

# ***WASHINGTON IRVING***



# ***TALES OF THE ALHAMBRA***

**Washington Irving**

# **Tales of the Alhambra**

**Enriched edition. Including "Chronicle of the  
Conquest of Granada"**

*Introduction, Studies and Commentaries by Kenneth Gale*

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# Introduction

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This collection unites Washington Irving's two major books born of his Spanish residence: *Tales of the Alhambra* (1832) and *Chronicle of the Conquest of Granada* (1829). Read together, they map the terrain between romantic reverie and narrative history, between the lived present of a traveler among palace courtyards and the remembered past of late medieval Iberia. The purpose of gathering them is to foreground their conversation with each other: one volume shaped by sketches, legends, and on-the-spot impressions; the other organized as a sustained account of campaigns and courts. The pairing offers a coherent view of Irving's engagement with Granada as place, symbol, and archive.

The texts assembled here represent distinct, complementary genres. *Tales of the Alhambra* blends travel writing, descriptive essays, and short legends, developed from Irving's observations and from stories circulating around the palace and city. *Chronicle of the Conquest of Granada* is a work of narrative history, crafted from historical sources yet rendered with literary vividness. Irving frames the latter as if derived from a chronicle by a monk named Fray Antonio Agapida, a persona he devised to shape tone and perspective. Together, the books span memoiristic sketch, folkloric tale, and historiography, illustrating Irving's range across nonfictional and imaginative modes.

*Tales of the Alhambra* begins with the premise of a traveler residing amid the halls and gardens of the Nasrid palace, attending to its daily life and to the imprints of the past that surface in conversation and custom. From that vantage, the book interleaves depictions of rooms, vistas, and inhabitants

with retellings of local legends featuring sultans, soldiers, and hidden treasures. Its method is accumulative rather than linear: set pieces of observation and anecdote build a portrait of Granada and the Alhambra as living environments where history is palpable yet hospitable to wonder, curiosity, and reflective repose.

*Chronicle of the Conquest of Granada* takes as its subject the final decades of the fifteenth century, when the Crown of Castile and the Nasrid Emirate of Granada contended for dominion in Iberia. The narrative follows the arc of campaigns, embassies, and courtly deliberations that culminate in the collapse of the last Muslim-ruled kingdom on the peninsula. It is historical storytelling rather than archival transcription, attentive to character, setting, and momentum while tracing the broad movements of conflict and negotiation. Without detailing individual episodes, the *Chronicle* establishes a continuous account of events and atmospheres surrounding the end of Nasrid rule.

Across these two books, unifying themes emerge: the endurance of cultural memory; the dialogue between Christian and Muslim legacies in Spain; and the power of architecture to hold and release stories. Irving is drawn to thresholds—gates, courtyards, borderlands—where identities meet and combine. He treats the Alhambra as both monument and microcosm, a site in which art, language, and ritual from differing traditions coexist. The *Chronicle*'s medieval pageant and the *Tales*' modern sketches briefly occupy the same imaginative ground, suggesting that the past is never altogether concluded but continues to echo through place, custom, and the tales people choose to tell.

Stylistically, Irving is notable for supple, balanced prose; for descriptive precision that favors color, light, and movement;

and for a humane, steady temperament that prefers curiosity over polemic. He often frames narration through a self-aware traveler's voice, creating intimacy without confessional excess. Humor appears gently, through social observation and a fond eye for local habits. In the historical canvas, he employs a dignified cadence that suits diplomatic exchanges and martial ceremonies, yet remains accessible. The result is a signature blend of picturesque detail and narrative clarity that invites readers into spaces both immediate and ceremonially distant.

Irving's Spanish writings rely on sustained research as well as on-site experience. While living in Spain, he consulted manuscripts and printed chronicles in Madrid and other repositories, a practice that underpins the Chronicle's architecture and informs the historical references that surface in the Tales. The fictive guise of Fray Antonio Agapida allows him to borrow the tone of early modern annalists while preserving artistic control. In the Alhambra sketches, he listens to custodians, guides, and neighbors, treating oral tradition as a companion to written record. That dual attention—to documents and to living voices—animates his vision of Granada.

