



Dracula

Bram Stoker



About the author

Bram Stoker (1847–1912) is best known as the author of *Dracula* (1897), one of the most famous horror novels of all time. Abraham Stoker was born in Clontarf, Ireland in 1847. He was sickly and bedridden for much of his childhood. As a student at Trinity College, however, he excelled in athletics and academics and graduated with honours in mathematics in 1870. He worked for ten years in the Irish civil service, and during this time he was a drama critic for the *Dublin Mail*. His glowing reviews of Henry Irving's performances encouraged the Shakespearean actor to seek him out. The two became friends and in 1879, Stoker became Irving's manager. He also performed managerial, secretarial, and even directorial duties at London's Lyceum Theatre. Despite an active personal and professional life, he began writing and publishing novels, beginning with *The Snake's Pass* in 1890. *Dracula* appeared in 1897. Following Irving's death in 1905, Stoker was associated with the literary staff of London's *Telegraph* and wrote several more works of fiction, including the horror novels *The Lady of the Shroud* (1909) and *The Lair of the White Worm* (1911). He died in London, in 1912.

Summary

Jonathan Harker goes on a business trip to meet Count Dracula in his dark castle somewhere in Transylvania. He realises straight away that the Count is a strange and evil man. He tries to escape but fails. Back in England, Lucy, a friend of Jonathan's girlfriend Mina, becomes mysteriously ill after an encounter with something strange in her garden. She is pale, tired, and has two marks on her neck. Doctor Seward writes to his friend, Professor Van Helsing,

for help. Lucy dies and is buried. A number of children are then found with marks on their necks and Van Helsing knows that Lucy has come back to life as a vampire. He and his companions go to the coffin and push a wooden stake into her heart and cut off her head. Van Helsing sets out a plan to kill Dracula. The men first go to Carfax House, where Dracula is thought to be hiding, but they find nothing except old boxes full of earth. Then, they witness Mina drinking Dracula's blood. They challenge him but he escapes. Van Helsing knows that Dracula has infected Mina in the same way as Lucy, and there follows a race against time. They chase Dracula across Europe to his castle and kill him. Mina is saved.

Chapters 1–2: Jonathan Harker, a lawyer's clerk, travels in a carriage through the wild countryside of Transylvania, to the home of Count Dracula. Dracula wants to buy a house in England and Jonathan has been sent to finalise the contract. He arrives at the dark castle and meets Dracula, who he thinks is a strange looking man. Then, strange things begin to happen. Firstly, Dracula never eats any food. Then, whilst Jonathan is shaving, Dracula silently enters the room and is angry at the sight of a mirror. He throws it out the window. One night, he sees Dracula crawling down the castle wall like an animal. Shaken by this experience, he falls asleep on a bed. Three beautiful female vampires appear from nowhere and begin to seduce him. Dracula suddenly returns and screams angrily at the women. He drops a bag containing a live baby on the floor for the women, which they then kill.

Chapters 3–4: Jonathan realises that he is being kept prisoner in the castle and decides to escape. He knows he has to get the key to the door, but it is in the Count's room. He crawls down the wall and into Dracula's room where he sees lots of boxes. In one of them, lying on some earth in a sort of trance, is Dracula. Jonathan is too scared to search further and leaves. The next day he tries again. This time Dracula is in the box but has blood around his mouth and looks like a wild animal. Jonathan drops a stone on his head but to no effect. He runs back to his room. Back in England, Jonathan's girlfriend, Mina, and her friend Lucy are worried about Jonathan. One night, Mina finds Lucy in the garden, an ominous black shape close to her. Mina also notices that her friend has two small wounds on her neck. Lucy becomes ill and mystified, Doctor Seward writes to his friend, Professor Van Helsing.



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Chapters 5–6: Lucy is now very ill and Van Helsing performs a blood transfusion. Then he surrounds the girl with garlic flowers and orders that the windows and doors are shut. Doctor Seward guards Lucy but one night he is attacked by Renfield, a patient from the mental hospital, and fails to go to Lucy's house. The next day he meets Van Helsing, and they discover the dead body of Lucy's mother lying next to her dying daughter. Lucy, now with pointed white teeth and a changed face, asks her boyfriend, Arthur, to kiss her. Van Helsing prohibits this and Lucy lies back and dies.

Chapters 7–8: Days after the death, local children are discovered with marks on their necks similar to Lucy's. Van Helsing suggests to Seward that Lucy made the marks on the children and that she is a vampire. After midnight, he and Seward go into Lucy's tomb and discover she is not in her coffin. Then they see her outside the tomb with a small child in her arms. The next night, Van Helsing, Seward, Arthur and Quincey Morris go to the tomb. Once again, Lucy is not in her coffin but they wait until morning and see her returning with another child. When Lucy returns to her coffin, Arthur, under instruction from Van Helsing, pushes a wooden stick into her heart, and the vampire is dead.

Chapters 9–10: The men decide to catch and kill Dracula. They know he is living in Carfax House in London. They enter the house and find boxes full of earth. Suddenly, the place fills with rats and the men run away. Renfield, the madman, is attacked in his room. Before he dies, he talks of having seen Dracula and that Mina might be involved with him. They run quickly to Mina's room and find her in the arms of a man and she is drinking blood from his chest.

They show him their crosses and the vampire disappears. Mina is now worried that she will become a vampire and Van Helsing consoles her.

