

Abraham “Bram” Stoker



He was born in 1847 in Fairview, Ireland. His parents were Abraham Stoker (1799-1876) and the feminist Charlotte Mathilda Blake Thornely (1818-1901).

Stoker was the third of seven children. Abraham and Charlotte were members of the Clontarf Church of Ireland parish and attended the parish church (St. John the Baptist located on Seafield Road West) with their children, who were both baptised there.

Early life

Stoker was bed-ridden until he started school at the age of seven, when he made a complete recovery. Of this time, Stoker wrote, "I was naturally thoughtful, and the leisure of long illness gave opportunity for many thoughts which were fruitful according to their kind in later years."

After his recovery, he became a normal young man, even excelling as an athlete (he was named University Athlete) at Trinity College, Dublin, which he attended from 1864 to 1870. He graduated with honours in mathematics. He was auditor of the College Historical Society and president of the University Philosophical Society, where his first paper was on "Sensationalism in Fiction and Society".

Early career

In 1876, while employed as a civil servant in Dublin, Stoker wrote a non-fiction book (*The Duties of Clerks of Petty Sessions in Ireland*, published 1879) and became the theatre critic for the newspaper *Dublin Evening Mail*. In December 1876, he gave a favourable review of the actor Henry Irving's performance as **HAMLET** at the Theatre Royal in Dublin. After that they became friends. He also wrote stories, and in 1872 "The Crystal Cup" was published by the London Society, followed by "The Chain of Destiny" in four parts in *The Shamrock*.



Bram Stoker's former home,
Kildare Street, Dublin, Ireland.

Lyceum Theatre and later career

In 1878 Stoker married Florence Balcombe, a celebrated beauty whose former suitor was Oscar Wilde. The couple moved to London, where Stoker became acting-manager and then business manager of Irving's Lyceum Theatre, a post he held for 27 years. On 31 December 1879, Bram and Florence's only child was born, a son that they christened Irving Noel Thornley Stoker. The collaboration with Irving was very important for Stoker and through him he became involved in London's high society, where he met, among other notables, James McNeil Whistler and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (to whom he was distantly related). In the course of Irving's tours, Stoker got the chance to travel around the world. In the mid 1890s, Stoker is rumoured to have become a member of the **Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn**, though there is no concrete evidence to support this claim. One of Stoker's closest friends was J.W. Brodie-Innis, a major figure in the Order, and Stoker himself hired Pamela Coleman Smith, as an artist at the Lyceum Theater.

Stoker supplemented his income by writing novels; the best known being the vampire tale *Dracula*, which was published in 1897. Before writing *Dracula*, Stoker spent eight years researching European folklore and stories of vampires. *Dracula* is an epistolary novel, written as collection of diary entries, telegrams, and letters from the characters, as well as fictional clippings from the Whitby and London newspapers. Stoker's inspirations for the story were a visit to Slains Castle in Aberdeenshire, and a visit to the crypts under the church St. John the Baptist where Stoker was baptised.

Death

Bram Stoker died in 1912, and was cremated and his ashes placed in a display urn at Golders Green Crematorium. After Irving Noel Stoker's death in 1961, his ashes were added to that urn. The original plan had been to keep his parents' ashes together, but after Florence Stoker's death her ashes were scattered at the Gardens of Rest.

Posthumous

The short story collection Dracula's Guest and other Weird Stories was published in 1914 by Stoker's widow Florence Stoker. The first film adaptation of *Dracula* was named ***NOSFERATU***. *Nosferatu* was produced while Florence Stoker, Bram Stoker's widow and literary executrix, was still alive. Represented by the attorneys of the British Incorporated Society of Authors, she eventually sued the filmmakers. Her chief legal complaint was that she had been neither asked for permission for the adaptation nor paid any royalty. The case dragged on for some years, with Mrs. Stoker demanding the destruction of the negative and all prints of the film. The suit was finally resolved in the widow's favour in July 1925. Some copies of the film survived, however and the film has become well known.