Within Irving's broader career, these books mark a sustained engagement with a culture beyond his native United States, extending the international reach evident in his earlier travel sketches. They also consolidate a mature manner: a fusion of literary art with documentary concern. The works demonstrate how Irving could inhabit, and interpret for Anglophone readers, a setting layered with languages, dynasties, and religious practices. Rather than offering a mere travelogue or a strictly academic history, he composes companion volumes that make Spain legible as both a landscape and a story world, hospitable to inquiry as well as to reverie.

The lasting significance of these books lies partly in their role in shaping the nineteenth-century Anglophone image of the Alhambra and Moorish Spain. *Tales of the Alhambra* popularized the palace as a destination and emblem, contributing to its status in travel culture. *The Chronicle*, meanwhile, offered a readable gateway to a complex historical transition, mediating scholarly materials for a general audience. Modern readers can recognize period attitudes in Irving's portrayals, yet also appreciate his effort to register dignity and nuance across cultural boundaries. His work continues to prompt reflection on how the past is presented, preserved, and imagined.

Structurally, the volumes model different ways to organize knowledge. *Tales* advances by juxtaposition—an itinerary of rooms and encounters, interspersed with legends that dramatize the moods of the place. *The Chronicle* proceeds chronologically, assembling campaigns, councils, and negotiations into a sustained narrative line. Reading them together encourages two complementary habits: lingering attentiveness to detail and long-view comprehension. They show how description, anecdote, and historical synthesis can cooperate, and how genre choice shapes the truths a writer can tell about a complicated subject such as Granada's layered history.

The present collection brings these two books into one setting so that their connections become unmistakable. Readers can move from the palace's present-tense textures to the historical processes that once determined its fate, and back again, without leaving the author's company. The juxtaposition clarifies Irving's purpose: not merely to delight with scenery and legend, nor solely to recount political change, but to knit together experience, remembrance, and inquiry. The arrangement underscores how each book illuminates the other, offering a rounded introduction to

Irving's Spanish project and to the enduring resonance of Granada.

To open these pages is to enter a guided conversation between place and time. The Alhambra's arches and courts furnish a stage for small human gestures as well as for the distant strains of royal decisions. Irving's prose, patient and observant, invites readers to dwell in both registers. The union of *Tales of the Alhambra* and *Chronicle of the Conquest of Granada* allows that invitation to be accepted in full: to see the palace as a living environment and as a historical artifact, and to recognize in Irving's craft a lasting mediation between romance and record.

# Author Biography

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Washington Irving (1783–1859) was a pioneering American man of letters whose graceful prose helped establish a transatlantic audience for U.S. literature in the early nineteenth century. Writing across history, travel, and fiction, he blended humor, romance, and a painterly eye for place. Readers often meet him through short tales like *Rip Van Winkle* and *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*, yet his sustained engagement with Spain produced two enduring books in this collection: *Tales of the Alhambra* and *Chronicle of the Conquest of Granada*. Working at the intersection of historical research and imaginative storytelling, Irving made the past feel accessible while enlarging the literary map available to American authors.

He grew up in New York City during the early republic and read widely rather than pursuing an extensive formal education. Apprenticed in the law, he was admitted to the bar in 1806, though legal practice never rivaled literature in his ambitions. Early essays show the imprint of 18th-century British periodical writers such as Addison and Goldsmith, whose urbane tone and moral lightness he adapted to American scenes. Travel as a young man, including a formative tour of Europe, broadened his historical curiosity and his ear for idiom. By temperament and training, Irving became a cultural mediator, translating places and traditions for readers on both sides of the Atlantic.

His first notable success came with the satirical miscellany *Salmagundi* (1807–1808), followed by *A History of New York* (1809), published under the playful persona of Diedrich Knickerbocker. These works established a distinctive comic

voice rooted in local observation. International recognition arrived with *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.* (1819–1820), written largely while he was in England. The collection mingled travel sketches with short fiction and set the template for his polished, conversational style. The widespread popularity of this book helped demonstrate that an American author could find a broad audience without surrendering regional color or a reflective, leisurely pace.

