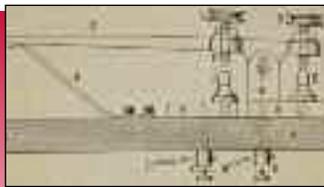
Romantic New York. Because of the relatively few cultural centers in the United States at that time, the Romantic artists and thinkers knew each other well. The influence that the members exerted on one another helped to perpetuate Romantic thought in American literature. One group of Romantics, known as the Knickerbockers, met in New York City. Washington Irving and William Cullen Bryant were prominent members of the group.

Another group that found its home in New York was the Bread and Cheese Club. Among its notable members was James Fenimore Cooper. This group, though, was not exclusively composed of artists and writers. It was more of a social club for thinkers. Included on its rolls was the inventor of the telegraph, Samuel F. B. Morse.

The groups in New York City fostered much of the literary and artistic accomplishments between 1800–1840. Many of the writers during this period impressed the world literary scene with their abilities. Finding a balance between American and European voices with *The Sketch Book*, Irving earned the respect and adulation of British writers such as Sir Walter Scott. And, for the first time, an “American book” was placed in the hands of readers around the globe.



Morse telegraph key



Morse 4S key



Morse telegraph register



Answer true or false for each of the following statements.

- 1.1 _____ Europe was the standard by which American society and culture were judged.
- 1.2 _____ America’s expanding borders and ever-increasing population caused no change in society.
- 1.3 _____ The pessimistic spirit of the immigrants did not help to fuel advances in farming, transportation, and industry.
- 1.4 _____ President Andrew Jackson fought for the rights of the elite.
- 1.5 _____ Andrew Jackson feared that the ignorance of the urban masses would lead to impulsive choices.
- 1.6 _____ As America flourished both politically and economically, so did its artistic development.
- 1.7 _____ America writers complained that the vast open landscape limited their topics for writing.
- 1.8 _____ American writers traveled to Europe in search of money.
- 1.9 _____ Romanticism focused on the individual’s imagination and feelings.
- 1.10 _____ Romanticism replaced God’s Word with reason.

- 1.11 _____ According to the Romantic, nature was innocent and man was essentially good.
- 1.12 _____ The two groups from New York City that fostered literary and artistic accomplishments were the Knickerbockers and the Independents.

Washington Irving (1783–1859). Washington Irving was the first American to achieve international fame as a writer. Born to a wealthy mercantile family in New York City, Irving was exposed to the literary riches of the Old World. He was drawn to the writings of Shakespeare, Oliver Goldsmith, Joseph Addison, Sir Walter Scott, and Laurence Sterne. Modeling his prose after theirs, Irving combined European style with New World flavor to produce works that were distinctively American.

As children, Irving and his brothers enjoyed writing poems and satirical papers. This early interest in writing was transferred into their adult lives. At twenty-four, Irving and his brother published an anonymous magazine called the *Salmagundi*. Its name, which means “spicy hash,” typified the publication’s contents: satirical essays on New York’s social and political life. After he lost interest in his training as a lawyer, Irving’s literary life began to occupy more of his energies. In 1808, he began writing *A History of New York*. Supposedly told by an eccentric old man named Deitrich Knickerbocker, it was a spoof on the colonial history of the Dutch-American community in New York. Irving’s story safely turned history on its head. Although it mocks some of America’s most cherished figures, this comical work was popular and it made Irving famous.



Washington Irving

In 1815 with the announcement of his fiancée’s death still ringing in his ears, Irving moved to England. He planned to run the Liverpool branch of his family’s business; but after its collapse in 1818, he returned to his literary pursuits. For fourteen years, Irving traveled Europe, gathering tales and inspiration. While traveling, he began to read German folk tales. He found the myths to be a rich source of writing material. Placing the tales in an American setting, Irving gave his country a legendary past, which many writers thought America was greatly lacking. Irving’s *Rip Van Winkle* was a direct result of this blending European and American imaginations.

Irving returned to the United States in 1832. During his time in Europe, he had published many works on America and his travels in Europe. *The Sketch Book* was his most famous work and had earned him world acclaim. Containing only a handful of American topics, it reflected Irving’s European interests. Irving’s work, however, appealed to American as well as British readers, earning him an honorary degree from Oxford. After serving as a diplomatic attaché to Spain, Irving retired to his home in Tarrytown, New York.

Typical of the Romantic artists, Irving sought to manipulate the reader’s emotions rather than “encourage depth of inquiry.” His goal was to entertain, not to inform. Facts and historical events were not revelations of God’s will but pieces of a puzzle to be placed together in way that would bolster romantic feelings about America. Although his works demonstrate a definite break from Puritan tradition, they give us a wealth of “insight into human nature.” By focusing on the individual, we gain an understanding of his motivations and intents. Characters such as Rip Van Winkle and Ichabod Crane have added valuable details to the American literary landscape.



Fill in each of the blanks using items from the following word list.

- | | |
|-----------|----------|
| entertain | writer |
| German | New York |
| human | |

- 1.13 Washington Irving was the first American to achieve international fame as a _____.
- 1.14 *A History of* _____ made Irving famous.
- 1.15 By placing _____ folk tales in an American setting, Irving gave America a legendary past.
- 1.16 Irving’s goal was to _____, not to inform.
- 1.17 Irving’s work gives us “insight into _____ nature.”

What to Look For:

Irving believed that a good teller of tales plays on both the imagination and the emotions. As you read, think about the way Irving makes you sympathetic toward Rip. How does Rip make decisions, with his reason or with his emotions? Also, notice the way in which the landscape and the time periods give credibility to the legend. Does the story seem somewhat believable?

Rip Van Winkle by Washington Irving. “Rip Van Winkle” was first published in *The Sketch Book*. By attributing the tale to the fictitious Diedrich Knickerbocker, Irving distanced himself from the story, making it seem more like a legend. In actuality, the tale is an American adaptation of a German folk tale.

The following Tale was found among the papers of the late Diedrich Knickerbocker, an old gentleman of New York, who was very curious in the Dutch history of the province, and the manners of the descendants from its primitive settlers. His historical researches, however, did not lie so much among books as among men; for the former are lamentably scanty on his favorite topics; whereas he found the old burghers, and still more their wives, rich in that legendary lore, so invaluable to true history. Whenever, therefore, he happened upon a genuine Dutch family, snugly shut up in its low-roofed farmhouse, under a spreading sycamore, he looked upon it as a little clasped volume of black-letter, and studied it with the zeal of a book-worm.

The result of all these researches was a history of the province during the reign of the Dutch governors, which he published some years since. There have been various opinions as to the literary character of his work, and, to tell the truth, it is not a whit better than it should be. Its chief merit is its scrupulous accuracy, which indeed was a little questioned on its first appearance, but has since been completely established; and it is now admitted into all historical collections, as a book of unquestionable authority.

The old gentleman died shortly after the publication of his work, and now that he is dead and gone, it cannot do much harm to his memory to say that his time might have been much better employed in weightier labors. He, however, was apt to ride his hobby his own way; and though it did now and then kick up the dust a little in the eyes of his neighbors, and grieve the spirit of some friends, for whom he felt the truest deference and affection; yet his errors and follies are remembered “more in sorrow than in anger,” and it begins to be suspected, that he never intended to injure or offend. But however his memory may be appreciated by critics, it is still held dear by many folk, whose good opinion is well worth having; particularly by certain biscuit-bakers, who have gone so far as to imprint his likeness on their new-year cakes; and have thus given him a chance for immortality, almost equal to the being stamped on a Waterloo Medal, or a Queen Anne’s Farthing.

Rip Van Winkle

WHOEVER has made a voyage up the Hudson must remember the Kaatskill* mountains. They are a dismembered branch of the great Appalachian family, and are seen away to the west of the river, swelling up, to a noble height, and lording it over the surrounding country. Every change of season, every change of weather, indeed, every hour of the day, produces some change in the magical hues and shapes of these mountains, and they are regarded by all the good wives, far and near, as perfect barometers. When the weather is fair and settled, they are clothed in blue and purple, and print their bold outlines on the clear evening sky; but, sometimes, when the rest of the landscape is cloudless, they will gather a hood of gray vapors about their summits, which, in the last rays of the setting sun, will glow and light up like a crown of glory.

