

Drama

**CLASSIC**  
a story with  
timeless appeal

**THE HEADLESS HORSEMAN  
IS COMING FOR YOU.**

THE  
LEGEND  
OF  
**SLEEPY  
HOLLOW**

based on the famous story by  
**WASHINGTON IRVING**





## CHARACTERS

Circle the character you will play. \*Starred characters are major roles.

\***Stage Directors 1, 2 & 3**

(SD1, SD2 & SD3)

**Knickerbocker:** the storyteller

\***Ichabod Crane:** a schoolmaster

\***Katrina Van Tassel:** the village beauty

\***Brom Bones:** the village brute

**Baltus Van Tassel:** Katrina's dad

**Wolf**

**New Schoolmaster**

Villagers: **Martha, Ida, Van Ripper, Brouwer, Jansen**



### AS YOU READ, THINK ABOUT:

What kind of person is Brom Bones?

## SCENE 1

**SD1:** The lights come up on Knickerbocker standing next to a rickety wooden bridge.

**SD2:** Wild ducks squawk in the silver sky. A crisp wind rustles the fallen leaves.

**Knickerbocker:** I was never one for ghost stories—not until I happened upon a village called Sleepy Hollow.

**SD3:** Knickerbocker picks up a crumpled wool hat.

**Knickerbocker:** Sleepy Hollow is a drowsy, dreamy place—a place of hauntings and superstitions. It was here I heard tell of a man named Ichabod Crane.

**SD1:** A lanky fellow enters, absentmindedly whistling. His long nose is buried in a book.

**Knickerbocker:** Ichabod was very tall, with long arms and hands that dangled a mile out of his sleeves. His head was small, with huge ears and big green eyes.

**SD2:** Two old women shuffle by.

**Martha:** Good day, Schoolmaster.

**Ichabod (startled):** Why, good day, ladies.

**Ida:** You are quite **absorbed** in your book.

**Ichabod:** Yes, *A History of Witchcraft*. The dark arts are a fascination of mine.

**Martha:** We've no witches here, only ghosts.

**Ida:** Did you hear the Wailing Widow last night?

**Ichabod:** No, but I did hear the wind in the trees.

**Martha:** That wasn't wind. That was the widow's ghost. She always shrieks when a terrible storm is coming.

**SD3:** The women walk on. Ichabod looks up at the darkening sky and shivers.

## SCENE 2

**SD1:** At the Van Tassels' mansion, Ichabod has just finished giving a singing lesson to Katrina.

**Katrina:** Would you like to stay for tea?

**Ichabod:** I would be delighted.

**SD2:** While Katrina pours tea, Ichabod devours a slice of honey cake. He reaches for another.

**Katrina:** So . . . are you enjoying Sleepy Hollow?

**Ichabod (with his mouth full):** Yes, quite.

**Katrina:** And where are you staying this week?

**Ichabod:** With the Van Rippers.

## GHOSTS OF THE WAR

In 1790, when this tale takes place, America was a brand-new country. But memories of the American Revolution—and its bloody battles—were still raw in people's minds. Many ghost stories revolved around tragedies suffered during the war.



**Katrina:** You don't mind going from place to place, carrying all your belongings?

**Ichabod:** Alas, that is the life of a schoolmaster. I must rely on the kindness of my students' parents to house and feed me.

**Katrina:** But don't you get paid?

**Ichabod** (*turning red*): My wages are hardly enough for a loaf of bread. But I am quite rich in the mind. I've read so many books—

**SD3:** Ichabod is interrupted by the thundering of hooves. Katrina leaps up.

**Katrina:** That must be Brom Bones, come to take me riding. His black horse Daredevil is the finest in the valley!

### SCENE 3

**SD1:** Ichabod eats dinner with his host, Mr. Van Ripper.

**Ichabod:** Katrina and her father are having a party tonight. Should I attend?

**Van Ripper:** Of course. Why wouldn't you?

**Ichabod:** Well, Brom Bones will be there. He said if he caught me near Katrina, he'd flatten me like a pancake.

**Van Ripper** (*laughing*): Brom may be rough, but he's full of good humor.

**Ichabod:** I am merely giving Katrina singing lessons. I cannot deny, of course, her many charms.

**Van Ripper:** And that she stands to inherit a large estate.

**Ichabod:** Shouldn't Brom have some competition?

**Van Ripper:** Once he began courting Katrina, no other suitor dared come near.

**Ichabod:** I can see why. His neck is the size of my waist.

**Van Ripper:** You're a worthy lad. Take my old horse, Gunpowder, and go to the party.

### SCENE 4

**SD2:** Ichabod arrives at the party.

**SD3:** Wide-eyed, he stares at the table laden with platters of ginger cakes, pumpkin pies, smoked beef, and roast chickens.

