

The Legend of Sleepy Hollow

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Jump to: [navigation](#), [search](#)

"The Legend of Sleepy Hollow"



"Ichabod pursued by the Headless Horseman,"
by [F. O. C. Darley](#), 1849.

Author	Washington Irving
Country	United States
Language	English
Genre(s)	short story
Published in	The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon
Publication date	1820

[The Legend of Sleepy Hollow](#)
The short story read by Chip from the [LibriVox](#) project.

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"**The Legend of Sleepy Hollow**" is a [short story](#) by [Washington Irving](#) contained in his collection [The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.](#), written while he was living in [Birmingham, England](#), and first published in 1820. With Irving's companion piece "[Rip Van Winkle](#)", "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" is among the earliest examples of American fiction still read today.

Contents

[\[hide\]](#)

- [1 Plot](#)
- [2 Background](#)
- [3 Film and television variations](#)
- [4 Stage and music adaptations](#)

- [5 Audio books](#)
- [6 Local impact](#)
 - [6.1 Placenames](#)
- [7 See also](#)
- [8 References](#)
- [9 External links](#)

[[edit](#)] Plot

The story is set circa 1790 in the [Dutch](#) settlement of *Tarry Town* (based on [Tarrytown, New York](#)), in a secluded glen called Sleepy Hollow. It tells the story of [Ichabod Crane](#), who is a lean, lanky, and extremely [superstitious](#) schoolmaster from [Connecticut](#), who competes with Abraham "Brom Bones" Van Brunt, the town rowdy, for the hand of 18-year-old Katrina Van Tassel, the daughter and sole child of a wealthy farmer, Baltus Van Tassel. As Crane leaves a party he attended at the Van Tassel home on an autumn night, he is pursued by the [Headless Horseman](#), who is supposedly the [ghost](#) of a [Hessian trooper](#) who had his head shot off by a stray cannonball during "some nameless battle" of the [American Revolutionary War](#), and who "rides forth to the scene of battle in nightly quest of his head". Ichabod mysteriously disappears from town, leaving Katrina to marry Brom Bones, who was "to look exceedingly knowing whenever the story of Ichabod was related". Although the nature of the Headless Horseman is left open to interpretation, the story implies that the Horseman was really Brom in disguise.

[[edit](#)] Background



 *The [Headless Horseman](#) Pursuing [Ichabod Crane](#)* (1858) by [John Quidor](#)

The *Legend of Sleepy Hollow* was based on a German folktale set in the Dutch culture of Post-Revolutionary War in New York State. The original folktale was recorded by [Karl Müsäus](#). An excerpt of Müsäus:

The headless horseman was often seen here. An old man who did not believe in ghosts told of meeting the headless horseman coming from his trip into the Hollow. The horseman made him climb up behind. They rode over bushes, hills, and swamps. When they reached the

bridge, the horseman suddenly turned into a skeleton. He threw the old man into the brook and sprang away over the treetops with a clap of thunder.^[1]

The [dénouement](#) of the fictional tale is set at the bridge over the Pocantico River in the area of the [Old Dutch Church and Burying Ground](#) in [Sleepy Hollow](#). The characters of Ichabod Crane and Katrina Van Tassel may have been based on local residents known to the author. The character of Katrina is thought to have been based upon Eleanor Van Tassel Brush, in which case her name is derived from that of Eleanor's aunt Catriena Ecker Van [Texel](#).

Irving, while he was an aide-de-camp to New York Gov. [Daniel D. Tompkins](#), met an army captain named [Ichabod Crane](#) in [Sackets Harbor, New York](#) during an inspection tour of fortifications in 1814. He may have patterned the character in "The Legend" after Jesse Merwin, who taught at the local schoolhouse in [Kinderhook](#), further north along the [Hudson River](#), where Irving spent several months in 1809.^[2]

The story was the longest one published as part of [The Sketch Book](#), which Irving issued using the pseudonym "Geoffrey Crayon" in 1820.^[3]

"The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" follows a tradition of folk tales and poems involving a supernatural wild chase, including [Robert Burns](#)'s [Tam O' Shanter](#) (1790), and [Bürger](#)'s *Der wilde Jäger*, translated as *The Wild Huntsman* (1796).

