

# THE LEGEND OF SLEEPY HOLLOW

## RESOURCE PACK



**Tilted Wig**  
productions

Tilted Wig Productions on Facebook  
[www.tiltedwigproductions.com](http://www.tiltedwigproductions.com)  
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**NOVEL WRITTEN BY: WASHINGTON IRVING**  
**ADAPTED FOR STAGE BY: PHILIP MEEKS**  
**PRODUCED BY: TILTED WIG**  
**RESOURCE PACK BY: HOLLY GILLANDERS**

# Welcome!

This Education Pack has been put together for teachers, students and drama groups in order to encourage students to explore the process of adapting this story for the stage and to understand how we approach ensemble storytelling on stage and the practices we use when theatre making. Teachers may find elements of the interviews and articles in this pack especially useful for KS3, KS4 KS5, especially for students studying Gothic Fiction, GCSE Drama and A-level Drama & Theatre students.



This pack encourages independent thought, analysis, discussion and practical participation as well as exclusive insights from the creative team. We want to encourage all to read the original book and watch the play. Our intention is to share the joy of exploring everything that surrounds the story, and the excitement of staging a theatrical production, the challenges presented by touring a production and the pandemic and rehearsal room insights from the creative team.

The advisory age for this production is 12+.

We really hope this pack is useful to you and enjoyable to all who use it.

Enjoy the show!

**Tilted Wig**  
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Tilted Wig Productions on Facebook

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# The Production Company

Katherine Senior and Matthew Parish formed Tilted Wig Productions in 2017. Katherine and Matthew have 13 years experience producing and touring plays throughout the UK with Creative Cow – a Devon-based theatre company they co-founded in 2007.

From the very beginning of our careers as actors touring the depths of the British countryside, setting up shows in pubs and skittle alleys – and wherever else any-one would take us – we have worked hard to create a professional ensemble company of actors.

all over the country, and with their inaugural production of GREAT EXPECTATIONS they were proud to co-produce for the very first time with Malvern Theatres. 2019 will see them co produce with Malvern Theatres again and also Churchill Theatre, Bromley on THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY and Philip Meeks play MURDER, MARGARET AND ME, which tells the fascinating story of the relationship between murder mystery author Agatha Christie and actress Margaret Rutherford.

2020 began with an exciting tour of LADY



Our shows now tour to some of the biggest theatres in the UK, yet that same ethos is still the driving force behind Tilted Wig Productions.

Whether Tilted Wig is producing a classic play or an exciting new adaptation, for each production they aim to bring together a vibrant and innovative creative team.

Over the years Katherine and Matthew have formed strong relationships with top venues

CHATTERLEY'S LOVER, adapted by Ciaran McConville. The tour was planned across the length and breadth of the UK but sadly was cut short due to COVID-19.

We are delighted to be touring be back on stage, touring the UK with this haunting production of THE LEGEND OF SLEEPY HOLLOW.



# Design of a Decade

Tilted Wig Production Timeline 2010-2020

(Including productions with Creative Cow)



2020

Lady Chatterley's Lover



2021

The Legend of Sleepy Hollow



2019

Murder, Margaret and Me



2019

The Picture of Dorian Gray



2018

Great Expectations



2015

A Christmas Carol



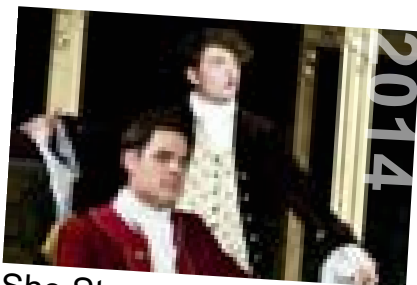
2016

Travels With My Aunt



2017

Our Man in Havana



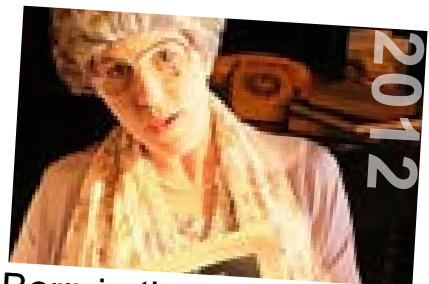
2014

She Stoops to Conquer



2013

Charley's Aunt



2012

Born in the Gardens



2010

Look Back in Anger



2010

Dumb Show



2011

Hard Times

# Chat with The Producers

## **Which bit of the producing process do you enjoy the most?**

There are so many elements to running a theatre company. We started out as actors so I suppose you could say we are actor-managers as in days past. While Matthew has turned his focus very much on the producing side of the company, I still act in the plays we tour (when parenting duties allow!) and I also do quite a bit of the design, artwork and creative side of things. This partnership has worked well in the last 12 years and makes the job mostly enjoyable! Bringing a new company together is always very exciting. Casting and introducing new creatives to the team and keeping it fresh and vibrant is an integral part of building a company for each project. This ensures we don't get stale and introverted which is also key. Of course one of the most enjoyable parts is the first night of a show, teetering on the edge and wondering if all the hard work will pay off and we send our audiences home with perhaps something more than what they came with.

## **What is the hardest or most complicated thing about producing a tour and why do you think touring is important?**

I don't know what the hardest part of touring is. I suppose it is complicated to juggle the venues in to a logistically suitable tour and it is always tough to bring the show in on an affordable budget. When you hear "commercial" producer the thought tends to be that there is a lot of money but it is the opposite – we have no funding and so have relied solely on box office for all 23 of the shows we have toured.

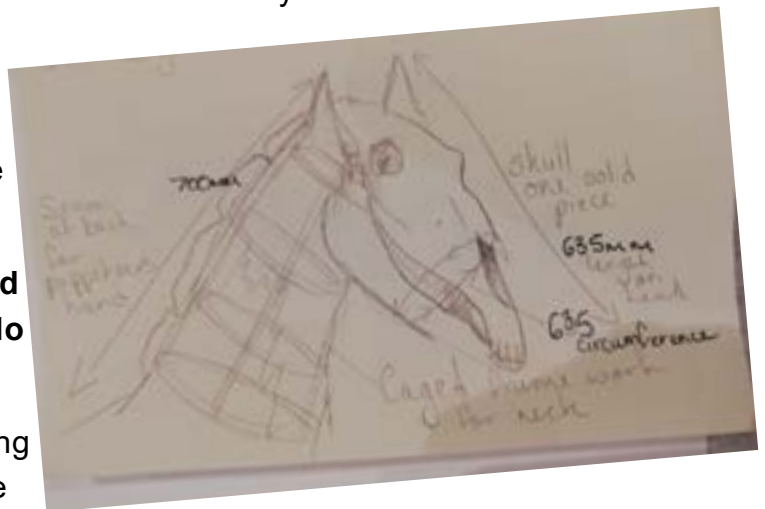
Collaborating with theatres is vital because it will keep touring theatre alive in the regions

and this is crucial for a diverse programme of quality visiting companies that comes at a more affordable ticket price to London

## **How did your production team go about organizing key production elements such as costume fittings, model showings and production meetings, when contact was limited due to COVID restrictions? Did these all happen remotely over zoom?**

Yes, or rather Teams! We've become rather fond of Teams on this show..

We have held three readings of the play online so we can hear it read aloud and the writer, Philip can make changes and the director, Jake can get a sense of how it will work in situ. We have a relatively short rehearsal period for a brand new script so to be able to work in advance on line like this has been very useful.



We also held our production meetings online initially and then half and half as restrictions eased. Those who could, met in person and others zoomed in, so a bit of a hybrid latterly. Our costume supervisor has just worked with measurements sent via email so far and will be able to work with the actors in person once in rehearsal.

We are also holding workshops a week be-

fore rehearsals start which will be purely to establish the key illusions on the show and some movement, light and sound aspects.

**How did you undertake the casting process for the play? If it was via self tapes, how were you able to get a feel for if that actor was right the role, without seeing them in person?**

Yes, it was self tapes and meetings on Teams. It worked very well but eventually we had to call people in to meet in person because when you're casting a play you really need to see actors in the flesh as that is of course the medium in which we are producing our work. It's very hard to gauge zoom auditions for a stage show and it is a little unfair to ask actors to do it.

**Is the Gothic horror a new genre for Tilted Wig?**

It is...we are very excited to be working on this and Philip Meeks, the writer is a huge fan of the genre and has created something really special, with such attention to detail and thorough care to the style of storytelling.

**How does it work in rehearsals/ back-stage with social distancing/ capacity limits? What control measures are put in place?**

Most people usually do their own make-up anyway as we don't tend to tour a wig and costume person but yes, this time we will make sure that everyone has their own dressing room when venues allow and ensure that everything is sanitised. They don't have to be in a bubble anymore but we will be taking care to look after the company when on tour as the winter season comes upon us. We are doing everything in rehearsals to keep everyone safe with testing, if not double vaxxed and sanitising everything. The play will be staged non socially distanced and people will not be

required to wear masks at this stage but we will be following the UK Theatre and government guidelines at all times, if things change.