**SD1:** Ichabod sinks his teeth into an apple pastry. Sugar falls down the front of his suit.

**SD2:** Just then, a man—so broad-shouldered that he must turn sideways to fit through the door frame—struts into the room.

**SD3:** He and Ichabod lock eyes.

**Ichabod** (*coldly*): Good evening, Brom Bones.

**Brom** (*coldly*): Ichabod.

**Martha:** That Brom Bones looks ready for a fight.

**Ida:** Come, now. Brom is more mischievous than mean.

**SD1:** Brom walks up to Katrina.

**Brom:** What is that gangly grasshopper doing here?

**Katrina:** The schoolmaster? He is an honored guest.

**Brom:** Ha! Honored guest? He's got dinner plates where his ears should be and shovels for feet.

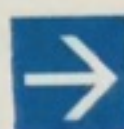
**Katrina:** Oh Brom, you're just jealous.

### SCENE 5

**SD2:** The guests dance merrily to the lively sounds of a fiddle.



Washington Irving (1783-1859) was born at the end of the American Revolution. He was America's first famous writer and is still widely read today. Go, Irving!





**Ichabod:** Dear Katrina, may I have this dance?

**SD3:** Katrina glances slyly at Brom.

**Katrina:** Why certainly, Mr. Crane.

**SD1:** As Ichabod dances, his long limbs fly around the room like an octopus in a tornado.

**SD2:** Katrina laughs with delight. As she spins, she sees Brom Bones **brooding** in the corner.

## SCENE 6

**SD3:** Later that night, Ichabod joins a group of guests by the fire.

**Martha:** In these parts, Mr. Crane, you must take care to live a decent life. Those who don't are carried away by ghouls in the dead of night.

**Jansen:** Oh yes, many ghosts haunt Sleepy Hollow. There's the old Dutchman who walks the docks, shouting for a **musket**—

**Baltus:** —and the woman in white. You can hear her crying in the very spot where she froze to death in the snow—

**Jansen:** But no ghost compares to the Headless Horseman.

**Ichabod (trembling):** The headless who?

**Jansen:** The Headless Horseman. He is said to be the ghost of a Hessian soldier whose head was blown clean off by a cannonball.

**Martha:** His body is buried in the churchyard. Every night he rides forth in search of his head.

**Ida:** He cannot rest until he finds it, so take care not to be on the roadway at the **witching hour**!

**Baltus:** I have seen his horse tethered among the graves in the churchyard.

**Brouwer:** Well, I once *met* him on the road. I called to him: "Show me your face, good man."

**SD1:** The room is silent. All are listening, **rapt**.

**Brouwer:** When he turned, there was nothing there—only the stump of a neck.

**Ichabod:** Heavens!

**Brouwer:** He pulled me up onto his horse.

**SD2:** Brouwer takes a bite out of his apple and chews it slowly.

**Ichabod (gulping):** What happened next?

**Brouwer:** How we galloped—over bush and bramble, hill and swamp. We reached the old church bridge. That's when the Horseman . . .

**Ichabod:** What? When the Horseman what?!

**Brouwer:** He turned into a skeleton, threw me into the brook, and with a clap of thunder (*claps hands loudly*), sprang over the treetops!

**Ichabod:** Oh my!

**Brouwer (shivering):** I will never forget it.

**Brom:** I too have seen the Headless Horseman. I was coming home one night when he overtook me.

**Jansen:** What did you do?

**Brom:** Rather than give in to terror, I offered to race him for a bowl of punch.

That's right, a bowl of punch!

**Ida:** Well, did you win?

**Brom:** I would have won, but just as we came to the old church bridge, the Horseman vanished in a flash of fire.

**Martha:** Of course! It is said that the Horseman cannot pass the old church bridge.

**Brom (looking at Ichabod):** So if the Horseman comes after you, head for the bridge. If you can but reach the bridge, you will be safe.

## SCENE 7

**SD3:** On his way home that night, Ichabod, pale as a tombstone, trots along on Gunpowder. The shadows are long in the moonlight.

