

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Washington Irving was born into a rich Scottish family in New York in 1783. He studied law but literature was his real passion. While he was working as a lawyer¹, he started to write for newspapers and magazines. His articles and stories satirized² the customs³ and manners⁴ of the Americans. New York was home to many Dutch settlers⁵ and Irving wrote about them in his first book *A History of New York*, published in 1809. This humorous account by a fictional⁶ character called Diedrich Knickerbocker was immensely successful and was described as 'the first great book of comic literature written by an American'.



ABOUT THE BOOK

The Legend of Sleepy Hollow (1809) tells the story of a schoolteacher from Connecticut, Ichabod Crane, who comes to the small village of Sleepy Hollow. When he meets Katrina Van Tassel, the pretty daughter of a wealthy farmer, he falls in love. But he has a rival, the boastful¹ Brom Bones. After a party at her house, Katrina rejects Ichabod's courtship² and he rides home dejected³. On the way back he encounters the terrifying Headless Horseman, the ghost of an enemy soldier from the Revolutionary War⁴. A frightening chase ensues and Ichabod disappears. The people of Sleepy Hollow believe that Ichabod's ghost now haunts the village.

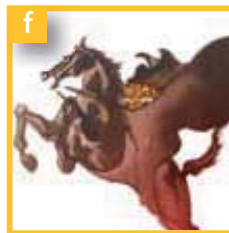
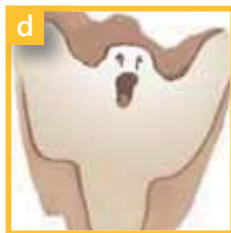
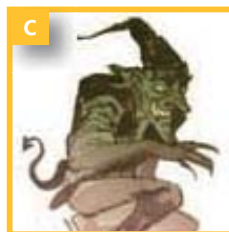
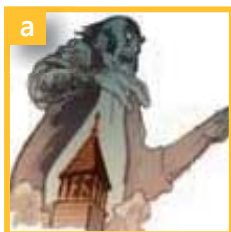