**Would you say the cost of putting on a production is more expensive than pre-pandemic, to allow for testing and Covid safety measures to be implemented?**

Yes, it is more expensive. Of course we are working post Brexit too and we have seen an increase in the set build of around 60% for materials so it's much more expensive than before and really pushes home the need to recycle materials and endeavour to be more green. We always kept props and costumes and even set when we were a smaller outfit but unless you have affordable large storage facilities it is very difficult now.

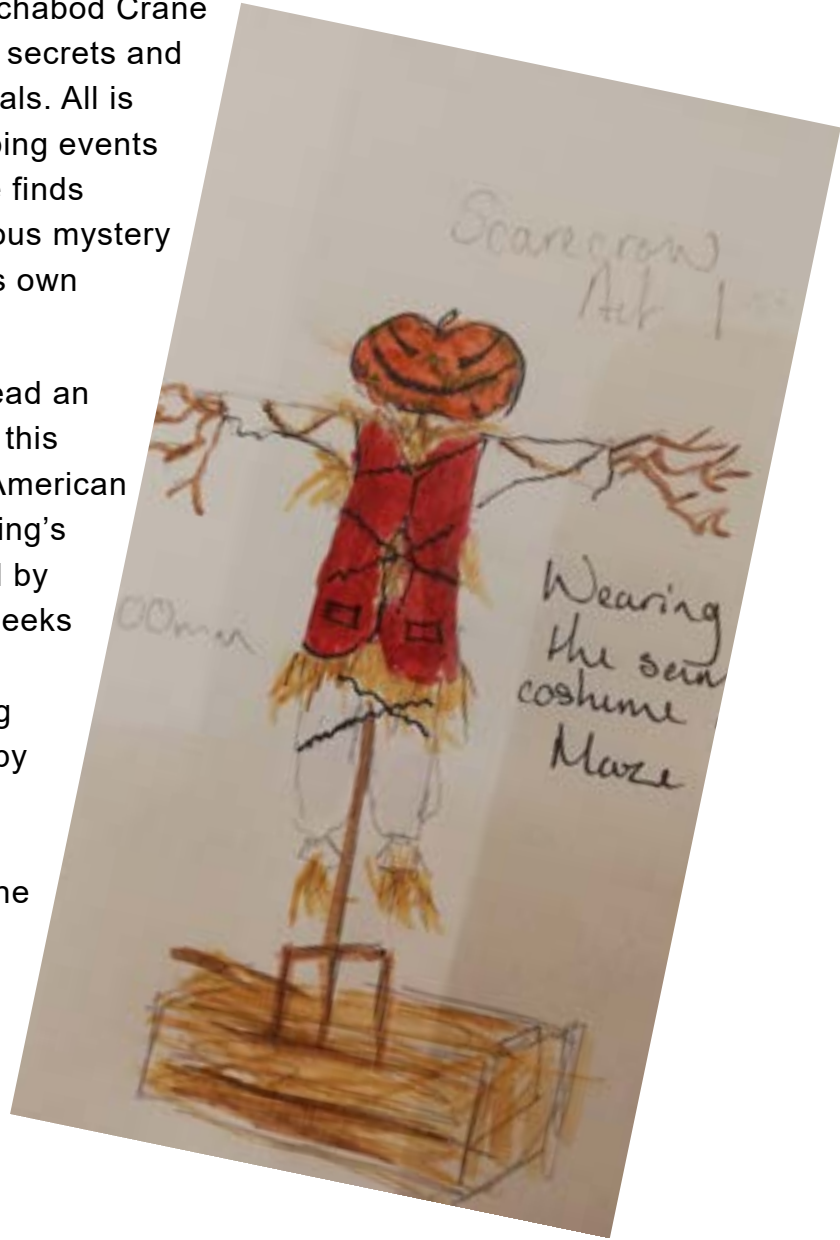
**What are you most looking forward to about your production of The Legend of Sleepy Hollow?**

I am really looking forward to how the actors deliver the wonderful text that Philip has created. He has written something very special that is going to be very exciting on the ears and Jake, the director working alongside Filipe, the illusionist is creating a visual feast for the eyes...so we are very excited to deliver this production to audiences up and down the country as it will be something people have never seen before in a theatre.

# Synopsis of our Play

Welcome to Sleepy Hollow. Population 436. Arriving as the new teacher, Ichabod Crane finds himself embroiled in the secrets and unsettling traditions of the locals. All is not as it seems. When disturbing events overwhelm the small town, he finds himself swept up in a dangerous mystery which leaves him doubting his own sanity.

Wendi Peters and Bill Ward lead an outstanding ensemble cast in this brand new adaptation of the American Gothic horror. Washington Irving's classic tale has been adapted by acclaimed playwright Philip Meeks into a heart pounding visual masterpiece with jaw dropping illusions. The Legend of Sleepy Hollow unleashes one of the most terrifying monsters from the horror canon on stage – the Headless Horseman





# The Author: Washington Irving

## Biography (1783-1859)

Irving's parents were British. His mother was born in Orkney, Scotland and his father in Falmouth, Cornwall. Irving was one of 11 children and he was born in New York on 3 April 1783. He was named after George Washington, who he met when he was six years old, the year George Washington became president.

Irving was a journalist, lawyer, historian and diplomat as well as a writer.

His first work of fiction *Knickerbocker's History of New York* (1809), was a satirical history of the Dutch settlers in New York.

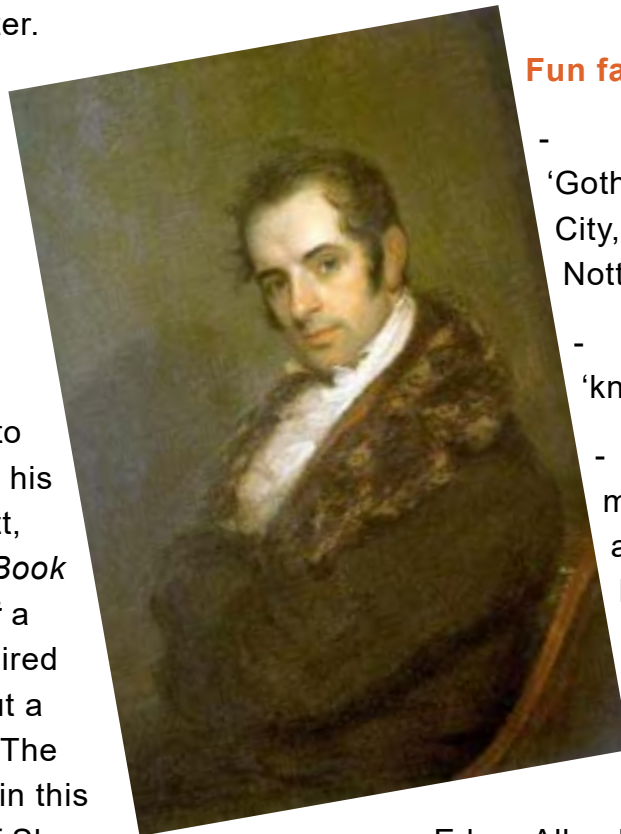
Irving spent a lot of time in England. Encouraged to focus and persevere with his writing by Sir Walter Scott, Irving wrote *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent* a book of short stories inspired by his trips to England but a few inspired by America. The most notable two stories in this collection; *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* and *Rip Van Winkle* have been hailed the first American short stories.

As well as fiction and essays, Irving wrote biographies, including that of Oliver Goldsmith, the prophet Mohammed and his namesake George Washington.

Washington Irving has been called 'the father of American literature', having been the first American writer to make a living mainly through his writing and the first to become successful in both America and Europe.

Towards the end of his life he moved to Tar-

rytown, near Sleepy Hollow, where he continued to write. Irving died of a heart attack on 28 November in 1859 and is buried in Sleepy Hollow cemetery.



### Fun facts about Irving!

- He created the moniker 'Gotham City' for New York City, inspired by a village in Nottinghamshire, UK
- He invented the word 'knickers'
- He is responsible for the modern idea of Christmas as we know it. Charles Dickens reportedly told Irving that he used one of his stories as inspiration for his Christmas scene in *The Pickwick Papers*.
- Edgar Allan Poe, Mary Shelley and Lord Byron were all reported to be fans of Washington Irving's writing as well as Dickens.

# Gothic Literature – Overview and Timeline

The Gothic genre began in the 18th century, born out of the Romanticism movement. The latter focused on the individual's spiritual journey and emotional sensitivity combined with a celebration of nature. Gothic literature expanded on these themes, pushing them into frightening realms of horror, creating terrifying thrills for the reader and exploring the dark side of the human psyche.

