

The Legend of Sleepy Hollow

Washington Irving ~

Illustration © 1990 by Russ Flint from *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*.



In the bosom of one of those spacious coves which indent the eastern shore of the Hudson, there lies a small market town, which by some is called Greensburgh, but which is more generally and properly known by the name of Tarrytown. This name was given by the good housewives of the adjacent¹ country, from the tendency of their husbands to linger about the village tavern on market days. Not far from this village, perhaps about two miles, there is a little valley among high hills, which is one of the quietest places in the whole world. A small brook glides through it, with just murmur enough to lull one to repose, and the occasional whistle of a quail, or tapping of a woodpecker, is almost the only sound that ever breaks in upon the uniform tranquility.² This glen has long been known by the name of Sleepy Hollow.

A drowsy, dreamy influence seems to hang over the land. The whole neighborhood abounds with local tales, haunted spots, and twilight superstitions. The dominant spirit, however, that haunts this enchanted region is the apparition of a figure on horseback without a head. It is said by some to be the ghost of a Hessian trooper³ whose head had been carried

1. *Adjacent* (ə jă' sənt) means "surrounding" or "nearby."

2. *Tranquility* (trəŋ kwil' ə tē) means "peacefulness."

3. A *Hessian* (hesh' ən) *trooper* is a German soldier who fought with the British during the American Revolution.

Vocabulary

dominant (dom' ə nənt) *adj.* having the greatest power or force; controlling

apparition (ap' ə rish' ən) *n.* ghostly vision

The Legend of Sleepy Hollow

away by a cannonball, in some nameless battle during the Revolutionary War. His haunts are not confined to the valley, but extend at times to the adjacent roads, and especially to the vicinity of a church at no great distance. Certain historians of those parts claim 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 is owing to his being late, and in a hurry to get back to the churchyard before daybreak. The specter⁴ is known, at all the country firesides, by the name of the Headless Horseman of Sleepy Hollow.

In this by-place of nature, there abode, some thirty years since, a worthy fellow of the name of Ichabod Crane, who sojourned⁵ in Sleepy Hollow for the purpose of instructing the children of the vicinity. The name of Crane was not inapplicable to his person.⁶ He was tall, but exceedingly lank, with narrow shoulders, long arms and legs, hands that dangled a mile out of his sleeves, feet that might have served for shovels, and his whole frame most loosely hung together. To see him striding along the profile of a hill on a windy day, with his clothes bagging and fluttering about him, one might have mistaken him for the spirit of famine descending upon the earth, or some scarecrow eloped⁷ from a cornfield.

4. A *specter* is a ghost.

5. Here, *abode* means "lived." *Ichabod* (ik' ə bod). Someone who has *sojourned* has traveled.

6. The name *Crane* fit the man because he resembled a long-legged, long-necked bird.

7. Here, *eloped* means "run off" or "escaped."

Vocabulary

conscientious (kon' shē en' shəs) *adj.* guided by one's conscience; showing careful attention to what is right and wrong

His schoolhouse was a low building of one large room, rudely constructed of logs. From here the low murmur of his pupils' voices might be heard in a drowsy summer's day, like the hum of a beehive; interrupted now and then by the authoritative voice of the master, in the tone of menace or command; or, perhaps, by the appalling sound of the birch, as he urged some tardy loiterer along the flowery path of knowledge. Truth to say, he was a conscientious man, and ever bore in mind the golden maxim,⁸ "Spare the rod and spoil the child."—Ichabod Crane's scholars certainly were not spoiled.

The revenue arising from his school was small, and would have been scarcely sufficient to furnish him with daily bread, for he was a huge feeder. To help out his maintenance, he was, according to country custom in those parts, boarded and lodged at the houses of the farmers whose children he instructed. With these he lived successively a week at a time, thus going the rounds of the neighborhood, with all his worldly effects tied up in a cotton handkerchief. In addition, he was the singing master of the neighborhood, and picked up many bright shillings by instructing the young folks in psalmody.⁹ Thus, by various little makeshifts, the worthy pedagogue¹⁰ got on tolerably enough, and was thought, by all who understood nothing of the labor of headwork, to have a wonderfully easy life of it.

8. A *maxim* is a saying.

9. *Psalmody* is the singing of hymns.

10. *Makeshifts* are things done in place of the proper or desired things. A *pedagogue* (ped' ə gog') is a teacher.

