**THE LEGEND OF SLEEPY HOLLOW**
by Washington Irving

A HomeschoolRadioShows Listening Guide
by Cindy Horton

### Summary

“The Legend of Sleepy Hollow,” a short story contained in *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.*, was written by Washington Irving and published in 1820. This exciting radio version of the story begins with the ominous legend of the Headless Horseman. The local people of Sleepy Hollow say that he is the marauding ghost of a Hessian Trooper who fought during the Revolutionary War and had his head blown away by a cannonball!

Ichabod Crane, who is described as “easily mistaken for a scarecrow,” is Sleepy Hollow's schoolmaster. As strict as he is with his students at the village school, he strives to be agreeable and useful to the area farmers with whom he boards a week at a time. It is said that a village schoolmaster is often a favorite among the ladies, and Mr. Crane is especially favored because he has read many books and is somewhat of an expert on New England witchcraft “in which he firmly believes.”
One moonless night, Ichabod visits with a group of the village widows, who share ghoulish tales of ghosts, goblins, and spirits with him. After they begin their stories of the Headless Horseman, Ichabod bids them a fearful leave. With a quivering heart and restless imagination, Ichabod makes his way back to his hosts' home.

In addition to schooling the youngsters of Sleepy Hollow, Master Crane leads the village Singing School. Here he has become enamored with a lovely young lady named Katrina van Tassel. As an excuse to be nearer to her, Ichabod offers to tutor Katrina in her singing.

Meanwhile, we meet Brom Bones who is also in love with Katrina. Brom is the town "bully," the strongest, most feared man in Sleepy Hollow. Brom tells his friends that he wants to fight for Katrina but that Ichabod refuses. One man suggests that Brom pull some tricks on Ichabod, and Brom replies, "Who do you think smoked up the schoolhouse by plugging up the chimney?"

Ichabod borrows a horse named Gunpowder to attend a party at the van Tassel Mansion. Brom, who rode his horse "Daredevil," is also there. He greets Ichabod rather warmly and says with great enthusiasm, "I am so glad you are here!" After a while, Ichabod manages to speak to Katrina alone. With some trepidation, he confesses that he would like to ask for her hand in marriage. "My hand?" says Katrina as laughter pours from her mouth.

Heartbroken and mortified, Ichabod mounts Gunpowder and heads back toward the home of his current hosts. It is a very dark night, and he hears moaning coming from the bushes along the road. His heart pumps, the horse becomes skittish and turns this way and that. Suddenly....the Headless Horseman rides into view! Ichabod can see that he is carrying his own head before him on the horse. Ichabod spurs his horse onward, but the Headless Horseman gallops after him. In terror, Ichabod rides faster and then... "Oh! Oh! He's throwing his head at me!"

What became of Ichabod Crane? His host reported that he found a smashed pumpkin lying in the road but never saw Master Crane again. A short time after his disappearance, Katrina van Tassel married Brom Bones. Two years later, a visiting farmer told the villagers that Ichabod is living in another town, safe and sound, but no one half believes him. Every time anyone mentions Ichabod, Brom explodes with uproarious laughter, which makes them wonder...
For more research:

Biography of Washington Irving:
http://www.hudsonvalley.org/education/Background/abt_irving/abt_irving.html

Read the complete and original “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow”:
http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/41

The original folktale that inspired the story:
http://www.americanfolklore.net/folktales/ny9.html

The real Sleepy Hollow, New York:
http://www.sleepyhollowny.gov/

Discussion Questions

Do you believe in ghosts and spirits? Why or why not?

What are “superstitions”?

Why do you think some people are so affected by superstitions?

What do you think happened to Ichabod Crane?

Who was the Headless Horseman?

Moral Lesson

Ichabod Crane was very susceptible to the influence of his own fear. Think about how he felt when going home on the “dark and moonless” night after listening to the widows’ ghost stories. His fear and wild imagination undoubtedly had an affect on his feelings when he saw the Headless Horseman. If he had kept his fear under control, perhaps he could have thought logically that a ghost could not possibly have thrown its own head at him!

Psalm 27:1 The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

Psalm 91:5 Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow the flieth by day

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