



## Legend of Sleepy Hollow Washington Irving

<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/41>

Each of my books and stories includes Discussion Questions, Words to Know, and Writing Prompt Inspiration. I want to help teachers and homeschool parents by providing these things and making some of their work easier.

I also love old stories and would like more kids to read them. “Legend of Sleepy Hollow” is one such story that is a fun classic at Halloween. You can get it free at the above link and use the below guide with your students to further understand the story.

NOTE: there are several times the author refers to negro. I understand this is not a pleasant item in the work, but would hope it brings up discussion on the times it was written in and how things have changed.



## Discussion Questions

1 – The name Diedrich Knickerbocker is an interesting name. It definitely isn't one that is common today. What do you think of the name? What are the origins of Diedrich and Knickerbocker.

2 – The beginning doesn't specifically name where the story takes place. (Hudson valley near New York City) From clues in the story, can you figure out where the story is set? Take into account when it was written – 1790. Of note is the story was written by Irving while living in England.

3 – As you're reading the story, what difference are there in the time period compared to now. Make note of any.

4 – The author sets the stage by saying that the people lead a languid lifestyle, but someone set a curse upon the area. It sounds like a rumor, but a doctor and Indian chief are both mentioned. This is an example of an early (and fictional) urban legend. Find out more about urban legends. How does this affect your view of the story?

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Urban\\_legend](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Urban_legend)

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/urban-legend>

Are there any local stories or urban legends where you live?

5 – Irving talks about many strange events and sightings in this area.

Are these true or just whispered rumors repeated over and over, which add to the hype and believability in the area?

He also says that over time, people are influenced by that area and grow imaginative.

Why does he tell us so much about the strangeness and how it affects people?

Answer this question again at the end of the story and see if your thoughts have changed.

6 – When describing Ichabod Crane, the author says, “Hands that dangled a mile out of his sleeves, feet that might have served for shovels.” When he talked about how Ichabod walked, he said, “or some scarecrow eloped from a cornfield.”

Why didn't he say he had long arms and feet and had a lanky walk?

Did the way Ichabod was described make it clearer for you to picture how he looked?

7 – How is the school house described?

What makes school at this time period so different from school in the modern world?

8 – What is Ichabod's life like?

What does he do daily?

What jobs does he have?

In today's world, we might say he has several side hustles – what are those?



Why does he do these various things?

9 – Ichabod is superstitious and reads books that enforce his beliefs. This makes him nervous about the dark because he believes in spooky things.

How is the author using that to setup the end of the book?

10 - The author presents a pretty complete picture of Ichabod's character.

How would you describe Ichabod?

Is he ambitious?

Does he enjoy hard work?

What other ways can you describe him?

11 – Ichabod 'fancies' Katrina.

Why did he want to court Katrina? Besides her looks, her father is well to do (has some money).

How does the author let us know her father is rich?

How are the standards of having money different than today?

12 – Who is Bram bones?

Describe him?

How are he and Ichabod different?

Why did he want to court Katrina?

13 – How do Ichabod and Bram go about their rivalry different?

What are some things they do?

14 – Writing can be a reflection of the times – both good and bad.

What examples are in this story that show how things have changed?

15 – Who was Cotton Mather?

How did his writings affect Ichabod?

16 – They have a grand feast with many dishes. Look up any items you don't recognize from the feast and see if you can find recipes for some of the delectables.

Here's a recipe for Oly Koeks:

<https://www.inliterature.net/by-book/sleepy-hollow/2018/10/sleepy-hollow-doughty-dough-nuts-olykoeks.html>

17 – What is Ichabod's demeanor when he leaves the party?

18 – What does Ichabod see on his midnight ride?

Is it real or imaginary like the other things that scared him earlier in the story?



19 – There might be several interpretations of what happened with Ichabod and the headless horseman. What are the possibilities? What do you believe?

20 – There are several movie adaptations of this story. Disney has a great cartoon and there was a movie called “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow” with Johnny Depp in it. Watch one of these or another that you find and compare how the story is different than what the author wrote.



## Words to Know

This story was written over 300 years ago. Many of the words that were commonly used then are not used as much today and may seem strange. I encourage everyone to look up any words they don't recognize. Below are some of the words that jumped out at me as being ones that could use some clarity in their definition.

1 – Vouch

*I do not vouch for the fact*  
when you know something to be true

2 – Sojourn(ed)

*A worthy wight of the name of Ichabod Crane, who sojourned, or as he expressed it, “tarried,” in Sleepy Hollow*  
To go somewhere, but not to stay

3 – Cognomen

*The cognomen of Crane was not inapplicable to his person*  
From Roman times – typically a last name.

4 – Propensity

*It is remarkable that the visionary propensity I have mentioned is not confined to the native inhabitants of the valley*  
Acting in a certain way

5 – Laude

*I mention this peaceful spot with all possible laude...*  
To recommend or praise something

6 – Potentate

*...that he was one of those cruel potentates of the school...*  
The leader or person in charge

7 – Whilom

*...and like the lion bold, which whilom so magnanimously the lamb did hold...*  
Something that happened in the past

8 – Magnanimous(ly)

*...and like the lion bold, which whilom so magnanimously the lamb did hold...*  
Being forgiving toward someone you normally wouldn't



9 – Erudition

*...he was, moreover, esteemed by the women as a man of great erudition...*

Having a lot of knowledge

10 – Coquette

*She was withal a little of a coquette*

Flirtatious woman

11 – Linsey-woolsey

*...in another, a quantity of linsey-woolsey just from the loom...*

A type of fabric, at the time of the story it was made by hand

12 – Eloquence

*... or sauntering along in the twilight, that hour so favorable to the lover's eloquence.*

To speak very well

13 – Ferule

*In his hand he swayed a ferule, that sceptre of despotic power.*

A ruler that was typically used for punishment

14 – Pertinacious

*There was something in the moody and dogged silence of this pertinacious companion that was mysterious and appalling.*

An opinion that you won't give up



## Write Your Own

Here are a couple ideas to spark new stories based on *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*

1 – Learn about some local mythology and history. Write a story about that local mythology. This can be anything, but you can also modify it to use scarecrows, jack-o-lanterns, bats, and more.

2 – Pick a scene at the beginning and elaborate. Add more description and dialogue. Maybe one of the times Bram was picking on Ichabod or one of the days at school. Make a full scene instead of the synopsis like writing in the story.