



# 19<sup>th</sup> Century American Fiction

Romanticism, Gothic Literature and Irving Washington's "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow"

# Romanticism

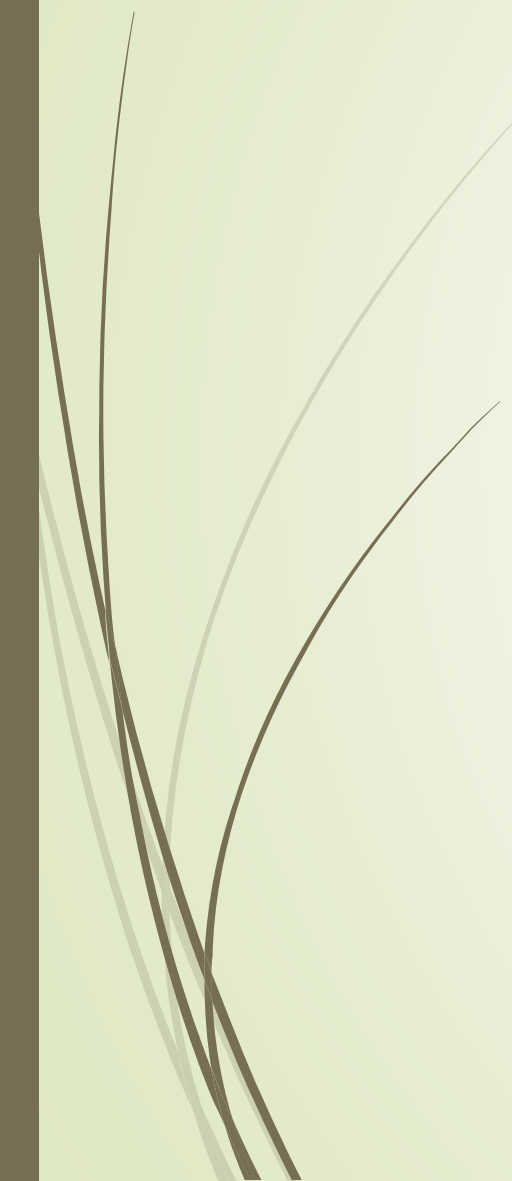
- ❖ 18<sup>th</sup> century
- ❖ Revolutionary
- ❖ It defied neoclassicism and the ancient models of perfection
- ❖ It was a reaction to rationalism and empiricism
- ❖ It stressed the importance of subjectivity and individuality

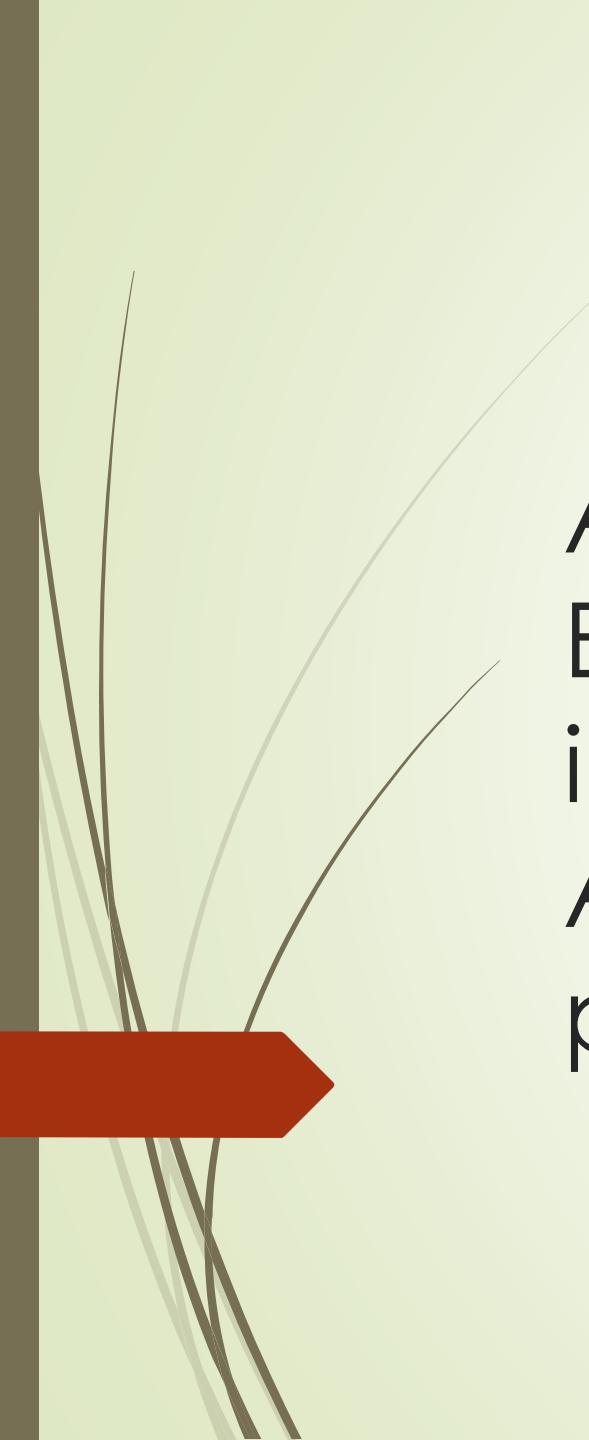
# Romanticism

- ❖ It elevated the artist above others
- ❖ Emotions and senses could lead to higher truths (idealism)
- ❖ Nature is the key to spirituality
- ❖ Civilization oppresses and takes us away from the truth