At the foot of these fair mountains, the voyager may have descri ed* the light smoke curling up from a village, whose shingle-roofs gleam among the trees, just where the blue tints of the upland melt away into the fresh green of the nearer landscape. It is a little village, of great antiquity, having been founded by some of the Dutch colonists, in the early times of the province, just about the beginning of the government of the good Peter Stuyvesant,* (may he rest in peace!) and there were some of the houses of the original settlers standing within a few years, built of small yellow bricks brought from Holland, having latticed windows and gable fronts, surmounted with weathercocks.

In that same village, and in one of these very houses (which, to tell the precise truth, was sadly time-worn and weather-beaten), there lived many years since, while the country was yet a province of Great Britain, a simple good-natured fellow, of the name of Rip Van Winkle. He was a descendant of the Van Winkles who figured so gallantly in the chivalrous days of Peter Stuyvesant, and accompanied him to the siege of Fort Christina. He inherited, however, but little of the martial* character of his ancestors. I have observed that he was a simple good-natured man; he was, moreover, a kind neighbor, and an obedient hen-pecked husband. Indeed, to the latter circumstance might be owing that meekness of spirit which gained him such universal popularity; for those men are most apt to be obsequious* and conciliating abroad, who are under the discipline of shrews at home. Their tempers, doubtless, are rendered pliant and malleable in the fiery furnace of domestic tribulation; and a curtain lecture is worth all the sermons in the world for teaching the virtues of patience and long-suffering. A termagant* wife may, therefore, in some respects, be considered a tolerable blessing; and if so, Rip Van Winkle was thrice blessed.

Certain it is, that he was a great favorite among all the good wives of the village, who, as usual, with the amiable sex, took his part in all family squabbles; and never failed, whenever they talked those matters over in their evening gossipings, to lay all the blame on Dame Van Winkle. The children of the village, too, would shout with joy whenever he approached. 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. Whenever he went dodging about the village, he was surrounded by a troop of them, hanging on his skirts, clambering on his back, and playing a thousand tricks on him with impunity; and not a dog would bark at him throughout the neighborhood.

The great error in Rip's composition was an insuperable* aversion to all kinds of profitable labor. It could not be from the want of assiduity* or perseverance; for he would sit on a wet rock, with a rod as long and heavy as a Tartar's lance,* and fish all day without a murmur, even though he should not be encouraged by a single nibble. He would carry a fowling-piece* on his shoulder for hours together, trudging through woods and swamps, and up hill and down dale, to shoot a few squirrels or wild pigeons. He would never refuse to assist a neighbor even in the roughest toil,

and was a foremost man at all country frolics for husking Indian corn, or building stone-fences; the women of the village, too, used to employ him to run their errands, and to do such little odd jobs as their less obliging husbands would not do for them. In a word, Rip was ready to attend to anybody's business but his own; but as to doing family duty, and keeping his farm in order, he found it impossible.

In fact, he declared it was of no use to work on his farm; it was the most pestilent little piece of ground in the whole country; every thing about it went wrong, and would go wrong, in spite of him. His fences were continually falling to pieces; his cow would either go astray, or get among the cabbages; weeds were sure to grow quicker in his fields than anywhere else; the rain always made a point of setting in just as he had some out-door work to do; so that though his patrimonial* estate had dwindled away under his management, acre by acre, until there was little more left than a mere patch of Indian corn and potatoes, yet it was the worst conditioned farm in the neighborhood.

His children, too, were as ragged and wild as if they belonged to nobody. His son Rip, an urchin begotten in his own likeness, promised to inherit the habits, with the old clothes of his father. He was generally seen trooping like a colt at his mother's heels, equipped in a pair of his father's cast-off galligaskins,* which he had much ado to hold up with one hand, as a fine lady does her train in bad weather.

Rip Van Winkle, however, was one of those happy mortals, of foolish, well-oiled dispositions, 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. If left to himself, he would have whistled life away in perfect contentment; but his wife kept continually dinning* in his ears about his idleness, his carelessness, and the ruin he was bringing on his family. Morning, noon, and night, her tongue was incessantly going, and every thing he said or did was sure to produce a torrent of household eloquence. Rip had but one way of replying to all lectures of the kind, and that, by frequent use, had grown into a habit. He shrugged his shoulders, shook his head, cast up his eyes, but said nothing. This, however, always provoked a fresh volley from his wife; so that he was fain to draw off his forces, and take to the outside of the house—the only side which, in truth, belongs to a hen-pecked husband.

Rip's sole domestic adherent was his dog Wolf, who was as much hen-pecked as his master; for Dame Van Winkle regarded them as companions in idleness, and even looked upon Wolf with an evil eye, as the cause of his master's going so often astray. True it is, in all points of spirit befitting an honorable dog, he was as courageous an animal as ever scoured the woods—but what courage can withstand the ever-during and all-besetting terrors of a woman's tongue? The moment Wolf entered the house his crest fell, his tail drooped to the ground, or curled between his legs, he sneaked about with a gallows air, casting many a sidelong glance at Dame Van Winkle, and at the least flourish of a broomstick or ladle, he would fly to the door with yelping precipitation.

Times grew worse and worse with Rip Van Winkle as years of matrimony rolled on; a tart temper never mellows with age, and a sharp tongue is the only edged tool that grows keener with constant use. For a long while he used to console himself, when driven from home, by frequenting a kind of perpetual club of the sages, philosophers, and other idle personages of the village; which held its sessions on a bench before a small inn, designated by a rubicund* portrait of His Majesty George the Third.* Here they used to sit in the shade through a long lazy summer's day, talking listlessly over village gossip, or telling endless sleepy stories about nothing. But it would have been worth any statesman's money to have heard the profound discussions that sometimes took place, when by chance an old newspaper fell into their hands from some passing traveller. How solemnly they would listen to the contents, as drawled out by Derrick Van Bummel, the schoolmaster, a dapper learned little man, who was not to be daunted by

the most gigantic word in the dictionary; and how sagely they would deliberate upon public events some months after they had taken place.

The opinions of this junto* were completely controlled by Nicholas Vedder, a patriarch of the village, and landlord of the inn, at the door of which he took his seat from morning till night just moving sufficiently to avoid the sun and keep in the shade of a large tree; so that the neighbors could tell the hour by his movements as accurately as by a sun-dial. It is true he was rarely heard to speak, but smoked his pipe incessantly. His adherents, however (for every great man has his adherents), perfectly understood him, and knew how to gather his opinions. When any thing that was read or related displeased him, he was observed to smoke his pipe vehemently, and to send forth short, frequent and angry puffs; but when pleased, he would inhale the smoke slowly and tranquilly, and emit it in light and placid clouds; and sometimes, taking the pipe from his mouth, and letting the fragrant vapor curl about his nose, would gravely nod his head in token of perfect approbation.*

From even this stronghold the unlucky Rip was at length routed by his terma-gant wife, who would suddenly break in upon the tranquillity of the assemblage and call the members all to naught; nor was that august* personage, Nicholas Vedder himself, sacred from the daring tongue of this terrible virago,* who charged him outright with encouraging her husband in habits of idleness.

Poor Rip was at last reduced almost to despair; and his only alternative, to escape from the labor of the farm and clamor of his wife, was to take gun in hand and stroll away into the woods. Here he would sometimes seat himself at the foot of a tree, and share the contents of his wallet* with Wolf, with whom he sympathized as a fellow-sufferer in persecution. "Poor Wolf," he would say, "thy mistress leads thee a dog's life of it; but never mind, my lad, whilst I live thou shalt never want a friend to stand by thee!" Wolf would wag his tail, look wistfully in his master's face, and if dogs can feel pity I verily believe he reciprocated the sentiment with all his heart.

In a long ramble of the kind on a fine autumnal day, Rip had unconsciously scrambled to one of the highest parts of the Kaatskill mountains. He was after his favorite sport of squirrel shooting, and the still solitudes had echoed and re-echoed with the reports of his gun. Panting and fatigued, he threw himself, late in the afternoon, on a green knoll, covered with mountain herbage, that crowned the brow of a precipice. From an opening between the trees he could overlook all the lower country for many a mile of rich woodland. He saw at a distance the lordly Hudson, far, far below him, moving on its silent but majestic course, with the reflection of a purple cloud, or the sail of a lagging bark, here and there sleeping on its glassy bosom, and at last losing itself in the blue highlands.

