

THE LEGEND OF SLEEPY HOLLOW

A GHOST STORY ADAPTED BY
Lindsay Price

FROM THE ORIGINAL BY
Washington Irving



CLASSROOM STUDY GUIDE

Introduction

What will happen when Icabod Crane comes face to face with the headless horseman?
An adaptation of the Washington Irving story.

Playwright Bio

Lindsay Price is the vice president of Theatrefolk Inc. and the co-creator of the Drama Teacher Academy. She has been involved with theatre education for over 25 years as a playwright, adjudicator, workshop instructor, resource writer, curriculum supervisor, professional development creator, and keynote speaker. Her plays have been performed in schools all over the world with over 1000 productions a year.

Synopsis

Icabod Crane is new to Sleepy Hollow and seems to fit right in. He's taking over the choir, courting the wealthy daughter, and sharing a ghost story or two. But not everyone is happy to see Icabod and not everyone thinks he loves ghost stories as much as he says. What happens when Icabod gets a ghoulish surprise?

Characters

ICABOD CRANE [M]: The new teacher. About to get a nasty lesson of his own. One monologue.

BROM BONES [M]: A strapping man, gone a 'courtin'.

MR. VAN TASSEL [M]: The Van Tassel patriarch. Welcomes Icabod to the area.

PETER [M]: One of Brom's flunkies.

DOLF [M]: The second of Brom's flunkies. All good flunkies travel in packs of two.

FOUR GIRLS

ANKE [W]

MARET [W]

LENA [W]

BRITT [W]

KATERINA VAN TASSEL[W]: The apple of Icabod's eye.

MRS. VAN TASSEL [W]: Katrina's mother.

MRS. CLOSSON [W]: Another partygoer who meets Icabod.

CHORUS OF PARTYGOERS: As many as you need.

THE HEADLESS HORSEMAN: A puppet operated by 2–3 performers.

Themes

Revenge, relationships, theatre, greed, the supernatural, reality vs appearance

Pre-Read Questions

- ★ What adaptations of *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* are you familiar with?
- ★ Who is your favorite Halloween character or creature?
- ★ What elements make a good horror story?
- ★ What is an adaptation? Name an example of an adaptation you know.
- ★ What genre would you classify *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* as?
- ★ Do you like ghost stories? Why or why not?
- ★ Do you believe in ghosts? Why or why not?
- ★ What scares you?

Pre-Read Activities

Create Your Own Puppet

- ★ Provide students with paper bags, socks, felt, coloring utensils and other items to create puppets.
- ★ Explain to students that there is a larger puppet used in the show but for today each student will create their own hand puppets.
- ★ Give students about a half hour to create their puppet. Tell them to use this opportunity to express their creativity. If you find you have more time during class you can extend the half hour.
- ★ Once students have created their puppet, tell them to create a backstory for it. Here are some examples of questions they can answer:
 - ★ What is the puppet's name?
 - » Where is it from?
 - » How old is the puppet?
 - » What are its likes and dislikes?
 - » What inspires your puppet?
- ★ Once students are finished with their puppet and have created a backstory, have them present.

Spooky Stories

- ★ Discuss with students: What makes a scary story? How do you create a scary atmosphere when telling a story? What techniques can you use in the telling of a scary story?
- ★ Tell students they are going to be presenting spooky stories in class today. Give students 5–10 minutes to brainstorm their story and write it down. The story can read like a monologue or a story out of a book. Remind students to keep their story short so that everyone gets a turn to share their creations.

- ★ Once students are done, have the class sit in a circle and create a spooky atmosphere. If possible you can give the students flashlights or dim the lights in your classroom.
- ★ Have students take turns sharing their stories in the circle. If you have a flashlight, the student sharing the story should use it to tell the story as if they were at a campfire.