The genre took its name from the architecture that became an iconic setting for gothic fiction - a mysterious or creepy castle or large house, often of medieval design. Strange places that evoke a sense of unease in general have come to be synonymous with the genre, from wide open landscapes, such as brooding moorland, to small and confined places of imprisonment. Extreme weather is also a key feature of the literary style.

Recurrent motifs of the Gothic horror novel include the supernatural, omens, persecuted maidens menaced by a powerful force, the exiled outsider, the lone male and a fear what might come back to haunt you from the

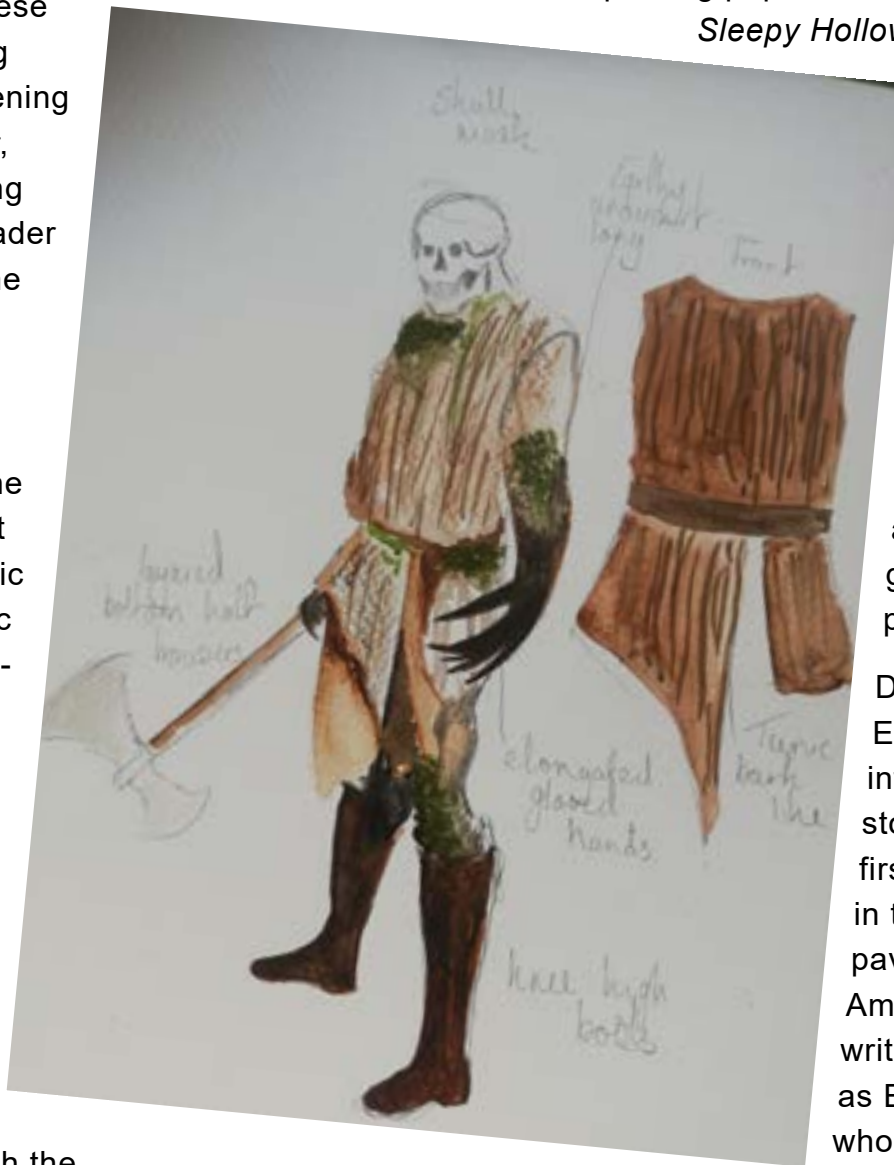
past. Some of these motifs are clearly evidenced in *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*.

Gothic literature received a resurgence in the 19th century, with novels such as *Dracula* proving popular. *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* was influenced

by the gothic stories being produced in Europe; Ichabod Crane the anti-hero, the outsider, an uneasy setting in a village rife with superstition and a terrifying ghost from the past.

Despite the European influence, Irving's story was the first of its kind in the USA. He paved the way for American gothic writing giants, such as Edgar Allan Poe, who adopted Irving's short story approach

to create terrifying, disturbing tales. Poe developed the genre further by using the Gothic setting as a metaphor for extreme psychological states of the human mind. The genre continues to thrive, on screen as well as in print, with contemporary writers such as Stephen King still popular today.



Dates	Key work of Gothic Fiction produced.
<b>1764</b>	<i>The Castle of Otranto</i> written by Horace Walpole. The first Gothic novel to be published. UK.
<b>1794</b>	<i>The Mysteries of Udolpho</i> by Ann Radcliffe. UK. A different approach to the Gothic genre, Radcliffe provided natural and rational explanations to the supernatural occurrences of the novel.
<b>1796</b>	<i>The Monk</i> . MG Lewis. UK. A more traditional gothic novel which pushed the boundaries of horror, with extreme violence. A scandal is caused upon its release.
<b>1816</b>	Lord Byron's writing challenge to his friends one wet weekend at the Villa Diodati in Geneva led to the first vampire story to be written in English <i>The Vampyre</i> by John Polidori and Mary Shelley's classic <i>Frankenstein</i> .
<b>1819 &amp; 1820</b>	<i>The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.</i> – a collection of short stories by Washington Irving published. 'The Legend of Sleepy Hollow' featured in this collection. Published in instalments. USA.
<b>1840</b>	<i>Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque</i> . A collection of psychologically terrifying short stories published. Written by Edgar Allan Poe. USA.
<b>1842</b>	<i>The Masque of the Red Death</i> . Edgar Allan Poe. USA
<b>1847</b>	<i>Wuthering Heights</i> . A classic gothic romance novel set in the Yorkshire Moors, which has become part of the classic western literature canon, Written by Emily Bronte. UK.
<b>1959</b>	<i>The Haunting of Hill House</i> by Shirley Jackson. USA.
<b>1977</b>	<i>The Shining</i> by Stephen King. USA. King's bestselling novel, reported to be inspired by <i>The Castle of Otranto</i> and Edgar Allan Poe's <i>The Masque of the Red Death</i> .
<b>1983</b>	<i>The Woman in Black</i> . Horror story by Susan Hill. UK. Written in the traditional Gothic horror style. Went on to be adapted for stage and has been frightening audiences in the West End of London for 25 years.
<b>1987</b>	<i>Beloved</i> by Toni Morrison. USA. A ghost story inspired by a true story of a former slave in 1870s Ohio.

# Key Events: History of The USA and Washington Irving Timeline

**1492** - Christopher Columbus arrives in America, thinking he has discovered India. It is populated by Native Americans, who have lived there for centuries.

**1565** - First permanent European settlement in North America - St Augustine, present-day Florida - founded by the Spanish.

**1614** – The first Dutch settlement in North America built

**1620** - Plymouth Colony, near Cape Cod, is founded by the Pilgrim Fathers, whose example is followed by other English Puritans in New England.

**1632**- Salem witch trials

**1643** - Dutch settlers at war with the Weckquaesgecks and several other tribes who owned the 2 miles of land that made up the village that came to be known as Sleepy Hollow, along the Hudson River. When Europeans first settle in Sleepy Hollow not known.

**1664**- The British seize the colony of New Netherlands and rename it New York.

**1763** - Britain gains control of territory up to the Mississippi river following victory over France in Seven Years' War.

**1773** – The Boston Tea Party / Ichabod Crane born

**1775** - American Revolution begins. America at War with Britain, initially in retaliation to high taxes, then to claim independence.

**1776** – The Founding Fathers produce the declaration of independence on the 4th July.

**1783** - Treaty of Paris signed. Great Britain accepts American independence. The Revolutionary War ends/ Washington Irving born.

**1789** – George Washington elected first President of the United States. Washington Irving meets George Washington.

**1790** – Washington Irving visits Sleepy Hollow (approx. 1790)/Ichabod Crane arrives in Sleepy Hollow.



**1802** – Washington Irving begins his writing career as a journalist

**1804** – Irving takes an extended tour of Europe.

**1806** – Irving passes the bar and becomes a lawyer.

**1809** – Washington Irving's first book published. The humorous *Knickerbocker's History of New York*

**1819 & 1820** – Washington Irving's *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* published (set in 1790) as part of his serialised short story collection *The Sketch Book of Henry Crayon*. Also featured in the collection is his famous short story Rip van Winkle, a tale about a man who goes to sleep in the Catskill mountains and wakes up 20 years later.

**1829-1832** – Washington Irving moves to London to serve as Secretary to the American Legation.

**1859** – Washington Irving dies and is buried in Sleepy Hollow Cemetery.

**1876** – *Old Christmas* – selection of short stories by Washington Irving published posthumously.

**1920** – One hundred years after *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* was written, women are given the right to vote in the USA.