On the other side he looked down into a deep mountain glen, wild, lonely, and shagged, the bottom filled with fragments from the impending cliffs, and scarcely lighted by the reflected rays of the setting sun. For some time Rip lay musing on this scene; evening was gradually advancing; the mountains began to throw their long blue shadows over the valleys; he saw that it would be dark long before he could reach the village, and he heaved a heavy sigh when he thought of encountering the terrors of Dame Van Winkle.

As he was about to descend, he heard a voice from a distance, hallooing, "Rip Van Winkle! Rip Van Winkle!" He looked round, but could see nothing but a crow winging its solitary flight across the mountain. He thought his fancy must have deceived him, and turned again to descend, when he heard the same cry ring through the still evening air; "Rip Van Winkle! Rip Van Winkle!"—at the same time Wolf bristled up his back, and giving a low growl, skulked* to his master's side, looking fearfully down into the glen. Rip now felt a vague apprehension stealing over him; he looked anxiously in the same direction, and perceived a strange figure slowly toiling up the rocks, and bending under the weight of something he carried on his back. He was

surprised to see any human being in this lonely and unfrequented place, but supposing it to be some one of the neighborhood in need of his assistance, he hastened down to yield it.

On nearer approach he was still more surprised at the singularity of the stranger's appearance. He was a short, square-built old fellow, with thick bushy hair, and a grizzled beard. His dress was of the antique Dutch fashion—a cloth jerkin strapped round the waist—several pair of breeches, the outer one of ample volume, decorated with rows of buttons down the sides, and bunches at the knees. He bore on his shoulder a stout keg, that seemed full of liquor, and made signs for Rip to approach and assist him with the load. Though rather shy and distrustful of this new acquaintance, Rip complied with his usual alacrity;* and mutually relieving one another, they clambered up a narrow gully, apparently the dry bed of a mountain torrent. As they ascended, Rip every now and then heard long rolling peals, like distant thunder, that seemed to issue out of a deep ravine, or rather cleft, between lofty rocks, toward which their rugged path conducted. He paused for an instant, but supposing it to be the muttering of one of those transient thunder-showers which often take place in mountain heights, he proceeded. Passing through the ravine, they came to a hollow, like a small amphitheatre, surrounded by perpendicular precipices, over the brinks of which impending trees shot their branches, so that you only caught glimpses of the azure sky and the bright evening cloud. During the whole time Rip and his companion had labored on in silence; for though the former marvelled greatly what could be the object of carrying a keg of liquor up this wild mountain, yet there was something strange and incomprehensible about the unknown, that inspired awe and checked familiarity.

On entering the amphitheatre, new objects of wonder presented themselves. On a level spot in the centre was a company of odd-looking personages playing at nine-pins.* They were dressed in a quaint outlandish fashion; some wore short doublets, others jerkins, with long knives in their belts, and most of them had enormous breeches, of similar style with that of the guide's. Their visages, too, were peculiar: one had a large beard, broad face, and small piggish eyes: the face of another seemed to consist entirely of nose, and was surmounted by a white sugarloaf hat, set off with a little red cock's tail. They all had beards, of various shapes and colors. There was one who seemed to be the commander. He was a stout old gentleman, with a weather-beaten countenance; he wore a laced doublet, broad belt and hanger,* high crowned hat and feather, red stockings, and high-heeled shoes, with roses* in them.

The whole group reminded Rip of the figures in an old Flemish painting, in the parlor of Dominie Van Shaick, the village parson, and which had been brought over from Holland at the time of the settlement.

What seemed particularly odd to Rip was, that though these folks were evidently amusing themselves, yet they maintained the gravest faces, the most mysterious silence, and were, withal, the most melancholy party of pleasure he had ever witnessed. Nothing interrupted the stillness of the scene but the noise of the balls, which, whenever they were rolled, echoed along the mountains like rumbling peals of thunder.

As Rip and his companion approached them, they suddenly desisted from their play, and stared at him with such fixed statue-like gaze, and such strange, uncouth, lack-lustre countenances, that his heart turned within him, and his knees smote together. His companion now emptied the contents of the keg into large flagons, and made signs to him to wait upon the company. He obeyed with fear and trembling; they quaffed* the liquor in profound silence, and then returned to their game.

By degrees Rip's awe and apprehension subsided. He even ventured, when no eye was fixed upon him, to taste the beverage, which he found had much of the flavor of excellent Hollands.* He was naturally a thirsty soul, and was soon tempted to repeat the draught. One taste provoked another; and he reiterated his visits to

the flagon so often that at length his senses were overpowered, his eyes swam in his head, his head gradually declined, and he fell into a deep sleep.

On waking, he found himself on the green knoll whence he had first seen the old man of the glen. He rubbed his eyes—it was a bright sunny morning. The birds were hopping and twittering among the bushes, and the eagle was wheeling aloft, and breasting the pure mountain breeze. “Surely,” thought Rip, “I have not slept here all night.” He recalled the occurrences before he fell asleep. The strange man with a keg of liquor—the mountain ravine—the wild retreat among the rocks—the woe-begone party at nine-pins—the flagon*—“Oh! that flagon! that wicked flagon!” thought Rip—“what excuse shall I make to Dame Van Winkle!” He looked round for his gun, but in place of the clean, well-oiled fowlingpiece, he found an old firelock lying by him, the barrel incrusting with rust, the lock falling off, and the stock worm-eaten. He now suspected that the grave roysterers of the mountain had put a trick upon him, and, having dosed him with liquor, had robbed him of his gun. Wolf, too, had disappeared, but he might have strayed away after a squirrel or partridge. He whistled after him and shouted his name, but all in vain; the echoes repeated his whistle and shout, but no dog was to be seen.

He determined to revisit the scene of the last evening’s gambol,* and if he met with any of the party, to demand his dog and gun. As he rose to walk, he found himself stiff in the joints, and wanting in his usual activity. “These mountain beds do not agree with me,” thought Rip, “and if this frolic should lay me up with a fit of the rheumatism, I shall have a blessed time with Dame Van Winkle.” With some difficulty he got down into the glen: he found the gully up which he and his companion had ascended the preceding 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. He, however, made shift to scramble up its sides, working his toilsome way through thickets of birch, sassafras, and witch-hazel, and sometimes tripped up or entangled by the wild grapevines that twisted their coils or tendrils from tree to tree, and spread a kind of network in his path. At length he reached to where the ravine had opened through the cliffs to the amphitheatre; but no traces of such opening remained. The rocks presented a high impenetrable wall over which the torrent came tumbling in a sheet of feathery foam, and fell into a broad deep basin, black from the shadows of the surrounding forest. Here, then, poor Rip was brought to a stand. He again called and whistled after his dog; he was only answered by the cawing of a flock of idle crows, sporting high in air about a dry tree that overhung a sunny precipice; and who, secure in their elevation, seemed to look down and scoff at the poor man’s perplexities. What was to be done? the morning was passing away, and Rip felt famished for want of his breakfast. He grieved to give up his dog and gun; he dreaded to meet his wife; but it would not do to starve among the mountains. He shook his head, shouldered the rusty firelock, and, with a heart full of trouble and anxiety, turned his steps homeward.

As he approached the village he met a number of people, but none whom he knew, which somewhat surprised him, for he had thought himself acquainted with every one in the country round. Their dress, too, was of a different fashion from that to which he was accustomed. They all stared at him with equal marks of surprise, and whenever they cast their eyes upon him, invariably stroked their chins. The constant recurrence of this gesture induced Rip, involuntarily, to do the same, when, to his astonishment, he found his beard had grown a foot long!

He had now entered the skirts of the village. A troop of strange children ran at his heels, hooting after him, and pointing at his gray beard. The dogs, too, not one of which he recognized for an old acquaintance, barked at him as he passed. The very village was altered; it was larger and more populous. There were rows of houses which he had never seen before, and those which had been his familiar haunts had

disappeared. Strange names were over the doors—strange faces at the windows—every thing was strange. His mind now misgave him; he began to doubt whether both he and the world around him were not bewitched. Surely this was his native village, which he had left but the day before. There stood the Kaatskill mountains—there ran the silver Hudson at a distance—there was every hill and dale precisely as it had always been—Rip was sorely perplexed—“That flagon last night,” thought he, “has addled* my poor head sadly!”

