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Final Report on A Modern History of New York

This summer, I read Washington Irving's *A History of New York*. That book was like nothing I had read before: frustrating, chock-full of seemingly irrelevant details, scattered, and still, funny as ever. I loved his coy nicknames for historical figures and the vivid images he creates of critical scenes in New York's "history." I found myself not just skimming through battle scenes, but scanning methodically to see what Peter the Headstrong would do next. Soon, this turned into much more, as I embarked on a creative writing journey I had never undertaken before. I decided to write my own *Modern History of New York City*, using Irving's as a critical framework.

I borrowed Irving's dry humor, silly nicknames, lovingly-mocking tone, and the mysterious way his story began. Like Irving, I also used current events to inspire my fictional stories, and played into dramatizing them for the reader's enjoyment. As an aspiring journalist and life-long resident of New York City, it was difficult to accept Irving's "truth," which was relative, fictional, and often outright deceitful. But I slowly discovered—through Irving's flexible interpretations of real events in New York's history—the uniting properties that come with the humor, ridiculousness, and absurdity that Irving employs. Irving's writing does not fit into one category of history or literature, and I continue to wonder how that impacted his legacy and influence. His creative histories make me wonder where subjectivity fits in a world obsessed with objectivity. I'm excited to take this exploration further in my honors project this year, and I feel grateful to have gotten the chance to get to know Irving so well this summer.