

## BACKGROUND

### SHADOW PUPPETS

Shadow puppet plays go back a long, long way. Nobody really knows where or when it began. But, there is a legend that it started in China. In ancient times, the favorite wife of the Chinese Emperor Wudi (156-87 B.C.) died, and he was heartbroken. He lost interest in everything and stopped performing his duties as Emperor. His court and councilors became very worried about him, because they couldn't get him to respond to anything. There was a great artist in the court who had an idea. He created a shadow figure of the Emperor's wife, Lady Li that looked just like her. He then put up a silk screen and lit it from behind. Then, he put the moveable figure of Lady Li behind the screen and imitated the way she moved. He even disguised his voice so it sounded like her. The grief stricken Emperor was immediately pleased by the work of the great artist, and returned to his work. This was the birth of shadow puppets, and Chinese shadow-theater.

In India, shadow puppets were made from animal hides and were richly decorated and painted. They are used in performances that have a religious character and are called *Wayang Purwa*. *Wayang* means shadow or ghost. In Java this form of puppetry is called "Wayang kulit." Shadow puppetry is one of the oldest forms of story telling. Shadow Puppet Theater was also performed as early as the 1700's in Persia, Turkey, Greece and Egypt.

### Shadow Puppets in the West

In Europe, all the knowledge about shadow puppets came from China, but European Shadow Theater has a style that is different from Eastern shadow puppetry. European shadow puppets are designed to hide the puppet rods that are used to move the puppets, so the audience never sees them. "Silhouettes," which is the style of puppets used in this performance of the *Legend of Sleepy Hollow*, was invented in France around 1759. At that time, a man by the name of Etienne de Silhouette was the Controller General of

Finance in Paris—he was in charge of the government’s money. Because France had money troubles at that time, the Marquis made severe rules to limit spending. The angry French public began to call everything that was cheap, stingy, and mean a “silhouette.” It just so happens that, at that time, it was fashionable to have portraits made of flat, black scissor-cuts in the outline of a person’s face. These were easier and *cheaper* to make than painted portraits. They were very popular and, because of their cheapness, became known as “silhouettes.” The artist very carefully made them so that they really looked like the person that was posing for them. Shadow puppets made as silhouettes can be black, white, or in color, or can be transparent, so light passes through them, but they are always two-dimensional.

## **THE LEGEND OF SLEEPY HOLLOW**

Washington Irving’s *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* was the first American work of fiction that achieved acclaim in Europe. Set in New York State’s Hudson Valley 20 years after the Revolutionary War, *Sleepy Hollow* depicts the peaceful, rural life of the early Dutch settlers in that area. But, it is much more than that. *Sleepy Hollow* is at once a comedy and also a dark tale of what happens when obsessive greed and fear rules someone’s life as they do to the hapless “itinerant pedagogue,” Ichabod Crane.

Sleepy Hollow is situated right on the Hudson River about 20 miles north of the center of New York City. In 1609, at the time that Henry Hudson traveled up the river named for him, the village of Sleepy Hollow was part of the land that belonged to the Weckquaesgeck Indians. The Pocantico River runs through the area, and it was referred to as “Slapershaven” in a book published by a Dutch settler in 1655. Translated, this means Sleeper’s Haven. After a time, the English version eventually became “Sleepy Hollow.”

In 1664, a Dutch settler by the name of Frederick Philipse, with the permission of the English governors, purchased large sections of land from the Native American tribes who lived along the Hudson River, including the section that contained Sleepy Hollow. His purchase was named the Manor of Philipsburg in 1693 through a charter with the English government, which had control of New York at that time. Since he had a mill, manor house and church, Philipse leased his land to tenant farmers who agreed to settle

there. Philipse kept a large section of land for himself on the Pocantico River that included the mill and Sleepy Hollow.

At the beginning of the 18th Century, Sleepy Hollow became an important place for local farmers. They came to church for weddings, baptisms, and Sunday services, and to the mill at harvest. By the time the American Revolution occurred, three generations of families had lived at Philipsburg, primarily Dutch-American settlers. But, there were also French Huguenot, Swiss, and German settlers, as well as African American slaves and Native-Americans. So, Sleepy Hollow and nearby Tarrytown had a very diverse population. After the Revolution, Philipse and his family went to England, and the tenant farmers were able to buy their farms. When Washington Irving visited friends in the area, he met many of the people, and learned about the land through exploring, fishing and hunting. What he learned about local customs and the territory became part of *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*.

