

BIG THEMES

- Superstitions
- Fear
- Ghost Tales
- Ego
- Jealousy
- Mystery

THE LEGEND OF SLEEPY HOLLOW

ABOUT THE PLAY

Introducing the Legend

A schoolmaster enters and asks the class to quiet down. He scolds them for poor performance on their history exam. He expresses frustration that they do not care about their history, and that the elders of the community have asked him to leave out certain events. He is troubled over not teaching them everything he knows. The schoolmaster sets the mood for a ghost story. This ghost story is a local legend that haunts the memories of the town and is part of their history these students need to hear.

The schoolmaster describes the sleepy, tranquil town. He asks the audience about superstitions such as four leaf clovers, lucky rabbit feet, lucky coins and spices. He believes these trinkets support the angels as they protect us from the evils of the world including a headless Hessian soldier. The Headless Horseman is rumored to be buried in the Old Dutch Church Graveyard on the other side of what is known as Horseman's Bridge. He wanders the graveyard searching for a head to steal and replace his flaming jack-o-lantern, but cannot cross the bridge into the hollow.

Ichabod Crane

The schoolmaster reveals he was once a child in that same classroom and a student of Ichabod Crane. The schoolmaster transforms into Ichabod Crane, a tall, lanky, and awkward schoolmaster who is new to town. He is not shy about saying what he really thinks out loud, such as how he has worked in many schools much nicer than Sleepy Hollow, but it will do. He encourages the children to talk and get loud and then yells at them to be quiet. He quizzes the students and scolds them. Ichabod asks a student what his mother is making for dinner. He loves food and is often invited to dinners at the homes of his students. He teaches the students a dance called the gavotte. He tells the students he will teach them some protective psalms and then dismisses the class.

Ichabod is a great storyteller and loves to sing and dance. He also loves to gossip. He enjoys gossiping about Abram De Young stealing lamps from Joseph Van Zandt's carriage while also flirting with his daughter Emily. Ichabod also has a great imagination and is consistently concerned with superstitions. The ladies of the town love Ichabod, but he only has eyes for the daughter of the richest man in town, the lovely Katrina Van Tassel.

Katrina Van Tassel and Brom Bones

Katrina is beautiful and spoiled by her wealthy father. Ichabod flirts with her through quoting poetry and giving her flowers. She invites him to visit her father's farm. Katrina Van Tassel also has another admirer, Brom Bones. Brom is a local hero who is very strong and has a short temper. Brom brags about building a stone wall and Katrina compliments his skill. She introduces Ichabod to Brom.

Brom is bigger and stronger than Ichabod, but Ichabod tries to show his superior intellect and charm every chance he gets. Ichabod impresses Katrina with his singing and dancing. Brom tries to sing and dance as well as Ichabod, but is not very good. Ichabod cooks a delicious dinner for Katrina, and Brom can only create a meal of meat and beer. It seems that Ichabod has charmed Katrina and won her affections over Brom, but Katrina enjoys having the two men competing for her attention.

The Annual Harvest Party

Katrina invites both Brom and Ichabod to her father's annual harvest party on Old Hollow's Eve.

Ichabod is excited to attend the party and pretends to dance and flirt with Katrina. He also pretends to duel with Brom, defending the honor of his love. Ichabod travels to the party on his mule named Gunpowder. The road to the party has many twists and turns.

The head of staff invites the partygoers to create a circle for a lively party. Katrina and Ichabod are at the center of attention, dancing to the band. Baultus Van Tassel, Katrina's father, is impressed by Ichabod. They are surrounded by admiring ladies and men jealous of his skills and charm.

Ghost Story Contest

Baultus invites the guests to participate in a scary ghost story contest. Brom confidently awaits his turn and then takes center stage. He tells his story of meeting the Headless Horseman.

The Horseman was well known during the revolution as a vicious soldier who would cut off the heads of anyone he could find. After he and his horse were taken down in battle, the soldiers decided his head should not be buried with his body. Where they buried his head is still a mystery today. There is rumor that Satan himself leaves the door to hell open for the Horseman to come and go, searching for his missing skull. Brom encountered the horseman on one of these searches and challenged him to a race. They were neck-and-neck and the Horseman nearly caught up to him with his sword, until Brom crossed the Hollow Bridge and the Horseman was unable to cross and disappeared into the night.

Ichabod is terrified of this story and Katrina and her father are now not so sure he is the right match for her. Brom takes one last curious look at Ichabod before he leaves the party. Ichabod leaves, unhappy and frightened.

The Chase in the Hollow

Gunpowder slowly walks through the dark and spooky hollow. It is eerily quiet. Ichabod believes he hears frogs croaking his name and a raven cawing out, "Beware". Ichabod tries to convince himself that it is all in his head and he can keep going. He sees a looming figure from the corner of his eye. He calls out and tries to hurry Gunpowder along.

Suddenly he notices the looming figure is following him. As Ichabod speeds up, so does the figure. As Ichabod slows down, so does the figure, staying exactly 15 paces behind him. As the clouds clear, the moon lights up the silhouette of the mysterious figure. It is the Headless Horseman and as they both stop still, the Horseman pulls out his sword!

Gunpowder rears back and gallops away full force! The Horseman chases. Ichabod feels the breath of the Horseman on his neck and nearly falls off Gunpowder as they barrel down the path. At the fork in the road, Gunpowder is able to barely miss the sword and get a few paces ahead of the Horseman. Ichabod remembers Brom's story and charges towards the bridge. As he crosses the bridge, he sees that the Horseman cannot cross. He sighs in relief before looking back to see the Horseman hurl his fiery jack-o-lantern head directly at him. Ichabod is knocked unconscious on the ground.

The Next Morning

The next morning Van Ripper discovers all that is left of the Ichabod Crane; a hat, shattered pumpkin, and horse hooves. Gunpowder is found eating grass near the school house. No one in town hears from Ichabod again, although Brom Bones seems to know more than he will admit.

The narrating Schoolmaster explains there are rumors that Ichabod escaped to New York City and started a new life, but many have their doubts. Brom and Katrina eventually get married and have children, who have children, and so on. The story is passed down through the generations, but no one officially knows the truth. The Schoolmaster reveals he is a descendant of Brom and Katrina and encourages the pupils to decide for themselves if this was an unlawful act or a ghostly attack. He warns them to stay away from the Hollow and as he blows out the candle to end the story, we see signs that the Horseman may still be haunting us all.