# Q & A With The Director

## Jake Smith

***Our director Jake Smith shares his rehearsal room practice and approach to directing this production.***

**What drew you to bringing the story of The Legend of Sleepy Hollow to life on the stage?**

I remember it being terrifying as a child when I watched the Tim Burton movie. I was thinking of titles to present to Tilted Wig who usually programme and tour classics and I wanted a title that hadn't been done recently or at all. I had just directed *The Hound of the Baskervilles* for Northern Stage and really enjoyed bringing that mystery and thriller to the stage. The Legend of Sleepy Hollow seemed like the perfect title to explore because Sleepy Hollow is undoubtedly one of the greatest horror stories ever written and a tour de force to stage. This production has at its heart the power of nomadic storytelling and gathering around the campfire for a good ghost story. It is an important story for now as we look at conversations around the identity of nations, communities and humankind throughout the



world. It came to be just before Covid and at the time where people were questioning society and mankind. In the story of The Legend of Sleepy Hollow, Ichabod is representative of the American Dream and all

it represents and it is interesting to look at this and evaluate it in comparison to how the American Dream from 2017 to 2021 came into question during Donald Trump's presidency.

Both myself and the writer Philip Meeks are also fans of Horror, in particular Folk Horror and the way it uses horror to derive fear from an audience and Sleepy Hollow offered a historically rich community to build this narrative from. When I went to the

source text and read the original short story I was surprised how little dramatic narrative story was within the book compared to the film. It only had the Horseman appearing at the end. This is of course a classic trope of horror, in not showing the monster until the end if at all. This offered us an amazing opportunity to invent and create our own story within The Legend of Sleepy Hollow that Washington Irving had written. Who were these people? How did they get there?

It is a deeply haunting and beautifully lyrical play that the writer Philip Meeks has written. He has created a structure to the play that is almost like an epic ballad, the audience need to keep their wits about them. There is some detective work to be done!

“It is an important story for now as we look at conversations around the identity of nations, communities and humankind throughout the world”

**When directing a horror story, are there any considerations you need to make to approaching the staging and the relationship between the audience and the stage?**

I can't change the relationship between the audience and the stage on this tour as we are only touring to proscenium arch theatres. However, we have discussed ways of effecting the audience in the stalls. The dynamic the proscenium offers us is the ability to deliver strong imagery.

**“The dynamic the proscenium offers us is the ability to deliver strong imagery”**

With any theatrical adaptation you are always going to encounter an audience who have an expectation. On this occasion these will be fans of the film as people are less familiar with the book. It is important to note this is not the film, as that is another story, which Tim Burton owns. I always love to embrace the powerful medium and tools of the theatre and what devices the theatre can offer that film can't. In particular with this production we have worked with an Illusionist to create effects that give a sense of spectacle but also unease as to how they happen right in front of us. Horror isn't always about the jump scare. It can often be psychological and an intense feeling of fear, disgust or shock so it is important I tell the story that is written and illustrate the beats that have been scripted.

It is really important I think of this as a new American play, which explore the history of a real place as this is also the story we are telling. I will make sure that I am building and growing anticipation throughout, without hopefully giving away what is at play, as it is this that is scarier than any monster....or is

it?

**“Through their care for the characters we allow the audience catharsis with what the characters experience.”**

I think overall though we need to make sure the characters are well rounded and that we create a particular eerie and changing landscape through light and sound. Through inviting the audience into the play through their care for the characters we allow them catharsis with what the characters experience.

**How do you approach rehearsals? Will the ensemble be devising any of the scenes or do you have a clear vision in your head of the shape of the scene before rehearsals start?**

We are working from a text so devising the story isn't necessary as myself and Philip have done that through the play's development and Philip's ideas for the adaptation.

The way I work often involves storyboarding each scene and creating a blueprint of how I see the production working when working with an adaptation or text-based piece.

**“the audience will need to engage their imagination and suspend their disbelief”**

With adaptation you are creating a mechanical vehicle with the production that the actors can inhabit with their organic performances. However, you need to understand it as a vehicle and the poetics of the language you are using to build the world of the story and production.

On this production the audience will need to engage their imagination and suspend their disbelief at times as we have one set that the actors weave in and out of to deliver several locations and effects. I always offer opportunity to facilitate the ideas of my actors in the room but feel it is good to have a blueprint to share with them especially as we have only three weeks to create the show. However, it is likely because it is a new play ideas will be expressed and changes to the script will be made throughout the rehearsal process.

**When you are staging rehearsals, do you have to bear in mind the different auditorium shapes and sizes of the venues you are touring to?**

Absolutely, this is one of the first things myself and the designer have to incorporate into the design when discussing a show that will tour. This is a really useful part of the show, to liaise with stage management about in rehearsal to check the decisions you are making can be achieved in the spaces we are touring to. There isn't a lot of time in every venue to change blocking and adjust sightlines so I like to make sure we are covering all venues when we create the show in the beginning. This means all audiences get the same version of the show with minimal adjustments.

“This is a really useful part of the show, to liaise with stage management about in rehearsal to check the decisions you are making can be achieved in the spaces we are touring to”

With the actors it is important you prepare them vocally too for the change in auditorium, especially as in this production they aren't wearing microphones. We were lucky to rehearse at the Churchill Theatre in Bromley and be able to get the actors on the stage and in the auditorium to explore their voice in the space.

**As a company, how will you approach creating this strange community? Will you create any pre-show rituals?**

We are creating a dialect for Sleepy Hollow together as a company with our dialect coach. This is an exciting and unifying exercise as historically the characters in the play wouldn't have the accents we associate them having today. So this is one way we will approach in creating this community.

I think we will create a few rituals that we do before every show. I am keen when working with actors that we release our outside stresses of the day and come together to focus on our rhythm needed for the show. This can be achieved through playing a game involving numbers and actions.

This cast of actors are really fun and I imagine they might have some fun and enjoy scaring each other along the tour.

**How important is music and movement in this production?**

Movement is very important in this production as the cast multi-roll so they will be working with our movement director to establish clear changes in physicality to depict several of their characters. It is also something that helps us create this strange community as they dance for a section of act one where we fast forward through a section of the story when Ichabod arrives up until him being guest of honour on Hallowmas Eve.

They will also work with the dialect coach to add changes vocally to each of the charac-



ters they play.

“There is nothing more truly terrifying than those who believe their actions are divinely justified.”

Music is the voice of the piece and will guide the audience unknowingly into fear. Music is a real key ingredient in Horror and building suspense and fear. There will be times in this production you can't hear the music but it will be there and hopefully causing an uneasy effect.

**Your cast will be multi-rolling, with most of the actors playing at least three characters. Do you have any tips for approaching multi-rolling for Drama and Theatre studies students?**

I think it is important to understand the clear objective of each of your characters and their given circumstances as these often then lead you to explore vocal and physical mannerisms and qualities that are based on this information. You can start really small by focussing on a line of each character and saying it in different ways until you like the sound of it and are able to recreate a sense of consistency between the characters voices. You can do the same with physicality make a tableau of each character and then begin to add features to it, how do they walk, how do they sit, what is their rhythm or emotion. You don't have to run before you can walk and layering your discoveries will help begin to build believable multi-roles. I think as long as you always route it in what does your character want you will always be on the right lines.

**In your opinion, what is the key ingredient for a successful ensemble company?**

For me it all starts in the casting process, it

is important when casting an ensemble you cast a family. In particular for this production I know that the cast will be travelling and spending a lot of time together so you want them to get on. Overall trust is the key ingredient, you need to create an environment where everyone trusts they can be creative, they can fail and it not matter and their voice is important and is heard. As a director of an ensemble your job is to guide silently, make your presence an awareness known but don't leave a trace.

**What is the message at the core of this telling of The Legend of Sleepy Hollow?**

I think Ichabod says it within the play “There is nothing more truly terrifying than those who believe their actions are divinely justified.” The production is about belief and embracing uncertainty and our notions of good and evil. It also celebrates Washington Irving as being the founding father of American Horror Fiction and the genre we all love today!

### Ensemble rehearsal room exercises

- I use exercises from French movement practitioner **Jaques Lecoq's method** to route the ensemble and get them accustomed to how they physically work with one another. I use an exercise called **The Plateau** to explore status and balancing the space.
- I use **eventing**, which is derived from **Stanislavski** to break down all the changes the characters experience in the play and their given circumstances and objectives. As a group together we create a wall map of all the events. This means all the actors understand what each character is experiencing and in turn how they impact or react to that throughout the story.

# The Characters in our Play

These character descriptions formed the casting breakdown, which the actors agents receive. They submit their clients for consideration who they feel match the brief or would be perfect for the role. The producers, director and writer then create a shortlist of

actors who have been submitted and invite them to audition. The descriptions are also key in helping the actor prepare for the audition, giving them clues and ideas as to how to play the character.