## **LEARNING ACTIVITIES**

Note: If you have any suggestions or comments on additions, deletions or improvements to these lesson plans, please email them to us: [vtpuppet@starband.net](mailto:vtpuppet@starband.net) and we will incorporate them into the text giving credit to you.

### **BEFORE THE PERFORMANCE**

Find a book of the story and do a read-aloud. Picture books are fine, but be aware that they are mostly abridged. For the unabridged story go to:

[http://www.pagebypagebooks.com/Washington\\_Irving/The\\_Legend\\_of\\_Sleepy\\_Hollow/The\\_Legend\\_Of\\_Sleepy\\_Hollow\\_p1.html](http://www.pagebypagebooks.com/Washington_Irving/The_Legend_of_Sleepy_Hollow/The_Legend_Of_Sleepy_Hollow_p1.html)

### **AFTER THE PERFORMANCE**

Have students write a written response to the performance and the story. Compare the written story to the play. Have them do an essay on similarities and differences

## VOCABULARY FOR SLEEPY HOLLOW

This is a large vocabulary list. You can:

- 1 Break the class into several groups and assign part of the list to each group, or
2. After reading the story yourself, select 10 words that you think would be most appropriate for your classes to learn.

Abode	Fable	Pensive
Abound	Garnished	Peril
Affections	Gazette	Perplexity
Ample	Glen	Personage
Animated	Hues	Perverse
Appalled	Indent	Propensity
Apparition	Invaluable	Revel
Awe	Knight-errant	Rival
Beheld	Legendary	Rural
Bookworm	Linger	Scathed
Cavalier	Loiterer	Sequester
Cavernous	Lore	Snipe
Chastisement	Lull	Specter
Cove	Menace	Summit
Credulity	Morsel	Superstition
Dismembered	Murmur	Tranquility
Dominant	Noble	Translucent
Effects	Opaque	Transparent
Enchanted	Pedagogue	Urchin
Enraptured	Repose	Vicinity
		Yore
		Zeal

## LANGUAGE ARTS/READING/ENGLISH

For a biography of Washington Irving and related lesson plans for grades K-2, and 3-8), go to:

[http://www.hudsonvalley.org/education/Background/abt\\_irving/abt\\_irving.html](http://www.hudsonvalley.org/education/Background/abt_irving/abt_irving.html) Ask the students if they have any previous familiarity with Washington Irving's writing, either the *Legend of Sleepy Hollow*, or *Rip Van Winkle*. Have them read background material so that they know something about the history of the Sleepy Hollow area. Test their reading comprehension by having them summarize the background material.

## **CREATIVE WRITING**

Washington Irving's tale of the Headless Horseman has become a Halloween classic, although few Americans celebrated that holiday when the story was new. Have the students explore the artistry that helped make Irving our nation's first literary master and ponder the mystery that now haunts every Halloween—What happened to Ichabod Crane?

Look for places in the text where Ichabod felt secure, happy, self-confident and then compare to the places in the text where he felt fear, anger, jealousy, etc.

### **Washington Irving**

Visit the following website for a biography of Washington Irving and related lesson plans:

[http://www.hudsonvalley.org/education/Background/abt\\_irving/abt\\_irving.html](http://www.hudsonvalley.org/education/Background/abt_irving/abt_irving.html)

## **GEOGRAPHY**

Have the students look at maps of New York's Hudson Valley to locate Sleepy Hollow.

Have them research the history of the areas—the geography and environment, the people, customs and traditions, especially their folklore that gave rise to ghost stories or tales of the supernatural.

### **History**

Have the students do a timeline of other activities that were occurring during that period (early 1800-1820) in the U.S.

## SCIENCE

### SHADOWS, TRANSPARENT, TRANSLUCENT AND OPAQUE OBJECTS

**OBJECTIVE:** To learn how transparent, translucent and opaque materials affect the formation of shadows, using shadow puppets.

#### DEFINITIONS:

**Transparent:** Easily seen through, allowing a view of objects on the other side, e.g., like looking through a window, spectacles, or sunglasses

**Translucent:** Allowing light to pass through, but blocking a view of the objects on the other side.

**Opaque:** Not allowing light to pass through.

**Shadow:** A dark figure or image cast on a surface by an object that is placed between the light source and the surface

#### ACTIVITIES:

1. Have students suggest objects that they think are transparent, translucent, or opaque, and why. Write each suggestion under its appropriate heading on the board.
2. Find objects in the classroom that fit each category.
3. Have students bring in to class one example each of a transparent, translucent, and opaque object. Ask them to explain why they put each object into one of the three categories.
4. Have students describe shadows that they are familiar with, including their own. List these on the board.

