

Dracula: Characters

Stoker uses the literary style known as an epistolary novel to tell the story via multiple narrative perspectives. The narrative is not only constructed through diary entries, but also through telegrams, letters, newspaper articles and business reports. This could therefore suggest that the narrative is unreliable and the reader cannot form a strong connection with any of the characters. This gives the reader the decision of how to view the characters, based on what is gathered from the information given. Characters can be also symbolic, representing certain ideas or ideals, so it is essential that you consider:

Major characters

Dracula

Jonathan Harker

Mina Harker

Dr Seward

Dr Van Helsing

Other characters

Lucy Westenra

Arthur Holmwood/Lord Godalming

Quincey P Morris

Renfield

Dracula



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Dracula is the antagonist of the story and a vampire:

Jonathan Harker's journal is crucial to Dracula's characterisation, as it gives us the most detailed description of the character:

Harker is also the only character who spends a significant amount of time with Dracula

Harker's journals do not explicitly state that he is a vampire as Harker does not consider this

Instead, he is presented as a sinister and creepy character who cannot be trusted

The reader is not told Dracula's age, though it can be inferred through the stories that he tells Harker that **he may be hundreds of years old**

He is first presented to us through the character of Harker:

Initially he seems charming, polite and well-educated

However, physically, Dracula is described by Harker in a negative way

His mouth is described as "cruel looking" and Harker comments on his "sharp white teeth"

It is clear that he is of **noble blood** and he comes from a long line of aristocracy:

However, his thirst for blood and power make him a direct contrast to the character of Lord Godalming

He possesses supernatural abilities and powers:

He has super strength and the ability to control animals such as wolves

He is also able to shapeshift into mist and animals

He has no reflection

He feeds off people and infects them with his vampirism as he drains the blood from them

Dracula is well-read and has an excellent knowledge of the world around him:

He recounts tales of his family and their former glory to Harker

It is clear that Dracula has a plan and had done his research before he moved to London

He shows no remorse or any kindness to any character he comes close to:

He leaves Harker to die in the castle when he has no more use for him

He slowly drains Lucy of life and turns her into a vampire

He uses characters such as the crew on the ship and Renfield to do his bidding and kills them when he no longer needs them or if they try to fight him (as was the case with Renfield)

Dracula seems merciless and relentless in his pursuit to execute his plan:

He arrogantly tells Van Helsing that "others shall yet be mine", which highlights his desire to dominate

He is eventually killed by Quincey P Morris and the other men who pursue him in Transylvania

His bloodline, personality and actions suggest that he is selfish and driven by his desire to overpower and overthrow

Jonathan Harker



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Jonathan Harker is a **young solicitor from London:**

He has been sent by his firm on a business trip to Transylvania

His job is to secure and finalize a real estate deal with Count Dracula

His diary entries account for a significant portion of the novel and we begin the story with his entries

He spends the most significant amount of time with Count Dracula and we learn about the vampire through his perspective:

He lives with the Count during his stay at Transylvania and ultimately escapes death

Harker can initially be seen as **naive** as he does not take the villagers' warnings seriously

His initial impressions of Dracula are that he is noble and polite, but he soon realizes that he is not to be trusted:

Dracula's appearance also unnerves Harker, but he appears passive during his stay at Castle Dracula

Harker initially does not seem strong enough to kill Dracula on his own:

He is essentially trapped in the castle and is at a loss over what to do

He decides to explore the castle to find a way out

Through Harker's diary entries, we get an insight into his fragile state of mind and his fears and weaknesses:

He openly writes about almost being seduced by the female vampires in Castle Dracula and writes of his shame

It is worth noting that during his imprisonment at the castle, Harker's masculinity is replaced with the image of a "damsel in distress" linked to traditional fairy tales:

He is trapped and overpowered by a man who is, as he says himself, stronger than he is

He cannot escape and is confined to his room

He is left to be killed by an evil woman (or women)

His masculinity is restored when he decides to climb down the castle wall so that he can rest "as a man"

We next hear of Harker through Mina's letters and diary entries:

He is recovering in a hospital in Buda-Pesth as he is still haunted by the events that he witnessed at the castle

He returns to London but is still weakened by what he saw and does not believe in himself

His reaction to seeing Dracula in London make it evident that he was still shaken by the events that took place in Transylvania:

It is clear that, at this point, he doubts his own abilities and his role

It is Jonathan's meeting with Van Helsing that restores his self-confidence, as Van Helsing assures him that what he saw at Castle Dracula was not a figment of his imagination:

This makes him feel like "a new man" and his fear vanishes

This also motivates Harker to join the men in their pursuit to kill Dracula

Near the end of the novel, it is evident that Harker feels guilt over what happened to Mina:

