Reader’s Theater Adaptation of:

THE LEGEND OF SLEEPY HOLLOW

By: Washington Irving

Adapted By: Miss K.
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Props: pumpkin, hat, food, musical instruments, hobby horses

Characters/Cast:
- Ichabod Crane
- Student 1
- Student 2
- Narrator 1
- Narrator 2
- Katrina Van Tassel
- Baltus Van Tassel
- Brom Van Brunt
- Townswoman 1
- Townswoman 2
- Townsman
- The Headless Horseman (optional - no lines)
Scene 1. Setting the Scene

Narrator 1: In the bosom of one of those spacious coves which indent the eastern shore of the Hudson, at that broad expansion of the river dominated by the ancient Dutch navigators -

Narrator 2: Hold it a second. The audience won’t know what you’re saying.

Narrator 1: I’m describing where the setting is for our story.

Narrator 2: (sighs) You can’t describe it that way. They’ll be confused. Who says ‘at that broad expansion’ anyway?

Narrator 1: (groans) Then you do it.

Narrator 2: (coughs) Very well then. (pause). Many of you have heard of a little glen named Sleepy Hollow, which is about two miles from a village known as Tarry Town. And Sleepy Hollow has said to been bewitched by an old Indian tribe. To this day, the villagers are still somewhat superstitious.

Narrator 1: And the ghost of a Hessian trooper haunts the region. They say he’s looking for his head that was carried away by a cannonball from the Revolutionary War. To many in Tarry Town, they know him as the Headless Horseman of Sleepy Hollow.

Narrator 2: Look! Here comes our main character now, Ichabod Crane himself!

Scene 2. Meet Ichabod Crane

Ichabod: (walking and whistling) What a beautiful day it is!

Townswoman 1: My! How tall he is!

Townsmen: And awfully skinny too!

Townswoman 1: He must be the new schoolmaster!

Ichabod: (tips his hat at the people): Good morning.

Narrator 1: Ichabod was tall and exceedingly lank, with narrow shoulders, long arms and legs, hands that dangled a mile out of his sleeves, and feet that might have served for shovels. His head was small, and flat at top, with huge ears, large green glassy eyes, and a long snipe nose. He wore a small wool hat upon his head.

Narrator 2: He walked into the schoolhouse, which was a large one room building made of logs.

Student 1: (whispers to student 2) He got invited to our house for dinner.
Student 2: (whispers) I hear he eats like a horse!

Student 1: And he’s so skinny!

Narrator 1: It was true. Ichabod Crane was a huge eater.

Narrator 2: Not only did he eat a lot, he helped the local farmers with mending fences and driving the cows.

Narrator 1: Yes, he found favor among many, especially in the eyes of the mothers as he would sit with a child on one knee, and rock a cradle with his foot for hours.

Narrator 2: And as school finished for the day, Ichabod strolled through the town.

Townswoman 1: Mr. Crane! Are we still having our voice lesson today?

Ichabod: Certainly, my dear.

Townswoman 2: (waves at Ichabod) Mr. Crane! You are coming for dinner tomorrow night?

Ichabod: Oh yes. I look forward to the apple pie.

**Scene 3. Silly Superstitions**

Narrator 1: Ichabod Crane would sit and listen to the old Dutch wives’ tales of ghosts and goblins, haunted bridges and haunted houses, and particularly of the headless horseman.

Narrator 2: As Ichabod walked home one evening, he looked around in the trees.

Ichabod: (nervously) Was that an owl I heard? What just ran across the path?

Narrator 1: How often did he shrink with curdling awe at some rushing blast, howling among the trees of a snowy night –

Ichabod: (looks around) I hope it was just the wind….I hope I don’t see that Headless Horseman!

**Scene 4. The Van Tassel Family**

Narrator 2: Ichabod was instructing one of his musical students one evening. Her name was Katrina Van Tassel, the only child of a wealthy Dutch farmer. And she was very beautiful.

Narrator 1: She wore ornaments of pure yellow gold to set off her charms. And Ichabod soon discovered Old Baltus Van Tassel was a perfect picture of a thriving, contented, liberal-hearted farmer.

Ichabod: Very good, Miss Katrina. Say, is that all your father’s land along the Hudson?

Katrina: Yes, he owns many birds, turkeys, ducks, and many animals. We also have the orchards over there as well as the fields of wheat, rye, buckwheat and corn.
Ichabod: Wonderful…I can taste the roast pig now….and see a spacious farmhouse and all the money –

Katrina: Let’s continue the lesson, Mr. Crane.

Ichabod: Yes, of course! How sidetracked I become!

Narrator 1: From the moment Ichabod laid his eyes upon these regions of delight, the peace of his mind was at an end, and his only study was how to win the heart of the peerless daughter of Van Tassel.

**Scene 5. Brom Bones**

Narrator 2: However, Ichabod was not the only admirer of Katrina Van Tassel.

Narrator 1: Yes. He had to encounter a host of rustic admirers. Among these the most formidable was a burly, roaring, roistering blade of the name of Brom Van Brunt, the hero of the country round, which rang with his feats of strength and hardihood. He was broad-shouldered, with short curly black hair…From his Herculean frame, he had received the nickname of “Brom Bones.”

Narrator 2: And a great horseman too!