[[edit](#)] Film and television variations



 [Will Rogers](#) in *The Headless Horseman* (1922)

Notable [film](#) and [television](#) variations include:

- *The Headless Horseman* (1922), a silent version directed by Edward Venturini, and starring [Will Rogers](#) as Ichabod Crane. It was filmed on location in New York's [Hudson River Valley](#).
- *The Adventures of Ichabod and Mr. Toad* (1949), directed by [James Algar](#), [Clyde Geronimi](#) and [Jack Kinney](#), produced by [Walt Disney Productions](#) and narrated by [Bing Crosby](#). It is an [animated cartoon](#) adaptation of the story, paired with a similar treatment of [Kenneth Grahame](#)'s *The Wind in the Willows*. The climactic ride is more extended than in the original story, and the possibility is stressed that the visually impressive Horseman is in fact a ghost rather than a human in disguise. Later the Sleepy Hollow portion of the film was separated from the companion film, and shown separately as *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* in 1958.

- A short animated version produced in 1972 was narrated by [John Carradine](#).
- *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* (1980), directed by Henning Schellerup. A made-for-television movie filmed in [Utah](#), starring [Jeff Goldblum](#) as Ichabod Crane, [Meg Foster](#) as Katrina, and [Dick Butkus](#) as Brahm Bones. Producer [Charles Sellier](#) was nominated for an [Emmy Award](#) for his work on the movie.^[4] The film is not closely adapted to the original story, depicting Crane as a skeptic regarding ghosts and the supernatural, although it foreshadows [Tim Burton](#)'s similar 1999 treatment.
- *Tall Tales & Legends* episode "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" (1987), starring [Ed Begley, Jr.](#) as Ichabod Crane, [Beverly D'Angelo](#) as Katrina Van Tassel, and [Charles Durning](#) as Doffue Van Tassel who is also the narrator. Produced and hosted by [Shelley Duvall](#).
- In 1988 [PBS](#) and [Rabbit Ears Productions](#) produced a multi-award winning animated adaptation and a subsequent book depicting the Irving story. Illustrations, directing, and adaptation was done by [Robert Van Nutt](#), music by [Tim Story](#), and the narration by [Glenn Close](#).
- *The Real Ghostbusters* featured an episode with a descendant of Ichabod Crane cursed by a headless apparition on a motorcycle who chases her.
- In the Nickelodeon television series *Are You Afraid of the Dark?* (1992), the episode "The Tale of the Midnight Ride" serves as a sequel to the classic story. In this episode a boy moves to Sleepy Hollow where he develops a crush on a girl. One night after the Halloween dance, they see the ghost of Ichabod Crane and send him over the bridge that the Headless Horseman cannot cross, prompting the Headless Horseman to then come after them.
- *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* (1999) was a Canadian television film starring [Brent Carver](#) and [Rachelle Lefevre](#) which was filmed in [Montreal](#).
- *Sleepy Hollow* (1999) was a feature film directed by [Tim Burton](#), though the adaptation takes many liberties with the plot and characters, changing Crane from the local schoolmaster into a police constable sent from [New York](#) to investigate recent murders, with the Horseman being used as a weapon against the local landowners. [Johnny Depp](#) starred as Ichabod Crane while [Christopher Walken](#) plays the Headless Horseman. The cast also featured [Christina Ricci](#) as Katrina, and [Casper Van Dien](#) as Brom.
- *The Night of the Headless Horseman* (1999) was an hour long [computer animated](#) FOX TV special utilizing [motion capture](#).
- *The Haunted Pumpkin of Sleepy Hollow* (2002) was an hour long animated special from [PorchLight Entertainment](#).
- *The Hollow* (2004) was a TV movie that premiered on the ABC Family channel starring [Kevin Zegers](#) and [Kaley Cuoco](#). The adaptation focused on a teenage descendant of Ichabod Crane.
- "The Legend of Sleepy Halliwell" (2004) was an episode of the TV show *Charmed*. A headless horseman murders the teachers at Magic School by beheading them.
- *Halloween Hound: The Legend of Creepy Collars* is the second-season premiere of the [PBS](#) series *Wishbone*. In this episode, the show's central character and narrator, a talking dog named Wishbone, imagines himself as Ichabod Crane and re-enacts the Headless Horseman story in his imagination as his owner, a boy named Joe Talbot, goes on a Halloween night scavenger hunt.