## Baltus Van Tassel

(Male, 40–50 years)

The father figure. A big loud head of the town. He's dying. And he's worried about the future of his home and his daughter and his traditions.

With his other roles he helps bring the community of Sleepy Hollow. Miss Pinn is a particularly joyous role.

Lots of different tones required. From great humour to downright evil.



## Brom 'Bones' Van Brunt

(Male, 20–25 years)

The chief antagonist.

Beautiful and troubled. Someone who makes the whole village swoon in one way or another.

His hatred of Ichabod is complex in this version. He's terrified of losing his status in Sleepy Hollow as the Big Chiefs future son in law. He's worried long term about the money being taken from Sleepy Hollow. But his real fear of Ichabod is how the man makes him feel. Something he knows he shouldn't and has probably fought against for years.

His other roles are more subtle than Baltus' rota. But fun. Especially the free and easy Minerva Klaff.



## Ichabod Crane

(Male, 25–30 years)

An ultimate ageless adorable sexually ambivalent anti hero.

Someone distinct with a definite look to recreate this literary icon for the stage.

Fast talking, quick thinking, witty, sexually charming and full of secrets. Ichabod is ambiguous in many ways. The original American Dreamer. A new breed of Yankee who sees new opportunities in his vast unexplored nation. For wealth. For sex. For a happiness he's probably wise enough to know he'll never find. But damn, he'll enjoy the journey anyway. And why shouldn't he? His terrible childhood is only hinted at.

Ichabod does not believe in the unnatural no matter how much evidence is hurled his way. He only believes in what he can see and achieve. His arrogance in this respect is his downfall.

Ichabod gets involved in the stories but is always Ichabod



## Katrina Van Tassel

(Female, 20–25 years)

Not the parasol twirling maiden we've come to expect of this part. She's a woman who works the land and has had to help her ailing father build his fortune since the "small tragedy" that took her mother away. She's wise and gutsy and takes no nonsense.

Her other roles are challenging because they all contain shades of Katrina herself. As well as Jenny Anyone she also plays her own doomed mother.

The other secret to her role is she's ultimately the BIG BAD. The witchy force behind the menace of Sleepy Hollow.



## Joost De Groot

(Female, Male, Non-Binary, 25–30 years)

A playable, simple country boy with strange ways and an unyielding loyalty to the bullying Brom.

Lots of contrasts in roles and a huge amount of quick in and out characters.

Has to go from high comedy as Alice and then must transform into handsome Roricus Maze.... and ultimately terrify as the Horseman himself.



## Widow Mariette Papenfuss

(Female, 45–65 years)

A tough talking no nonsense Mary Wickes or Bea Arthur type. Lots of wit. She's Ichabod's confidant. She's watching out for him as well as herself. The character treads a dangerous path throughout and has her own terrible secrets.





# Q & A With Playwright

## Philip Meeks

*Playwright Philip Meeks shares his thoughts on the adaptation process, creative collaboration, the horror genre, historical context and key themes of this production.*

### Have you worked with Titled Wig Before?

I met Titled Wig when they toured the York Theatre Royal/ Salisbury Playhouse production of my play *Murder, Margaret and Me*, which tells the story of the friendship between actress Margaret Rutherford and crime writer Agatha Christie as the Miss Marple movies were being filmed. The company have a fresh approach to bringing theatre to the stage. They provide quality productions that theatres can afford, presented so creatively. I think they are wonderful.

### How do you approach adapting a book for stage and what is your process?

The word ‘adapting’ means you take something that works in one artform and you turn it into something that works in another. However,

I don’t think this production of *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* has been an act of adaptation. I’ve used the bare bones of the story and created an original play. Washington Irving was one of the first fiction writers. He wrote his short stories in a journalistic way, I think he was the bridge between journalistic writing and fiction. You read the original story and it has a wonderful, contemporary, energetic style but not much happens. In the original, you have a love triangle between Ichabod Crane, Katrina and Brom Bones. Ichabod, I would say, is one of literature’s first anti-heroes. He turns up and decides he wants to marry Katrina Von Tassel, who has been dallying with Brom. At the party which celebrates Hallowmass – the origins of Hal-

loween – Brom instigates the telling of the of the Legend of Headless Horseman who protects the town from people who want to steal money from the area. Katrina’s father subsidises the village – if that money went they would die. It’s about the establishment of America. The roots of America. You’ve got this huge division of people who wanted to carry on with tradition and people who wanted to be American dreamers – like Ichabod.

“Ichabod, I would say, is one of literature’s first anti-heroes”

I studied American History, so I used my knowledge of the events and literature of the time and thought about what else could be brought to the story. This is a story about the dawn of America and the birth of American gothic horror. Ichabod Crane embodies the new ambitious American who began emerging after independence in 1776. I think of him as the first American Dreamer who thinks he can seize the entire country. I thought about this when I was creating the play – the history of America and where it sat, as well as the history of where the story sat in American Horror Fiction. The settlement of North America is a strange thing. When America was settled it was all about money and ‘how can we make ourselves richer, conquering new land.’ I think the whole downfall of the Western world, which is happening right now, started with the settlement of America. That’s what this play is also about. It’s about the wrong people landing. The people who were leaving to go to America were religious zealots, criminals.

It was peopled by rotten individuals. That's the point of the sequence where they turn up. They are all wicked! The original settlers of Sleepy Hollow were vile, evil people.

**Baltus is very protective over the telling of legend in the play, initially he deters Brom from sharing it. He says 'secrets are currency in the new world'. How much is the legend of the Headless Horseman a warning to outsiders and how much is supernatural belief?**

It's both. On the surface, the legend of the headless horseman is there

as a warning but it IS real. That is where the horror comes into it. The ancient spirit of the land just wants to have a happy life. We think monsters want to kill, but they just want to be left alone to survive. The basis of the story.- the ancient spirit, the wendigo is living in a cellar from another generation. So the natives can't touch the land that it is in as they are scared of it and religious in their own way. It's only when heathens from Europe come over that it can live again. It's not evil.

The whole premise of the play is there is no such thing as good and evil. There is supernatural and things that will scare some people, but the most important things to be scared of in real life are things like 'You aren't allowed to be gay'. That's what my adaptation is all about. Human monsters are what you should be scared of.

**Did you suggest *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* to Tilted Wig? How did the idea come about?**

We were looking to do another project together. Tilted Wig are all about telling literary stories and I am a big horror fan. I think horror is about society rather than horrible things. It is a great way to talk about humanity. The greatest writers in my opinion are horror writers, Stephen King and Shirley Jackson being two of them. They talk about humanity in the most extraordinary circumstances.

This text is grandfather gothic. If there hadn't been *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*, there wouldn't be Stephen King or Shirley Jackson. This was the start of Horror Fiction. Gothic Fiction is a European concept, it existed before anyone even walked on the ground of America.



Jake (the director) and I met Tilted Wig on a cold day in Southsea and we had two ideas – HG Wells *The Time Machine* and *Sleepy Hollow*, as we thought both texts said a lot about our existence in 2020. Tilted Wig loved the idea of *Sleepy Hollow*. It's rarely been done on the

stage. It's been turned into a couple of musicals and there are a few old American plays, but to say that the Headless Horseman is such an iconic monster, it's not been done that much. The roots and ideas behind him – it is so much about society and also how we treated women and how we are where we are now. That was important to me. The leading character in my version is a woman. Who is 55!

**I wondered about the drafting and revi-**

**sion process – how closely do you work with the rest of the creative team when drafting your script?**

The play gets smaller every time you write it. I think writing a play is like sculpting a bit of wood or marble. Every time you come to a draft you end up with less wood or marble so suddenly the thing appears. The whole thing about creating art is making the idea smaller and manageable and understandable. I've got fabulous people around me who help to achieve that. Collaboration to me is the most important thing as a writer for me. It's all about collaboration to make the idea make sense.

**“The whole premise of the play is there is no such thing as good and evil”**

**Do you all have readings together?**

Yes. I might watch a rehearsal in some instances and not be keen on an interpretation, but that is between the actor and the director that is their choice. It's nothing to do with me. There will be another version. Plays exist per production. If you have written something that is interpretable, that is brilliant. I am sure Shakespeare would be happy that there are modern day versions of his plays. You write an idea and words that exist. I am not precious. I started writing in soap operas so I think that makes you less precious.

I don't listen to feedback on the script until I hear actors read it. You can hear any dip in energy and when you hear it, you know that bit is wrong. You underline it as you go through the reading and come back to it later. Also, hearing actors read sections aloud in auditions helps identifying anything that

needs to be changed. It's all very helpful.