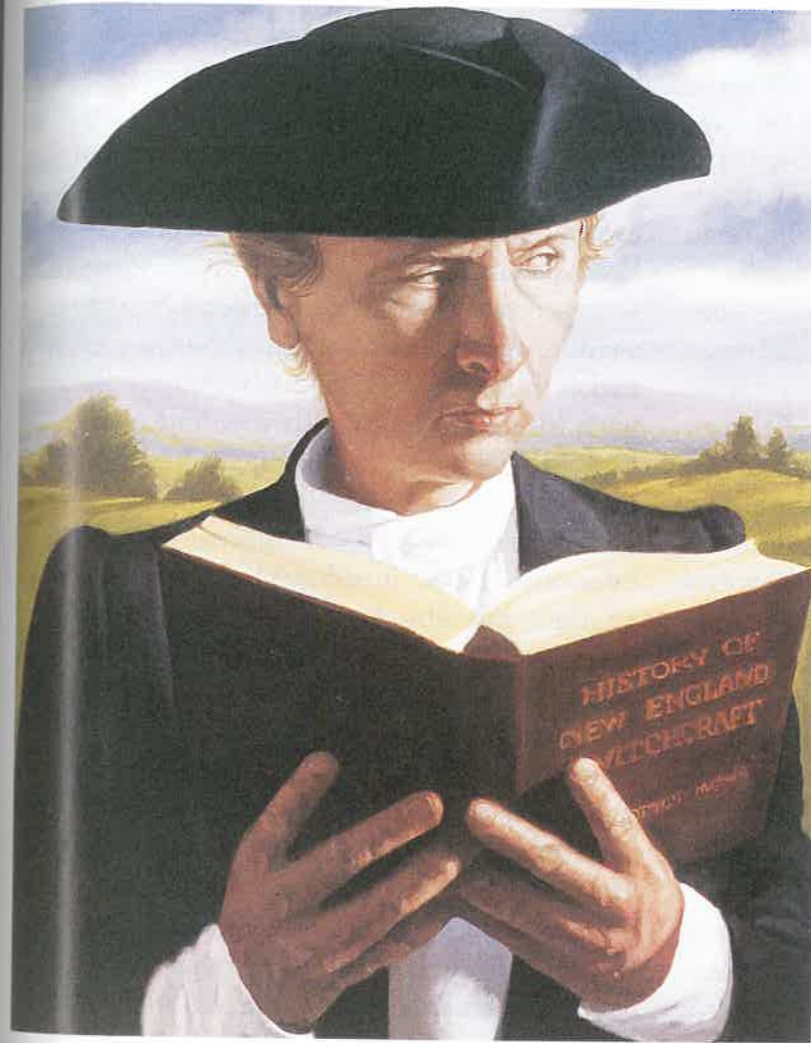


Illustration © 1992 by Michael Garland from *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*.

Viewing the painting: Which of Ichabod Crane's characteristics are depicted in this painting?

The schoolmaster is generally a man of some importance in the female circle of a rural neighborhood, being considered of vastly superior taste and accomplishments to the rough country swains.¹¹ Our man was esteemed by the women as a man of great learning, for he had read several books quite through, and was a perfect master of

11. *Swains* are young men or suitors.

Vocabulary

speculation (spek' yə lā' shən) *n.* an opinion or conclusion based on guesswork

Cotton Mather's¹² *History of New England Witchcraft*, in which, by the way, he most firmly believed. It was often his delight, after his school was dismissed in the afternoon, to stretch himself on the rich bed of clover bordering the little brook that whimpered by his schoolhouse, and there con over old Mather's direful¹³ tales.

Another of his sources of fearful pleasure was to pass long winter evenings with the old Dutch wives and listen to their marvelous tales of ghosts and goblins, and haunted fields, and haunted brooks, and haunted bridges, and haunted houses, and particularly of the Headless Horseman, or Galloping Hessian of the Hollow, as they sometimes called him. He would delight them equally by his anecdotes of witchcraft, and would frighten them woe-fully with speculations upon comets and shooting stars, and

with the alarming fact that the world did absolutely turn round, and that they were half the time topsy-turvy!

But if there was a pleasure in all this, it was dearly purchased by the terrors of his walk homewards later. What fearful shapes

12. *Cotton Mather* (1663–1728) wrote more than 450 books about religion, history, and medicine.

13. To *con over* is to study. *Direful* means "dreadful."

and shadows beset his path amidst the dim and ghastly glare of a snowy night! And how often was he thrown into complete dismay by some rushing blast, howling among the trees, in the idea that it was the Galloping Hessian on one of his nightly scourings!¹⁴

Among the musical disciples who assembled, one evening in each week, to receive his instructions in psalmody was Katrina Van Tassel, the daughter and only child of a prosperous Dutch farmer. She was a blooming lass of fresh eighteen; plump as a partridge; ripe and melting and rosy-cheeked as one of her father's peaches; and universally famed, not merely as a beauty, but as an heiress. She was a little of a coquette,¹⁵ as might be perceived even in her dress, which was a mixture of ancient and modern fashions, as most suited to set off her charms.

Ichabod Crane had a soft and foolish heart, and it is not to be wondered at that so tempting a morsel soon found favor in his eyes, more especially after he had visited her in her paternal mansion.¹⁶ Old Baltus Van Tassel was a perfect picture of a thriving, contented farmer. His stronghold was situated on the banks of the Hudson, in one of those green, sheltered, fertile nooks, in which the Dutch farmers are so fond of nestling. Close by the farmhouse was a vast barn that might have served for a church, every window and crevice of which seemed bursting forth with the treasures of the farm.

The pedagogue's mouth watered as he looked upon this sumptuous¹⁷ promise of

luxurious winter fare. In his devouring mind's eye he pictured to himself every roasting-pig running about him with a pudding in his belly, and an apple in his mouth. The pigeons were snugly put to bed in a comfortable pie and tucked in with a coverlet of crust; the geese were swimming in their own gravy. Not a turkey but he beheld daintily trussed up, with its gizzard under its wing, and, perhaps, a necklace of savory sausages.

