

**SUMMARY**

As the leaves turn crisp and autumn is in the air, it's a perfect time to retell Washington Irving's classic, "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow." Students will love the colorful characters and quaint setting in this quintessentially American tale of villagers, ghosts, and superstitions.

LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS

- Understanding character
- Understanding setting
- Identifying foreshadowing clues
- Understanding characters' motivations

MAIN TEACHING OBJECTIVES

After reading this play, students should be able to:

- Retell the important events in the plot of a classic American story
- Describe Ichabod Crane and explain how his weaknesses got him into trouble
- Discuss the motivations of different characters in the play
- Describe the setting and understand how it affects the action of the play

BEFORE READING

Background information: Ask students if they are familiar with the story, "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow." Have they heard of the character the Headless Horseman? Tell them that the classic story and its characters were created by a famous American writer named Washington Irving. It was originally published in 1820 in a collection that also included "Rip Van Winkle." These stories are some of the oldest works of American literature that are still commonly read today.

DURING READING

Identifying foreshadowing: Advise students to be aware of clues that suggest something strange is going to happen. How do these clues affect the reader? *They build suspense.* How does Knickerbocker add to the suspense of the story? In what ways is this play a classic ghost story?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS/ WRITING PROMPTS

- In the first scene, what details tell you what Ichabod Crane looks like? What about what he does? What image does this create of Ichabod? (understanding details) *Ichabod is tall and lanky with long arms, big ears, and a long nose. He whistles, reads, and walks at the same time. He seems bookish and gawky.*
- In what year does the story take place? What events do you know of that happened around that time? What do you know about how people lived then? (understanding setting) *The story takes place in 1790, shortly after the Revolutionary War (1775-83). George Washington was President. Students might suggest people rode horses, got light from candles, went to one-room schoolhouses, did work by hand, etc.*
- In what ways are Ichabod Crane and Brom Bones different? What do they have in common? (comparing and contrasting) *Ichabod is weak and skinny, but the townspeople find him charming because he is the new schoolmaster. Brom Bones is handsome and strong but a troublemaker. They both want to win over Katrina Van Tassel.*
- How does Brom feel at the party? Why do you think he tells his story of the Horseman? (understanding character's motivations) *He feels angry that Katrina is dancing with Ichabod. He tells the story to show how tough and brave he is. Also, he could be luring Ichabod to the bridge to pounce on him.*
- Why did Ichabod leave the party so late? Do you think this was a good idea? Why or why not? (making judgments) *He left late because he wanted time alone with Katrina. Students might suggest it was a bad idea because he is afraid to be in the dark by himself.*
- How would you describe the villagers of Sleepy Hollow? (understanding character) *They are superstitious and like to tell stories.*
- How do Ichabod's superstitions affect him? (understanding character) *They cause him to dwell on all the scary stories he heard at the party and believe something bad will happen.*

Drawing conclusions: Have a discussion about the end of the story. Do students believe that Ichabod was carried off by the Headless Horseman? Why or why not? If not, what else could have happened to him?

Advising Ichabod: Invite students to write a letter to Ichabod, explaining to him how he could have avoided the trouble he got himself into. Tell them to discuss two or three things he could have done differently.

Reinterpreting the legend: "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" has been retold many times, in stories, movies, plays, TV shows, and even an opera. Have students work individually or in groups to create their own interpretation of the tale in another format: a poem, artwork, dance, song, etc. Then, hold a Sleepy Hollow sharing event in your classroom, where students present their work.

WRITING PROMPTS

Expository: Do your students like ghost stories? Ask them to write an essay telling how they feel about hearing or reading scary stories. If they have a favorite, they can explain what they like about it.

Narrative: Have students imagine they were at the old church bridge when Ichabod approached it. Invite them to write their own story telling what they witnessed there.

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Skills and Test-Prep Online

Go to www.scholastic.com/storyworks to print out the following activities that can be used with this play:

- Comprehension Quiz
- Critical Thinking Questions
- Vocabulary
- Guided Reading & Thinking
- Understanding Genre (Ghost Story)