It was with some difficulty that he found the way to his own house, which he approached with silent awe, expecting every moment to hear the shrill voice of Dame Van Winkle. He found the house gone to decay—the roof fallen in, the windows shattered, and the doors off the hinges. A half-starved dog that looked like Wolf was skulking about it. Rip called him by name, but the cur snarled, showed his teeth, and passed on. This was an unkind cut indeed—“My very dog,” sighed poor Rip, “has forgotten me!” He entered the house, which, to tell the truth, Dame Van Winkle had always kept in neat order. It was empty, forlorn, and apparently abandoned. This desolateness overcame all his connubial* fears—he called loudly for his wife and children—the lonely chambers rang for a moment with his voice, and then all again was silence.

He now hurried forth, and hastened to his old resort, the village inn—but it, too, was gone. A large, rickety wooden building stood in its place, with great gaping windows, some of them broken and mended with old hats and petticoats, and over the door was painted, “The Union Hotel, by Jonathan Doolittle.” Instead of the great tree that used to shelter the quiet little Dutch inn of yore, there now was reared a tall naked pole, with something on the top that looked like a red nightcap, and from

it was fluttering a flag, on which was a singular assemblage of stars and stripes—all this was strange and incomprehensible. He recognized on the sign, however, the ruby face of King George, under which he had smoked so many a peaceful pipe; but even this was singularly metamorphosed. The red coat was changed for one of blue and buff, a sword was held in the hand instead of a sceptre, the head was decorated with a cocked hat, and underneath was painted in large characters, GENERAL WASHINGTON.

There was, as usual, a crowd of folk about the door, but none that Rip recollected. The very character of the people seemed changed. There was a busy, bustling, disputatious tone about it, instead of the accustomed phlegm* and drowsy tranquillity. He looked in vain for the sage Nicholas Vedder, with his broad face, double chin, and fair long pipe, uttering clouds of tobacco-smoke instead of idle speeches; or Van Bummel, the schoolmaster, doling forth* the contents of an ancient newspaper. In place of these, a lean, bilious*-looking fellow, with his pockets full of handbills, was haranguing



vehemently about rights of citizens—elections—members of congress—liberty—Bunker’s Hill—heroes of seventy-six—and other words, which were a perfect Babylonish jargon to the bewildered Van Winkle.

The appearance of Rip, with his long grizzled beard, his rusty fowling-piece, his uncouth dress, and an army of women and children at his heels, soon attracted the attention of the tavern politicians. They crowded round him, eyeing him from head to foot with great curiosity. The orator bustled up to him, and, drawing him partly aside, inquired “on which side he voted?” Rip stared in vacant stupidity. Another short but busy little fellow pulled him by the arm, and, rising on tiptoe, inquired in his ear, “Whether he was Federal or Democrat?” Rip was equally at a loss to comprehend the question; when a knowing, self-important old gentleman, in a sharp cocked hat, made his way through the crowd, putting them to the right and left with his elbows as he passed, and planting himself before Van Winkle, with one arm akimbo,* the other resting on his cane, his keen eyes and sharp hat penetrating, as it were, into his very soul, demanded in an austere tone, “what brought him to the election with a gun on his shoulder, and a mob at his heels, and whether he meant to breed a riot in the village?”—“Alas! gentlemen,” cried Rip, somewhat dismayed, “I am a poor quiet man, a native of the place, and a loyal subject of the king, God bless him!”

Here a general shout burst from the bystanders—“A tory!* a tory! a spy! a refugee! hustle him! away with him!” It was with great difficulty that the self-important man in the cocked hat restored order; and, having assumed a ten-fold austerity of brow, demanded again of the unknown culprit, what he came there for, and whom he was seeking? The poor man humbly assured him that he meant no harm, but merely came there in search of some of his neighbors, who used to keep about the tavern.

“Well—who are they?—name them.”

Rip bethought himself a moment, and inquired, “Where’s Nicholas Vedder?”

There was a silence for a little while, when an old man replied, in a thin, piping voice, “Nicholas Vedder! why, he is dead and gone these eighteen years! There was a wooden tombstone in the church yard that used to tell all about him, but that’s rotten and gone too.”

“Where’s Brom Dutcher?”

“Oh, he went off to the army in the beginning of the war; some say he was killed at the storming of Stony Point—others say he was drowned in a squall at the foot of Antony’s Nose. I don’t know—he never came back again.”

“Where’s Van Bummel, the schoolmaster?”

“He went off to the wars too, was a great militia general, and is now in Congress.”

Rip’s heart died away at hearing of these sad changes in his home and friends, and finding himself thus alone in the world. Every answer puzzled him too, by treating of such enormous lapses of time, and of matters which he could not understand: war—Congress—Stony Point; he had no courage to ask after any more friends, but cried out in despair, “Does nobody here know Rip Van Winkle?”

“Oh, Rip Van Winkle!” exclaimed two or three, “Oh, to be sure! that’s Rip Van Winkle yonder, leaning against the tree.”

Rip looked, and beheld a precise counterpart of himself, as he went up the mountain: apparently as lazy, and certainly as ragged. The poor fellow was now

completely confounded. He doubted his own identity, and whether he was himself or another man. In the midst of his bewilderment, the man in the cocked hat demanded who he was, and what was his name?

"I don't know," exclaimed he, at his wit's end; "I'm not myself—I'm somebody else—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!"

The bystanders began now to look at each other, nod, wink significantly, and tap their fingers against their foreheads. There was a whisper, also, about securing the gun, and keeping the old fellow from doing mischief, at the very suggestion of which the self-important man in the cocked hat retired with some precipitation. At this critical moment a fresh, comely woman pressed through the throng to get a peep at the gray-bearded man. She had a chubby child in her arms, which, frightened at his looks, began to cry. "Hush, Rip," cried she, "hush, you little fool; the old man won't hurt you." The name of the child, the air of the mother, the tone of her voice, all awakened a train of recollections in his mind. "What is your name, my good woman?" asked he.

"Judith Gardenier."

"And your father's name?"

"Ah, poor man, Rip Van Winkle was his name, but it's twenty years since he went away from home with his gun, and never has been heard of since—his dog came home without him; but whether he shot himself, or was carried away by the Indians, nobody can tell. I was then but a little girl."

Rip had but one question more to ask; but he put it with a faltering voice: "Where's your mother?"

"Oh, she too died but a short time since; she broke a blood-vessel in a fit of passion at a New England peddler."

There was a drop of comfort, at least, in this intelligence. The honest man could contain himself no longer. He caught his daughter and her child in his arms. "I am your father!" cried he—"Young Rip Van Winkle once—old Rip Van Winkle now! Does nobody know poor Rip Van Winkle?"

All stood amazed, until an old woman, tottering out from among the crowd, put her hand to her brow, and peering under it in his face for a moment, exclaimed, "Sure enough it is Rip Van Winkle—it is himself! Welcome home again, old neighbor—Why, where have you been these twenty long years?"

Rip's story was soon told, for the whole twenty years had been to him but as one night. The neighbors stared when they heard it; some were seen to wink at each other, and put their tongues in their cheeks: and the self-important man in the cocked hat, who, when the alarm was over, had returned to the field, screwed down the corners of his mouth, and shook his head—upon which there was a general shaking of the head throughout the assemblage.

It was determined, however, to take the opinion of old Peter Vanderdonk, who was seen slowly advancing up the road. He was a descendant of the historian of that name, who wrote one of the earliest accounts of the province. Peter was the most ancient inhabitant of the village, and well versed in all the wonderful events and traditions of the neighborhood. He recollected Rip at once, and corroborated his story in the most satisfactory manner. He assured the company that it was a fact, handed down from his ancestor the historian, that the Kaatskill Mountains had always been haunted by strange beings. That it

was affirmed that the great Hendrick Hudson, the first discoverer of the river and country, kept a kind of vigil there every twenty years, with his crew of the Half-moon; being permitted in this way to revisit the scenes of his enterprise, and keep a guardian eye upon the river, and the great city called by his name. That his father had once seen them in their old Dutch dresses playing at nine-pins in a hollow of the mountain; and that he himself had heard, one summer afternoon, the sound of their balls, like distant peals of thunder.

To make a long story short, the company broke up, and returned to the more important concerns of the election. Rip's daughter took him home to live with her; she had a snug, well-furnished house, and a stout cheery farmer for a husband, whom Rip recollected for one of the urchins that used to climb upon his back. As to Rip's son and heir, who was the ditto of himself, seen leaning against the tree, he was employed to work on the farm; but evinced an hereditary disposition to attend to anything else but his business.