By the mid-1820s Irving was in Spain with access to archival materials in Madrid, where he immersed himself in late medieval and early modern history. From this research emerged *Chronicle of the Conquest of Granada* (1829), presented as a translation of a pious chronicler, Fray Antonio Agapida. The device allowed Irving to synthesize sources while maintaining narrative momentum and a chivalric atmosphere. The book traces the final campaigns that ended Moorish rule in the Iberian Peninsula, drawing on chronicles and state papers while avoiding pedantry. Contemporary readers valued its readability; later audiences continue to find in it a gateway to complex cultural histories.

During extended stays in Andalusia, Irving visited and briefly lived within the Alhambra at Granada, an experience that inspired *Tales of the Alhambra* (1832). The volume gathers sketches, legends, and reflections about the palace-fortress and its environs, mixing on-the-spot observation with retellings of local lore. Rather than antiquarian cataloging, Irving offers an evocative portrait of place, attentive to architecture, landscape, and the rhythms of everyday life. The result helped shape Romantic-era travel writing and popularized the Alhambra for English-language readers. Later editions incorporated revisions and additional material, but its enduring appeal lies in the humane curiosity that animates its pages.

Irving's career also included public service that complemented his writing life. After years in Europe, he served as secretary of the American legation in London and later, in the 1840s, as United States minister to Spain. Returning home, he settled at Sunnyside on the Hudson River, where he continued to write biographies and histories, including a multi-volume *Life of George Washington* (published in the 1850s). These works, composed with care for narrative clarity and character, reinforced his reputation for dignified prose. He balanced civic duty with literary craft, using official posts to deepen his understanding of international archives and diplomatic contexts.

Irving spent his final years refining manuscripts and hosting a steady stream of visitors, dying in 1859. He is often regarded as among the first American authors to sustain a career chiefly through writing, and his achievements helped legitimize American literature abroad. *Tales of the Alhambra* and *Chronicle of the Conquest of Granada* illustrate the range of his historical imagination, melding scholarship with storytelling while encouraging readers to look beyond national borders. His lucid style, genial humor, and sensitivity to setting influenced generations of historians and fiction writers. Today, his work endures as both pleasurable reading and a bridge across cultures.

# Historical Context

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Washington Irving's career unfolded at the crossroads of a young United States seeking cultural standing and a Europe absorbed in Romantic rediscovery of the past. Born in 1783, he became one of the first American prose writers to achieve international fame, living abroad for much of 1815–1832. The two works gathered here span two distinct eras: late medieval Iberia during the final Nasrid century and its conquest, and early nineteenth-century Spain as it emerged from the Napoleonic wars. Irving's double vantage—historian of the fifteenth century and observer of contemporary Granada—structures the collection's dialogue between past and present.

Spain's political landscape when Irving arrived was unsettled. After the Peninsular War, Ferdinand VII restored absolutist rule in 1814, briefly interrupted by the Liberal Triennium (1820–1823) before repression resumed. Irving worked in Madrid from the mid-1820s, with access to royal and national archives and to the scholarship of Martín Fernández de Navarrete. This archival turn produced his *History of Columbus* (1828), followed by *Chronicle of the Conquest of Granada* (1829). A few years later he fashioned *Tales of the Alhambra* (1832), drawing on observations and legends gathered during a residence in the palace-fortress at Granada in 1829.

Irving wrote within the European Romantic movement, which prized medieval subjects, local tradition, and picturesque ruins. His method echoes contemporaneous historical romance and antiquarian practice, indebted to ventures such as Walter Scott's blend of narrative and

archival recovery. Romanticism's appetite for borderlands and liminal histories made al-Andalus particularly compelling. Granada offered a palimpsest of Islamic court culture, Christian conquest, and long decay visible in architecture and custom. The tension between imaginative reconstruction and documentary restraint informs both works: the Chronicle arranges events with chivalric coloration, while the Tales mediate between eyewitness travel sketch and curated folklore.