As the enraptured¹⁸ Ichabod fancied all this and as he rolled his great green eyes over the fat meadowlands, his heart yearned after the damsel who was to inherit these domains.

When he entered the house, the conquest of his heart was complete. It was one of those spacious farmhouses, with high-ridged but lowly sloping roofs, built in the style handed down from the first Dutch settlers, the low projecting eaves forming a piazza¹⁹ along the front. From this piazza the wondering Ichabod entered the hall, which formed the center of the mansion. Here rows of resplendent pewter²⁰ ranged on a long dresser; a door left ajar gave him a peep into the best parlor, where the claw-footed chairs and dark mahogany tables shone like mirrors; and a corner cupboard, knowingly left open, displayed immense treasures of old silver and well-mended china.

From the moment that Ichabod laid his eyes upon these regions of delight, the peace of his mind was at an end, and his only

study was how to gain the affections of the peerless²¹ daughter of Van Tassel. In this enterprise, however, he had to encounter a host of fearful adversaries²² of real flesh and blood, the numerous admirers who beset every portal to her heart, keeping a watchful and angry eye upon each other, but ready to fly out in the common cause against any new competitor.

Among these the most formidable was a burly, roaring, roistering blade,²³ of the name of Abraham, or, according to the Dutch abbreviation, Brom Van Brunt. He was broad-shouldered and double-jointed, with short, curly black hair, and a bluff but not unpleasant countenance, having a mingled air of fun and arrogance. From his Herculean²⁴ frame and great powers of limb, he had received the nickname of "Brom Bones," by which he was universally known. He was famed for great knowledge and skill in horsemanship. He was foremost at all races. He was always ready for either a fight or a frolic, but had more mischief than ill will in his composition; and, with all his overbearing roughness, there was a strong dash of waggish²⁵ good humor at bottom. He had three or four boon²⁶ companions, who regarded him as their model, and at the head of whom he scoured the country, attending every scene of feud or merriment for miles round.

This reckless hero had for some time singled out the blooming Katrina for the object of his gallantries, and it was whispered that she did not altogether discourage his hopes. Certain it is, his advances were signals for rival candidates to retire. When his horse was seen tied to Van Tassel's paling,²⁷ a sure sign that his master was courting within, all other suitors passed by in despair.

Such was the formidable rival with whom Ichabod Crane had to contend, and, considering all things, a stouter²⁸ man than he would have shrunk from the competition, and a wiser man would have despaired. He had, however, a happy mixture of pliability and perseverance²⁹ in his nature.

To have taken the field openly against his rivals would have been madness. Ichabod, therefore, made his advances in a quiet and gently insinuating³⁰ manner. Under cover of his character of singing master, he made frequent visits at the farmhouse.

I profess not to know how women's hearts are wooed and won. To me they have always been matters of riddle and admiration. He who wins a thousand common hearts is entitled to some renown; but he who keeps undisputed sway over the heart of a coquette is indeed a hero. Certain it is, this was not the case with the redoubtable³¹ Brom Bones. From the moment Ichabod Crane made his advances, the interests of the former evidently declined. His horse

14. *Scourings* are searches.
15. A *coquette* (kō ket') is a flirt.
16. A *morsel* is a small portion. A *paternal mansion* is a house belonging to a person's father.
17. *Sumptuous* means "costly, showy, and magnificent."

18. *Enraptured* means "carried away by intense joy or delight."
19. A *piazza* (pē az' ə) is a large covered porch.
20. *Resplendent* (ri splen' dant) means "splendid" or "gleaming."
Pewter is a mixture of tin, lead, and copper.

21. *Peerless* means "without equal; matchless."
22. A *host of fearful adversaries* is a large number of rivals.
23. *Formidable* (for' mi də bəl) means "causing fear or awe due to size, strength, or power." A *roistering blade* is a lively and attractive young man.
24. *Herculean* (hur' kyə lē' ən) means "very strong and muscular," and is taken from the Greek hero *Hercules*.
25. *Waggish* means "humorous" or "friendly."
26. *Boon* means "merry."

27. A *paling* is one of the pickets of a fence.
28. *Stouter* means "braver" or "stronger."
29. *Pliability* is the ability to adjust to changes. *Perseverance* is determination to continue despite difficulty.
30. *Insinuating* means "suggesting indirectly; hinting."
31. Something that is *redoubtable* causes fear or awe and deserves respect.

Vocabulary

perceive (pər sēv') *v.* to take in or grasp mentally; notice

Vocabulary

renown (ri noun') *n.* widespread reputation; fame

was no longer seen tied at the palings on Sunday nights, and a deadly feud gradually arose between him and the schoolmaster of Sleepy Hollow.

Brom, who had a degree of rough chivalry in his nature, would have carried matters to open warfare, and have settled their pretensions to the lady according to the mode of the knights-errant of yore³²—by single combat; but Ichabod was too conscious of the superior might of his adversary to enter the lists³³ against him. He had overheard a boast of Bones, that he would “double the schoolmaster up, and lay him on a shelf of his own schoolhouse”; and he was too wary to give him an opportunity. There was something extremely provoking in this obstinately pacific system; it left Brom no alternative but to play boorish³⁴ practical jokes upon his rival. Ichabod became the object of whimsical persecution to Bones and his gang of rough-riders. They harried his hitherto peaceful domains;³⁵ smoked out his singing school, by stopping up the chimney; broke into the schoolhouse at night and turned everything topsy-turvy; so that the poor schoolmaster began to think all the witches in the country held their meetings there.

