ENG253
Week #8: Weekly Reading and Writing

Tuesday
Washington Irving, pages 361 – 398

*Rip Van Winkle* and *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*

Thursday
*Cultural Portfolio: Asserting a National Language and Literature*, 399 – 407

Please write in response to two of the following (one on Irving and one on the *National Language*)

**Irving**

- Scholars of the modern short story point to *Rip Van Winkle* as the first. Explain the way in which *Rip Van Winkle* came to be imagined, out of a Germanic folklore tradition.
- Reflect on our contemporary notions of the American Dream. How might we scholars consider *Rip Van Winkle* as the first American Dream in American Literature? Play around with the historic connections between Rip Van Winkle and the earliest colonists.
- Consider making connections between *Rip Van Winkle* and your own life. For example, recast the story in our contemporary lives and write a summary of your update.
- Think about the legend of Anne Hutchinson, whose story precedes Irving’s *Legend of Sleepy Hollow* by about two centuries. She was banished from the Bay Colony for trusting her own mind and heart above any printed word or reasoned argument. Do you see her spirit return in Irving’s story? In what ways are latter-day Antinomians and Headless Horsemen heroic figures in American imaginative literature?

**National Language**

- Discuss Webster’s beliefs in the power of language. To what extent does Webster identify the fate of his own work with the nation’s destiny?
- Note that in the *Cultural Portfolio* on a National Language the cultures that Americans are described as breaking away from are always European. How do Native American and African languages and literatures fit into such a discussion? How would you characterize American literature and language today? How is your portrait of today different from those described in the *portfolio*?