[\[edit\]](#) Stage and music adaptations

- *Sleepy Hollow* (1948), a [Broadway musical](#), with music by George Lessner and book and lyrics by Russell Maloney and Miriam Battista. It lasted 12 performances.^[5]
- *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* (1989), a one-act stage adaptation by Kathryn Schultz Miller.^[6]
- *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* for Speaker & Orchestra (1999), a 15 minute composition by Robert Lichtenberger; it premiered October 2001 by Lincoln's Symphony Orchestra ([Lincoln, NE](#)) conducted by Tyler White.
- *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* (2009), an [opera](#), with music by [William Withem](#) and libretto by Melanie Helton; it premiered March 27, 2009, in the Concert Auditorium at [Michigan State University](#).^[7]
- *Sleepy Hollow* (2009), a musical with book and lyrics by Jim Christian and music by Tom Edward Clark. It premiered at [Weber State University](#) in [Ogden, Utah](#) on October 30, 2009.^{[8][9]} It received the 2009 [Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival](#) Musical Theatre Award.^[10]
- *The Hollow* (2011). Book by Hunter Foster, music & lyrics by Matt Conner, directed by Matt Gardiner; premiered at Signature Theatre in Washington, DC (Eric Schaeffer, Artistic Director).^[11]

[[edit](#)] Audio books

- [Ed Begley](#) was the Narrator for a recording on both LP and audio cassette by [Caedmon Records](#) ([ISBN 978-9995389598](#)).
- *Sleepy Hollow* (1998). Produced for the [Radio Tales](#) series on [National Public Radio](#). The program was released on audiocassette by Durkin Hayes Publishing Ltd in 1998 as a part of both its DH Audio catalog and its "Paperback Audio" line ([ISBN 0886469031](#)).
- *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* (2005). Produced by The [Colonial Radio Theatre on the Air](#) and released by Blackstone Audio. Faithfully adapted from the book by Washington Irving, this production has an elaborate music score by Jeffrey Gage, sound effects, and a full cast. Originally released as a "Halloween Pick" by [Barnes & Noble](#) bookstores, the production went on to win the Ogle Award for "Best Fantasy Production of 2005." The cast includes Lincoln Clark as Ichabod Crane, Joseph Zamparelli Jr. as Brom Bones, and Diane Capen as Katrina Van Tassel. The book was dramatized, produced and directed by Jerry Robbins. On Halloween 2005, the production was broadcast coast to coast on [XM Radio](#)'s [Sonic Theater](#), and repeated the following year. It continues to be one of Colonial's most popular titles in release.
- [BBC Radio 7](#) (and later [BBC Radio 4 Extra](#)) has repeatedly broadcast a three-part reading of the story with [Martin Jarvis](#) as the Narrator.
- *Historic Hudson Valley*^[12] produced with Berger Platters, a dramatic reading of "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" (2008) with musical effects by Matt Noble. Parent's Choice gave it the Silver award in 2009, noting; "Here, master storyteller Jonathan Kruk delivers the story as an audio book, with colorful eloquence backed by orchestral radiance. While remaining true to Irving's original text, Kruk boosts the story's energy through his highly skilled reading."^[13]

[[edit](#)] Local impact

- In 1997 the village of [North Tarrytown, New York](#), where many events of the story took place, changed its name to [Sleepy Hollow](#). The high school teams are named "The Horsemen".
- In 2006, a large statue depicting the Headless Horseman chasing [Ichabod Crane](#) was placed along Route 9 in Sleepy Hollow/Tarrytown, New York.
- A not-for-profit organization [Historic Hudson Valley](#)^[14] has held since 1996 Legend Weekend at Philipsburg Manor, Sleepy Hollow, New York, featuring a rider portraying the headless Hessian, and a storyteller retelling The Legend of Sleepy Hollow as a historic celebration attended by thousands annually before Halloween.

[\[edit\]](#) Placenames

- Town and village names:
 - [Sleepy Hollow, Illinois](#), many of the street names reflect characters from the tale, and the image of the Headless Horseman can be found on many of the city's landmarks and publications.
 - [Sleepy Hollow, California](#) has Ichabod Ct., Crane Dr. and Van Winkle Dr.
- Subdivision names:
 - [Bethel, Connecticut](#), "Sleepy Hollow Estates", Ichabod Lane, Legend Drive, and Katrina Circle
 - [Roanoke, Virginia](#), and [Longwood, Florida](#), "Sleepy Hollow", street names such as Ichabod and Horseman
 - [Pearland, Texas](#) "Sleepy Hollow", street names such as Washington Irving Dr., Sleepy Hollow Dr., Crane Dr., Tarrytown Ln., Brom Bones Blvd.
 - [Falls Church, Virginia](#), Sleepy Hollow Road and Ichabod Place
 - [Hampden Township, Pennsylvania](#), "Sleepy Hollow", Ichabod Court, Brom Court, and Katrina Court.
- Schools:
 - The Ichabod Crane School District, [Valatie, New York](#). The school's sports teams are called "The Riders" and a silhouette of Ichabod Crane on his horse is often representative of the home team while a silhouette of the Headless Horseman is representative of the opponent. The wings in the junior high school are also named for characters and places, such as Katrina Van Tassel and Sleepy Hollow.