Halloween Scenes

- ★ Put students into groups of four and tell them they are going to write their own Halloween scenes based on a scary story (e.g., *Frankenstein*, *Dracula*, *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*). You could also do this with urban legends.
- ★ Go around to each group and have them pick a story out of the hat to inspire their scene. Students can begin working on the adaptation process once they know what story they are making a scene for.
- ★ After students are done, have each group perform their scene. Then, discuss:
 - » What was the adaptation process like?
 - » What did you think was most important to include in your story?
 - » What made your story “scary”?
 - » Did anything stand out to you from the scenes you saw?
 - » What was the most challenging part of writing your scene? How did you overcome this challenge?

Research Project: Author

- ★ Divide students into groups and give them a limited amount of time to research the author of the original novel, Washington Irving.
 - » Who was Washington Irving?
 - » What was his background?
 - » How many novels did he write?

- » What inspired his version of *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*?
- » Was he a “successful” writer?
- » Was there any criticism of his writings?
- ★ Decide how students will share their knowledge. Will they create a scene based on what they’ve learned? An oral presentation with a visual component? Will they create a quiz? Give students a way to demonstrate what they’ve learned.

Adaptation Exercise

- ★ Divide students into groups. Give each group a short poem as their source material. The point is for students to work quickly.
- ★ Discuss the definition of adaptation, and adaptations that students may know.
 - » Adaptation definition: to make something suitable for a new purpose, to modify, to alter
- ★ The goal of the exercise is to have students adapt the poem into a scene. They don’t have to use the words of the poem, but the scene must be connected to the poem. Remind students that they are making something suitable for a new purpose. That means the adapted version must have theatrical qualities.
 - » What characters can be derived from the poem?
 - » What location can the scene take place in, as indicated by the poem?
 - » What conflict can be derived from the poem?
- ★ The scene should be less than one minute. Give groups time to discuss, create, rehearse, and present.
- ★ Afterward, discuss the similarities and differences in the scenes. Hopefully there will be differences! This will show students that there is not just one way to adapt material.
- ★ Also, discuss the process. What were the challenges? How did they modify and alter for a new purpose?

The Legend of Sleepy Hollow Adaptation Exercise

- ★ As a class, read a small section from the original *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* text.
- ★ Discuss the definition of adaptation, and adaptations that students may know.
 - » Adaptation definition: to make something suitable for a new purpose, to modify, to alter
- ★ Divide students into groups. Each group will have a copy of the original section. Their first task is to identify characters, locations, and possible lines of dialogue.
- ★ Next, groups are to discuss, decide, rehearse, and come up with a one-minute section of a scene. This is an exploration, rather than an assessed assignment. How do you adapt? What are the challenges?
- ★ After groups present, discuss the similarities and differences in the scenes. Hopefully there will be differences! This will show students that there is not just one way to adapt material.
- ★ Also, discuss the process. What were the challenges? How did they modify and alter for a new purpose?

Close Reading Analysis Questions

Close reading is an analysis tool. Students read a text multiple times for in-depth comprehension, striving to understand not only **what** is being said but **how** it's being said and **why**. Close reading takes a student from story and character to drawing conclusions on author intention. Close reading prompts students to flex their thinking skills by:

- ★ Teaching students to engage with a text.
- ★ Teaching students to be selective. We can't highlight everything in the text, only the most important elements.
- ★ Teaching students to make educated decisions. All conclusions and opinions must be backed up with a text example.

Have students analyze *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*, individually or in groups, using the following text-dependent questions:

Read One: What is happening?

1. Why is Icabod in Sleepy Hollow?
2. Who is Brom courting?
3. What is Brom well known for?
4. How does Icabod outsmart Brom?
5. What does Icabod reveal he wants?
6. What is the story of Major Andre?
7. Which is the most famous Hollow story?
8. How does Brom escape the Headless Horseman?
9. Where is Icabod's hometown?

Read Two: How does it happen?

