



**NEW MEXICO YOUNG ACTORS
LEGEND OF SLEEPY HOLLOW STUDY GUIDE**

LEGEND OF SLEEPY HOLLOW
by Vera Morris

Based on the short story by Washington Irving
Directed by Rachel Ribeiro
Costumes by Jaime Pardo
Sets by Kristin Hawson and Rachel Ribeiro

Dear Teachers,

Welcome to New Mexico Young Actors' production of ***Legend of Sleepy Hollow***. We are offering this study guide as a way to help you prepare your classes for our upcoming production. Included in this guide are a history and synopsis of our story, a list of characters, a vocabulary list and lesson ideas, as well as some audience protocol reminders. We always enjoy hearing from you and your students and look forward to receiving any pictures, stories, or comments about the production. Thank you for your interest in and support of New Mexico Young Actors. We look forward to seeing you soon!

History and Synopsis

Washington Irving was born in New York in 1783, just as the United States, as an independent country, was in its infancy. He is known as the first American man of letters and is mostly remembered for his short stories "Legend of Sleepy Hollow" and "Rip Van Winkle," both of which first appeared in his collection of stories, *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent*, published in 1820. Irving wrote many more stories, biographies, and satires, and spent the years 1842—1846 as U.S. Ambassador to Spain. He died in New York in 1859.

The play is set in the Dutch farming community of Sleepy Hollow, New York in the early 1800s. Some of the spooky ghosts of the village introduce the story. The ghosts exit and residents enter discussing how the town will provide for the new school master, Ichabod Crane. Sixteen-year-old Katrina van Tassel appears with the young girls, Hilda and Greta. They gossip about the Sleepy Hollow boys, including Brom Bones, who has his eye set on Katrina. Bones enters with his sidekick, Yost, both attempting to impress the girls with their brawn. Soon after, Ichabod Crane arrives and immediately takes a liking to Katrina and displays his love of good food.

Ichabod proves to be quite the disciplinarian when he is later found in the schoolhouse teaching multiplication to his pupils. To the delight of the students, Ichabod is distracted as Katrina enters

and invites him to a sewing circle with the locals where there will be plenty of vittles and ghost stories, including the legend of the headless horseman of Sleepy Hollow. Ichabod attends the event that evening and is accosted by ghosts in the graveyard while walking home, an occurrence he believes to be a fantasy and blames on indigestion from the piccalilli at the party.

After a choir rehearsal later that week, Ichabod offers to walk Katrina home and is set upon by the jealous Brom Bones. Katrina stands up to Bones as Ichabod cowardly ducks behind her. Bones and Yost get even later by releasing a beehive into the classroom while Ichabod is teaching.

Sometime later, there is a party at the home of the van Hudsons. In attendance is Ichabod, who garners the courage to ask for Katrina's hand in marriage, a request which is firmly denied. Bones overhears and angrily kicks Ichabod out of the party. Ichabod finds himself once more walking home alone through the graveyard where he is chased by the infamous headless horseman and never seen in Sleepy Hollow again.

Cast of Characters

Woman in White, Indian Chief, Pirate, ghosts

Mrs. Trenkler, Katrina's aunt

Farmer Stuyvesant, citizen of Sleepy Hollow

Mrs. Van Tassel, Katrina's mother

Widow Van Doorn, another citizen

Mrs. Van Hudson, another citizen

Hilda, girl of Sleepy Hollow

Greta, another girl of Sleepy Hollow

Katrina, another girl of Sleepy Hollow

Brom Bones, ready for a fight or some fun

Yost, friend of Bones

Ichabod Crane, schoolmaster

Walter, Wilda, Johanna, Hendrick, pupils

The Headless Horseman

CLASSROOM DISCUSSION (PRE-PERFORMANCE)

1. *How many of you have experienced a live dramatic performance? What did you see?*

2. *What are some of the differences between seeing a live performance and watching television or going to a movie?*

- Theater features live actors on stage. They have spent many weeks rehearsing for the performance.
- The audience is a very important part of the performance. Appreciation and enthusiasm for the performers is shown by close attention and participation and applause at the proper times. The success of the play often depends on the audience.
- The atmosphere of a live performance is entirely different from your home, where the television is always available.
- It is easy to identify with live actors. You can see how they use their bodies and voices to convey different emotions.
- Actors wear costumes and make-up to help create the impression of the characters they play.
- There is much more to most live performances than actors. Special sets, effects, lighting, music, costumes, and of course, the audience add to the total experience.

3. *Introduce your students to the following theatrical terms:*

Box Office • Acts & Scenes • Producer • Program • Costumes • Props • Director • Stage • Curtain Call • Stagehand • Lobby • Usher • Musical Theater • Orchestra Pit • Playwright • Scenery • Makeup • Actor • Balcony • Cue • Play

4. *Introduce your students to the following terms found in our story:*

widow, superstitious, vittles, whippoorwill, braggart, geography, Hessian, bachelor, vexing, conscientious, maxim, piccalilli, swashbuckling, enunciation, pugilism, rogue, peck, bushel, insolence, impudence

THEATER ETIQUETTE

Discuss the role of the audience and proper theater etiquette.

