



# Read Rhyme Repeat

## **Rip Van Winkle**

Theater Adaptation  
by Jill Craddock

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Rhyming Reader's Theater Adaptation by Jill Craddock

## Characters

RIP VAN WINKLE

DAME VAN WINKLE/JUDITH/NARRATOR 1

NICHOLAS VEDDER/NARRATOR 2

## NARRATOR 2

Our tale begins and ends in a singular, lone location.  
The Van Winkles dwell in a place soon to be a nation,  
In an oppressive era and topsy-turvy time,  
A New-York mountain town with horizons sublime.

## RIP

*(Entering his home)*

Hello? Hello?

## DAME VAN WINKLE

Hello? Hello? Hello, indeed. Where have you been, you lousy "good" fellow?

## RIP

Helping the neighbors. That big storm blew over their fence.  
I rebuilt the section enclosing their pasture.

## DAME VAN WINKLE

You "helped"? I wager you charged not one single pence!  
Earning a living, husband, seems a skill you can't master.  
Every child in the neighborhood squealing, "Oh, Mr. Van Winkle!"  
You're idle and indolent, with eyes all a-twinkle.  
The kite-flying, story-telling, marble-shooting—  
With all the time that you waste, we'd be better off looting.

## RIP

Idle and indolent? I said I rebuilt a fence.  
And I hunted for hours, for meat for the table.

### **DAME VAN WINKLE**

For squirrels! Rip, we are parents.  
With two children we've raised from the cradle.  
Where is the man I married, heir to the Van Winkle estate?  
Even our offspring see a mate who is low rate.

### **RIP**

It is simply no use to work on this farm.  
Everything I do on our land brings harm.  
Our livestock flit.  
The weeds won't quit.

### **DAME VAN WINKLE**

Pull some time from your neighbor to improve your own land!  
This estate has wasted since you've had it in hand.  
Your father and grandfather would spin in their graves.  
I'm glad they can't see how carelessly you've behaved.

### **RIP**

Take that back! I married a... I have produced two heirs.

### **DAME VAN WINKLE**

They're ragamuffins, Rip. People think we don't care.  
Little Rip has a rope at his waist to hold up your old clothes.  
Judith sneezes and sniffs with a constant runny nose.

### **RIP**

I should tend to my cow, before she goes astray.

### **DAME VAN WINKLE**

She got away yesterday!  
You did nothing about your one single animal, out in the rain.  
You were off in the village, smiling away.

### **RIP**

Then I'll go find her. She, at least, is not prone to complain.

*(RIP leaves his home and goes to the public house.)*

### **VEDDER**

Rip! You look like you're carrying the weight of the world.  
Have a drink on the house.  
Trouble again with the spouse?

**RIP**

Ach, Vedder. She's the only person who can agitate me.  
Whatever good I do, the dame sees how I've failed,  
Notes what I lack.

**VEDDER**

This too shall pass.

**RIP**

Even my dog can't stomach my betrothed.  
His tail and chest sag. So do mine. We're be-loathed.

**VEDDER**

Here's what you do with a troublesome bride.  
Divvy the house, divide up the labors.  
Give her the inside, and you have the outside,  
Pop in sometime later, and you can join your neighbors!

**RIP**

Thank you, friend, for the shrewd and clever ruse.

**VEDDER**

Look who's here. The schoolmaster, about to read us the news.

**RIP**

What kind of news is coming our way?

**VEDDER**

More taxes for that fat king.  
Let's revolt. One of these days....

**RIP**

What do you mean?

**VEDDER**

I mean, why should he take everything?  
I own the tavern. I do the work.  
But the Brits are the ones who see the perks.  
We need to grind them down to rubble!

**RIP**

That sounds like trouble.

**VEDDER**

The response of a hen-pecked man, with a shrew for a wife.  
Speaking of, she's heading this way with a hustle in her bustle.  
Rip, don't go along with everything people tell you all your life.

**DAME VAN WINKLE**

*(Enters the public house)*

Vedder! How many drinks did you throw down his lazy gullet?