Bibliography



Bram Stoker Commemorative Plaque,
WHITBY, England (2002)

Novels

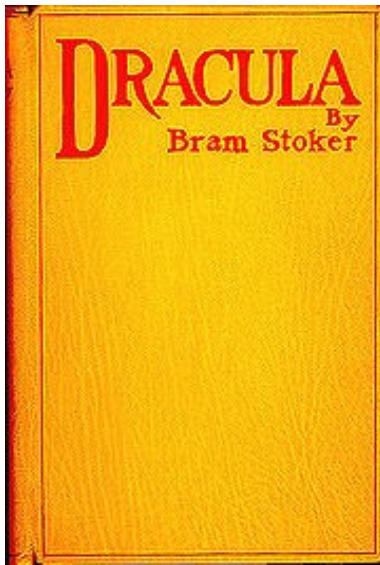
- *The Primrose Path* (1875)
- *The Snake's Pass* (1890)
- *The Watter's Mou'* (1895)
- *The Shoulder of Shasta* (1895)
- *Dracula* (1897)[1]
- *Miss Betty* (1898)
- *The Mystery of the Sea* (1902)
- *The Jewel of Seven Stars* (1903)
- *The Man* (aka: *The Gates of Life*) (1905)
- *Lady Athlyne* (1908)
- *The Lady of the Shroud* (1909)
- *The Lair of the White Worm* (1911)

Short story collections

- *Under the Sunset* (1881), comprising eight *fairy tales* for children
- *Snowbound: The Record of a Theatrical Touring Party* (1908)
- *Dracula's Guest and Other Weird Stories* (1914), published posthumously by Florence Stoker

Dracula, 1897

Dracula has been attributed to many literary genres including vampire literature, horror fiction, the gothic novel and invasion literature. Structurally it is an epistolary novel, that is, told as a series of diary entries and letters. Literary critics have examined many themes in the novel, such as the role of women in Victorian culture, conventional and conservative sexuality, immigration, colonialism, postcolonialism and folklore. Although Stoker did not invent the vampire, the novel's influence on the popularity of vampires has been singularly responsible for many theatrical and film interpretations throughout the 20th and 21st centuries.



The first edition cover of ***Dracula***

Plot summary

The novel is mainly composed of journal entries and letters written by several narrators who also serve as the novel's main protagonists; Stoker supplemented the story with occasional newspaper clippings to relate events not directly witnessed by the story's characters. The tale begins with Jonathan Harker, a newly qualified English solicitor, journeying by train and carriage from England to Count Dracula's crumbling, remote castle (situated in the Carpathian Mountains on the border of Transylvania and Moldavia). The purpose of his mission is to provide legal support to Dracula for a real estate transaction overseen by Harker's employer, Peter Hawkins, of Exeter in England. At first seduced by Dracula's gracious manner, Harker soon discovers that he has become a prisoner in the castle. He also begins to see disquieting facets of Dracula's nocturnal life. One night while searching for a way out of the castle, and against Dracula's strict admonition not to venture outside his room at night, Harker falls under the spell of three wanton female vampires, the Brides of Dracula. He is saved at the last second by the Count, however, who ostensibly wants to keep Harker alive just long enough because his legal advice and teachings about England and London (Dracula's planned travel destination was to be among the "teeming millions") are needed by Dracula. Harker barely escapes from the castle with his life.

Not long afterward, a Russian ship, the *Demeter*, having weighed anchor at Varna, runs aground on the shores of Whitby, England, during a fierce tempest. All of the crew are missing and presumed dead, and only one body is found, that of the captain tied to the ship's helm. The captain's log is recovered and tells of strange events that had taken place during the ship's journey. These events led to the gradual disappearance of the entire crew apparently owing to a malevolent presence on board the ill-fated ship. An animal described as a large dog is seen on the ship leaping ashore. The ship's cargo is described as silver sand and boxes of "mould" or earth from Transylvania.

