

TEXT	'RIP VAN WINKLE' (1819)
AUTHOR	Washington Irving
THEMES	Routines, food (unit 2), emotions (unit 4), places (unit 8), towns (unit 14), animals (unit 16)
VOCABULARY	Descriptions of places, people and feelings
WRITING	Imagining changes in the future
SPEAKING	Role play conversation explaining the present to someone from the past

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Washington Irving (1783–1859) was a major American writer, particularly famous for his short stories. His story *Sleepy Hollow* was made into a TV series. Irving was one of the first authentic 'American' literary voices – one of a group of writers who wanted to establish English writing in the USA with its own identity and character. One way of doing this was to focus on the people and places of the country. Rip Van Winkle is a good example of this. Rip falls asleep for twenty years. When he wakes up and walks into his village, he finds everything has changed. He has missed the Revolutionary War and its political impact through the break with Britain. Irving is able to reflect on those dramatic changes by seeing this new world through Rip's eyes. At the same time, despite the importance of an independent USA, the story is a little nostalgic and regretful, perhaps as the author considers how quickly old ways of life are lost.

WARMER

Find a picture of the Rip Van Winkle statue in Irvington USA or the one at the summit of Hunter Mountain. Ask students to speculate as to who this man is, and why there is a statue of him. Draw attention to his beard, as this is mentioned in the text.

ABOUT YOU

The questions introduce some of the themes of the text. Ask students if they know any stories or films where people travel in time. Do they go back or forward in time? Which do they think makes the best story – travel to the past or the future? Depending on how well students know the area or their towns, ask them to think of recent changes. Have new shops opened? Have any buildings been knocked down? What might change in the future?

Use the introduction to raise the question of how students think life has changed since their parents were young and how much they think it will change by the time they are their parents' age. Ask for suggestions/predictions. You might want to encourage students to keep notes as their ideas can be used in Activities 5 and 6.

- 1 Students read silently or you read the text out loud. Check vocabulary comprehension and use the glossary, giving more examples, if necessary. Demonstrate *stroking* through the action, *astonishment* with a facial expression, and *sigh* by making the noise and gesture. Get students to repeat these actions and noises. Students describe to each other what they believe Rip thinks and feels.

EXTENSION

The text is highly visual. You could choose a student to be Rip and act out his movements as you read, or do this activity in small groups.

MIXED ABILITY

The previous drama group activity works well with mixed ability groups because the stronger ones can be 'directors' while weaker participants follow guided instructions.

2

Possible answers

- 1 He looks strange/dirty/old. They don't know him.
- 2 Because they are responding to his very long beard
- 3 The mountains, the river
- 4 The dog is not Wolf. Wolf is dead by now.
- 5 Ask for suggestions and discuss them with the whole class.

VOCABULARY

3

Answers

- 1 sighed
- 2 carried on
- 3 stroke
- 4 starving

4

Answers

- 1 populous
- 2 silver
- 3 astonishment
- 4 starving
- 5 foot
- 6 sigh

WRITING

- 5 You can introduce this task with a scene or trailer from one of many films which deal with the theme of time travel, such as *Back to the Future*. Brainstorm ideas with the whole class. Introduce some frames for comparing times such as *It is now ... it was ...*, *In x it was ... but in y it is ...*. As this works as a collaborative activity, arrange groups so that stronger and weaker students work together. An alternative is to do this writing in reverse – compare life now to twenty years ago. This could involve doing research such as looking for photos online showing how towns have changed. Examples can be found on websites such as <https://www.boredpanda.com>. The written work can be presented with visuals, either real, or drawn, and given as a group presentation.

SPEAKING

- 6 The Speaking activity is connected to some of the previous activities. This can be done as improvisation from notes, or scripted. If you choose to have students write scripts, encourage attention to stress. When we express surprise, we tend to stress a word. Tell students to underline the words they want to stress and practise their dialogues stressing those words. It doesn't matter if they exaggerate – it's almost preferable as they develop a clearer sense of changes of volume and pace.

MIXED ABILITY

Short, scripted dialogues benefit weaker students as it means the content is prepared in advance. You can pair stronger students with instructions to improvise their exchanges whilst strong/weak or weak/weak pairs work together to create a short script to act out.