Townswoman 1: There goes Brom Bones and his gang!

Brom Bones: I’m going to double the schoolmaster up, and lay him on a shelf of his own schoolhouse!

Townsman: You better hurry up then. Ichabod Crane’s on his way to the Van Tassel’s party tonight.

Brom Bones: And how do you know that?

Townsman: I just leant him a broken down plow horse named Gunpowder.

Brom Bones: (laughs) He’s not any match for my horse, Daredevil!

**Scene 6. The Van Tassel Party**

Narrator 1: Ichabod arrived at the castle of the Eleer Van Tassle, which he found thronged with the pride and flower of the adjacent country. There were old farmers, women, and of course, Brom Bones. He was the hero of the scene, having come to the gathering on his favorite steed, Daredevil.

Ichabod: Ahh so many wonderful cakes, pies and dishes! Where do I begin?

Narrator 2: Ichabod chuckled at the thought of owning everything he could see.

Baltus Van Tassel: Let’s start some music already! It’s time we had some dancing!

Ichabod: Ah yes! I love dancing! Would you like to dance, Miss Van Tassel?

Katrina: Of course, Mr. Crane!
Narrator 1: The lady of Ichabod’s heart was his partner in the dance, and smiling gracioulsy in reply to his chatter, while Brom Bones, sorely smitten with love and jealousy, sat brooding by himself in one corner.

Brom Bones: Hmph. I cannot stand that Ichabod Crane!

Narrator 2: And after the dancing and eating, the storytelling began.

Townsman: I once met the headless horseman! He chased me across the hills, the swamp, and then we came to the church bridge!

Townswoman 2: What happened?

Townsman: Well, suddenly, the horseman turned into a skeleton! He threw me into the brook, and BANG! He rode off over the treetops!

Brom Bones: (laughs) That Galloping Hessian is nothing more than a racing jockey! Once, I was coming from a nearby town, and I saw him. He offered to race me for a bowl of punch. We got to the church bridge, he bolted, and vanished into fire!

Narrator 2: Later in the evening, Ichabod walked around, looking for Katrina Van Tassel.

Ichabod: There she is! And she’s with that Brom Bones! I don’t understand!

Katrina: Oh Mr. Crane, you have met Brom, haven’t you?

Ichabod: Yes, I have.

Narrator 1: So Ichabod left the party and went to the stable for his horse. He had never felt so lonely and dismal.

Scene 7. The Horseman

Narrator 1: As he rode, all the stories of ghosts and goblins that he had heard earlier now come crowding upon his recollection.

Ichabod: I do hope I don’t run into anything on the way home. It’s awfully dark out. There’s the brook ahead with the bridge! C’mon Gunpowder, let’s cross quickly!

Narrator 2: Ichabod kicked Gunpowder several times, but as they neared the bridge, a dark shadow emerged!

Narrator 1: Ichabod beheld something huge, misshapen, black, and towering!

Ichabod: Who are you?

Narrator 2: Ichabod received no reply.

Ichabod: I must keep going!
Narrator 1: On mounting a rising ground, which brought the figure of his fellow traveler in relief against
the sky, gigantic in height, and muffled in a cloak, Ichabod was horrorstruck seeing –

Ichabod: He’s headless! He’s carrying his own head! Gunpowder, we must get away from him!

Narrator 2: They dashed away as the horseman chased them. Then they reached that stretch of road
which descends to Sleepy Hollow, shaded by trees for about a quarter of a mile, where it crosses the
famous church bridge.

Ichabod: C’mon Gunpowder! We can’t panic! If I can but reach that bridge! I’m safe!

Narrator 1: Then he heard the black steed panting and blowing close behind them. Ichabod saw him
rising in his stirrups, in the very act of hurling his head at him. Ichabod tried to dodge it, but it struck his
head with a tremendous crash! Ichabod tumbled into the dust, and Gunpowder, the black steed, and the
rider passed by like a whirlwind.

Scene 8. Disappeared

Narrator 1: Should we tell them what happened to Ichabod Crane?

Narrator 2: Well, no one really knows.

Townswoman 1: My husband found Gunpowder without a saddle at Mr. Crane’s house.

Townswoman 2: He didn’t come home?

Student 1: No. He didn’t come to school either.

Narrator 1: An inquiry was set on foot, and after diligent investigation they came upon the saddle
trampled in the dirt. The tracks of horses’ hoofs deeply dented in the road were traced to the bridge,
beyond which, on the bank of a broad part of the brook, was found the hat of the unfortunate Ichabod,
and close beside it a shattered pumpkin.

Townsman: We searched the brook, but we haven’t found Mr. Crane.

Townswoman 1: He must’ve been carried off by that headless horseman!

Narrator 2: Some say that Ichabod Crane was still alive, that he had changed his home to another part of
the country, studying law. Brom Bones, of course, married the lovely Katrina, and always looked like he
knew something when told of Ichabod’s story. He even laughed at the mention of the pumpkin.

Narrator 1: The country wives still say that Ichabod was spirited away by supernatural means. The
schoolhouse fell to decay, reported to be haunted by the ghost of the unfortunate schoolmaster. And a
plowboy even said he has heard Ichabod’s voice at a distance, chanting a melancholy tune among the
tranquil solitudes of Sleepy Hollow.

Narrator 2: Thank you for joining us.