[\[edit\]](#) See also



- [Sleepy Hollow Cemetery](#) was founded in 1849, and is adjacent to the Old Dutch Burying Ground. They are separately owned and administered.

[\[edit\]](#) References

Notes

- ↑ [Musäus Folktale](#)

2. [^] [A letter from Merwin Irving was endorsed in Irving's handwriting: "From Jesse Merwin, the original of Ichabod Crane"](#) *Life and Letters of Washington Irving*, New York: G.P. Putnam and Son, 1869, vol. 3, pp. 185–186.
3. [^] [Burstein, Andrew. *The Original Knickerbocker: The Life of Washington Irving*. New York: Basic Books, 2007: 143. ISBN 978-0-465-00853-7](#)
4. [^] ["Charles Sellier, creator of 'Grizzly Adams,' dies at 67". *Variety Magazine*. 2011-02-03. Retrieved 2011-02-11.](#)
5. [^] [Internet Broadway Database.](#)
6. [^] ["Legend of Sleepy Hollow One Act Play for Schools and Theatres!". childrenstheatre.easystorecreator.com. Retrieved 2010-11-28.](#)
7. [^] ["The Legend of Sleepy Hollow: An MSU Opera - YouTube". 26 March 2009. Retrieved 21 November 2011.](#)
8. [^] ["Sleepy Hollow Legend Lives on at Regional Competition". weber.edu. December 28, 2009. Retrieved 28 November 2010.](#)
9. [^] [Hansen, Erica \(25 October 2009\). "WSU creates musical of 'Sleepy Hollow' tale". Deseret News. Retrieved 28 November 2010.](#)
10. [^] ["The Michael Kanin Playwriting Awards for Festival Year 2009". 10 March 2010. Retrieved 28 November 2010.](#)
11. [^] [signature-theatre.org](#)
12. [^] [hudsonvalley.org](#)
13. [^] ["Parents Choice".](#)
14. [^] ["Historic Hudson Valley homepage". Retrieved 28 November 2010.](#)

Further reading

- Thomas S. Wermuth (2001). *Rip Van Winkle's Neighbors: The Transformation of Rural Society in the Hudson River Valley*. State University of New York Press. ISBN 0-7914-5084-8.
- W. Scott Poole (2011). *Monsters in America: Our Historical Obsession with the Hideous and the Haunting*. Baylor University Press. ISBN 978-1-60258-314-6.

[[edit](#)] External links


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- [The Legend of Sleepy Hollow](#) original text with human-read audio.
- ["The Legend of Sleepy Hollow"](#) from *The Harvard Classics* (1917), hosted online at [Bartleby.com](#).
- ["The Legend of Sleepy Hollow"](#) at [American Literature](#).
- ["Sleepy Hollow"](#), a non-fiction update on the story's locale, written by Washington Irving in 1839.
- [Old Dutch Burying Ground of Sleepy Hollow](#), the churchyard where Ichabod Crane sought sanctuary.
- [Sleepy Hollow Cemetery](#). Founded in 1849, it is adjacent to but separate from the Old Dutch Burying Ground.
- [List of locations related to "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow"](#).
- ["Rip Van Winkle" and "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" - Irving's Fictions of Revolution](#)

- [*The Adventures of Ichabod and Mr. Toad*](#) at the [Internet Movie Database](#).
- [*Sleepy Hollow*](#) at the [Internet Movie Database](#) (directed by [Tim Burton](#)).
- ["The Legend of Sleepy Hollow in Concert"](#) Annual festival featuring Irving's original narrative and orchestral score by Steven Smith
- ["The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" Brickfilm](#) ([Lego](#) movie).
- [The unabridged "Legend of Sleepy Hollow" \(Episode Number 174\)](#) is read in its entirety in Mister Ron's Basement Podcast
- [A Librivox Podcast version of "Legend of Sleepy Hollow"](#) can be found here as well

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