**How much are you considering when writing the practical implications of a touring production, that will appear on different sized stages?**

It's very much part of the collaboration. Your early drafts are your personal vision. The next, how the director sees it. The final draft is how it will be. When it comes to budget, you start to realise things can be done with a suggestion. I will start to write in the stage directions suggestions. This is not my first supernatural play I have written. In your first script you can say 'I see it like this.' We have been through various versions of the special effects and I realised that the very fact we revealed there is a ghost is enough. There are things that can be achieved with sound. Sound design is key to anything horrific on stage. Anyone who has been to see a horror play on stage, for example *The Woman in Black*, will know how important the sound is.

**Music and dancing feature heavily in the production. The choreography is a device to move the action along and transition between scenes, but does it play another role?**

Yes. Just look at the creepiness of Morris dancing. They dance through the terrors of the *The Wicker Man*. The dancing is of a ritualistic nature. We've got

a wonderful movement director, Chris Cumming. We don't have a live band so we need someone like Chris, the movements need to be very precise or rabid enough to fit in with the beats of the music. We are talking about a village of cannibals, it's not going to be a graceful kick line! They are going to be stumbling all over the place. It's about working up the context of the dance within the music. The creative team on the show will do it wonderfully. It should be rough around the

edges.

One of my great influences is hammer horror films and I said to the music director, listen to the scores. I think if hammer horror were to make a version of Sleepy Hollow, this is the version they would have made. It's very good vs evil, black

**In Irving's story, Ichabod is very superstitious. His prized possession is his book about witchcraft that he likes to read and scare himself with. In your version, he is a contradiction. He reads tealeaves yet he believes in facts, maths and science and gets rid of the talisman.**

I decided to turn it on its head. He used the tealeaves to lure the townspeople in,

to win them over. He is completely amoral. He doesn't have any thought about what is right or wrong and he has no belief in anything because everything in his life has been so horrible. But he does believe that he had a mother who loved him. She saved him by putting him in a tea chest and throwing him overboard at the Boston Tea Party. That's all he believes in. Everything else that has happened to him is in memory of his mother, that's probably why he goes searching for a woman. He thinks he is saving his mother. But my interpretation is that he is gay and he falls in love with Brom. It is love at first sight and in the end he saves both of them. He is a good person but many people would say

he is bad. It's the whole question of 'what is good, what is bad?' He is a person reacting to things around him. He is happy for other people to have other beliefs and to accept them but not if they impinge on his own. Key to it is the relationship with the older woman, because he never had a mother. That's why she is the main part.

**How much is the play Mariette, the older woman's story?**

The trajectory of a story can be – this is the protagonist, this is the antagonist. But isn't there always a character who takes your heart more? Why not create somebody who we love more than the antagonist and the protagonist. Why not make this female dominant? That's the big subversion. This is a very patriarchal society in Sleepy Hollow but I wanted to write about women. I wanted to write about the sort of women who were trapped in this society and the suppression of women. Mariette is a very different woman. She has basically fought her town all of her life to be her own person. She has become very useful to Sleepy Hollow as she cares about the new comers. She is their tool, their weapon.

She has had enough of it. I saw this image of Joan Crawford when she played Johnny Guitar, standing there with the guns. I wanted to create a part for an older woman who is that version of the person. She is the lead role, along with Brom.

**The language that some of the characters use is unfamiliar to me. Are they words you created specifically for the residents of Sleepy Hollow, to create a sense of place?**





I don't think Irving's stories have been translated in the vernacular of the age. I went to the British Library and looked up Old English words. Ichabod never speaks them but the locals do. I wanted them to speak their own language with their own, horrible words. . I took a few words from my research that I peppered through and made up some of the words. It's about making it theatrical and authentic and reminding us that language changes. There is also a rhythm to the dialogue and it will help the actors learn the lines! It creates an energy. Communities speak in their own words and dialect. Ichabod picks it up gradually. It's great for the audience to connect with Ichabod, encountering these strange words with him.

**If you were going to summarise the key themes of the play, what would they be?**

They are layered, like an epidermis of themes. Humanity vs the unknown. The story is about somebody who goes on a journey. This is why Washington Irving got it so right. He sets out as one sort of person. Has a terrible experience and ends up as another person...if indeed he survives. So in my version he is a person who doesn't believe at all in the supernatural or anything that isn't driven by humans. By the end, he does believe in another world. Whether that makes him happy or not – he is probably dead by the end.

The audience go on a different journey. They will question what is going on around him. That why I think it will be thrilling for an audience. They will question – 'who is Mariette?' They have so many things to work out. They are presented with a fabulous Katrina Von Tassell who is earthy, not parasol twirling. It

is a who dunnit. It has different stories to tell. I think it will be a very thrilling experience. There is a fabulous effects person. There are going to be some very special, spooky moments.

**“Collaboration to me is the most important thing as a writer for me.”**

**How do you want the audience to feel and think when they leave the auditorium?**

I would like them to think that this production is a real part of the horror trope. As somebody who loves horror, I personally would like to think that I am contributing to the world of horror by creating a really scary story about the Sleepy Hollow headless horse- man. I want the audience to think 'I wouldn't have behaved like that' or 'I can see why they did that.' I think the whole nature of horror is to make you wonder how you would function in an impossible situation.

Putting the reader in the place of the protagonist is very Gothic fiction. In the play's case, you are putting the audience in the shoes of a very complicated character. Ichabod is born in a world that is destroying the beliefs it has. He is a totally modern human being. I think I've made him a bit of an action hero, a bit Machiavellian. I have made him the product of nuns and devil worshippers, but literally he is being told that the world is his own. I think it is a horror story for the amoral or unreligious.

**This story paved the way for Edgar Allan Poe...**

Yes! Along with King and Jackson. They all adored Irving. He wrote with a very journalistic tone. The narrative is not as we expect stories to be now. Stories were meant to scare children into behaving, they were told

**“I think horror is about society rather than horrible things”**

to tell us things. But something went wrong. They didn't have a beginning, middle and end. Irvine plugged a literary gap, because his narrative voice is so lively. As well as playing such a key part in Gothic fiction he influenced writers across the globe. Charles Dickens regularly claimed to have been influenced by him.

**Do you have any advice for students who are interested in a career in writing for the stage?**

My advice is, if you want to write, just start writing. You don't have to figure out if it is for the stage, or if it's for television. Just write your stories down. Get a notebook and pen and write down anything that you hear that interests you, even on the bus as soon as you hear it or you will forget it. Write down anything that interests you as this will be your awakening as a writer. You will start to mine conversations you have heard, for example your Grandma in the kitchen. The starting point for a writer is a love of language and a love of words. What are people saying, who to and why they saying it? Often the words they say are not what they mean. Start tuning in to the words people say and then you will begin to make sense out of them.

If you understand why people say what they say, you can write. Writing is about honesty

and understanding the basics of human nature. Your job as a writer is to tell the truth. That can be ugly and horrible, but unless you find the way people speak, you can't tell the story.

**“Writing is about honesty and your job as a writer is to tell the truth.”**



# Behind The Illusion

**Filipe J.Carvalho is the Illusions Director for our production of *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*. He has worked on shows such as *Back to the Future – The Musical*, *The Book of Dust* and *Secret Cinema: Stranger Things*. Here Filipe shares his exclusive insights into the world of theatre illusion, including a magic challenge!**

“Often the three questions I get asked the most are:

- How did you get into magic?
- What does an Illusions Director do?
- Can you teach me a trick?”

**HOW I GOT INTO MAGIC** My love for magic and illusions started when I was 5 years old. I went to a friend’s birthday party and his mum performed a few tricks for us from one of those magic sets you buy at a supermarket. I was mesmerised and could not believe what I had witnessed. I spent the whole party asking my friend’s mum to teach a trick, in the end she kindly taught me one and my mind was blown. I was amazed how by using a simple secret we were able to create a miracle. And that was it, I was hooked for life! From that moment I started to study magic and illusions by reading magic books, buying magic tricks from magic shops and when I was 13 joined the Portuguese Magic Association (API) where I met other fellow magicians. At 19, I moved to London to study Theatre Production. I fell in love with the people, the city and its opportunities, and after 14 years I still love it. I’m now a proud member of the prestigious Magic Circle.

**WHAT IS MY JOB** The role of an Illusions Director in the context of a theatre play is to create illusions or special effects which



enhance the narrative and create a wow or gasp moment. The process is always different for each project, but it usually starts by reading the script and meeting with the director and designer of the show to talk through their vision and share ideas of possible illusions. Sometimes the illusion is already written in the script, for example, the stage directions say “The ghost of Christmas Past disappears in a puff of smoke”, other times nothing is mentioned and is up to me to suggest to the director illusions or effects I think will enhance and move the narrative forward. These can range from subtle effects like a bottle falling from a table by itself rep-

resenting a paranormal force, to large scale illusions like making a car fly. Once we've decided what effects we want in the show I then go away and start the creative process of researching, developing and prototyping different ideas and methods to achieve the desired illusion. When the designs are finalised, if any special magic props need to be built I send the drawings to prop makers or set builders to be fabricated. The next phase is rehearsals, where I work with the director, choreographer, and the rest of the creative team, to teach the actors and backstage team how to do the magic effects. This is always a very satisfying process, as it's the first time we see the magic effects being done live by the actors. After rehearsals in the studio, we move to the theatre and do what we call technical rehearsal, this is where the final part of the puzzle comes in: Lights & Sound!