Soon Dracula is menacing Harker's devoted fiancée, Wilhelmina "Mina" Murray, and her vivacious friend, Lucy Westenra. Lucy receives three marriage proposals in one day, from an asylum psychiatrist, Dr. John Seward; an American, Quincey Morris; and the Hon. Arthur Holmwood (later Lord Godalming). Lucy accepts Holmwood's proposal while turning down Seward and Morris, but all remain friends. There is a notable encounter between Dracula and Seward's patient Renfield, an insane man who means to consume insects, spiders, birds, and other creatures — in ascending order of size — in order to absorb their "life force". Renfield acts as a kind of motion sensor, detecting Dracula's proximity and supplying clues accordingly.

Lucy begins to waste away suspiciously. All her suitors fret, and Seward calls in his old teacher, Professor Abraham Van Helsing from Amsterdam. Van Helsing immediately determines the cause of Lucy's condition but refuses to disclose it, knowing that Seward's faith in him will be shaken if he starts to speak of vampires. Van Helsing tries multiple blood transfusions, but they are clearly losing ground. On a night when Van Helsing must return to Amsterdam (and his message to Seward asking him to watch the Westenra household is accidentally sent to the wrong address), Lucy and her mother are attacked by a wolf. Mrs Westenra, who has a heart condition, dies of fright, and Lucy apparently dies soon after.

Lucy is buried, but soon afterward the newspapers report children being stalked in the night by a "bloofer lady" (as they describe it), i.e. "beautiful lady". Van Helsing, knowing that this means Lucy has become a vampire, confides in Seward, Lord Godalming and Morris. The suitors and Van Helsing track her down, and after a disturbing confrontation between her vampiric self and Arthur, they stake her heart, behead her, and fill the mouth with garlic.

Around the same time, Jonathan Harker arrives home from recuperation in Budapest (where Mina joined and married him after his escape from the castle); he and Mina also join the coalition, who turn their attentions to dealing with Dracula.

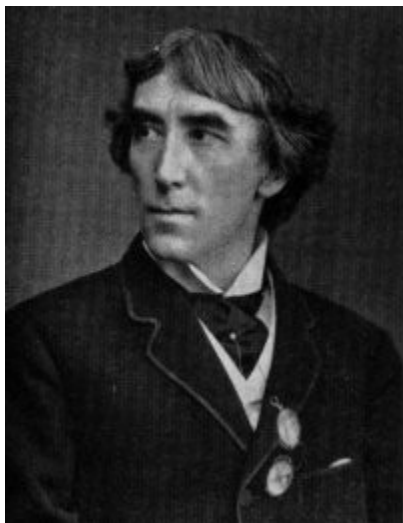
After Dracula learns of Van Helsing and the others' plot against him, he takes revenge by visiting — and biting — Mina at least three times. Dracula also feeds Mina his blood, creating a spiritual bond between them to control her. The only way to forestall this is to kill Dracula first. Mina slowly succumbs to the blood of the vampire that flows through her veins, switching back and forth from a state of consciousness to a state of semi-trance during which she is telepathically connected with Dracula. It is this connection that they start to use to deduce Dracula's movements. It is only possible to detect Dracula's surroundings when Mina is put under hypnosis by Van Helsing. This ability gradually gets weaker as the group makes their way to Dracula's castle.

Dracula flees back to his castle in Transylvania, followed by Van Helsing's group, who manage to track him down just before sundown and destroy him by shearing "through the throat" and stabbing him in the heart with a Bowie knife. Dracula crumbles to dust, his spell is lifted and Mina is freed from the marks. Quincey Morris is killed in the final battle, stabbed by Gypsies who had been charged with returning Dracula to his castle; the survivors return to England.

The book closes with a note about Mina's and Jonathan's married life and the birth of their first-born son, whom they name Quincey in remembrance of their American friend.