32. *Chivalry* (shiv' əl rē) refers to the qualities of a knight, such as honor, courage, skill in battle, and respect for women. Here, *pretensions* are claims. *Knights-errant of yore* are wandering knights of long ago.

33. To *enter the lists* is to compete in a tournament.

34. The *obstinately pacific system* refers to Ichabod's stubborn refusal to compete openly with Brom. *Boorish* means “crude; bad-mannered.”

35. Brom and his friends raided the schoolhouse—the one territory that Ichabod controlled (*his domains*) and that had been peaceful up to this time (*hitherto*).

Vocabulary

wary (wār' ē) *adj.* cautious; on the alert

pensive (pen' sɪv) *adj.* thinking deeply, often about something sad

In this way matters went on for some time, without producing any material effect on the relative situation of the rivals. On a fine autumn afternoon, Ichabod, in *pensive* mood, sat enthroned on the lofty stool whence he usually watched all the concerns of his little literary realm. His scholars were all busily intent upon their books, or slyly whispering behind them with one eye kept upon the master; and a kind of buzzing stillness reigned throughout the schoolroom. It was suddenly interrupted by the appearance of a man who came clattering up to the school door with an invitation to Ichabod to attend a merry-making, or “quilting frolic,” to be held that evening at Mynheer³⁶ Van Tassel's.

All was now bustle and hubbub in the late quiet schoolroom. The scholars were hurried through their lessons; books were flung aside without being put away on the shelves; inkstands were overturned, benches thrown down; and the whole school was turned loose an hour before the usual time.

The gallant Ichabod now spent at least an extra half-hour brushing up his best and indeed only suit of rusty black, and arranging his locks by a bit of broken looking glass that hung up in the schoolhouse. That he might make his appearance before his mistress in the true style of a cavalier,³⁷ he borrowed a horse from the farmer with whom he was living and issued forth, like a knight-errant in quest of adventures. But

36. *Mynheer* (mīn hār') is Dutch for *Mr.* or *Sir*. (The word is sometimes shortened to *Heer*.)

37. A *cavalier* is a gallant knight.

it is proper that I should, in the true spirit of romantic story, give some account of the looks and equipment of my hero and his steed. The animal he bestrode was a broken-down plow horse that had outlived almost everything but his viciousness. He was gaunt³⁸ and shaggy, with a thin neck and a head like a hammer; his rusty mane and tail were tangled and knotted with burrs. Still, he must have had fire in his day, if we may judge from the name he bore of Gunpowder.

Ichabod was a suitable figure for such a steed. He rode with short stirrups, which brought his knees nearly up to the pommel³⁹ of the saddle; his sharp elbows stuck out like grasshoppers'. He carried his whip perpendicularly in his hand, and, as his horse jogged on, the motion of his arms was not unlike the flapping of a pair of wings.

It was toward evening that Ichabod arrived at the castle of the Heer Van Tassel, which he found thronged⁴⁰ with the pride and flower of the adjacent country. Brom Bones, however, was a hero of the scene, having come to the gathering on his favorite steed, Daredevil, a creature, like himself, full of mettle⁴¹ and mischief, which no one but himself could manage.

I pause to dwell upon the world of charms that burst upon the enraptured gaze of my hero as he entered the state parlor of Van Tassel's mansion. Not those of the lasses, but the ample charms of a genuine Dutch country tea table. There was the doughty doughnut, the tenderer olykoek, and the crisp and crumbling

38. *Gaunt* means “looking like skin and bones.”

39. The *pommel* of a saddle is the part that juts out at the front and top.

40. *Thronged* means “crowded.”

41. *Mettle* is spirit and courage.

cruller;⁴² sweet cakes and shortcakes, ginger cakes and honey cakes, and the whole family of cakes. And then there were apple pies and peach pies and pumpkin pies, besides slices of ham and smoked beef; not to mention broiled shad⁴³ and roasted chickens.

I want breath and time to discuss this banquet as it deserves, and am too eager to get on with my story. Happily, Ichabod Crane was not in so great a hurry as his historian, but did ample justice to every dainty.

He could not help, too, rolling his large eyes round him as he ate, and chuckling with the possibility that he might one day be lord of all this scene of almost unimaginable luxury and splendor. Then, he thought, how soon he'd turn his back upon the old schoolhouse and kick any itinerant⁴⁴ pedagogue out-of-doors that should dare to call him comrade!

And now the sound of the music from the common room, or hall, summoned to the dance. How could the flogger of urchins⁴⁵ be otherwise than animated and joyous? The lady of his heart was his partner in the dance, and smiling graciously in reply to all his amorous looks, while Brom Bones, sorely smitten with⁴⁶ love and jealousy, sat brooding by himself in one corner.

When the dance was at an end, Ichabod was attracted to a knot of the sager⁴⁷ folks, who, with old Van Tassel, sat smoking at one end of the piazza, gossiping over former

42. The *doughty* (dō' tē), *olykoek* (ol' i kook'), and *cruller* (krul' ər) are three types of pastries.

43. *Shad* is a kind of fish.

