

The Legend of Sleepy Hollow

by Washington Irving

Our story begins with Ichabod Crane, a young teacher who moved from his hometown in Connecticut to a small village called Sleepy Hollow where he was to become the schoolmaster. Sleepy Hollow was a small, quiet town said to be under some kind of enchantment. The residents all seemed to move a little slower, daydream a little more, and were more prone to believe in the supernatural.

Sleepy Hollow's residents were also descendants of the village original Dutch settlers, and the village had more than its fair share of supernatural occurrences. Sleepy Hollow's most famous supernatural phenomenon was the ghost of the Headless Horseman, said to be a Hessian soldier who lost his head to a cannon ball during the Revolutionary War. The Horseman was seen most often riding by the church, where local historians claimed he had been buried. The headless horseman was believed to have been always in search of his head. Ichabod was fascinated by this story, as he was inclined to believe in the supernatural.



Ichabod was a strict teacher but not a cruel one. He made almost no money out of teaching but he felt quite fulfilled in his new role. He copied with different villagers who would put him up and feed him in exchange for teaching their children. While teaching the young villagers, Ichabod fell in love with Katrina Van Tassel, a beautiful young woman of eighteen. Katrina was the only child of Baltus Van Tassel, one of the more successful farmers in the area. Charmed by her flirtatious nature, Ichabod soon began to visit the Van Tassel farm more frequently to woo her. Ichabod was not alone in his attentions to Katrina, however. Her beauty and charm had attracted many other men in the village, especially the formidable Brom Van Brunt, also known as Brom Bones. Brom was notorious for his boisterous personality, love of pranks, and great skill at horseback riding—all of which made him something of a village hero.

To scare off Ichabod out of wooing Katrina, Brom started pulling some major pranks on him. First he filled Ichabod's school house with snakes, he trained a dog to follow Ichabod around howling, and set every other prank to humiliate and humiliate Ichabod.

One day, Ichabod was invited to a party at the Van Tassels. Ichabod left the party cross-fallen after Katrina did not respond to his efforts to charm her. He soon found himself walking back home. The path was increasingly wet and quiet but Ichabod tried to contain himself. Walking along the haunted Major Andre's tree, Ichabod saw a large, dark figure looming nearby. Ichabod called out to the figure but it would not identify itself. As Ichabod walked away, the figure began to follow him down the path riding a large, dark horse. Ichabod who was greatly disturbed, tried to shake off his pursuer, when he finally noticed that the rider had no head on his shoulders, the head seemed to be sitting on the saddle in front of the man.

The two finally ended up by the church and Ichabod raced to the bridge where the ghost was said to disappear as it could not follow. Ichabod managed to cross the bridge and he looked over his shoulder to see if the ghost had followed him. The Horseman threw his detached head at Ichabod as he could not reach him and managed to knock Ichabod off of his horse.

The next day, Ichabod's horse returned to its owner's farm, but there was no sign of Ichabod. A search party found hoof prints and Ichabod's hat, with a smashed pumpkin left next to it. Ichabod was never heard from again in Sleepy Hollow. Some of the townspeople believed that Brom Bones had pulled off a great prank—which put Brom in the final position to marry Katrina—but the old women and local folklore maintained that he was taken by the Headless Horseman!

Exercise 1: Mark the following statements as True or False according to the text.

	True	False
1. Ichabod Crane worked as a teacher.		
2. Sleepy Hollow was a big, crowded town.		
3. Sleepy Hollow's residents were all very active people who hurried about their busy lives.		
4. Sleepy Hollow's residents were also descendants of the village original Dutch settlers.		
5. Sleepy Hollow's most famous supernatural phenomenon was the haunted house.		
6. Ichabod was a strict teacher.		
7. Ichabod earned a lot of money.		
8. Katrina was a beautiful young woman.		
9. Ichabod was the only man interested in Katrina.		
10. At the end of the story Ichabod kills the headless horseman.		

Exercise 2: Read the text and underline any unknown words, discuss the meaning of these words in class or look up their definitions online.

Exercise 3: Read the text again and answer the questions below:

- Who was Ichabod Crane from?

- What was the headless horseman always looking for?

- How did Ichabod feel about his role as a schoolmaster?

- Who did Ichabod fall in love with?

- Why did Ichabod begin to visit the Van Tassel family more frequently?

- Who was Ichabod's biggest rival when it came to Katrina's heart?

- What kind of man was Brom Van Brunt?

- What did Brom do to scare Ichabod out of wooing Katrina?

- Why did Ichabod race to the bridge when he was followed by what seemed to be the "Headless Horseman"?

- What did the search party find after Ichabod disappeared?