The Chronicle's historical horizon is the War of Granada (1482-1492), the last phase of the centuries-long Christian expansion in Iberia. The Nasrid emirate, centered on Granada, faced the rising centralized power of the Catholic Monarchs, Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castile. The conflict culminated in the capitulation of Granada on 2 January 1492, when Muhammad XII, known as Boabdil, surrendered the city and its palaces. Terms initially guaranteed certain religious and property rights to Muslim inhabitants, later narrowed or revoked. Irving's narrative foregrounds the war's pageantry, sieges, and embassies while tracing the political calculus behind the campaign.

Irving signaled his dependence on early sources while employing a literary device: he framed the Chronicle as if edited from a monkish historian, Fray Antonio Agapida, a fictional figure. The work draws substantially on late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century chronicles and letters, including accounts associated with Hernando del Pulgar, Andrés Bernáldez, and Peter Martyr, as well as frontier ballads. This mosaic of testimony and song enabled Irving to blend diplomatic detail with the idiom of romance. The invented Agapida allows him to voice period zeal and irony by turns, highlighting how religious and courtly rhetoric shaped contemporary interpretations of the war.

Social and military conditions in late Nasrid Granada are crucial context. Dynastic fractures divided the ruling family among Abu I-Hasan Ali, his brother al-Zagal, and Muhammad XII, weakening resistance as Castile and Aragon pressed their advantage. Frontier society on both sides was militarized; noble lineages sought prestige through raids and fortified towns. Newer technologies, notably gunpowder artillery, accelerated the fall of walled cities and altered siegecraft. Irving's emphasis on chivalric encounter sits alongside these structural forces, sketching figures such as Gonzalo Fernández de Córdoba within a broader transformation of warfare and state capacity at the end of the fifteenth century.

The Alhambra itself is a historical actor. Built largely under Nasrid rulers in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, especially during the reigns of Yusuf I and Muhammad V, it combined citadel, courtly residence, and ceremonial spaces. After 1492, it served at times as a royal residence; Emperor Charles V initiated a Renaissance palace within the complex in the sixteenth century. By the eighteenth century, the site had deteriorated. During the Peninsular War, French forces occupied the Alhambra; parts were damaged in 1812 during their retreat. Squatters, soldiers, and caretakers lived among fading stuccoes—conditions Irving would witness a generation later.

Irving's 1829 stay within the Alhambra gave him a vantage on the palace as lived-in ruin. Local custodians and residents preserved keys, stories, and routines, and guided visitors through halls whose inscriptions and fountains retained their allure despite neglect. The Tales, published in 1832, emerged from this encounter with place and people. They intermix travel sketch, anecdote, and retellings of legends associated with specific courts, towers, and gates. Rather than a systematic history, the book offers a social

cross-section of early nineteenth-century Granada while curating a body of lore that had accreted around the site since the conquest.

Romantic-era interest in the Islamic Mediterranean shaped how European and American audiences received Granada. Orientalist habits cast al-Andalus as Europe's intimate East—exotic yet proximate, its artistic vocabulary legible through architecture and ornament. Travel accounts by British, French, and Spanish writers circulated widely, and Granada became a touchstone of this discourse. Irving participated in the vogue while leaning on Spanish scholarship and archives, producing a hybrid voice. His sympathetic attention to Nasrid material culture and to Andalusian customs coexists with tropes of the picturesque, reflecting a period negotiation between scholarly recovery and marketable exoticization.

The publishing ecology aided this cross-cultural exchange. Expanding transatlantic markets, advances in printing and wood-engraving, and the growth of periodicals fostered travel writing and illustrated editions. The *Tales*' first edition appeared in 1832; Irving later issued an expanded edition in 1851, adding sketches and reflections prompted by continued interest in the site. Over the following decades, designers and architects treated the Alhambra as a model for ornamental theory; Owen Jones's multi-part studies of the monument in the 1830s–1840s exemplify how print turned Granada's patterns into widely circulated visual knowledge for architects, decorators, and readers.