44. *Itinerant* (i tin' ər ənt) means “traveling from place to place.”

45. A *flogger of urchins* is one who whips children.

46. *Amorous* (am' ər əs) means “loving; romantic.” *Sorely smitten with* means “extremely affected by.”

47. *Sager* (sāj' ər) means “wiser” or “better educated.”

The Legend of Sleepy Hollow

times, and drawing out long stories about the war. But all these were nothing to the tales of ghosts and apparitions that succeeded.⁴⁸ Many dismal tales were told about funeral trains and mourning cries and wailings heard and seen about the great tree where the unfortunate Major André was taken, and which stood in the neighborhood. The chief part of the stories, however, turned upon the favorite specter of Sleepy Hollow, the Headless Horseman, who had been heard several times of late, patrolling the country, and, it was said, tethered his horse nightly among the graves in the churchyard.

The tale was told of old Brouwer, a disbeliever in ghosts, how he met the horseman returning from his foray into Sleepy Hollow, and was obliged to get up behind him; how they galloped over bush and brake, over hill and swamp, until they reached the bridge, when the horseman suddenly turned into a skeleton, threw old Brouwer into a brook, and sprang away over the treetops with a clap of thunder.

This story was immediately matched by a thrice-marvelous adventure of Brom Bones, who made light of the Galloping Hessian as an arrant jockey. He affirmed⁴⁹ that, on returning one night from the neighboring village of Sing Sing, he had been overtaken by this midnight trooper; that he had offered to race with him for a bowl of punch, and should have won it, too, for Daredevil beat the goblin horse all hollow, but, just as they came to the church bridge, the Hessian bolted, and vanished in a flash of fire.

All these tales sank deep in the mind of Ichabod. He repaid them in kind with large

extracts⁵⁰ from his invaluable author, Cotton Mather, and added many fearful sights which he had seen in his nightly walks about Sleepy Hollow.

The revel now gradually broke up. Ichabod only lingered behind, according to the custom of country lovers, to have a tête-à-tête⁵¹ with the heiress, fully convinced that he was now on the high road to success. What passed at this interview I will not pretend to say, for in fact I do not know. Something, however, must have gone wrong, for he certainly sallied forth, after no very great interval, with an air quite desolate and chopfallen.⁵² Without looking to the right or left to notice the scene of rural wealth on which he had so often gloated, he went straight to the stable, and with several hearty cuffs and kicks, roused his steed most uncourteously from the comfortable quarters.

It was the very witching time of night that Ichabod, heavy-hearted and crestfallen, pursued his travel homewards.

All the stories of ghosts and goblins that he had heard in the afternoon now came crowding upon his recollection. He had never felt so lonely and dismal. He was, moreover, approaching the very place where many of the scenes of the ghost stories had been laid. In the center of the road stood an enormous tulip tree. It was connected with the tragical story of the unfortunate André, who had been taken prisoner close by, and was universally known by the name of Major André's Tree.

50. *Extracts* are passages or images from a book.

51. A *tête-à-tête* (tet' ə tet') is a private conversation between two people.

52. *Sallied forth* means "went out briskly." Someone who is *chopfallen* is discouraged or downhearted.

About two hundred yards from the tree a small brook crossed the road, and ran into a marshy and thickly wooded glen, known by the name of Wiley's Swamp. A few rough logs, laid side by side, served for a bridge over this stream. To pass this bridge was the severest trial. It was at this identical spot that the unfortunate André was captured. This has ever since been considered a haunted stream, and fearful are the feelings of the schoolboy who has to pass it alone after dark.

As he approached the stream his heart began to thump. He summoned up, however, all his resolution, gave his horse half a score of kicks in the ribs, and attempted to dash briskly across the bridge. But instead of starting forward, the perverse old animal made a lateral⁵³ movement, and ran broadside against the fence. Ichabod, whose fears increased with the delay, jerked the reins on the other side and kicked lustily with the opposite foot. It was all in vain. His

53. *Perverse* means "stubbornly determined to go against what is expected or desired." *Lateral* means "sideways."