#### CREATING SHADOWS USING “PUPPETS” AND A SHADOW SCREEN

There are 3 elements to the shadow puppet theatre:

1. A screen made of translucent material stretched on a frame
2. A light behind the screen surrounded by darkness
3. Something held and moved between the light and the screen, casting a shadow

## **The Screen**

The Screen could be white paper on a window, stretched on an old picture frame, or even better, on a painter's stretcher for canvas. Sheeting, muslin, or any interesting fabric will wear longer and have it's own texture.

## **The Light**

Light, such as from a desk lamp, should fall evenly over the entire screen. Here's another idea, if the lights are off in your classroom, and the windows are covered with translucent paper, you should be able to have a shadow puppet show by placing the puppeteers on the other side of the windows. The possibilities are everywhere, a closet or even a cardboard box. Slide projectors and overhead projects produce excellent shadow puppet light, too.

## **Casting Shadows on a Screen**

ANYTHING can be held between the light and the screen to create a shadow! Start with one each of the opaque, translucent, and transparent objects brought in from home or found in the classroom.

Have the students describe the qualities of the shadows cast by each object—size shape, color. Can they see light through the objects? Have the students in the “audience” guess what the object is. Which view gave the best definition of the object? Can they see details, such as writing in the shadow?

Have the students describe what happens to these objects when they are placed at different angles to the light and the screen. Do they get longer, shorter, larger or smaller? Do they change shape? What happens as the objects move closer to and further from the screen?

## **Creating a Simple Shadow Puppet**

Start with a 3”x 3” square of black construction paper. Push a thumbtack through the middle of the square and into the end of a 12-inch dowel, so that the square is perpendicular to the card. Now put “the puppet” on the screen. Note how the shape remains constant if held flat against the screen, but pull the square away from the screen and it disappears. Turn the dowel at different angles to the screen, and you will see many shapes. Describe them.

Now, alter the square by piercing it with holes, or cut out shapes (like eyes, or a mouth). You have broken the solid black square, allowing light to flood through to the screen. A lot of character can be expressed by light passing through the shape of the figure. (A good example from our production is

Gunpowder, his ribs were showing so we knew he was not a young, healthy horse, or the transparent Native American Mother spirit in the moon.)

Finally, have the students build their own figures from opaque, translucent, and transparent materials, attach them to rods, and move them on a screen to a favorite piece of music. Have them create a shadow play using all three types of materials to get different effects.

### **Assessing Student Comprehension**

1. Have students describe what happens to the shadow when the light is blocked with a material that is:  
opaque  
translucent  
transparent
2. Describe what happens when the material is rotated or twisted on the rod
3. What happens when the object moves closer or further away from the shadow screen?
4. How were these different affects used to create the different moods of the scenes and characteristics of the puppet's personality (character)—e.g. fear, anger, urgency, greed, happiness, joy, disappointment, etc?
5. Describe your favorite use of transparent, translucent, and opaque affects in PuppeTree's Shadow Puppet production of *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*.

For a more comprehensive lesson plan on the science of light and shadow, please see the following website:

[http://www.cedu.niu.edu/scied/student/lessonplans/team\\_2/spring\\_99/hahn\\_spring.htm](http://www.cedu.niu.edu/scied/student/lessonplans/team_2/spring_99/hahn_spring.htm)

### **Other Resources**

Use the Following Lesson Plan from the National Endowment for the Humanities:

[http://edsitement.neh.gov/printable\\_lesson\\_plan.asp?id=256](http://edsitement.neh.gov/printable_lesson_plan.asp?id=256)



Download and duplicate any online materials you will need. If desired, you can bookmark specific web pages so that students can access relevant online materials directly. (See Selected EDSITEment Links for a guide to locating online materials.)

The PuppeTree thanks Martin Tewksbury, Joel and Ann Legunn for writing this lesson plan, and Stacy Glazer for web design and support. We welcome your comments and ideas by email [vtpuppet@starband.net](mailto:vtpuppet@starband.net).