Lighting plays a fundamental role in theatre illusions, as a lot of the times we are creating optical illusions with the help of clever lighting design. Sound effects or music can be used to enhance the magic moment and make it even more dramatic. As almost any theatre discipline, Magic is a team effort and the excellent execution of one illusion usually requires the collaboration and talent of other departments like lighting, sound, costume, stage management, automation, video, etc. Magic is the discipline of combining Art & Science in a unique way to create a miracle.

### GET INVOLVED – LEARN A MAGIC TRICK

If someone asks me to teach them a magic trick my answer will always be yes. Because if my friend's mum hadn't taught me my first magic trick when I asked her, I probably wouldn't be talking to you about illusions today. So here's one of the first magic tricks I learned and it's still one of my favourites.

**THE CUT & RESTORED STRING EFFECT:**  
The magician shows a piece of string and a

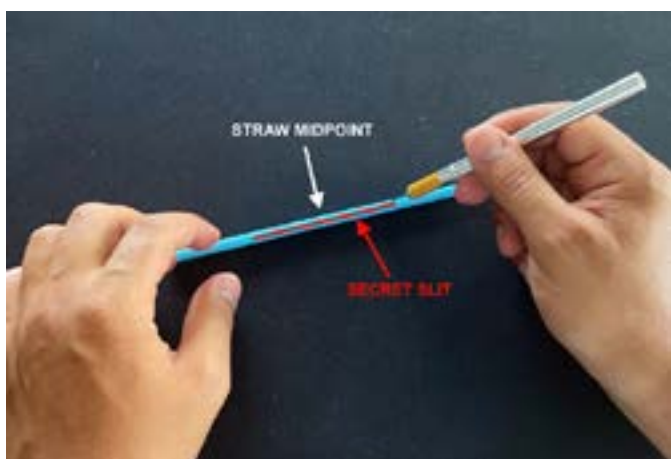
straw. They insert the string into the straw until we see each end of the string on either side. The magician bends the straw in half and cuts the strand and string in the middle. We see both halves of the straw are clearly separated. The magician makes the magic moves over the string, gives one blow, pulls one end of the string and magically the string is restored and in one piece.

**You will need:**

- 1x pair of scissors
- 1x straw, (preferably with long stripes, but it's not necessary. McDonalds straws are great for example)
- 1x piece of String (About 70cm long. You can use any type of string that can be cut with scissors. You can even use floss string.)
- 1x X-Acto Knife (ask for the help if you're not comfortable using an x-acto knife)



**SECRET PREPARATION** Before performing the trick you need to cut a secret slit in the middle of the straw using the X-Acto knife. See the photo below. Once you've done this you're ready to perform.



1. Show the string and straw. Face the secret slit in the straw towards you, so the audience can't see it.





## The Legend of Sleepy Hollow

2. Insert one end of the string into the straw and feed it until it comes out through the other end. Show the straw with the string going across it.



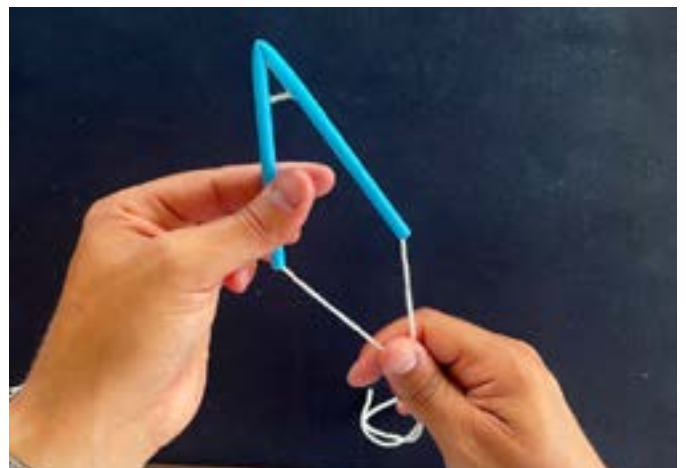
3. Bend the straw in half in the middle.



4. Important step: while grabbing the bent straw in your left hand, pull both ends of the string down with your right hand.



This will cause the middle of the string to slide down through the slit in the straw. The middle of the straw does not have any string going through it now.



5. Hide the exposed string with your index finger.



6. Hold the scissors in your right hand and carefully cut the middle of the straw avoiding the string which is further down and hidden by your fingers.



7. Show the two separate halves of the straw.



8. Now join the two straw halves, make a magic gesture of the string and give a magic blow.



9. Slowly pull one of the ends of the string and VOILA!?! The string is in one piece by Magic!



10. Receive your deserved applause and give the straw and string to the audience for examination.



### **REMEMBER: The Three Rules of Magic**

1. Never repeat a trick to the same person
2. Never tell the secret
3. Practise, practise, practise!

If you enjoyed learning this magic trick search “magic trick tutorial for beginners” on YouTube and you will find a lot of very cool tricks you can learn. HAVE FUN AND SPREAD THE MAGIC! -*FILIPPE J. CARVALHO*

### **VIDEO TUTORIAL**

You can also watch the video tutorial by going to the page below. The password is ICHABOD.

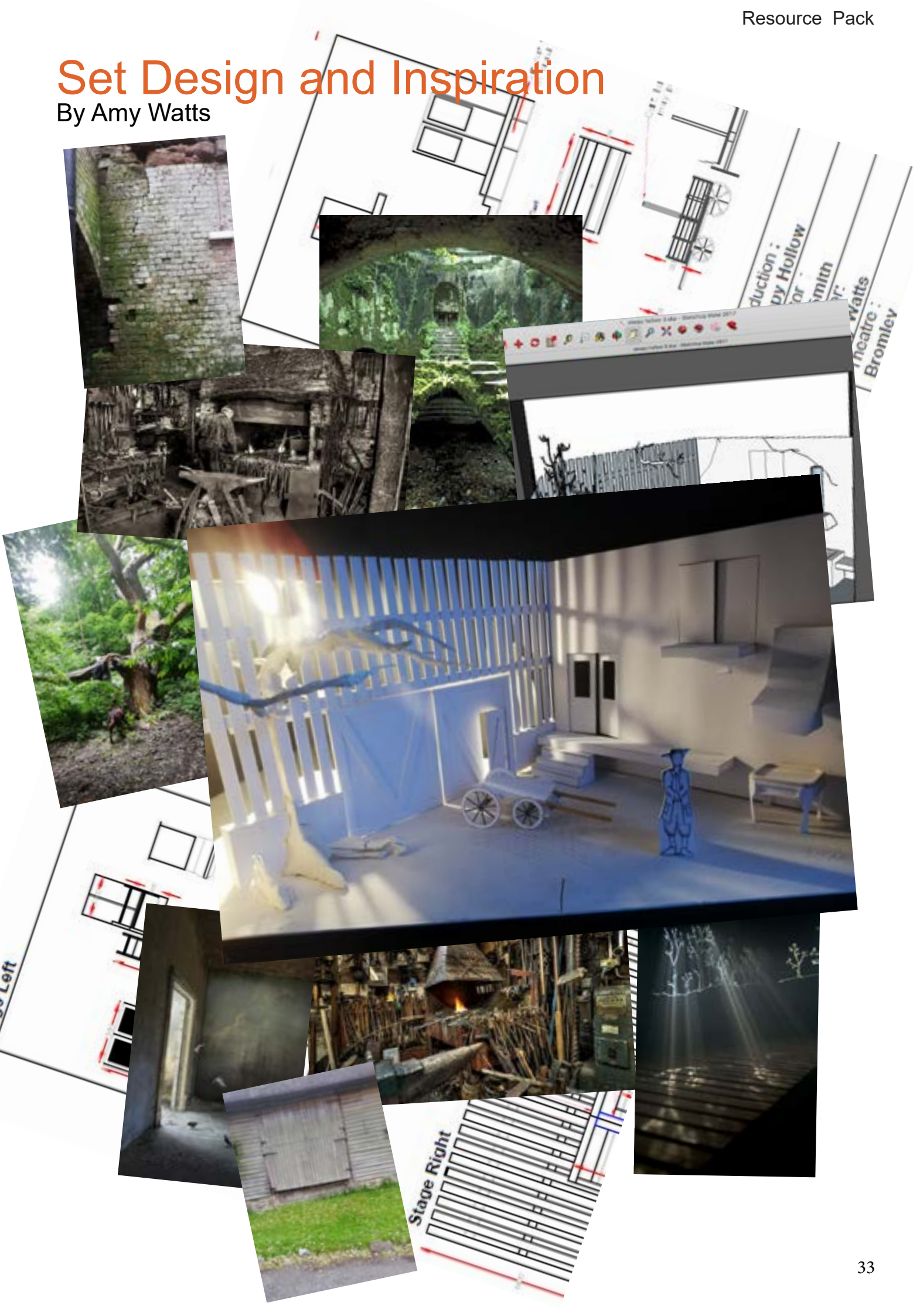
Link: [www.filipejcarvalho.com/sleepysecret](http://www.filipejcarvalho.com/sleepysecret)

Password: ICHABOD



# Set Design and Inspiration

By Amy Watts



# Get Involved!

Below are some suggested practical tasks and discussions you may want to set your students, once they have seen the production

## Get involved!

### DOUBLING UP

Most of the actors in our cast multi-role, playing more than one character. This requires skill to convince the audience they are playing a different person in the story and avoid confusion.