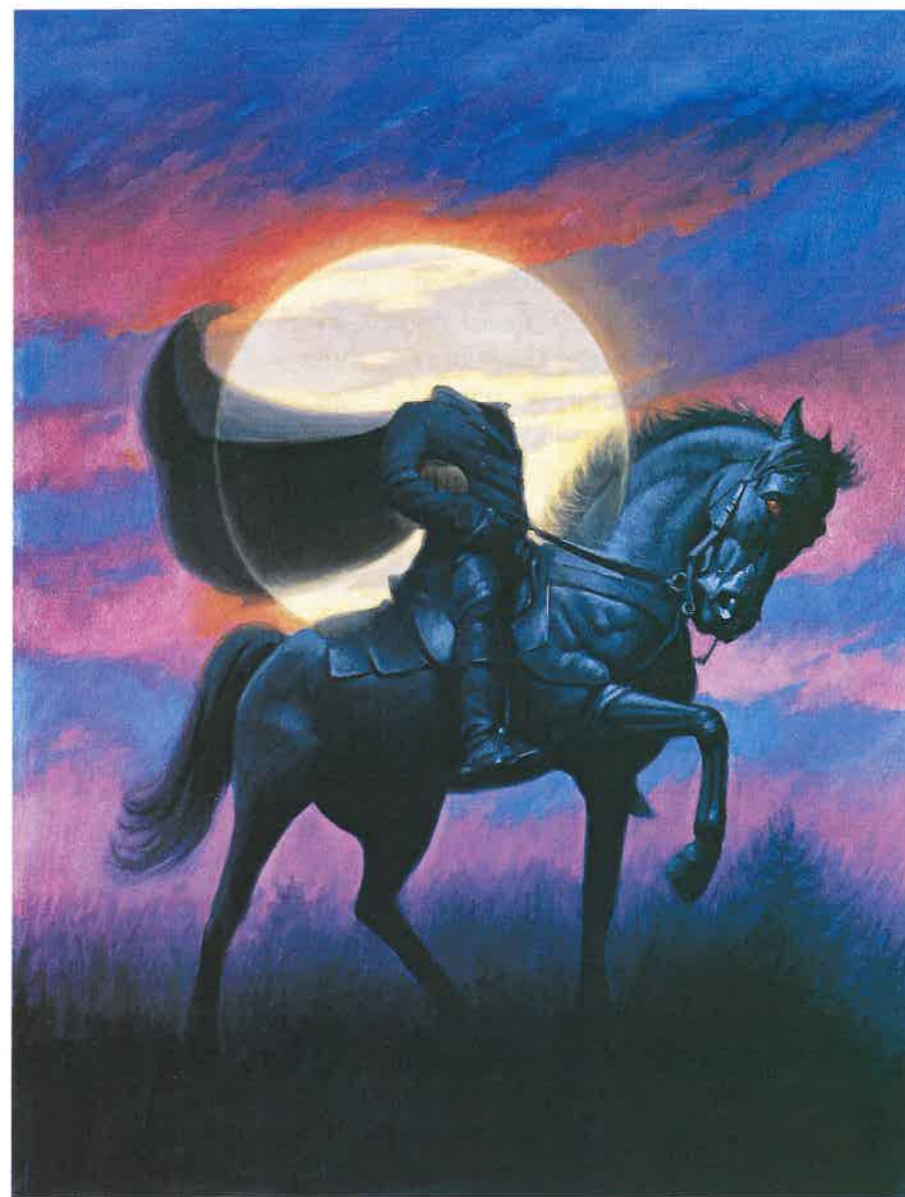


Illustration © 1992 by Michael Garland from *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*.

Viewing the painting: How could you explain this picture if you hadn't read the story?

steed started, it is true, but it was only to plunge to the opposite side of the road into a thicket of brambles and alder bushes. Just at this moment a splashing step by the side of the bridge caught the sensitive ear of Ichabod. In the dark shadow of the grove, on the margin of the brook, he beheld something huge, misshapen, black, and

48. Here, *succeeded* means "followed; came after."

49. *Made light of* means "joked about." *Arrant* (ar' ənt) means "outright." *Affirmed* means "stated firmly and positively."

towering. It stirred not, but seemed gathered up in the gloom, like some gigantic monster ready to spring upon the traveler.

The hair of the affrighted pedagogue rose upon his head with terror. What was to be done? To turn and fly was now too late; and besides, what chance was there of escaping ghost or goblin, if such it was, which could ride upon the wings of the wind? Summoning up, therefore, a show of courage, he demanded in stammering accents, "Who are you?" He received no reply. He repeated his demand in a still more agitated voice. Still there was no answer. Just then the shadowy object of alarm put itself in motion, and, with a scramble and a bound, stood at once in the middle of the road. Though the night was dark and dismal, yet the form of the unknown might now in some degree be made out. He appeared to be a horseman of large dimensions, and mounted on a black horse of powerful frame. He made no offer of harm or sociability, but kept aloof on one side of the road, jogging along on the blind side of old Gunpowder, who had now got over his fright and waywardness.

Ichabod, who had no relish⁵⁴ for this strange midnight companion, and bethought himself of the adventure of Brom Bones with the Galloping Hessian, now quickened his steed, in hopes of leaving him behind. The stranger, however, quickened his horse to an equal pace. Ichabod pulled up and fell into a walk, thinking to lag behind—the other did the same. There was something in the moody and dogged

silence of this persistent companion that was mysterious and appalling. It was soon fearfully accounted for. On mounting a rising ground, which brought the figure of his fellow traveler in relief against the sky, gigantic in height, and muffled in a cloak, Ichabod was horror-struck on perceiving that he was headless—but his horror was still more increased on observing that the head, which should have rested on his shoulders, was carried before him on the pommel of the saddle. His terror rose to desperation. He rained a shower of kicks and blows upon Gunpowder, hoping, by a sudden movement, to give his companion the slip—but the specter started full jump with him.

They had now reached the road which turns off to Sleepy Hollow; but Gunpowder, who seemed possessed with a demon, instead of keeping on it, made an opposite turn, and plunged headlong downhill to the left. This road leads through a sandy hollow, and just beyond swells the green knoll on which stands the whitewashed church.