**Wolf:** Ah-roooooo!

**SD1:** Ichabod flinches.

**Ida (offstage):** Take care not to be on the roadway at the witching hour!

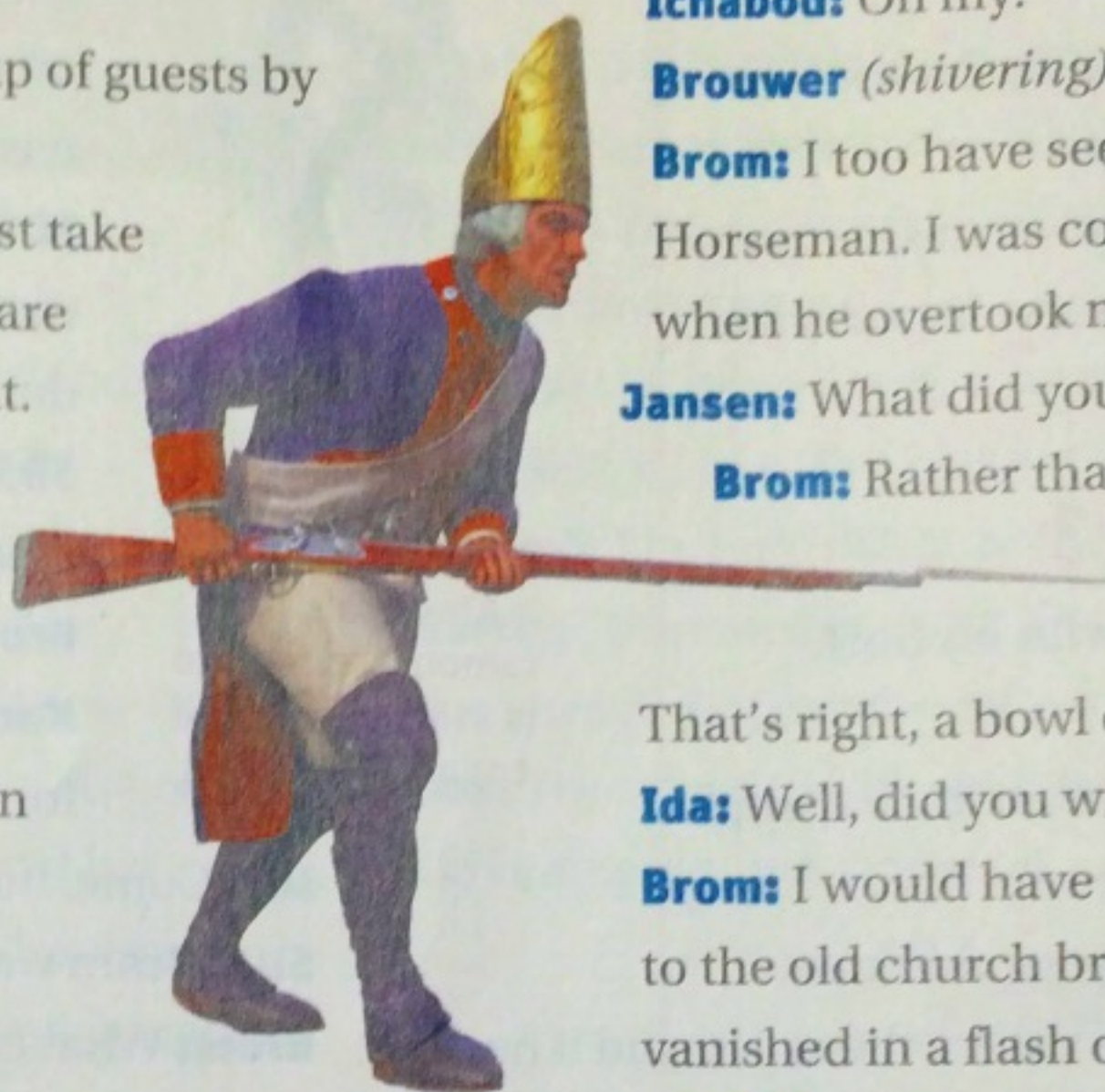
**Ichabod:** Keep it together, Ichabod.

**SD2:** Suddenly, there is a rustling in the thicket.

**SD3:** Something huge appears in the shadows.

**Martha (offstage):** Every night he rides forth in search of his head.

**SD1:** Ichabod's hands tremble as he clutches the reins.



The British hired 30,000 soldiers from the region that later became Germany to fight in the American Revolution. These mercenaries were called "Hessians." They were known for their cruelty.





**CITIES OF DEATH** Irving may have gotten his idea for "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" when he was 15. An epidemic of deadly yellow fever was spreading through the cities, so his parents sent him from their home in Manhattan to a friend's house in Tarry Town, a small village on the Hudson River. Irving fell in love with the Hudson River Valley, as the area was known, including its Dutch-American people and their many ghost stories.