# Romanticism in 19<sup>th</sup> Century America

- ❖ Political landscape: Uncharted territory
  - ❖ Social landscape: Contradictions. Farmers, frontiersmen and industrialization in the big cities
  - ❖ Cultural landscape: Anxiety of influence
  - ❖ Natural landscape: The American Eden
- 




According to Washington Irving, English romanticism was always an idealization of the past, whereas American romanticism lay in its promise for the future.

# Gothic Literature





# Characteristics of Gothic Literature

- Obviously fictional
  - It takes place in the past (usually medieval)
  - Uses folk stories and legends
  - Strong supernatural elements
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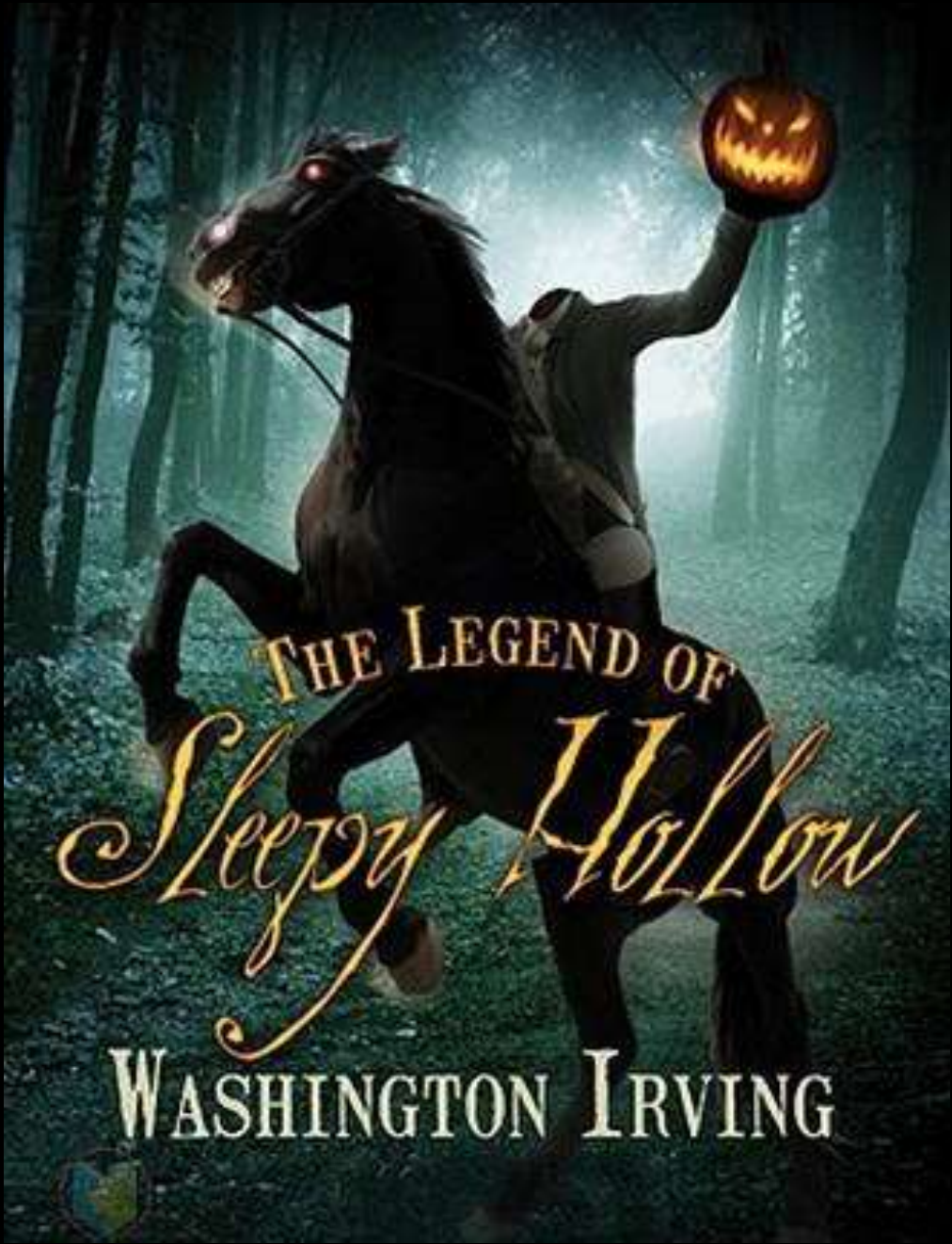
# Characteristics of Gothic Literature

- It discusses the abnormalities, hidden desires, anxieties and fears in a safe space
- There is usually a feeling of guilt that haunts
- It reflects the anxiety of change, the uncertainty of future and what could go wrong. A middle class nightmare.