As yet the panic of the steed had given his unskillful rider an apparent advantage in the chase; but just as he had got halfway through the hollow the girths⁵⁵ of the saddle gave way, and he felt it slipping from under him. He seized it by the pommel, and endeavored to hold it firm, but in vain; and he had just time to save himself by clasping old Gunpowder round the neck, when the saddle fell to the earth, and he heard it trampled underfoot by his pursuer. The goblin was hard on his

haunches; and (unskillful rider that he was!) he had much ado to maintain his seat, sometimes slipping on one side, sometimes on another, and sometimes jolted on the high ridge of his horse's backbone, with a violence that he feared would cleave him asunder.⁵⁶

An opening in the trees now cheered him with the hopes that the church bridge was at hand. He recollected the place where Brom Bones's ghostly competitor had disappeared. "If I can but reach that bridge," thought Ichabod, "I am safe." Just then he heard the black steed panting and blowing close behind him; he even fancied that he felt his hot breath. Another convulsive kick in the ribs, and old Gunpowder sprang upon the bridge; he thundered over the resounding planks; he gained the opposite side; and now Ichabod cast a look behind to see if his pursuer would vanish, according to the rule, in a flash of fire and brimstone.⁵⁷ Just then he saw the goblin rising in his stirrups, and in the very act of hurling his head at him. Ichabod endeavored to dodge the horrible missile, but too late. It encountered his cranium with a tremendous crash—he was tumbled headlong into the dust, and Gunpowder, the black steed, and the goblin rider passed by like a whirlwind.

The next morning the old horse was found without his saddle, and with the bridle under his feet, soberly cropping the grass at his master's gate. Ichabod did not make his appearance at breakfast—dinner hour came, but no Ichabod. The boys

assembled at the schoolhouse, and strolled idly about the banks of the brook, but no schoolmaster. An inquiry was set on foot, and after diligent investigation they came upon his traces. In one part of the road leading to the church was found the saddle trampled in the dirt. The tracks of horses' hoofs deeply dented in the road, and evidently at furious speed, were traced to the bridge, beyond which, on the bank of a broad part of the brook, where the water ran deep and black, was found the hat of the unfortunate Ichabod, and close beside it a shattered pumpkin.

The brook was searched, but the body of the schoolmaster was not to be discovered. The mysterious event caused much speculation at the church on the following Sunday. Knots of gazers and gossips were collected in the churchyard, at the bridge, and at the spot where the hat and pumpkin had been found. The stories of Brouwer, of Bones, and a whole store of others, were called to mind; and when they had diligently considered them all, and compared them with the symptoms of the present case, they shook their heads, and came to the conclusion that Ichabod had been carried off by the Galloping Hessian. As he was a bachelor, and in nobody's debt, nobody troubled his head any more about him. The school was removed to a different quarter of the Hollow, and another pedagogue reigned in his stead.

It is true, an old farmer, who had been down to New York on a visit several years after, and from whom this account of the ghostly adventure was received, brought home word that Ichabod Crane was still alive; that he had left the neighborhood, partly through fear of the goblin and

54. *Relish for* means "enjoyment of" or "interest in."

55. *Girths* are straps passed under the horse's belly to hold the saddle on.

56. *Much ado* is great difficulty. To *cleave him asunder* means "to tear him to pieces."

57. *Brimstone* is smelly, yellow smoke. The "flash" would show that the goblin was from hell, which is said to burn with fire and brimstone.

Vocabulary

aloof (ə lōōf') *adj.* emotionally distant; uninvolved; standoffish

The Legend of Sleepy Hollow

partly in mortification⁵⁸ at having been suddenly dismissed by the heiress. Brom Bones, too, who shortly after his rival's disappearance conducted the blooming Katrina in triumph to the altar, was observed to look exceedingly knowing whenever the story of Ichabod was related, and always burst into a hearty laugh at the mention of the pumpkin, which led some to suspect that he knew more about the matter than he chose to tell.

The old country wives, however, who are the best judges of these matters, maintain to

58. *Mortification* is great shame or embarrassment.

this day that Ichabod was spirited away by supernatural means.⁵⁹ The bridge became more than ever an object of superstitious awe; the schoolhouse, being deserted, soon fell to decay, and was reported to be haunted by the ghost of the unfortunate pedagogue; and the plowboy, loitering homeward of a still summer evening, has often fancied his voice at a distance, chanting a melancholy psalm tune among the tranquil solitudes⁶⁰ of Sleepy Hollow.

59. The country wives blamed Crane's disappearance on ghosts or some other unnatural, unearthly methods.

60. *Solitudes* are lonely, isolated places.



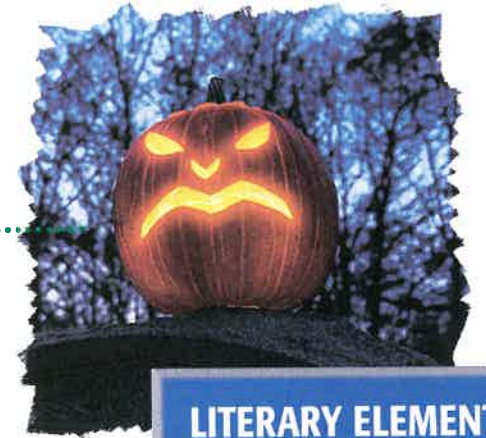
Illustration © 1990 by Russ Flint from *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*.

