

## The Legend of Sleepy Hollow by Washington Irving (1820)

*Adapted by Lori Tolbert—Easier Version (B1)*

Near the Hudson River, there is a quiet valley with a small village called Sleepy Hollow. It is a peaceful place where time moves slowly. The only sounds are birds singing and woodpeckers tapping on trees.

People say that Sleepy Hollow is a magical place. The people who live there often dream and believe in ghost stories. They tell stories about strange things they see and spirits that walk at night. The most famous ghost is the Headless Horseman. People believe he was a soldier who lost his head in a war long ago. Every night, he rides his horse through the valley looking for his head. When morning comes, he disappears near the old church.

In this strange village lived a schoolteacher named Ichabod Crane. He was a very unusual man. Ichabod was very tall and very thin. His arms and legs were long and thin like sticks. His feet were huge, and his head was small and flat. He had a long, thin neck, big ears, a long nose, and green eyes that looked at everything with great interest. When he walked on windy days, he looked like a scarecrow walking around.

Ichabod taught children in a small, old schoolhouse. The building was dark and old. The roof had holes in it, so rain came inside. The windows were broken and covered with pieces of old books. The wooden floor made noise when people walked on it. In the middle of the room was a big stone fireplace, but it was cold and dark most of the time.

Ichabod was strict with his students, but he was also kind. After school, he played games with the older boys and walked the younger children home. He didn't have his own house, so he stayed with different farming families each week. They gave him food and a place to sleep.

The older women in the village liked Ichabod very much. He was smart, polite, and listened carefully to their stories. On winter nights, he sat by their fires and listened to ghost stories with wide eyes. But these stories made him afraid when he walked home alone in the dark. To feel better, he sang church songs as he walked.

Ichabod was in love with Katrina Van Tassel, the daughter of a rich Dutch farmer. She was happy, friendly, and very beautiful. Ichabod dreamed of marrying her, but he also thought about her father's money and land. He imagined eating the cows as delicious meals, making sweet jams from the fruit trees, and owning all the rich farmland.

But Katrina had many other men who wanted to marry her. The most important one was Brom Bones, a big, strong man who was an excellent horseman. He was famous for playing tricks on people and making jokes. He rode a powerful horse called Daredevil, and he was the leader of all the young men



in the village. When his horse was tied up outside Katrina's house, other men were afraid to visit her. But Ichabod became her singing teacher so he could visit her often.

Brom wanted to make Ichabod go away. He made fun of Ichabod and played tricks on him. Once, he even brought a dog to howl while Ichabod was teaching Katrina to sing. But Ichabod never gave up hope.

One autumn afternoon, a servant brought Ichabod an invitation to a big party at the Van Tassel house. Ichabod let his students go home early. He put on his best clothes and borrowed an old farm horse named Gunpowder. The horse was slow and tired, but Ichabod rode proudly through the beautiful autumn countryside. The fields were full of orange pumpkins and the trees were heavy with red apples. He dreamed about the party and dancing with Katrina.

The Van Tassel house was brightly lit and full of happy people. The rooms were crowded with guests, music was playing, and the tables were covered with roasted meat, cakes, and apple cider. Ichabod danced many times with Katrina and felt very happy. Later, everyone sat together to tell ghost stories. The stories became scarier and scarier, and people always talked about the Headless Horseman who lived near the church bridge. Ichabod felt excited but also frightened, and he told some of his own scary stories.

Finally, all the guests went home, but Ichabod stayed to talk alone with Katrina. Nobody knows what they said to each other, but when Ichabod left the house, he looked very sad and disappointed. He got on Gunpowder, the old farm horse, and began the long, lonely ride home.

The night was very dark with no stars. The wind blew through the trees, making strange sounds. Shadows looked scary, and every noise made Ichabod more nervous. As he came near the big old tree and the haunted bridge, he became very afraid. Suddenly, a tall horseman appeared in the darkness. The rider was silent and frightening. Ichabod called out, but the horseman didn't answer. Ichabod made Gunpowder go faster, but the mysterious rider stayed beside him. Then Ichabod spotted something terrible: the horseman was carrying his head in his hands, not on his neck!

Ichabod was terrified. He made Gunpowder run toward the bridge because he believed the ghost would disappear when they crossed it. They ran across the wooden bridge, but when Ichabod looked back, the rider threw his head at Ichabod. It hit him and knocked him off his horse.

The next morning, Gunpowder came back alone. People found Ichabod's hat near the bridge next to a broken pumpkin. But they never found Ichabod.

Even today, people in Sleepy Hollow tell this mysterious story on dark autumn nights. They still believe that the Headless Horseman took Ichabod Crane away forever.