BEFORE READING

1 Match the words and the pictures.

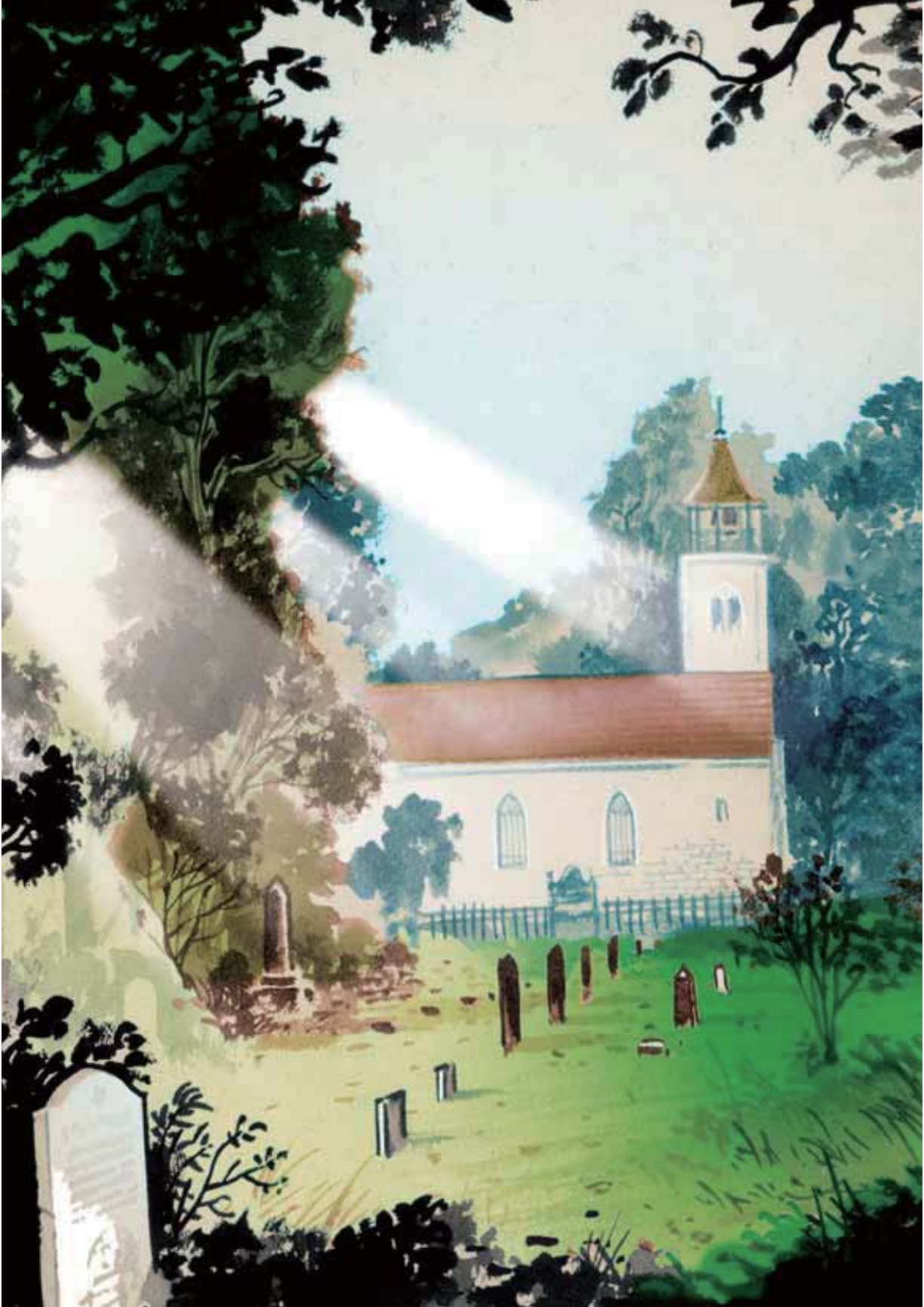
____ ① ghost
____ ② dragon
____ ③ giant

____ ④ witch
____ ⑤ goblin
____ ⑥ headless horseman



2 Complete the sentences with the words above.

- (a) A _____ mixes ingredients in a big pot or cauldron to make magic potions.
- (b) A _____ is huge. It has got wings and a long tail.
- (c) A _____ is an enormous person.
- (d) The _____ was killed on the battlefield and his ghost still rides his horse.
- (e) A _____ appears after death and usually haunts old castles.
- (f) A _____ is a bold little creature that plays tricks on people.



A QUIET VALLEY



The following account¹ was found among the papers of the late² Diedrich Knickerbocker.

On the eastern shore of the Hudson River there is a small town called Greensburgh. This place is better known as Tarry Town. It was given this name by the wives of that area because on market days their husbands ‘tarried,’ or wasted time, at the local tavern³. I cannot confirm this myself but I mention⁴ it just to be precise.

There is a little valley surrounded by high hills about two miles from here. This is one of the quietest places in the whole world. A small stream glides⁵ through it so silently that it could lull⁶ one to sleep. Only the sound of the birds ever interrupts this tranquility.

I remember that, when I was very young, I once wandered into a grove⁷ of trees. It was noon, when all nature is strangely quiet. The trees shaded one side of the valley. I couldn’t think of a better place than this little valley where I could escape from the world and its distractions, and quietly dream away the remnants⁸ of a troubled⁹ life.

1 **account:** story; report

2 **late:** dead

3 **tavern:** an inn or bar where people can eat and drink

4 **mention:** say

5 **glides:** runs or moves smoothly

6 **lull:** relax

7 **grove:** small wood

8 **remnants:** the remainder; what is left

9 **troubled:** difficult; with problems

COUNTRY LIFE AND CITY LIFE

- Do you live in the country or in a city?
- Where would you prefer to live – the countryside or the city? Why?



Because of the lazy atmosphere of the place and the character of its inhabitants, who are descended from the original Dutch settlers, this valley has been known for a long time by the name of Sleepy Hollow¹. The young men who live here are called the Sleepy Hollow Boys. A drowsy², dreamy influence seems to hang over the land. Supposedly, a German doctor put a spell³ on the place during the early days of the settlement.

According to another story an old Indian chief held his powwows⁴ here. Certainly something seems to have cast⁵ a spell over the minds of the good people. They have all kinds of strange beliefs. They go into trances⁶, have visions, frequently see strange sights, and hear music and voices in the air. The whole neighborhood is full of stories of superstitions⁷ and haunted⁸ places.

However, one dominant spirit haunts this magical region. It is the apparition⁹ of a figure on horseback, without a head. Some people think it is the ghost of a soldier whose head was carried away by a cannon ball in a battle during the Revolutionary War. The local people often see him hurrying along in the dark of night. He haunts not just the valley, but the adjacent roads and a nearby church.

1 **hollow:** valley

2 **drowsy:** sleepy

3 **spell:** magic formula

4 **powwows:** meetings of Native Americans

5 **cast:** (here) put

6 **trances:** states like sleep

7 **superstitions:** beliefs in unreal things

8 **haunted:** inhabited by ghosts

9 **apparition:** something that appears

According to historians the soldier's body was buried in the churchyard and his ghost now rides to the scene of battle in a nightly search for his missing head. It seems he sometimes rushes with great speed through the Hollow because he is in a hurry to get back to the churchyard before daybreak.

This legend has provided material for many wild stories, and at all the country firesides he is known by the name of the Headless Horseman of Sleepy Hollow.

THE HEADLESS HORSEMAN

- How did the horseman lose his head?
- Which places does he haunt?
- What is he searching for?
- When must he return to the churchyard?