Viewing the painting: Could this be a modern scene? Why or why not?

Responding to Literature

PERSONAL RESPONSE

- ◆ What would you do if you thought you were being chased by a ghostly figure? Jot down a few words of advice for Ichabod Crane.



Analyzing Literature

RECALL

1. What does Ichabod Crane look like? Cite details from the story.
2. How does Crane spend his afternoons and evenings?
3. Why does Crane become rivals with Brom Bones?
4. According to the townspeople, what happened to Crane?

INTERPRET

5. Why is Ichabod Crane's physical appearance important in this story?
6. What does Crane's fascination with the supernatural tell us about his character?
7. Why is Crane interested in Katrina? Why might Crane think Katrina would be interested in him? Give several reasons for your answers.
8. What do you suppose really happened to Crane? What in the story supports your answer?

EVALUATE AND CONNECT

9. Think back to the ghostly stories you discussed in the **Reading Focus** on page 815. What elements do they have in common with "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow"? Why do you think writers of scary stories often use so many of the same elements?
10. In your opinion, did Ichabod Crane deserve the fate that befell him? Why or why not?

LITERARY ELEMENTS

Literary Legend

A **legend** is a type of folktale—a story believed to be based on a historical event. Legends often exaggerate the truth. For example, many legends give characters extraordinary abilities that they did not possess in real life. Many legends were originally oral tales, but most have now been written down. A legend becomes a **literary legend** when a published version of the story is the form that is familiar to most people.

1. What aspects of "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" might be based in fact?
2. How might the publication of a legend affect the original (oral) story?
3. What other literary legends can you name?

● See **Literary Terms Handbook**, p. R5.

Literature and Writing

Writing About Literature

Point of View “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow” is told from a **third-person point of view**, that is, by a narrator who is not a character in the story. How might this story be different if told from a character’s point of view? Imagine you are Katrina or Ichabod or any other character, and rewrite a section of the story from that point of view.

Creative Writing

Urban Legends Have you heard that alligators live in the sewers of New York City? This story is an **urban legend**, a contemporary tale based on events that seem possible, but probably did not occur. With a partner, write an urban legend. Begin with something scary or strange that could happen where you live. Brainstorm ways to exaggerate your tale. Share your legend with the class.

Extending Your Response

Learning for Life

Casting Actors Imagine you are directing a movie version of “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow.” Write a **memo** to a casting agent describing the actor you want for each major character. Include specific talents and characteristics you require of each.

Literature Groups

Compare American Legends How does “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow” compare with other American legends, such as those about Johnny Appleseed and Davy Crockett? Brainstorm a list of American legends that includes Irving’s story. Discuss how the tales are similar and different. Present your conclusions to the class.



Johnny Appleseed

Reading Further

For strange tales from other places, try:
Wings of a Falcon by Cynthia Voigt
Haunted Waters by Mary Pope Osborne

Save your work for your portfolio.

internet CONNECTION

“Legend” on the Web Pay a virtual visit to Sleepy Hollow and Tarrytown. Type the names of these places into a search engine, and visit Web sites to learn more about the region, the legend, and Washington Irving.

Skill Minilessons

GRAMMAR AND LANGUAGE • VARYING SENTENCE STRUCTURE

Many sentences follow a set pattern: subject + verb + direct object or predicate noun (A **direct object** receives the action of the verb. A **predicate noun** follows a linking verb and renames the subject.)

Ichabod Crane [subject] *had* [verb] *a soft and foolish heart* [direct object].

However, you can add rhythm to your writing by rearranging the order of sentence elements so that you don’t always start with the subject.

A soft and foolish heart [direct object] *had* [verb] *Ichabod Crane* [subject].

- For more about sentence structure, see **Language Handbook**, pp. R32–R33.

READING AND THINKING • CAUSE AND EFFECT

In “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow,” Washington Irving uses a string of cause-and-effect relationships. For example, Crane’s fearful imagination causes him to believe in the story of the Headless Horseman.

PRACTICE Complete each sentence to show the effect of the cause. Then explain in writing how the three effects you named caused the final event in the story.

PRACTICE Rewrite the following sentences by changing the order of sentence elements.

- The schoolhouse was a low building with one large room.
- Ichabod Crane was a schoolmaster to remember.
- A dreamy atmosphere hung over the valley where Ichabod Crane lived.
- Brom Bones brooded, worried by his love.
- The sad animal Crane rode was a broken-down plow horse.

VOCABULARY • THE LATIN ROOT SPEC

The word *speculation* comes from the Latin root *spec*, which means “to see or look at.” This root is found in many words, often with a prefix that modifies its meaning. For example, if you *suspect* someone or something, you “look under” the surface. The prefix *sus-* is the same as *sub-* and means “under.” The following prefixes have been attached to *spec*:

intro-: inside *circum-*: around
retro-: back *pro-*: forward

PRACTICE Use the meaning of *spec* and the prefixes listed to complete each statement.

- If you are a *circumspect* person, you are
 - clumsy
 - careful
 - fast
 - humorous
- Introspective* people pay attention to
 - neighbors
 - clothing
 - feelings
 - classmates
- To look at something in *retrospect* is to look
 - afterwards
 - with regret
 - through a telescope
 - beforehand