# Terror VS Horror

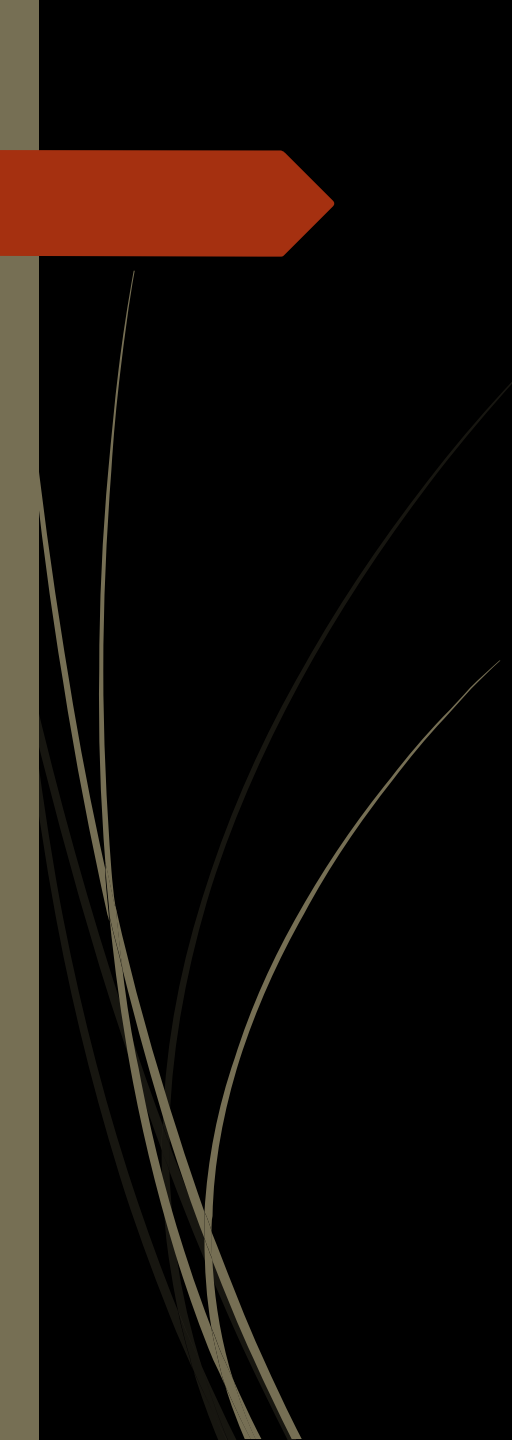




*The title*



*Setting*





A drowsy, dreamy influence seems to hang over the land, and to pervade the very atmosphere. Some say that the place was bewitched by a High German doctor, during the early days of the settlement; others, that an old Indian chief, the prophet or wizard of his tribe, held his powwows there before the country was discovered by Master Hendrick Hudson. Certain it is, the place still continues under the sway of some witching power, that holds a spell over the minds of the good people, causing them to walk in a continual reverie. They are given to all kinds of marvelous beliefs; are subject to trances and visions, and frequently see strange sights, and hear music and voices in the air (729).



# The Headless Horseman

The dominant spirit, however, that haunts this enchanted region, and seems to be commander-in-chief of all the powers of the air, is the apparition of a figure on horseback, without a head. It is said by some to be the ghost of a Hessian trooper, whose head had been carried away by a cannon-ball, in some nameless battle during the Revolutionary War (1779).



Indeed, certain of the most authentic historians of those parts, who have been careful in collecting and collating the floating facts concerning this spectre, allege that the body of the trooper having been buried in the churchyard, the ghost rides forth to the scene of battle in nightly quest of his head, and that the rushing speed with which he sometimes passes along the Hollow, like a midnight blast, is owing to his being belated, and in a hurry to get back to the churchyard before daybreak (730)



# Ichabod Crane

He was, moreover, esteemed by the women as a man of great erudition, for he had read several books quite through, and was a perfect master of Cotton Mather's 'History of New England Witchcraft,' in which, by the way, he most firmly and potently believed (733)





# Characters

- Ichabod Crane
- Katrina Van Tassel
- Baltus Van Tassel
- Brom Bones
- Hessian Headless Horseman



*Stories people tell*



*Why is it romantic?*



*Why is it gothic?*



*“The Legend of Sleepy Hollow” and all the things we talked about in our previous classes*