Background

Between 1879 and 1898 Stoker was business manager for the world-famous Lyceum Theatre in London, where he supplemented his income by writing a large number of sensational novels, his most famous being the vampire tale *Dracula* published on May 18, 1897. Parts of it are set around the town of Whitby, where he was living at the time. Throughout the 1880s and 1890s, authors such as H. Rider Haggard, Rudyard Kipling, Robert Louis Stevenson, Arthur Conan Doyle, and H.G. Wells wrote many tales in which fantastic creatures threatened the British Empire. **Invasion literature** was at a peak, and Stoker's formula of an invasion of England by continental European influences was by 1897 very familiar to readers of fantastic adventure stories. Victorian readers enjoyed it as a good adventure story like many others, but it would not reach its iconic legendary status until later in the 20th century when film versions began to appear.



Shakespearean actor and friend of Stoker's, [Sir Henry Irving](#) was a real-life inspiration for the character of Dracula, tailor-made to his dramatic presence, gentlemanly mannerisms and affinity for playing villain roles. Irving, however, never agreed to play the part on stage.

Before writing *Dracula*, Stoker spent seven years researching European folklore and stories of vampires, being most influenced by Emily Gerard's 1885 essay "Transylvania Superstitions", and an evening spent talking about Balkan superstitions with Arminius Vambery.

Though the most famous vampire novel ever, *Dracula* was not the first. It was preceded and partly inspired by Sheridan Le Fanu's "Carmilla", 1871, about a lesbian vampire who preys on a lonely young woman. The image of a vampire portrayed as an aristocratic man, like the character of Dracula, was created by John Polidori in "The Vampyre" (1819), during the summer spent with Frankenstein creator Mary Shelley and other friends in 1816. The Lyceum Theatre, where Stoker worked between 1878 and 1898, was headed by the tyrannical actor-manager Henry Irving, who was Stoker's real-life inspiration for Dracula's mannerisms and who Stoker hoped would play Dracula in a stage version. Although Irving never did agree to do a stage version, Dracula's dramatic sweeping gestures and gentlemanly mannerisms drew their living embodiment from Irving.

The Austrian documentary "The Vampire Princess" (2007) presents a new theory which says that the princess Eleonore von Schwarzenberg was an inspiration for Bram Stoker's novel. As proof the documentary mentions, among other things, that the first chapter originally was about a female vampire. It was later rewritten. In addition, when Jonathan Harker first meets Dracula, one of Harker's companions whispers a line from Gottfried August Bürger's ballad "Lenore": "Denn die Todten reiten schnell" ("For the dead travel fast"). Lenore, a nickname for Eleonore, is Eleonore von Schwarzenberg, according to the documentary.

The Dead Un-Dead was one of Stoker's original titles for *Dracula*, and up until a few weeks before publication, the manuscript was titled simply *The Un-Dead*. The name of Stoker's count was originally going to be Count Vampyre, but while doing research, Stoker became intrigued by the word *dracul*. Dracula is derived from the word *draco* in the Megleno-Romanian language, meaning *devil* (originally *dragon*). There was also a historic figure known as Vlad III Dracula, but whether Stoker based his character on him remains debated and is now considered unlikely.

Reaction

When it was first published, in 1897, *Dracula* was not an immediate bestseller, although reviewers were unstinting in their praise. The contemporary Daily Mail ranked Stoker's powers above those of Mary Shelley and Edgar Allan Poe as well as Emily Bronte's Wuthering Heights.

The novel has become more significant for modern readers than it was for contemporary Victorian readers, most of whom enjoyed it just as a good adventure story; it only reached its broad iconic legendary classic status later in the 20th century when the movie versions appeared. However some Victorian fans were ahead of the time, and in proclaimed it a classic of Gothic horror. In seeking a parallel to this horrible story our mind reverts to such tales as Frankenstein and The Fall of the House of Usher.

HISTORICAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Although *Dracula* is a work of fiction, it does contain some historical references. The historical connections with the novel and how much Stoker knew about the history are a matter of conjecture and debate.