The fifteenth century represented in the *Chronicle* stood at a religious hinge. Centuries of coexistence in Iberia—often unequal and periodically violent—gave way to stricter confessional regimes. In 1492, the Catholic Monarchs decreed the expulsion of Jews from their realms. The Treaty

of Granada initially guaranteed protections to Muslims who remained, but mounting pressures in the 1490s led to forced conversions in Castile by 1501. While Irving's *Chronicle* confines itself largely to the military and diplomatic arc of 1482–1492, this broader context frames the denouement. The *Tales*, by contrast, dwell on memory traces of the Moorish court in later Spanish life.

Political consolidation under Ferdinand and Isabella anchors the *Chronicle*'s backdrop. Administrative reforms empowered royal councils; the Santa Hermandad served public order; and crown control over noble power increased. The Inquisition, authorized in 1478, formed part of the architecture of confessional enforcement. Military mobilization for Granada showcased the capacities of a composite monarchy able to coordinate resources across kingdoms. Irving's narrative highlights court ceremonials, musters, and the symbolic staging of victory, presenting the war as both a territorial campaign and a theater of statecraft consolidating a late medieval polity into an early modern power.

The *Tales* intersect with Romantic folklorism that took shape across Europe in the early nineteenth century. Contemporary to the collecting of German Märchen and to antiquarian rescue of ballads, Irving recorded Andalusian legends connected to rooms, fountains, and burials within the Alhambra. He often credits local informants, such as guides and sentries, as narrators of these stories. Their motifs echo the romancero fronterizo, the border ballad tradition that flourished around the Granada war. By translating this oral and printed repertoire for Anglophone audiences, Irving helped canonize a network of place-bound narratives in an international literary marketplace.

A parallel story concerns preservation. From the 1830s onward, artists and architects documented the Alhambra's stucco, tile, and epigraphy. Owen Jones's richly colored studies broadcast Islamic design principles. In Spain, state-supported restorations began in the mid-nineteenth century, notably under the Contreras family, stabilizing structures and reviving ornamental programs. As European railroads expanded after the 1840s and later reached Andalusia, Granada became more accessible, increasing tourism and pressure for conservation. Irving's writings—popular and repeatedly reprinted—served as informal guide and spur, helping to revalue the Alhambra not as a ruin to be scavenged but as a monument to be preserved.

Irving's later diplomatic service returned him to Spain with official standing. He served as U.S. Minister to Spain from 1842 to 1846, years that kept him in contact with Spanish political and cultural elites during another period of turbulence, including the early reign of Isabella II. While these events lie outside the Chronicle's fifteenth-century frame, they informed the reflective tone of Irving's later prefaces and essays and sustained his authority as an interpreter of Spain for Anglophone audiences. The dual role—archival historian and cultural mediator—underwrites the coherence of the works collected here.

Reception of these books reflected nineteenth-century tastes. British and American readers embraced the Chronicle as an accessible narrative of a decisive European war, while the Tales shaped the itinerary and expectations of travelers. Guidebooks and illustrated editions echoed Irving's scenes and vocabulary. Spanish readers, too, engaged with translations and with the attention his books brought to Granada. In the twentieth century, scholars revisited these works through debates on Romantic medievalism, source use, and Orientalism, noting both their

archival foundations and their participation in contemporary modes of exotic depiction.

Across the collection, Irving tracks how built space remembers conquest. *The Chronicle* reconstructs the military and diplomatic processes that led to Granada's fall; the *Tales* record how, centuries later, the palaces functioned as a lived environment where residents and visitors generated meaning from fragments. These narratives also register technological and institutional shifts—from artillery to centralized bureaucracy—while preserving local voices. Minimal as they are in plot disclosure, the books show how a fortress could become archive, stage, and symbol, its inscriptions glossed by different epochs to suit changing political and cultural claims on the past.