Rip now resumed his old walks and habits; he soon found many of his former cronies,* though all rather the worse for the wear and tear of time; and preferred making friends among the rising generation, with whom he soon grew into great favor.

Having nothing to do at home, and being arrived at that happy age when a man can be idle with impunity, he took his place once more on the bench at the inn door, and was revered as one of the patriarchs of the village, and a chronicle of the old times "before the war." It was some time before he could get into the regular track of gossip, or could be made to comprehend the strange events that had taken place during his torpor.* How that there had been a revolutionary war—that the country had thrown off the yoke of old England—and that, instead of being a subject of his Majesty George the Third, he was now a free citizen of the United States. Rip, in fact, was no politician; the changes of states and empires made but little impression on him; but there was one species of despotism* under which he had long groaned, and that was—petticoat government. Happily that was at an end; he had got his neck out of the yoke of matrimony, and could go in and out whenever he pleased, without dreading the tyranny of Dame Van Winkle.

Whenever her name was mentioned, however, he shook his head, shrugged his shoulders, and cast up his eyes; which might pass either for an expression of resignation to his fate, or joy at his deliverance.

He used to tell his story to every stranger that arrived at Mr. Doolittle's hotel. He was observed, at first, to vary on some points every time he told it, which was, doubtless, owing to his having so recently awaked. It at last settled down precisely to the tale I have related, and not a man, woman, or child in the neighborhood, but knew it by heart. Some always pretended to doubt the reality of it, and insisted that Rip had been out of his head, and that this was one point on which he always remained flighty. The old Dutch inhabitants, however, almost universally gave it full credit. Even to this day they never hear a thunderstorm of a summer afternoon about the Kaatskill, but they say Hendrick Hudson and his crew are at their game of nine-pins; and it is a common wish of all hen-pecked husbands in the neighborhood, when life hangs heavy on their hands, that they might have a quieting draught out of Rip Van Winkle's flagon.

Kaatskill - Catskill
descried - discovered
Peter Stuyvesant - (1592–1672) governor of the Dutch colony, New Netherlands
martial - made for war
obsequious - submissive
malleable - bendable
curtain lecture - a private lecture given by the wife to her husband
termagant - a quarrelsome, scolding woman
impunity - free from punishment
insuperable - incapable of being overcome
assiduity - perseverance
Tartar's lance - spear used by soldiers of Genghis Khan
patrimonial - inherited from the father
galligaskins - loose pants
dinning - nagging
rubicund - red
George the Third - the King of England during the American Revolution
junto - small committee
approbation - approval
august - inspiring awe
virago - ill-tempered woman
wallet - backpack
skulked - moved sneakily
alacrity - merry willingness
nine-pins - bowling-like game
roses - decorative ribbon
quaffed - drank a lot
Hollands - a gin from Holland
gambol - frolic
addled - confused
connubial - having to do with marriage
phlegm - indifference
doling forth - reading aloud
bilious - ill-tempered
akimbo - hand on hip with elbow bent
tory - a person who remained loyal to England
cronies - buddies
torpor - inactivity
despotism - tyrannical power



Fill in each of the blanks using items from the following word list.

Catskill	foot	woods
George Washington	hen-pecked	twenty
idleness	petticoat	sleep

- 1.18 Rip Van Winkle's village was founded by Dutch colonists in the _____ mountains.
- 1.19 Rip was a kind neighbor and an obedient _____ husband.
- 1.20 Dame Van Winkle continually dinned in Rip's ears about his _____, his carelessness, and the ruin he was bringing his family.
- 1.21 To escape from the labor of the farm and clamor of his wife, he would stroll into the _____.
- 1.22 After drinking from the liquor-filled keg, Rip fell into a deep _____.
- 1.23 Rip slept for _____ years.
- 1.24 During his sleep, Rip's beard grew to be a _____ long.
- 1.25 The picture of King George was changed into a picture of _____.
- 1.26 Rip was happy to be freed from the tyranny of Dame Van Winkle, which he called the _____ government.



James Fenimore Cooper (1789–1851). As America's first novelist, James Fenimore Cooper used his platform to criticize and correct the social ills of his time. From infancy, he was exposed to the conflicts of settlement. His father was a frontiersman who cultivated, ruled, and pushed civilization beyond what is now known as central New York. Cooper's *Leatherstocking Tales* portray the changes that happen to people and nature when the wilderness is engulfed by a rapidly encroaching society.

In 1801 Cooper was sent to a prep school to prepare for Yale College. However, at age thirteen, he was expelled for not heeding disciplinary measures for committing numerous pranks. In 1806, he became a sailor aboard a merchant ship. Two years later, he enlisted in the U. S. Navy. When Cooper was twenty, his father died leaving him a large inheritance. Not too long after, Cooper left the Navy to become a gentleman farmer.

While reading a popular British novel to his family, Cooper exclaimed that he could write just as well as if not better than that author. His wife, as the story goes, made a bet that he could not. Unable to ignore the challenge, Cooper started writing. Within six months, Cooper published his first novel, *Precaution* (1820). Although it was not much better than the novel he had read, the challenge awakened within him an interest in writing. A year later, he published another book, *The Spy*. It was a romantic tale of the American Revolution. Despite its unskilled development, it



Yale College

gained him acceptance into the American literary scene. In 1822 Cooper moved his family to New York City, where he founded the Bread and Cheese Club.

Like Irving, Cooper tried to invent American folklore. However, Cooper's attempts were not simply to entertain but to expose society's problems. In 1823 Cooper published the first of the Leatherstocking Tales. In *The Pioneers*, Cooper created America's first fictional hero, Natty Bumppo. As a frontiersman with high ideals and a Christian upbringing, Natty was *the* model of behavior.

Throughout his writing career, Cooper authored thirty-two novels and various other pieces of nonfiction. Cooper's writing can seem awkward because of the variety of genre he used. A critic observed that it is this apparent lack of ease and simplicity of language that caused Cooper's novels at first to be viewed as adventure stories for boys. Many years after his death, however he was reread and recognized as America's first social critic. Despite his Romantic leanings, Cooper does not ignore the difficult social issues of his time. In his writings, he speaks about the "importance of proper race relations, the civil and natural rights of citizens, as well as the need to preserve the wilderness."



Underline the correct answer in each of the following statements.

- 1.27 James Fenimore Cooper was America's first (poet, novelist, politician).
- 1.28 Cooper's (wife, sister, father) bet that he could not write a better novel than the one he was reading.
- 1.29 In the Leatherstocking Tales, Cooper created America's first fictional (mother, outcast, hero).
- 1.30 Cooper has been recognized as America's first (political, social, religious) critic.

What to Look For:

The Prairie is the last of the Leatherstocking Tales. Natty Bumppo, the hero of the series, is a frontiersman who has lived in close contact with the Indians. As you read, pay attention to Natty's thoughts about differing cultures and religions. Is Natty thinking logically and biblically when he says that Christianity and Indian pantheism might both lead to heaven? How does Natty's opinion stand up against Jesus' words, "No one comes to the Father but through Me" (John 14:6)?

From: The Prairie

In this excerpt, Natty Bumppo is surrounded by his friends as he nears death. Duncan Uncas Middleton, an officer in the army, and his adopted son, Hard-Heart, whom he calls "Pawnee," share Natty's last moments.



When they entered the town,

its inhabitants were seen collected in an open space, where they were arranged with the customary deference to age and rank. The whole formed a large circle, in the center of which were perhaps a dozen of the principal chiefs. Hard Heart waved his hand as he approached, and as the mass of bodies opened he rode through, followed by his companions. Here they dismounted, and as the beasts were led apart, the strangers found themselves environed by a thousand grave, composed, but solicitous faces.

Middleton gazed about him in growing concern, for no cry, no song, no shout welcomed him among a people from whom he had so lately parted with regret. His uneasiness, not to say apprehensions, was shared by all his followers. Determination and stern resolution began to assume the place of anxiety in every eye, as each man silently felt for his arms, and assured himself that his several weapons were in a state for service. But there was no answering symptom of hostility on the part of

their hosts. Hard Heart beckoned for Middleton and Pau' to follow, leading the way towards the cluster of forms that occupied the center of the circle. Here the visitors found a solution of all the movements which had given them so much cause for apprehension.