1. Analyze the rhyming pattern the playwright uses throughout the story. How does this pattern help set the mood? How does it forward the story? Why do you think the playwright chose to include it?
2. What does "He's got the manners of a wounded bear" mean? What type of literary technique is the playwright using?
3. Why do you think the playwright chose to let the audience in on what Icabod is thinking?
4. Define the subtext on page 16. What is Icabod truly saying? Is he afraid of ghost stories?
5. Why do you think The Headless Horseman story is the only one not told in rhyming pattern?

6. Describe the tone of the play. What tone does the playwright use throughout the play? Cite an example from the text to support your answer.

Read Three: Why does it happen?

1. What are the themes in *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*?
2. What do you believe happened to Icabod? Why? Do you believe he is actually gone?
3. What do you think will happen next to Brom and Katrina now that Icabod is gone?
4. Why do you think *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* has continued to live on from generation to generation?
5. Which line in the play resonated with you the most? Why? What did the author want you to take away from this line?
6. How does the author want you to feel after you read this story?
7. Do you believe this adaptation stays true to the original story of *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*? Why or why not?

Post-Read Questions

- ★ What is one question you still have about the play?
- ★ Which character resonated with you the most and why?
- ★ Which Hollow story was your favorite? Why?
- ★ What was your biggest takeaway from the play?

Post-Read Activities

Creating Choreography

- ★ Put students into groups of three and have them read the scene between Icabod and Katrina on pages 10–11 where they dance together. Have students decide which two will play the characters and who will choreograph the scene. The characters who are not Icabod or Katrina can be spoken by the choreographer.
- ★ Tell students they will start by choreographing a basic dance in the style of the 1790s in *Sleepy Hollow* as mentioned in Appendix C of the play.
- ★ Once students create their choreography, have them practice doing the scene with the dance.
- ★ Now tell students they are going to get silly with their dance. Go around with titles of popular songs and dance styles in a hat. Have students pick one song and one dance style and tell them they must incorporate it into their scene. The scene will start with the traditional dance that was choreographed but then will turn into whatever song and dance they picked.
- ★ Give students 10 minutes to incorporate this new style and song into their scene. Once students are done, have them present.
- ★ Once everyone has presented discuss:
 - » What was the process of choreographing the dance like?
 - » What was it like incorporating the new style and song? How did it feel to add this in?
 - » What challenges did you face when choreographing? How did you overcome them?
 - » What stood out to you from the other scenes you saw?
 - » Did you feel silly doing the dance? Why or why not?

Poster Design

- ★ Based on what you've read, design a poster for the play. How would you visualize the play in a single image that would attract an audience? What font would you use for the title? What information other than the title would you include?

Staged Scenes

- ★ Divide students into small groups and assign each group a scene from the play, or a short moment within a scene.
- ★ Give students time to rehearse.
- ★ Each group will present their moment.
- ★ Discuss the scenes afterward:
 - » How did seeing the scenes acted out differ from reading them?
 - » Why is it important to act a scene as well as read it?
 - » Did any of the presentations offer a different interpretation of the characters than yours?

Sleepy Hollow Tableaux

- ★ Put students into groups of four and assign each group one of the three Sleepy Hollow stories mentioned in the play. This would be Major Andre, the woman in white, and the Headless Horseman.
- ★ Tell students they are going to create three tableaux for the story they are assigned. The first tableau will show the beginning of the story, the second will show the middle of the story, and the third will show the end of the story. Then have students create transitions between each tableau to tell the story.
- ★ Once students have created their tableaux, have them present.
- ★ After every group has presented discuss:

- » What stood out in any of the tableaux you saw?
- » What questions did you have about your story? How did you answer them?
- » What challenges did you face when creating the tableaux? How did you overcome them?
- » What was your favorite part of your story? Why?
- » What parts of your story did you think were the most important to include in your tableaux? How did you decide to incorporate them?

