

Katie Walkiewicz  
English Instructor-UNM  
Office-Humanities #250  
kawalk@unm.edu

## **Exercise in Critical Reading and Synthesis**

The Adventures of Ichabod and Mr. Toad (1949)  
Sleepy Hollow (1999)

While both movies retell Washington Irving's "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" they approach the short story in very different ways. As we watch clips from both movies—(1) when Ichabod reaches Sleepy Hollow, (2) when he hears the story of the horseman, and (3) when he is chased by the horseman—I want you to compare/contrast the interpretations each story takes.

**→As we watch the clips, please take notes on the following:**

1. How would you describe the visual style of the movie—the colors, the sounds and music, the overall feel of the images, etc.?
2. What is the overall plot?
3. Who is the audience?
4. How are Ichabod and the Horseman presented?
5. What images stick out or are the most memorable?
6. What tools and techniques does the movie use to scare its audience?

**→After watching the movies, I want you to think about the following?**

1. How does audience influence each movie?
2. What differences do we see in the two plots? Why might they be different?
3. How are the visual styles different?
4. What do the movies have in common?
5. How might audience and the years the movies were made in influence their interpretation of the story?
6. Which movie did you like the best?

## Writing Prompt

For this assignment we are going to write an “Exploratory Essay.” Exploratory writing is usually used to help the writer decide what he or she feels about an issue, rather than assert an argument or interpretation the reader had previously come up with. Exploratory writing is often a nice way to think about the different interpretations of a topic, and is often a nice way to work through complicated issues, such as school violence, reproductive rights, politics, etc. We are going to use exploratory writing, however, for a slightly different reason. Because there are so many elements to a movie, exploratory writing can help us process many of the components each movie uses without feeling overwhelmed.

Here is the structure I would like you to follow for your essay:

1. Look at the assignment as a genuine problem worth puzzling over. For this assignment, this means thinking about why the directors of the two movies provide to very different interpretations of the same story. This should take at least a paragraph.
2. Look at specifics from each movie: the plot, the characters, the setting, the dialogue or music, the audience. This should take three or four paragraphs.
3. Think about how these specifics compare. This should take two or three paragraphs, or be included in your #2 paragraphs.
4. Come up with a thesis that explains why the movies are so different, using the plot, setting, dialogue, etc. that you have outlined to support your thesis. This should take about a paragraph or two.

One thing that is really nice about exploratory writing is that you can be a bit more informal. What it means is that you can talk about how you interpreted different aspects of each movie, as well as your likes and dislikes, so really feel free to express your own opinions about the two or to “write as you think.”