# Synopsis (Selection)

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## **Tales of the Alhambra**

Irving blends travelogue, sketches of contemporary Granada, and retold Moorish legends centered on the Alhambra, shifting between observed daily life and the palace's mythic aura. Pivotal episodes touch on hauntings, hidden treasure, and eccentric locals, where history and superstition mingle without demanding a definitive verdict. The tone is romantic and gently humorous, foregrounding themes of cultural memory, the allure of ruins, and the interplay between rational inquiry and enchantment.

## **Chronicle of the Conquest of Granada**

Presented as a historical chronicle, this work relates the campaigns and courtly maneuvers that lead to the fall of the last Muslim stronghold in Iberia, with emphasis on chivalric codes and political strategy. Key movements follow sieges, diplomatic gambits, and rivalries within and across factions, narrated with vivid pageantry and a steady, reportorial cadence. It amplifies recurring Irving concerns—cross-cultural encounter, the spectacle and cost of war, and the melancholy of historical transition—offering a more martial, panoramic counterpoint to the Alhambra tales.

# Tales of the Alhambra

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# TALES OF THE ALHAMBRA

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## **PREFACE TO THE REVISED EDITION.**

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Rough draughts of some of the following tales and essays were actually written during a residence in the Alhambra; others were subsequently added, founded on notes and observations made there. Care was taken to maintain local coloring and verisimilitude; so that the whole might present a faithful and living picture of that microcosm, that singular little world into which I had been fortuitously thrown; and about which the external world had a very imperfect idea. It was my endeavor scrupulously to depict its half Spanish, half Oriental character; its mixture of the heroic, the poetic, and the grotesque; to revive the traces of grace and beauty fast fading from its walls; to record the regal and chivalrous traditions concerning those who once trod its courts; and the whimsical and superstitious legends of the motley race now burrowing among its ruins.

The papers thus roughly sketched out lay for three or four years in my portfolio, until I found myself in London, in 1832, on the eve of returning to the United States. I then endeavored to arrange them for the press, but the preparations for departure did not allow sufficient leisure. Several were thrown aside as incomplete; the rest were put together somewhat hastily and in rather a crude and chaotic manner.

In the present edition I have revised and re-arranged the whole work, enlarged some parts, and added others, including the papers originally omitted; and have thus endeavored to render it more complete and more worthy of the indulgent reception with which it has been favored.

W. I.

Sunnyside, 1851.

## **THE JOURNEY.**

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In the spring of 1829, the author of this work, whom curiosity had brought into Spain, made a rambling expedition from Seville to Granada in company with a friend, a member of the Russian Embassy at Madrid. Accident had thrown us together from distant regions of the globe, and a similarity of taste led us to wander together among the romantic mountains of Andalusia. Should these pages meet his eye, wherever thrown by the duties of his station, whether mingling in the pageantry of courts, or meditating on the truer glories of nature, may they recall the scenes of our adventurous companionship, and with them the recollection of one, in whom neither time nor distance will obliterate the remembrance of his gentleness and worth.

And here, before setting forth, let me indulge in a few previous remarks on Spanish scenery and Spanish travelling. Many are apt to picture Spain to their imaginations as a soft southern region, decked out with the luxuriant charms of voluptuous Italy. On the contrary, though there are exceptions in some of the maritime provinces, yet, for the greater part, it is a stern, melancholy country, with rugged mountains, and long sweeping plains, destitute of trees, and indescribably silent and lonesome, partaking of the savage and solitary character of Africa. What adds to this silence and loneliness, is the absence of singing birds, a natural consequence of the want of groves and hedges. The vulture and the eagle are seen wheeling about the mountain-cliffs, and soaring over the plains, and groups of shy bustards stalk about the heaths; but the myriads of smaller birds, which animate the whole face of other countries, are met with in but few provinces in Spain,

Together, the books turn wonder into a way of honoring complexity. *Tales of the Alhambra* invites attention to detail - the sound of water, patterns of shade - that resists final explanations. *Chronicle of the Conquest of Granada* widens the view to include designs, decisions, and negotiations that alter conditions for those details to persist. By traveling between microcosm and macrocosm, Irving models curiosity that refuses reduction. Wonder becomes a stance of respectful noticing, whether toward a doorway's lattice or a council's calculus. Such noticing restores dignity to people and places, keeping memory lively even when circumstances urge simplification or hurried judgment.