The trapper* was placed on a rude seat, which had been made, with studied care, to support his frame in an upright and easy attitude. The first glance of the eye told his former friends that the old man was at length called upon to pay the last tribute of nature. His eye was glazed and apparently as devoid of sight as of expression. His features were a little more sunken and strongly marked than formerly; but there, all change, so far as exterior was concerned might be said to have ceased. His approaching end was not to be ascribed to any positive disease, but had been a gradual and mild decay of the physical powers. Life, it is true, still lingered in his system; but it was as if at times entirely ready to depart, and then it would appear to reanimate the sinking form, reluctant to give up the possession of a tenement* that had never been corrupted by vice or undermined by disease. It would have been no violent fancy to have imagined that the spirit fluttered about the placid lips of the old woodsman, reluctant to depart from a shell that had so long given it an honest and honorable shelter.

His body was placed so as to let the light of the setting sun fall full upon the solemn features. His head was bare, the long, thin locks of gray fluttering lightly in the evening breeze. His rifle lay upon his knee, and the other accouterments of the chase were placed at his side, within reach of his hand. Between his feet lay the figure of a hound, with its head crouching to the earth, as if it slumbered; and so perfectly easy and natural was its position, that a second glance was necessary to tell Middleton he saw only the skin of Hector, stuffed, by Indian tenderness and ingenuity, in a manner to represent the living animal. His own dog was playing at a distance with the child of Tachechana and Mahtoree. The mother herself stood at hand, holding in her arms a second offspring, that might boast of a parentage no less honorable than that which belonged to the son of Hard-Heart. Le Balafre was seated nigh the dying trapper, with every mark about his person that the hour of his own departure was not far distant. The rest of those immediately in the center were aged men who had apparently drawn near in order to observe the manner in which a just and fearless warrior would depart on the greatest of his journeys.

The old man was reaping the rewards of a life remarkable for temperance and activity, in a tranquil and placid death. His vigor in a manner endured to the very last. Decay, when it did occur, was rapid, but free from pain. He had hunted with the tribe in the spring, and even throughout most of the summer, when his limbs suddenly refused to perform their customary offices. A sympathizing weakness took possession of all his faculties; and the Pawnees believed that they were going to lose, in this unexpected manner, a sage and counselor whom they had begun both to love and respect. But as we have already said, the immortal occupant seemed unwilling to desert its tenement. The lamp of life flickered without becoming extinguished. On the morning of the day on which Middleton arrived, there was a general reviving of the powers of the whole man. His tongue was again heard in wholesome maxims, and his eye from time to time recognized the persons of his friends. It merely proved to be brief and final intercourse with the world on the part of one who had already been considered, as to mental communion, to have taken his leave of it forever.

When he had placed his guests in front of the dying man, Hard Heart, after a pause that proceeded as much from sorrow as decorum, leaned a little forward and demanded, "Does my father hear the words of his son?"

“Speak,” returned the trapper, in tones that issues from his chest but which were rendered awfully distinct by the stillness that reigned in the place, “I am about to depart from the village of the Loups,* and shortly shall be beyond the reach of your voice.”

“Let the wise chief have no cares for his journey,” continued Hard Heart with an earnest solicitude that led him to forget for the moment that others were waiting to address his adopted parent; “a hundred Loups shall clear his path from briars.”

“Pawnee, I die as I have lived, a Christian man!” resumed the trapper with a force of voice that had the same startling effect upon his hearers as is produced by the trumpet when its blast rises suddenly and freely on the air after its obstructed sounds have been heard struggling in the distance; “as I came into life so will I leave it. Horses and arms are not needed to stand in the presence of the Great Spirit of my people. He knows my color, and according to my gifts will he judge my deeds.”

“My father will tell my young men how many Mingoes* he has struc, and what acts of valor and justice he has done, that they may know how to imitate him.”

“A boastful tonque is not heard in the heaven of a white man!” solemnly returned the old man. “What I have done He has seen. His eyes are always open. That which has been done will he remember; wherein I have been wrong will he not forget to chastise, though he will do the same in mercy. No, my son; a paleface may not sing his own praises and hope to have them acceptable before his God!”

A little disappointed, the young partisan stepped modestly back, making way for one of the recent comers to approach. Middleton took one of the meager hands of the trapper, and struggling to command his voice, he succeeded in announcing his presence. The old man listened like one whose thoughts were dwelling on a very different subject; but when the other had succeeded in making him understand that he was present, an expression of joyful recognition passed over his faded features.

“I hope you have not so soon forgotten those whom you so materially served!” Middleton concluded. “It would pain me to think my hold on your memory was so light.”

“Little that I have ever seen is forgotten,” returned the trapper; “I am at the close of many weary days, but there is not one among them all that I could wish to overlook. I remember you with the whole of your company: aye, and your grandfather that went before you. I am glad that you have come back upon these plains, for I had need of one who speaks the English, since little faith can be put in the traders of these regions. Will you do a favor to an old and dying man?”

“Name it,” said Middleton; “it shall be done.”

“It is a far journey to send such trifles,” resumed the old man, who spoke at short intervals, as strength and breath permitted; “a far and weary journey is the same: but kindnesses and friendships are things not to be forgotten. There is a settlement among the Otsego hills—”

“I know the place,” interrupted Middleton, observing that he spoke with increasing difficulty; “proceed to tell me what you would have done.”

“Take this rule and pouch and horn, and send them to the person whose name is graven on the plates of the stock—a trader cut the letters with his knife—for it is long that I have intended to send him such a token of my love.”

“It shall be so. Is there more that you could wish?”

“Little else have I to bestow. My traps I give to my Indian son, for honestly and kindly has he kept his faith. Let him stand before me.”

Middleton explained to the chief what the trapper had said and relinquished his own place to the other.

“Pawnee,” continued the old man, always changing his language to suit the person he addressed, and not unfrequently according to the ideas he expressed, “it is a custom of my people for the father to leave his blessing with the son before he shuts his eyes forever. This blessing I give to you; take it, for the prayers of a Christian man will never make the path of a just warrior to the blessed prairies either longer or more tangled. May the God of a white man look on your deeds with friendly eyes, and may you never commit an act that shall cause him to darken his face. I know not whether we shall ever meet again.

“There are many traditions concerning the place of good spirits. It is not for one like me, old and experienced though I am, to set up my opinions against a nation’s. You believe in the blessed prairies, and I have faith in the sayings of my fathers. If both are true, our parting will be final; but if it should prove that the same meaning is hid under different words, we shall yet stand together, Pawnee, before the face of your Wahcondah, who will then be no other than my God. There is much to be said in favor of both religions, for each seems suited to its own people, and no doubt it was so intended. I fear I have not together followed the gifts of my color, inasmuch as I find it a little painful to give up forever the use of the rifle and the comforts of the chase. But then the fault has been my own, seeing that it could not have been His. Aye, Hector,” he continued, leaning forward a little, and feeling for the ears of the hound, “our parting has come at last, dog, and it will be a long hunt. You have been an honest, and a bold, and a faithful hound. Pawnee, you cannot slay the pup on my grave, for where a Christian dog falls, there he lies forever; but you can be kind to him after I am gone, for the love you bear his master.”

“The words of my father are in my ears,” returned the young partisan, making a grave and respectful gesture of assent.

“Do you hear what the chief has promised, dog?” demanded the trapper, making an effort to attract the notice of the insensible effigy of his hound. Receiving no answering look, nor hearing any friendly whine, the old man felt for the mouth and endeavored to force his hand between the cold lips. The truth then flashed upon him, although he was far from perceiving the whole extent of the deception. Falling back in his seat, he hung his head like one who felt a severe and unexpected shock. Profiting by this momentary forgetfulness, two young Indians removed the skin with the same delicacy of feeling that had induced them to attempt the pious fraud.

“The dog is dead!” muttered the trapper after a pause of many minutes “A hound has his time as well as a man, and well has he filled his days! Captain,” he added, making an effort to wave his hand for Middleton, “I am glad you have come, for though kind and well meaning according to the gifts of their color, these Indians are not the men to lay the head of a white man in his grave. I have been thinking, too, of this dog at my feet; it will not do to set forth the opinion that a Christian can expect to meet his hound again; still there can be little harm in placing what is left of so faithful a servant nigh the bones of his master.”

“It shall be as you desire.”

"I'm glad you think with me in this matter. In order, then, to save labor, lay the pup at my feet; or for that matter, put him side by side. A hunter need never be ashamed to be found in company with his dog!"

"I charge myself with your wish."