Write Your Own Sleepy Hollow Story

- ★ Read the story of Major Andre and the woman in white on pages 17–18 as a class.
- ★ Discuss the structure of how the story is written. What is the rhyming pattern? How is the story told? What is similar between the two? What is different? What is the tone?
- ★ After a discussion, tell students they are going to write their own Sleepy Hollow stories in this same structure. Students get to create the character and what happens to them. The only rule they must follow is that they must stick to the structure discussed.
- ★ Give students about 15 minutes to write and create their story. If you find you have more time in class you can extend time as you see fit.
- ★ Once everyone has finished their stories, have them switch their story with another student in the class.
- ★ Have each person provide feedback on the structure to their partner. Tell them to focus specifically on structure and not the content of the story.
- ★ Once students have given each other notes on the structure give them five minutes to make edits. After students make their edits, have them present their story.

- ★ After everyone presents, discuss:
 - » What was it like creating your own story? Did you enjoy it? Why or why not?
 - » What challenges did you face when writing? How did you overcome them?
 - » What stood out to you about the other stories you heard?
 - » Was it difficult to follow the structure? Why or why not?
 - » What inspired your story? How do you think writers get their ideas?

Puppet Design

- ★ The playwright provides a description for the Headless Horseman puppet in Appendix A of the play. Put students into groups of 2–3 and have them discuss the structure of the puppet.
- ★ Then tell students they are going to create their own design for the Headless Horseman puppet.
- ★ Tell students they can use Appendix A as inspiration but that you want them to draw out their own creation of the puppet. What would it look like? How many actors would operate it? How would they create the puppet?
- ★ Once students are done creating their puppet renderings, have them present. After each group discuss:
 - » Do you think it would be possible to create this puppet? How would it come to life? Why or why not?
 - » What stands out to you about this puppet?
 - » What was challenging about creating a puppet design? What did you enjoy?
 - » How did you overcome the challenges you faced?
 - » In what other ways could puppets be used in this show? Can any of the other stories include puppets? Why or why not?

Playwright Process

Playwright Lindsay Price talks about her process writing and adapting *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*. Have students read and then discuss/reflect on how their perception of the writing process compares to the playwright's.

What was the inspiration for adapting this play?

As sometimes happens with plays, someone asked if Theatrefolk had *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*. We didn't at the time, but my interest was piqued. I really like adapting existing work. It's always an interesting challenge to bring a novel or short story to the stage. I feel very strongly that the original intent of the work should be maintained; sometimes it seems adaptors are so focused on making changes instead of highlighting what's already there. But at the same time, the end product has to be a play. Books are books for a reason just as plays are plays for a reason. There's a time to use the original dialogue and there's a time not to.

What challenges did you encounter during the writing process?

Washington Irving's original story is wonderful and the descriptions of the characters are so striking they are instantly easy to picture. Therein lies the first problem. The story description of Icabod, for example, is so vivid, it only leaves room to imagine one specific person. There's little to no room for interpretation. That doesn't work on stage and certainly not at the school level. In the end, I focused solely on the behaviours and attitude Irving brings to light in Icabod's character.

What was it like to see the play performed?

Awesome! Sometimes you make choices and aren't sure how they're going to translate when they become three-dimensional human beings. When it works, it's the best feeling in the world.

As a playwright, what is your favourite moment/character in the play and why?

Icabod is so well written in the original, he just comes to life so easily! Love characters who are filled with flaws. They are the best to play.

Which is harder for you, first drafts or rewrites?

I adore first drafts. The act of getting everything on the page without judgement is freeing and fun. I fully embrace messy first drafts with lots of plot holes and things that need to be solved. And then you actually have to solve those problems in the rewrites, which is always more a challenge for me.

What's your writing process like?

I love to write initial ideas down in notebooks. I always start with pen and paper. I keep writing notes and ideas and characters until I feel that pen and paper is actually getting in the way of my progress. That's when I know I'm ready to move to the computer and start compiling a first draft. I often start my writing process thinking about the play and letting it roam in my head for a while. So after thinking and taking notes I'm ready to dive into something more tangible.

What engages you about playwriting?

I love seeing characters live a story and I love watching it happen right in front of me (rather than be distant from the experience through a movie screen). It's an intimate experience and that is very engaging!