If you have already seen the play, pair up with a partner and select one of the actors in the company who performed multiple roles.

Reflect on how they achieved this and describe to your partner who they played and how they achieved the character transformation.

Think about any changes in •Voice (accent, pitch) •Physicality (posture, the way they moved, the dynamics of how they move, speed, energy) •Costume (is a more stylised, Brechtian approach being used? A change of hat or coat for a change of character?)

If you haven't seen the play yet, look out for how the actor approaches the change of characterisation.

## Get involved!

### CHARACTER DESCRIPTION TASK

Choose one character from this list and create your own character description. You should include the following • Age • Nickname/s • Character traits • Back story – how did they get to where we see them in the production?

Read them out to the rest of the group without saying the name of the character you have chosen and the group should try and guess what character you have chosen to describe from THE LEGEND OF SLEEPY HOLLOW .

## Get involved! Discussion

### Superstition

Superstition and ritual play a big part in the community of Sleepy Hollow. In our production, Ichabod Crane, the 'new American', shuns these traditions, preferring to believe in scientific fact and reason.

In the world of our play, do you think Ichabod would have been protected from the Headless Horseman if he had kept wearing the talisman? Why did Mariette give it to him?

Are there any superstitions that your family believe in? What are the rituals involved? Eg saluting a magpie, avoiding walking under ladders. Share these with a partner. Where do you think these superstitions originated from? Could there have been an ulterior motive for the person/people who created them?



## Get involved! Practical

### Devising The Headless Horseman's story

*The dominant spirit, however, that haunts this enchanted region, and seems to be commander-in chief of all the powers of the air, is the apparition of a figure on horseback, without a head. It is said by some to be the ghost of a Hessian trooper, whose head had been carried away by a cannon-ball, in some nameless battle during the Revolutionary War, and who is ever and anon seen by the country folk hurrying along in the gloom of night, as if on the wings of wind. Washington Irving, The Legend of Sleepy Hollow.*

In Washington Irving's short story, the headless horseman was a soldier, a casualty of the American Revolutionary war. In our version by Philip Meeks, he is Roricus Maze, a German mercenary who met a grizzly fate at the hands of the villager, in an act of revenge.

But who else could The Headless Horseman have been? Create your own version of the legend.

1. Jot down your ideas for the following;

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Age \_\_\_\_\_

Do they have a family? \_\_\_\_\_

Why are they in Sleepy Hollow? \_\_\_\_\_

What is their secret? \_\_\_\_\_

How did they lose their head? \_\_\_\_\_

What is their purpose for haunting the village? \_\_\_\_\_

What would their 'catch phrase' be? \_\_\_\_\_

What would bring them peace? \_\_\_\_\_

2. In small groups of 4 or 5, share the back stories you have created. Then vote on bringing one or two to life for the stage. Devise an ensemble storytelling of your chosen Headless Horseman stories, beginning around a fire at Hallowmas, like the resident's of Sleepy Hollow. Try to be as physical and inventive with your bodies and use of space as you can. How will you create a sinister atmosphere and terrify your audience?

If you select more than one version of the story, think creatively how you transition from one story to the next. Did you spot any techniques in our production that might help? Rehearse as much as possible and make sure each ensemble member has a role.

3. Share your scenes with the rest of your class. Remember to provide feedback when watching other groups scene on what you found effective or suggestions on how they could stage expand on their scene. Feedback and collaboration is such an important part of professional theatre making.

## Get involved! Practical

### Gothic Fiction – write your own short story

*Certain it is, the place still continues under the sway of some witching power, that holds a spell over the minds of the good people, causing them to walk in a continual reverie. They are given to all kinds of marvellous beliefs, are subject to trances and visions, and frequently see strange sights and hear music and voices in the air. The whole neighbourhood abounds with local tales, haunted spots and twilight superstitions....* Washington Irving *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*.

Folk legends and ghost stories are an important part of the culture in the village of Sleepy Hollow. We challenge you to delve into your imagination and write your own gothic story, inspired by your local community.

**-Inspiration** Think of a past event in your town, or a local historical figure, urban legend, haunted building or local ghost story to inspire your story.

**-Character** - Decide who your main protagonist will be (they don't have to be human!) Think of a name. Age. Do they have a job? What is their greatest fear and biggest hope? Really get under the skin to decide how they tick. What is their morning routine? Do they have any friends? What is their favourite song? Least favourite ice cream flavour? Characters with flaws and contradictions are appealing to a reader as they are relatable and memorable. For example, a penguin who hates being cold or a doctor who is scared of needles!

**-Strong openings & creating atmosphere** - A strong opening is important to grab the attention of the reader. As with the opening of our play, try use the senses to describe your setting, so the reader can understand where action is taking place and also become engulfed by the sights, smells and noises. What is the temperature like? What does the air taste like. Use the senses to make the reader feel uneasy..or lull them into a false sense of security!

Also think about where in the plot your story is starting. It doesn't have to be chronological, it could be right in the middle of a haunting, and your story could then go on to explain the events that lead up to the haunting. Wherever you start it, your reader needs to be lured in to the mystery of your story immediately to want to read on and find out what happens next.

**-Narrative voice** - experiment with different narrative voices and different points of view. Washington Irving used third person narrator in *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*, retelling a story he heard. This creates a distance between the reader and the text, allowing them to reflect on what they are reading and draw their own conclusions. Many classic Gothic novels use the first person narrator to draw the reader in. Epistolary narration is a popular technique used in *Dracula* and *Frankenstein*. This is where a variety of first person accounts are provided in letters, diary entries and other written forms, such as fictional newspaper articles. Experiment and find the style that feels right for your story.

*Wuthering Heights* uses a dual narrative, from the points of view of two characters. Try writing from the point of view of your main protagonist, then try writing about the same events from the point of view of a bystander, a tree, snail or even inanimate object, such as a lamppost! How does this change things? Does the original account still seem reliable? What is the effect on the reader?

**-Editing** - As our playwright Philip Meeks advised, it helps to hear your writing spoken aloud in the drafting process. Practice reading your story out loud or record yourself speaking it and listen back. Are you running out of breath with one of the sentences? Perhaps you could remove some of the words. Are any of your sentences clunky and difficult to say? Did you lose focus or interest? Be ruthless, keep things short and be sparing with your adjectives to give the story real impact when you do use them. Underline the lines that you really like to make sure you keep them.

**-Share your story** - When you are happy with your final story, be brave and let others read it!

# References and useful links for further research

## Washington Irving

[Washington Irving | Biography, Books, Sleepy Hollow, Short Stories, & Facts | Britannica](#)

[Washington Irving | Writer | Blue Plaques | English Heritage \(english-heritage.org.uk\)](#)

[Washington Irving \(Author of The Legend of Sleepy Hollow and Other Stories\) \(goodreads.com\)](#)

[Washington Irving \(americanliterature.com\)](#)

[Nine Interesting Facts about Washington Irving – Interesting Literature](#)

## Gothic Fiction

[Gothic literature - Year 9 - S3 - English Collection - Home Learning with BBC Bitesize - BBC Bitesize](#)

[The Gothic - The British Library \(bl.uk\)](#)

[Gothic Literature Study Guide \(americanliterature.com\)](#)

## American History

[American History - Take a Journey through American History from the Early Native Americans \(american-history.net\)](#)

[7 Surprising Facts About the Boston Tea Party - HISTORY](#)

[BBC News - United States of America timeline](#)

[History of the Village | Sleepy Hollow NY](#)

[Dutch New York: The Dutch settlements in North America - Colonial Voyage](#)

## Horror on the Stage

[Theatre can outdo cinema for horror – so where are all the scary plays? | Theatre | The Guardian](#)

## The Headless Horseman

[Head of the Headless Horseman Symbol in The Legend of Sleepy Hollow | LitCharts](#)