Chapter 11: The men discover that Dracula is travelling home to his castle on a ship. They take a train to Varna to intercept the ship, without success. They split into three groups and follow Dracula by ship, horse, and train. All the time Mina is slowly turning into a vampire. Near the castle they catch up with Dracula and have a fight with the men who are transporting him in his box. The men are chased away. Jonathan and Quincey Morris cut off

Dracula's head just as he is waking up. Dracula's body completely disappears. At the same time, Mina recovers her looks, and her soul is saved.

Background and themes

Superstitions, religion and modernity: This is a story of good versus evil and of the changing world of old superstitions to more modern ideas in Victorian England. In the middle of this conflict is traditional religion. Count Dracula represents a dark and evil force from a time long ago. He has powers that most of the characters in the book do not at first recognise. Doctor Seward naturally assumes that Lucy's illness must have a logical explanation because he approaches everything from a modern scientific point of view. However, Van Helsing, who is also a scientist, is convinced that something more sinister is happening to Lucy, and that medicine alone will not cure it. By using a mixture of superstitions (the wooden stake through the heart, the garlic, the cutting off of the head) religious symbols (the cross, the holy bread, and the holy book) and some modern aids (the guns, the trains, the ships) the men are able to defeat the Count.

Genius and madness: A minor theme in the novel is the suggestion that genius could be close to madness. Van Helsing, the hero of the book and a professor, and Renfield, a madman, are the only people in the book who believe, from the start, in Dracula's existence.

Discussion activities

Before reading

- Discuss:** Put the students in small groups and ask them to look at the cover of the book. Ask them to describe the castle. Then ask them to consider the following questions: *Who lives here? Would you like to meet him? Would you like to spend a night in this castle? Why/why not? Which country do you think it is in? How old is it?*

Chapters 1–2

While reading (p. 7 after 'Dracula climbed out of the window, and moved down the wall like some terrible animal of the night.')

- Predict:** One of Dracula's powers is that he can move like an animal. Tell the students that this is not his only power. Put the students in groups of three and ask them to predict what other powers he may have that may be revealed in the book.



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After reading

- 3 **Write:** Tell the students to write a letter to Mina from Jonathan. The letter should say how you arrived at the castle, describe what the Count looks like and what you think about the Count, and the experience with the three women and how you felt.

Chapters 3–4

While reading (p. 16 after 'the wounds on her neck were growing larger.')

- 4 **Role play:** Put the students into pairs. One is Lucy and the other is Mina. Act out a conversation between them. Mina wants to know what happened in the garden and why Lucy is ill, and about the marks on her neck. Lucy tries to explain.

After reading

- 5 **Write and guess:** Put students in pairs and ask them to choose a short paragraph from Chapters 3–4. Tell them to write it again, making five changes to words in the text. Students then read out their paragraphs to the other students, who have to identify the changes.

Chapters 5–6

Before reading

- 6 **Pair work:** Get students to look at the picture on pages 18 and 19 and to describe it and say how they think the person in it is feeling. Ask them the following questions: *Who is it? Where is he? What are in the glass bottles in front of him? What does he use them for?*

After reading

- 7 **Pair work:** Write the following words on the board: *blood, garlic, windows and doors, knife, wolf, sharp teeth*. Ask the students talk and write in pairs to say how these words were used in Chapters 5–6.

Chapters 7–8

While reading (p. 32, after 'Come to me Arthur.')

- 8 **Write and act:** Put the students in groups of three and ask them to write a mini play about what is happening in this part. Then the students act out their play in front of the class, the students playing the parts of Lucy, Van Helsing and Arthur. Encourage the students to expand on the situation. See discussion key for an example of an opening scene.

After reading

- 9 **Write, ask and answer:** Write '*Who placed the wood over Lucy's heart?*' on the board and elicit the answer (Doctor Seward). Now tell students to write similar questions about Chapters 7–8. Students then mingle with each other, asking and answering each other's questions.

Chapters 9–10

While reading (p. 37, after 'Rats!')

- 10 **Group work:** The men ran out of the house because they were afraid of the rats. Put students in small groups and ask them to talk about animals that frighten people, and what they do when they see these animals. Extend the discussion to other things that people are afraid of or have phobias to.

After reading

- 11 **Write and guess:** Write '*Blood ran from a wound in Dracula's chest.*' on the board. Elicit which word is wrong from the students (neck, not chest). Now students choose a sentence from Chapters 9 and 10 and rewrite it changing one word. Students mingle, reading out their sentences and the other students have to identify and correct the mistake.

Chapter 11

Before reading

- 12 **Predict:** Write these words on the board: *dreams, ship, train, castle, circle, three women, knife, soul*. In pairs tell the students that these words all appear in the last part of the story and get them to predict what happens.

While reading (p. 48, after 'They reached out their arms, calling for Mina.')

- 13 **Role play:** Put the students in groups of four. They decide who is going to be Mina and who is going to be the three women. Then tell them to role play a conversation. The three women must give their reasons why Mina should leave the circle, and Mina should try and resist.

After reading

- 14 **Research:** Ask the students to research on the Internet the films that have been made about Dracula. The students then give an oral presentation of the films. Remind them to include the following: *When it was made? Who were the actors? Was the story the same as the book?* You could extend the research to all the films that feature a vampire, not only Dracula.
- 15 **Write:** Tell the students that Dracula has decided that he wants a flat mate and he is going to put an advert in the local paper. Put the students in pairs and ask them to write the advert. The advert should describe his castle and himself, and what type of person he is looking for. Tell the students the adverts should be funny. They can read out their adverts and the class can vote for the funniest.

Vocabulary activities

For the Word List and vocabulary activities, go to www.penguinreaders.com.