**VEDDER**

*(Ignoring her, sniffing the air)*

Free drinks to whoever caught that mullet!  
I smell it suddenly strong in the air.  
Oh, hello, Dame Van Winkle; didn't see you there.

**DAME VAN WINKLE**

Mullet, indeed. I only wish my dear husband would catch one lonely fish.  
But even with bait and a boat, he'd bring home a bony squirrel.

**RIP**

Real men hunt. Fishing requires the patience of an oyster.

**DAME VAN WINKLE**

Then where's the pearl?

**RIP**

I can't sit in my home.  
I can't walk on my street.  
I have no home in the world.

*(Leaving)*

I am now a refugee.

**VEDDER**

Where are you going, buddy?

**RIP**

To sit on the stump of a tree.  
Only my faithful dog will know which one.  
So go on without us and have your fun.

**VEDDER**

Dame Van Winkle, can I offer you a frosty mug of "Wench, Be Gone!"

*(DAME VAN WINKLE exits.)*

### **NARRATOR 1**

Rip strode up the mountain shooting at squirrels and reaching a soaring elevation.  
He knew the longer he was gone, the fierier his homecoming confrontation.  
Every thought of Dame Van Winkle made him climb and clamber even higher.  
He breathed inspiration from the river view and treetop spires.

### **NARRATOR 2**

Then he heard a stranger's voice calling, causing him apprehension.  
How the strange little man knew him was beyond Rip's comprehension.

### **NARRATOR 1**

The stranger's garb was Dutch and decades out of fashion.  
He bore a keg on his shoulders and beckoned to Rip,  
Who, thirsty and filled with an unhappy passion,  
Descended the slope to the man and indulged in a nip.

### **NARRATOR 2**

But a nip of Holland's finest leads to a draft.  
Then another and another, until Rip was quite daft,  
And, looking again, he saw not just the Dutchman,  
But another man, small, with a face nearly all nose,  
Who was part of a faction in feathers and stocking hose.  
These folk played at ninepins in a silence like stone,  
With odd-looking faces from which all emotion had flown.

### **NARRATOR 1**

The group stopped to stare at Rip. Rolling balls echoed.  
They had neither the decency nor manners for a simple hello.  
Rip felt fear with the effect of the flagon,  
And looked desperately for a homebound horse and wagon.

### **NARRATOR 2**

Rip's nip led to a nap that led to sleep disproportionately deep.  
*(RIP falls asleep, then awakens.)*

### **RIP**

I couldn't have slept here all night.  
Now Dame and I will have our longest-ever fight.  
Oh, that wicked drink!  
What will I tell her? I must think!

And some prankster took my gun? And left me only this rusty piece of tin?  
Here I am again, taking it on the chin.  
Even my dog left me in the night.  
My own best friend, and he's nowhere in sight.

I'll find that bizarre Dutch crew and get my gun and dog both,  
If I can make it out of this thicket of grapevine overgrowth.  
But where is that glen? I'm all in tangles.  
I could have sworn this stream flowed at a different angle.

Never mind the Dutchman; I'll head toward the tavern.  
Vedder can help me recover my losses and wits.  
My stomach's as empty as a Catskill cavern.  
Not to mention my head feels like it's full of fuzz and peach pits.

*(He touches his head and discovers his beard is a foot long.)*

### **NARRATOR 1**

Overnight, Rip's beard grew a foot long.

**RIP**

All this in one night?

### **NARRATOR 2**

Hardly. And that's only one clue that something's gone wrong.

**RIP**

On my own street, I don't know a one single child.  
There are so many new people, new houses, strange names on the doors.  
And my own home? It looks a refuge for the wild.

### **NARRATOR 2**

Wait 'til he sees what else is in store.

**RIP**

Judith? Rip, Junior? Anyone here? Where did they go?  
Aye! I'll run to Vedder; Vedder will know!