- Arrive on time so that you do not miss anything and so that you will not disturb the rest of the audience while trying to get comfortable. Lights may go out before the performance begins and seating is very difficult after that time.
- It is easier for you (and the rest of the audience) to see and hear the performance if you stay in your seat and listen very carefully.
- Try your best to remain seated once the performance has begun. There is no intermission during the performance of *Legend of Sleepy Hollow*, which is 50 minutes in length.
- Although you may wish to say something to the actors, you need to hold your thoughts, as you will disturb their concentration.
- Sing or participate *if and only if* you are invited to do so. Your participation is often very important.
- Show the cast and crew your appreciation for their hard work with applause. Do this when you like a song, dance, or joke.

CLASSROOM DISCUSSION AND ACTIVITIES (POST- PERFORMANCE)

1. *Write an Epilogue:* Predict what happened next in the story. Write an article in which you tell the readers what happened after Ichabod Crane disappeared from Sleepy Hollow. What happened to the other characters in the story? Be as specific as possible and keep with the spirit of the original story.
2. *Discuss real life situations that reflect the moral in Legend of Sleepy Hollow.*
 - a) Ask the children what important traits they value in another person. Why is it important to be sincere and honest in your relationships? Explore how putting others first is better than bragging about oneself.
 - b) Discuss how Ichabod Crane could have been a better teacher. How could he have changed his approach to discipline? What about Ichabod's pursuit of Katrina? Did he have honorable intentions?

c) Reflect on the characters in the play. Ask your students which character they identify with the most. Why? List positive and negative traits of each character. What might each character do to improve his or her flaws?

3. *Music*: Was music used in the performance? Was it live or recorded? How could you tell? When was the music used? Why? Did it help develop the plot? What types of music were used? Identify musical instruments that were played. Can you describe how different kinds of music would make you have different kinds of feelings? When a theater production is a musical, an actor must have additional skills. Can you name some? A musical costs much more to produce. Can you name some additional expenses? (e.g., orchestra, a practice piano, a score, a choreographer, etc.)

4. *Sets*: Describe the sets used in the play you just saw. What props or details were used to suggest specific times or settings? How could lighting be changed to create a mood, season, time of day, etc.? What materials might have been used in building the sets? How were the sets and props moved on and off the stage? Suggest a scene (a farm, a school yard, a classroom, a shopping center, a neighborhood, a city street, a castle, an amusement park, a forest) and ask students to describe a basic stage set for the scene.

5. *Costumes*: What would you need to know to create costumes for a play (historical accuracy, sewing, theatrical effects, knowledge of fabric, etc.)? Why is the right costume important to the character in the play?

6. *Art activities*:

- Draw a picture of a favorite scene or character.
- Draw a picture of what the audience might look like from on-stage.
- Re-create a scene from the play using clay forms in a box.
- Design a program cover for the play using the title, date, and an illustration inspired by the play.
- Draw an advertisement for the play.
- Create a nineteenth-century New England graveyard, small village, one-room schoolhouse.

7. *Language arts*:

- Choose a character that you liked and write a one-day's diary for that character. Write a letter to a cast member telling what you liked about her or his character.
- Discuss the play. Was there a hero or heroine? A villain? The setting? Was there a moral to the story?
- In 25 words or fewer, describe the plot of the play.
- Discuss the work of a movie or theater critic. Write a newspaper-type review of the play.
- Read the original story by Washington Irving. Expand that into other stories by Washington Irving and other early American authors (Nathaniel Hawthorne, James Fenimore Cooper, Edgar Allen Poe, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Herman Melville). Assign various stories for the students to read and investigate.

8. *Theater*

- Discuss live theater. Are the actors aware of the audience? Why might an actor change his presentation because of audience reaction? Would it be easy to be an actor? Conduct an interview with a classmate pretending to be one of the actors and discover the actor's feelings about being on stage, memorization, rehearsals, costumes, audience, etc.

- Make a list of all the personnel needed for a play (director, actors, musicians, author, designers—set, costumes, lights, sound—stagehands, choreographer, producer, etc). What do these different jobs contribute to the theatrical production?

9. *History and Geography*

- Research 18th and 19th-century New England. What might life have been like in a rural farming community like Sleepy Hollow? Investigate one-room schoolhouses.
- Explore folklore and legends that may have been prevalent during this era.
- Research the history and biography of the Washington Irving.
- Discover New England on a map. New York, Connecticut, and Rhode Island are all referenced in the play.

Resources

Books

Irving, Washington. *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow and Other Stories*. Sterling Children's Books, New York; Illustrations © 2013.

Jones, Brian Jay. *Washington Irving: The Definitive Biography of America's First Bestselling Author*. Arcade Publishing, New York; © 2008, 2011.

Internet

Biography of Washington Irving: American National Biography, www.anb.org

Legend of Sleepy Hollow full text: Gutenberg Project, www.gutenberg.org

The town of Sleepy Hollow: www.visitsleepyhollow.com

Much of this material is contributed with the kind permission of the *Cincinnati Children's Theater*, *Pioneer Drama Service*, and *Plays for Young Audiences*. This study guide was compiled by Billie J. Little, a former Board member of New Mexico Young Actors, Inc., and Paul Bower, Executive Director of NMYA.