The old man made a long and apparently a musing pause. At times he raised his eyes wistfully, as if he would again address Middleton, but some innate feeling appeared always to suppress his words. The other, who observed his hesitation, enquired in a way most likely to encourage him to proceed, whether there was aught else that he could wish to have done.

"I am without kith or kin in the wide world!" the trapper answered, "When I am gone, there will be an end of my race. We have never been chiefs, but honest, and useful in our way. I hope it cannot be denied, we have always proved ourselves. My father lies buried near the sea, and the bones of his soil will whiten on the prairies—"

"Name the spot, and your remains shall be placed by the side of your father," interrupted Middleton.

"Not so, not so, Captain. Let me sleep, where I have lived, beyond the din of the settlements! Still I see no need why the grave of an honest man should be hid like a redskin in his ambushment. I paid a man in the settlements to make and put a graven stone at the head of my father's resting place. It was of the value of twelve beaver skins, and cunningly and curiously was it carved! Then it told to all comers that the body of such a Christian lay beneath: and it spoke of his manner of life, of his years, and of his honesty. When we had done with the Frenchers in the old war,* I made a journey to the spot in order to see that all was rightly performed, and glad I am to say, the workman had not forgotten his faith."

"And such a stone you would have at your grave?"

"I! No, no, I have no son, but Hard Heart and it is little that an Indian knows of white fashions and usages. Besides, I am his debtor already, seeing it is so little I have done since I have lived in his tribe. The rifle might bring the value of such a thing—but then I know it will give the boy pleasure to hang the piece in his hall, for many is the deer and the bird that he has seen it destroy. No, no, the gun must be sent to him whose name is graven on the lock!"

"But there is one who would gladly prove his affection in the way you wish; he who owes you not only his own deliverance from so many dangers, but who inherits a heavy debt of gratitude from his ancestors. The stone shall be put at the head of your grave."

The old man extended his emaciated hand and gave the other a squeeze of thanks.

"I thought you might be willing to do it, but I was backward in asking the favor," he said, "seeing that you are not of my kin. Put no boastful words on the same, but just the name, the age, and the time of the death, with something from the Holy Book; no more, no more. My name will then not be altogether lost on 'arth; I need no more."

Middleton intimated his assent, and then followed a pause that was only broken by distant and broken sentences from the dying man. He appeared now to have closed his accounts with the world and to await merely for the final summons to quit it. Middleton and Hard Heart placed themselves on the opposite sides of his seat and watched with melancholy solicitude the variations of his countenance. For two hours there was no very sensible alteration. The expression of his faded and time-worn features was that of a calm and dignified repose. From

time to time he spoke, uttering some brief sentence in the way of advice, or asking some simple questions concerning those in whose fortunes he still took a friendly interest. During the whole of that solemn and anxious period each individual of the tribe kept his place in the most self-restrained patience. When the old man spoke, all bent their heads to listen; and when his words were uttered, they seemed to ponder on their wisdom and usefulness.

As the flame drew nigher to the socket, his voice was hushed, and there were moments when his attendants doubted whether he still belonged to the living. Middleton, who watched each wavering expression of his weather-beaten visage with the interest of a keen observer of human nature softened by the tenderness of personal regard, fancied he could read the workings of the old man's soul in the strong lineaments of his countenance. Perhaps what the enlightened soldier took for the delusion of mistaken opinion did actually occur, for who has returned from that unknown world to explain by what forms, and in what manner, he was introduced into its awful precincts? Without pretending to explain what must ever be a mystery to the quick, we shall simply relate facts as they occurred.

The trapper had remained nearly motionless for an hour. His eyes alone had occasionally opened and shut. When opened, his gaze seemed fastened on the clouds, which hung around the western horizon, reflecting the bright colors, and giving form and loveliness to the glorious tints of an American sunset. The hour the calm beauty of the season, the occasion—all conspired to fill the spectators with solemn awe. Suddenly, while musing on the remarkable position in which he was placed, Middleton felt the hand which he held grasp his own with incredible power, and the old man, supported on either side by his friends, rose upright to his feet. For a moment he looked about him, as if to invite all in presence to listen (the lingering remnant of human frailty) and then, with a fine military elevation of the head and with a voice that might be heard in every part of that numerous assembly, he pronounced the word "Here!"

A movement so entirely unexpected, and the air of grandeur and humility which were so remarkably united in the mien of the trapper, together with the clear and uncommon force of his utterance, produced a short period of confusion in the faculties of all present. When Middleton and Hard-Heart, each of whom had involuntarily extended a hand to support the form of the old man, turned to him again, they found that the subject of their interest was removed forever beyond the necessity of their care. They mournfully placed the body in its seat, and Le Balafre arose to announce the termination of the scene to the tribe. The voice of the old Indian seemed a sort of echo from that invisible world to which the meek spirit of the trapper had just departed.

"A valiant, a just, and a wise warrior has gone on the path which will lead him to the blessed grounds of his people!" he said. "When the voice of the Wahcondah called him, he was ready to answer. Go, my children; remember the just chief of the palefaces, and clear your own tracks from briars!"

The grave was made beneath the shade of some noble oaks. It has been carefully watched to the present hour by the Pawnees of the Loup and is often shown to the traveler and the trader as a spot where a just white man sleeps. In due time the stone was placed at its head, with the simple inscription which the trapper had himself requested. The only liberty taken by Middleton was to add: "May no wanton hand ever disturb his remains!"

the trapper - Natty Bumppo

tenement - body

Loups - a Pawnee tribe

Mingoes - enemies

the old war - French and Indian War (1754–1763)

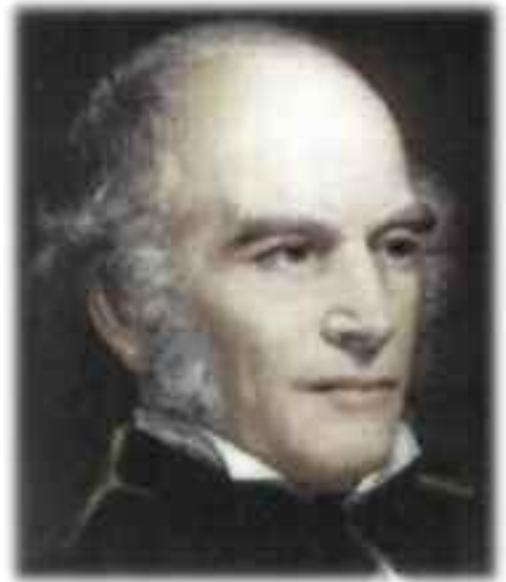


Answer true or false in each of the following statements.

- 1.31 _____ Upon entering the Indian town, Middleton grew concerned because everyone was singing, shouting, and welcoming him.
- 1.32 _____ Middleton and Paul found Natty Bumppo approaching death.
- 1.33 _____ When Hard Heart asked his father to “tell my young men how many Mingoes he has struck” and of the “acts of valor and justice he has done,” Natty explained that God does not hear “a boastful tongue.”
- 1.34 _____ Natty’s son believed in the God of the Bible and “in the blessed prairies.”
- 1.35 _____ According to Natty, there was a possibility that he and his unbelieving son “shall yet stand together” in heaven.
- 1.36 _____ Natty’s last word was “No!”

William Cullen Bryant (1794–1878). Known more for his poems than his journalism, Bryant was an influential writer in both genres. His poems, heavy with British Romanticism, helped to establish the Romantic movement in America. His editorials on slavery, women’s rights, and freedom of religion helped to shape American social and political views.

The son of a backwoods physician, Bryant was taught to appreciate the classics and nature. As a young boy, he set many of the psalms to rhyme. However, as a teenager Bryant departed from his Bible-oriented upbringing and became interested in Romanticism. His favorite brand of romantics were known as the “graveyard poets.” As their name indicates, these writers were captivated by the topic of death. Bryant’s first version of *Thanatopsis*, which means “meditation on death,” emerged during his reading of these poets. At fifteen, Bryant entered Williams College but dropped out with the hope of entering Yale. Tuition was too expensive, so instead, Bryant decided to read law. After three years of independent study, he passed the Massachusetts bar and practiced law for ten years. Bryant continued to write poetry but with a voice that was drifting farther and farther from the Puritan doctrines of his past. In 1821 the same year that he married Frances Fairchild, Bryant published a small collection of poems.