Following the publication of *In Search of Dracula* by Radu Florescu and Raymond McNally in 1972, the supposed connections between the historical Transylvanian-born **Vlad III Dracula of Wallachia** and Bram Stoker's fictional Dracula attracted popular attention. During his main reign (1456–1462), "Vlad the Impaler" is said to have killed from 20,000 to 40,000 European civilians (political rivals, criminals, and anyone else he considered "useless to humanity"), mainly by using his favourite method of impaling them on a sharp pole. The main sources dealing with these events are records by Saxon settlers in neighboring Transylvania, who had frequent clashes with Vlad III. Vlad III is revered as a folk hero by Romanians for driving off the invading Turks. His impaled victims are said to have included as many as 100,000 Turkish Muslims.

Historically, the name "**Dracul**" is derived from a secret fraternal order of knights called the Order of the Dragon, founded by Sigismund of Luxembourg (king of Hungary, Croatia and Bohemia, and Holy Roman Emperor) to uphold Christianity and defend the Empire against the Ottoman Turks. Vlad II Dracul, father of Vlad III, was admitted to the order around 1431 because of his bravery in fighting the Turks. From 1431 onward, Vlad II wore the emblem of the order and later, as ruler of Wallachia, his coinage bore the dragon symbol. The name Dracula means "Son of Dracul".

Stoker came across the name Dracula in his reading on Romanian history, and chose this to replace the name (*Count Wampyr*) that he had originally intended to use for his villain. However, some Dracula scholars, led by Elizabeth Miller, have questioned the depth of this connection. They argue that Stoker in fact knew little of the historic Vlad III except for his nickname. There are sections in the novel where Dracula refers to his own background, and these speeches show that Stoker had some knowledge of Romanian history. Yet Stoker includes no details about Vlad III's reign and does not mention his use of impalement. Given Stoker's use of historical background to make his novel more horrific, it seems unlikely he would have failed to mention that his villain had impaled thousands of people. It seems that Stoker either did not know much about the historic Vlad III, or did not intend his character Dracula to be the same person as Vlad III.

The Dracula legend as he created it and as it has been portrayed in films and television shows may be a compound of various influences. Many of Stoker's biographers and literary critics have found strong similarities to the earlier Irish writer Sheridan le Fanu's classic of the vampire genre, *Carmilla*. In writing *Dracula*, Stoker may also have drawn on stories about the sídhe — some of which feature blood-drinking women.



ELIZABETH BATHORY

It has been suggested that Stoker was influenced by the history of Countess **Elizabeth Bathory**, who was born in the Kingdom of Hungary. Bathory is known to have tortured and killed anywhere between 36 and 700 young women over a period of many years, and it was commonly believed that she committed these crimes in order to bathe in or drink their blood, believing that this preserved her youth. No credible evidence of blood-drinking or other blood crimes in the Bathory case has ever been found, however the stories and influence may explain why Dracula appeared younger after feeding.



COUNT DRACULA'S CASTLE

Some have claimed the castle of Count Dracula was inspired by Slains Castle, at which Bram Stoker was a guest of the 19th Earl of Erroll. However, since as Stoker visited the castle in 1895—five years after work on *Dracula* had begun—there is unlikely to be much connection. Many of the scenes in Whitby and London are based on real places that Stoker frequently visited, although in some cases he distorts the geography for the sake of the story.

Themes

- *Dracula* is an epistolary novel, written as a collection of diary entries, telegrams, and letters from the characters, as well as fictional clippings from the *Whitby* and London newspapers and phonograph cylinders.
- Stoker's novel deals in general with the conflict between the world of the past — full of folklore, legend, and religious piety — and the emerging modern world of technology, positivism, and secularism.
- No character in the novel advocates a rejection of science in favour of either religion or superstition.
- For the characters, and presumably for the author, science opens the possibility of shockingly unfamiliar phenomena. If the novel sounds a cautionary note, it merely warns against the presumption that *established science* as yet offers a complete world-view. Within Stoker's fictional universe, (correct) superstitious beliefs have an empirical basis and promise to yield to scientific inquiry.
- A number of scholars have noted the theme of a 'barbarian' prince attempting to usurp British society as being an example of the **invasion literature** which was popular at the time. Author Kim Newman characterized *Dracula* as being the story of "a one-man invasion" and drew attention to Van Helsing's claim that Dracula's goal was to become "the father or furthurer of a new order of beings, whose road must lead through Death, not Life". The imperialism, xenophobia and use of technology to achieve results, along with the presence of a vampire, have all been also discussed in academia as present in both *Dracula* and Stoker's 1909 novel, *The Lady of the Shroud*.