**Ichabod:** Who's there?

**SD2:** The figure is mounted on a powerful black horse.

**Ichabod:** I say, s-s-s-sir, who are you?

**SD3:** The figure does not respond. Ichabod rains a shower of kicks upon Gunpowder, and the horse takes off.

**SD1:** When Ichabod looks back over his shoulder, he is horror-struck by what he sees chasing him.

**Whole Class:** The Headless Horseman!

**SD2:** The head that should be resting on his shoulders hangs from the saddle in the form of a fiery jack-o'-lantern!

**Ichabod:** Fly, Gunpowder, fly!

**SD3:** Away they dash, sparks flashing under Gunpowder's hooves.

**Brom (offstage):** If you can but reach the bridge, you will be safe.

**Ichabod:** The church bridge!



"Knickerbocker" was a term for Dutch settlers, based on the knee-length pants they wore. Thanks to Irving, "Knickerbocker" came to mean a New Yorker. (And the New York Knicks basketball team was originally the Knickerbockers!)

**SD1:** Ichabod cracks his whip wildly in the air.

**Ichabod:** Hyaw, hyaw! Come on, Gunpowder!

**SD2:** Gunpowder's hooves pound the bridge. Ichabod looks back again, expecting the Headless Horseman to vanish in a clap of thunder. Instead, he sees the ghoul raise an arm and hurl its head . . . at him!

**Ichabod:** Ahhhhhhhhhh!

**SD3:** All goes dark.

## SCENE 8

**SD1:** Several months later, guests gather for the wedding of Brom Bones and Katrina Van Tassel.

**SD2:** The villagers sit by the fire telling tales to the new schoolmaster.

**Brouwer:** The next morning,

Gunpowder wandered home, but Ichabod Crane did not return.

**New Schoolmaster:** What happened to him?

**Jansen:** Nobody knows. A search led to the bridge. Ichabod's crumpled wool hat was found on the bank of the brook, and close beside it, a shattered pumpkin, of all things.

**SD3:** Brom Bones chuckles to himself.

**Ida:** Mr. Crane's body was never found.

**Martha:** Another victim of the Headless Horseman.

**Baltus:** It is said that on quiet evenings, you can hear the ghost of Ichabod Crane whistling near the schoolhouse.

**SD1:** Knickerbocker walks onstage.

**Knickerbocker (holding the crumpled wool hat):** Others suspected that perhaps Brom Bones knew much more of this matter than he chose to tell. ●



# If You Lived in Sleepy Hollow

It's 1790. You're a 12-year-old boy. And you kind of smell. **BY ADEE BRAUN**

**I**t's dark outside when you wake up. Your two little brothers are still sleeping on the cramped straw mattress you share.

You shake them awake, then **groggily** get dressed. Your clothes smell as bad as they look: rough brown pants, a grimy **flax** shirt, a vest of simple wool that your sister made, and a coat to keep out the autumn chill. Your leather boots are caked in mud and cow dung.

Normally you would be heading to school, but it's harvest time, and your whole family must pitch in. After the harvest, your father will take the wheat from your farm downriver to sell at the market in New York City.

You miss going to your one-room schoolhouse. You like learning about the American Revolution and all the battles that were fought in the Hudson River Valley, where you live.

Sometimes your teacher comes over for dinner and

entertains you with thrilling stories about General George Washington. You remember the blasting cannons and ringing bells when Washington was elected president last year—the first president of the brand-new United States of America!

## Working the Land

Your mother calls you in Dutch to come eat breakfast. (Your family came here from the Netherlands 130 years ago when New York was still a Dutch colony, and your family speaks English and Dutch.) After you eat, you grab your sickle and head to the fields, which glow in the pale morning light. Reaping is hard work, and by noon, you're tired and sweaty.

Thankfully, it's time for a well-earned meal of bread, turnips, cabbage, and porridge with grated cheese that your mother makes from the milk of your cows. (She keeps the best cheeses to sell at market.) You wash it all down with weak beer.

When you were little, you and your friends would play in

the woods, pretending to be soldiers of the Continental Army. Now that you're older, your time in the woods is spent fishing and hunting with your dad. But there's no time for hunting or fishing today.

## A Sweet Treat

At the day's end, your family gathers for a simple meal of fresh milk and bread, roasted meat, and a salad with vinegar. If you are lucky, you will get a dessert of homemade *koekjes*, tasty little flat cakes, or *krullen*, delicious deep-fried dough.

After supper, you and your brothers sit by the fire, telling ghost stories. If she isn't too tired, your mother will sing an old Dutch folk song.

As a bright moon rises, you drag your weary body to bed. You drift off to sleep to the sound of the wheat fields rustling in the wind. ●

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**This essay portrays what life was like in the Hudson River Valley in 1790. What information in the essay is reflected in the play?**