### **NARRATOR 1**

But the tavern was converted; it's now a hotel.  
Stars? Stripes? Blue coats? For Rip, none of this gelled.  
Nor the flag of some sort that flew high on the pole.  
And who was this "George Washington" that everyone extolled?

**RIP**

*(addressing imaginary hotel patrons)*

Elections, congress, Bunker's Hill, liberty:  
These words mean nothing to me!  
What do you mean, "citizens' rights"?  
Did this whole town turn inside-out, overnight?

Repeat the question please, just one more time.  
Vote? Federal or Democrat? I'm sorry, but I don't understand.  
Me? What's a Tory? Of course I'm not a spy!  
I've lived here all my life. Get Vedder. He'll tell you who I am!

**NARRATOR 2**

Then Rip learned the truth. Friend Vedder was dead these eighteen years.  
The news-reading schoolmaster had gone to congress.  
And yet another friend's death was a mystery.  
Confused and alone, Rip's heart filled deep with misery.

**RIP**

Don't you know Rip Van Winkle? Don't you know me?  
What do you mean, sir, "Who is that man?"  
Surely, I've just been asleep.  
Please, nice lady, listen to me.

**JUDITH**

*(to her baby)*

Quiet, Rip.

**RIP**

Me?

**JUDITH**

Rip is the name of my baby.  
He shares my father's name.  
Who disappeared twenty years now with no clue.  
It's a shame.

**RIP**

My Judith, it's you!

**JUDITH**

Pardon?

**RIP**

And where is the Dame, uh, Van Winkle's wife?

**JUDITH**

She screamed 'til she was red in the face and, thus, lost her life.

**RIP**

Is that so?

**NARRATOR 2**

It was the one thing that made sense.

**JUDITH**

You see, an unfortunate peddler tried to make her part with two pence.

**RIP**

Judith, look closely. What do you see? I'm your father.  
And the grandfather of this sweet baby.

**JUDITH**

It's been twenty years! Where have you been?

**RIP**

I fell asleep in the woods. I don't remember a thing  
But a Dutchman offering a drink,  
And a group of gypsies playing at ninepins, I think.

**JUDITH**

I heard old Peter Vanderdonk say the mountains were haunted before.  
I thought it was only legend and lore.  
He says if you're out on the night of a half moon—

**RIP**

The man's a loon.

**JUDITH**

Mr. Vanderdonk is the most respected historian you can find.

**RIP**

That's as may be. Still, everyone will think I've lost my mind.

**JUDITH**

Nonsense. They've already gone back to worrying about the election news.  
You're coming to live with us. So we can supervise your next snooze!

**RIP**

Where's Rip, Junior? Has he managed as well without me?

**JUDITH**

He's probably around here somewhere. Leaning on a tree.

**NARRATOR 2**

Rip, Junior inherited some of these leaning tendencies.  
He pretends to work on the farm, but really does as little as he can.

**RIP**

I can have a talk with him man-to-man.  
Do you know if any of my old friends are alive?

**JUDITH**

One or two have survived.

**RIP**

I'm off to see who I can find around here.  
There's a lot to catch up on from twenty years.

**JUDITH**

You slept through the war and woke up free.

**RIP**

May the Dame rest in peace.  
I'm no longer bound in matrimony.

**JUDITH**

No! You're a citizen, free, in these United American States.

**NARRATOR 2**

Everything had changed.

**JUDITH**

Doesn't it feel strange?

**RIP**

Not as strange as the gang of Dutch that drugged my toddy.  
I'll just take a seat on this bench and rest this old body.

**JUDITH**

I thought you wanted to go look up old friends.

**RIP**

Such an effort! If I stay on this bench, I'll find plenty of friends.

**JUDITH**

Is that what you intend?  
Just to sit here the rest of your days?

**RIP**

It may be a new era for you, but I didn't change my ways.  
Go on home. I'm old. Sitting here will make me happy.  
Almost as happy as seeing you and your beautiful boy.

**JUDITH**

Well, if this is what you want, at least I'll know where to find you.  
You'll let me know if you want to embark on a new worldview?

**RIP**

That, dear Judith, I will do.