Adaptations

For more details on this topic, see [Dracula in popular culture](#).

The story of *Dracula* has been the basis for countless films and plays. Of all the movies, the most popular are: *Dracula* (1931), *The Horror of Dracula* (1958), and *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (1992). Another famous version of the story was *Nosferatu* (1922), a film directed by the German director F.W. Murnau, was produced while Stoker's widow was alive, and the filmmakers were forced to change the setting and the characters' names for copyright reasons. The vampire in *Nosferatu* is called Count Orlok rather than Count Dracula.



BELA LUGOSI

The character of Count Dracula has remained popular over the years, and many films have used the character as a villain, while others have named him in their titles, such as *Dracula's Daughter*, *Brides of Dracula*, and *Zoltan, Hound of Dracula*. An estimated 160 films (as of 2004) feature Dracula in a major role, a number second only to Sherlock Holmes. The number of films that include a reference to Dracula may reach as high as 649, according to the Internet Movie Database.

Most adaptations do not include all the major characters from the novel. The Count is always present, and Jonathan and Mina Harker, Dr. Seward, Dr. Van Helsing, and Renfield usually appear as well. The characters of Mina and Lucy are often combined into a single female role. Jonathan Harker and Renfield are also sometimes reversed or combined. Quincey Morris and Arthur Holmwood are usually omitted entirely.

Bram Stoker Awards



About the Stoker Awards

Each year, the **Horror Writer's Association** presents the Bram Stoker Awards for Superior Achievement, named in honor of Bram Stoker, author of the seminal horror work, *Dracula*. The Stoker Awards were instituted immediately after the organization's incorporation in 1987. While many members, including HWA's first President, Dean Koontz, had reservations about awards for writing -- since the point of HWA was for writers to cooperate for their mutual benefit, not to compete against one another -- the majority of members heavily favored presenting awards, both to recognize outstanding work in the horror field and to publicize HWA's activities.

To ameliorate the competitive nature of awards, the Stokers are given "for superior achievement," not for "best of the year," and the rules are deliberately designed to make ties fairly probable. The first awards were presented in 1988 (for works published in 1987), and they have been presented every year since. The award itself is an eight-inch replica of a fanciful haunted house, designed specifically for HWA by sculptor Steven Kirk. The door of the house opens to reveal a brass plaque engraved with the name of the winning work and its author.

The Stoker Awards, like the Oscars, are non-juried awards. Any work of Horror first published in the English language may be considered for a Stoker during the year of its publication. The HWA membership at large recommends worthy works for consideration. A preliminary ballot is compiled using a formula based on recommendations. Two rounds of voting by our Active members determine first the finalists, and then the winners. The winners are announced and the awards presented at a gala banquet held in conjunction with HWA's annual conference, usually in June.

Between 2001 and 2004, the awards were presented in twelve categories: Novel, First Novel, Short Fiction, Long Fiction, Fiction Collection, Poetry Collection, Anthology, Nonfiction, Illustrated Narrative, Screenplay, Work for Young Readers, and Alternative Forms. Beginning with works published in 2005, however, the awards are given in eight categories: Novel, First Novel, Short Fiction, Long Fiction, Fiction Collection, Poetry Collection, Anthology, and Nonfiction. In addition, **Lifetime Achievement Stokers** are occasionally presented to individuals whose entire body of work has substantially influenced Horror.

2007 Bram Stoker Award Winners

Novel: *The Missing* by Sarah Langan

First Novel: *Heart-Shaped Box* by Joe Hill

Long Fiction: *Afterward, There Will Be A Hallway* by Gary Braunbeck