Locating wonder amid conflict matters because it reframes value. In *Tales of the Alhambra*, the beauty of craft and the cadence of stories invite care for fragile inheritances. In *Chronicle of the Conquest of Granada*, attention to ceremony and built form highlights what is at stake beyond victory or defeat. Both books, in their different modes, argue that cultural achievements are not ornaments to history but part of its substance. By letting admiration and analysis coexist, Irving's writing suggests that understanding a contested past requires not only recounting pressures and outcomes but also attending to what communities treasured and nurtured.

## **Question 5**

### **What ethical tensions arise when romanticizing a contested past?**

*Tales of the Alhambra* cultivates a romantic mood that risks softening hard edges. The allure of fountains, arches, and stories can obscure the inequalities and struggles that shape life around heritage sites. Yet the book often returns to caretakers, artisans, and residents, whose work and

perspectives register a grounded reality. These glimpses complicate nostalgia by situating beauty within labor and maintenance. Romanticizing becomes ethically fraught when it silences contemporary voices; Irving's sketches, in tracing conversations and routines, allow some of those voices to appear, even as the prose delights in atmosphere and the suggestiveness of ancient craftsmanship.

*Chronicle of the Conquest of Granada*, focused on campaigns and diplomacy, carries its own ethical tensions. By shaping episodes into compelling arcs, it can risk glamorizing conflict, even when the narrative strives for balance. At the same time, the chronicle records deliberation, delay, and negotiation, which counter any simple thrill of action. Its attention to logistics and ritual context reminds readers that consequences ripple beyond battlefields. The text's ethical strength lies in showing how ambitions and anxieties meet limits, while its vulnerability lies in the pull of drama. Together, these forces prompt careful consideration of how narration distributes admiration and blame.

Read side by side, the books expose a larger concern: how to honor a contested past without appropriating it. *Tales of the Alhambra* expresses admiration for Moorish craft and story traditions while recognizing the presence of contemporary communities around the site. *Chronicle of the Conquest of Granada* narrates struggles over territory and legitimacy, implicitly raising questions about cultural continuity under changing rule. The tension between appreciation and possession runs through both. By foregrounding description and context, Irving often steers admiration toward shared human capacities rather than partisan triumph, though the risk of aestheticizing loss never fully disappears from view.

Ethical tensions also touch the act of reading. *Tales of the Alhambra* encourages savoring textures and tales; *Chronicle of the Conquest of Granada* demands attention to pressures that unsettle those textures. If readers take pleasure only in ornament, they risk overlooking the conditions that made preservation precarious. If they focus only on contest, they can miss the value that gave places meaning. Irving's pairing gently counters both reductions. The works together suggest a discipline of attention that holds beauty and responsibility in the same frame, inviting reflection on how admiration might coexist with honest acknowledgment of struggle and transformation.

# Memorable Quotes

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**1q** "but there is a romance about all the recollections of the Peninsula dear to the imagination."

**2q** "It was emblematic of the fortunes of the place, and befitted the progeny of a ruin."

**3q** "Here then was a mystery."

**4q** "Was ever peaceable and retired conqueror in a more uncomfortable predicament?"

**5q** "scarce a field but was stained with blood."

**6q** "I want something that speaks more to the heart."

**7q** "the desert and the garden are ever side by side."

**8q** "No man says, "Get me a porter," but, "Call a Gallego.""

**9q** "for love delights to struggle with difficulties, and thrives the most hardily on the scantiest soil."

**10q** "and the Alhambra, like a slighted beauty, sat in mournful desolation, among her neglected gardens."

**11q** "A Soldier, just from the wars, who has brought away nothing but scars and bruises."

**12q** "These discreet statues watch over a treasure hidden in old times by a Moorish king."