Hopkins Hall at William’s College

In 1825 Bryant moved to New York City with the hope of embarking on a literary career. Soon after arriving, he was accepted into the art scene, joining the Bread and Cheese Club. For a time, Bryant was editor of the *New York Review and Athenoem Magazine*. After these endeavors failed, he became an editorial assistant on the *Evening Post*. Within two years, Bryant became part owner and editor-in-chief, retaining his position until his death. With his effective editorials, Bryant turned the *Evening Post* into one of the most respected publications in the country. Bryant was guided by principle in his political views, rather than by party loyalty. He supported the Democratic Party with its anti-slavery Free-Soil movement. However, in 1855, he helped to form the Republican Party.

Although he is considered a major figure in American verse, Bryant wrote very little poetry. His themes of nature, death, and the past held together in a classical form have caused critics to liken him to the British Romantic poet William Wordsworth.

We can see in *Thanatopsis*, that Bryant was a Romantic who was quickly turning toward transcendentalism. Nature does not offer merely a better way of life, but also comfort in death. For Bryant and the poets who would soon follow him, man is but a “brother to the insensible rock.”



Fill in each of the blanks using items from the following word list.

graveyard poets political women’s rights
Romantic William Wordsworth

- 1.37 Bryant’s poems helped to establish the _____ movement in America.
- 1.38 Bryant’s editorials on slavery, _____, and freedom of religion helped to shape American social and _____ views.
- 1.39 The first version of *Thanatopsis*, emerged during Bryant’s reading of the “_____.”
- 1.40 Bryant has been likened to the British poet _____.

What to Look For:

Bryant’s godlike view of Nature shines through as he considers the meaning of death. He finds comfort in the fact that his body will be turned to dust and find eternal communion with Nature. Believing that there is nothing beyond the grave, Bryant is not fearful. Notice that even the rhythm of his poem is soothing. As you read, think about the truth of Hebrews 9:27: “It is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment.” Should Bryant, as an unbeliever, view death as a comfort?

Thanatopsis. *The title means “meditation on death.” Originally written when Bryant was only sixteen years old, he revised it several times.*

Thanatopsis

To him who in the love of Nature holds
 Communion with her visible forms, she speaks
 A various language: for his gayer hours
 She has a voice of gladness, and a smile
 And eloquence of beauty, and she glides 5
 Into his darker musings with a mild
 And healing sympathy that steals away
 Their sharpness ere* he is aware. When thoughts
 Of the last bitter hour come like a blight
 Over thy spirit, and sad images 10
 Of the stern agony, and shroud, and pall,

And breathless darkness, and the narrow house,*
Make thee to shudder and grow sick at heart,
Go forth under the open sky and list
To Nature's teachings, while from all around 15
Earth and her waters, and the depths of air
Comes a still voice:*

Yet a few days, and thee
The all-beholding sun shall see no more
In all his course; nor yet in the cold ground,
Where thy pale form was laid with many tears, 20
Nor in the embrace of ocean, shall exist

Thy image. Earth, that nourished thee, shall claim
Thy growth, to be resolved to earth again,
And, lost each human trace, surrendering up
Thine individual being, shalt thou go 25
To mix forever with the elements,
To be a brother to the insensible rock
And to the sluggish clod, which the rude swain*
Turns with his share* and treads upon; the oak
Shall send his roots abroad, and pierce thy mould. 30

Yet not to thine eternal resting-place
Shalt thou retire alone, nor couldst thou wish
Couch* more magnificent. Thou shalt lie down
With patriarchs of the infant world, with kings,
The powerful of the earth, the wise, the good, 35

Fair forms, and hoary seers of ages past,
All in one mighty sepulchre. The hills
Rock-ribbed and ancient as the sun; the vales
Stretching in pensive quietness between;
The venerable woods, rivers that move 40

In majesty, and the complaining brooks
That make the meadows green; and, poured round all,
Old Ocean's gray and melancholy waste,—
Are but the solemn decorations all
Of the great tomb of man. The golden sun, 45

The planets, all the infinite host of heaven,
Are shining on the sad abodes of death,
Through the still lapse of ages. All that tread
The globe are but a handful to the tribes
That slumber in its bosom. Take the wings 50

Of morning,* pierce the Barcan* wilderness,
Or lose thyself in the continuous woods
Where rolls the Oregon, and hears no sound
Save his own dashings; yet the dead are there
And millions in those solitudes, since first 55

The flight of years began, have laid them down
In their last sleep, the dead reign there alone.
So shalt thou rest; and what if thou withdraw
in silence from the living, and no friend
Take note of thy departure? All that breathe 60

Will share thy destiny. The gay will laugh
When thou art gone, the solemn brood of care
Plod on, and each one as before will chase
His favorite phantom; yet all these shall leave
Their mirth and their employments, and shall come 65
And make their bed with thee. As the long train

Of ages glide away, the sons of men—
 The youth in life's green spring, and he who goes
 In the full strength of years, matron and maid,
 The speechless babe, and the gray-headed man— 70
 Shall one by one be gathered to thy side
 By those who in their turn shall follow them.

So live, that when thy summons comes to join
 The innumerable caravan which moves
 To that mysterious realm where each shall take 75
 His chamber in the silent halls of death,
 Thou go not, like the quarry-slave at night,
 Scourged to his dungeon, but, sustained and soothed
 By an unfaltering trust, approach thy grave
 Like one who wraps the drapery of his couch 80
 About him and lies down to pleasant dreams.



ere - before

narrow house - coffin

swain - a country lad

share - plowshare

couch - a bed

still voice - compare with 1 Kings 19:12

wings of the morning - borrowed from the language of Psalm 139:9

Barcan - reference to a desert region in North Africa



Answer true or false for each of the following statements.

- 1.41 _____ According to lines 13–15, Bryant believes that if the thought of death makes you “grow sick at heart,” you should listen to Nature.
- 1.42 _____ According to line 16, the “still voice” that Bryant hears is the God of the Bible.
- 1.43 _____ According to lines 22–30, our bodies will decay and become part of the earth.
- 1.44 _____ According to lines 60 and 61, not everyone who breathes will die.
- 1.45 _____ According to lines 73–81, Bryant encourages the reader that to be “sustained and soothed” by death will bring nothing more than “pleasant dreams.”



Review the material in this section in preparation for the Self-Test, which will check your mastery of this particular section. The items missed on this Self-Test will indicate specific areas where restudy is needed for mastery.

SELF-TEST 1

Answer true or false for each of the following statements (each answer, 3 points).

- 1.01 _____ Europe was the standard by which American society and culture were judged.
- 1.02 _____ The pessimistic spirit of the immigrants did not help to fuel advances in farming, transportation, and industry.
- 1.03 _____ As America flourished both politically and economically, so did its artistic development.
- 1.04 _____ American writers complained that the vast open landscape put limitations on the topics about which they could write.
- 1.05 _____ American writers traveled to Europe in search of money.
- 1.06 _____ Romanticism focused on the individual's imagination and feelings.
- 1.07 _____ Romanticism replaced God's Word with reason.
- 1.08 _____ According to the Romantic, nature was innocent and man was essentially good.
- 1.09 _____ The two groups from New York City that fostered literary and artistic accomplishments were the Knickerbockers and the Independents.

Underline the correct answer for each of the following statements (each answer, 3 points).

- 1.010 James Fenimore Cooper was America's first (poet, novelist, politician).
- 1.011 In the Leatherstocking Tales, Cooper created America's first fictional (mother, outcast, hero).
- 1.012 Cooper has been recognized as America's first (political, social, religious) critic.

Answer true or false for each of the following statements (each answer, 3 point).

- 1.013 _____ Middleton and Paul found Natty Bumppo approaching death.
- 1.014 _____ Natty's son believed in the God of the Bible and "in the blessed prairies."
- 1.015 _____ According to Natty, there is a possibility that he and his unbelieving son "shall yet stand together" in heaven.
- 1.016 _____ Natty's last word is "No!"

Fill in each of the blanks using items from the following word list (each answer, 3 points).

Catskill	entertain	writer
George Washington	German	William Wordsworth
hen-pecked	idleness	twenty
petticoat	political	women's rights
Romantic	sleep	

- 1.017 Rip Van Winkle's village was founded by Dutch colonists in the _____ Mountains.
- 1.018 Rip was a kind neighbor and an obedient, _____ husband.
- 1.019 Dame Van Winkle continually dinned in Rip's ears about his _____, his carelessness, and the ruin he was bringing his family.
- 1.020 After drinking from the liquor-filled keg, Rip fell into a deep _____.