His anger spurs him to pursue Dracula and Mina tries to calm him in order to make him see sense and reasoning, as he is described "like a living flame"

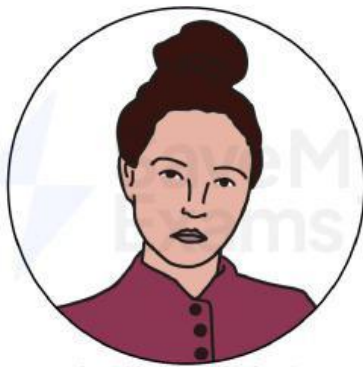
He states that he is willing to sell his soul to see Dracula destroyed

He agrees to withhold information from Mina in order to protect her, as he feels this is his duty

His love for Mina is also evident as declares that he is willing to become a vampire in order to be with Mina

He finally gets his revenge and redemption at the end of the novel, as he successfully manages to destroy Dracula with the rest of the men

Mina Murrey



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Mina Murrey is first introduced through Harker's diary entries: We find out that she is engaged to Harker

He describes her as the ideal woman when comparing her to the

female vampires in Dracula's castle

Mina is shown to have many virtuous characteristics and traits:

She is described as **faithful and loyal**

She is clearly a nurturer and is willing to take care of those she loves, including Lucy

She is also driven by her **desire to be a good wife**, so she learns shorthand and typewriting in order to help her fiancé/husband

Mina is a teacher by trade, but takes on many roles throughout the novel:

She acts as Lucy's companion at Whitby at the start of the novel

She then becomes her husband's carer and nurse as well as his wife

She is pivotal to the men's mission as she compiles and organizes all of the information they need

She is then used as a key into Dracula's location through hypnosis

Van Helsing meets Mina as he realizes that she witnessed the early stages of Lucy's encounter with Dracula

The other characters praise her for being **intelligent, courageous and for having a good temperament**

Mina becomes Dracula's next target:

Dracula visits Mina several times and drains her blood

Mina does not seem to realize this, though she writes about a mist entering her room

Also, the men do not realize and think her weakness and pale face are a typical female response to the topic of discussion

They realize when they find her sucking Dracula's blood from his chest and, as a result, she labels herself as "unclean"

She feels humiliated and that she has been tainted by what Dracula has done

As the men hunt for Dracula, **Mina resolves that she will die on her own terms:**

She makes the men take a solemn oath that they will kill her before she becomes a vampire

Her bravery and courage can be seen in her resolve to make her own decisions rather than succumb to the infection

When Mina becomes infected, Van Helsing tries to bless her by using a communion wafer:

This burns her forehead and leaves a scar, leading the others to realize that she is being transformed and corrupted

The burn mark may symbolize her falling from grace and her impurity

When Dracula is killed, the burn mark disappears, thereby suggesting that her purity and goodness is restored
Van Helsing describes her as having feminine virtues but a man's brain:

His "compliment" highlights how she was more forward thinking than women of that time, as she displayed a strength of character that was traditionally associated with men

He clearly greatly admires her and respects her intelligence

Through Mina, the themes relating to purity and corruption are explored as she represents feminine ideals of that time

Dr Seward



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John Seward is first introduced as one of Lucy's suitors whom she rejects
He is the head of a medical asylum and we later find out that he used to be one of Professor Van Helsing's students

Seward is a man of science and finds it difficult to comprehend anything that is supernatural or that cannot be explained by science and reasoning

He is friends with Quincey P Morris and Arthur Holmwood, the other two men who propose to Lucy

Seward strives to understand things based on logic and attempts to form conclusions based on scientific knowledge and theories

He has a particular patient (Renfield) whom he studies and writes about:

It is clear that he is fascinated with Renfield and his behaviours
He records this in his diary

Arthur Holmwood asks Dr Seward to diagnose and treat Lucy when she first becomes ill:

Dr Seward cannot understand what has happened to Lucy and so calls for his mentor, Professor Van Helsing

His passion for science and medicine limits his understanding and stops him from being able to save Lucy

However, despite being rejected, his love for Lucy never wavers
He can also be described as loyal and kind as he goes above and beyond to treat Lucy and try to save her:

He does the same with Mina when she is infected

He can be seen as Van Helsing's sounding board and partner during the novel:

Van Helsing consults Seward during Lucy's illness

He also gives Seward clues and questions to help Seward come to his own conclusions

Seward could be seen to be constantly questioning Van Helsing's theories and actions

His interactions with Van Helsing show a naive side to Seward

He is seen as a modern character:

He uses a phonograph to record his diary entries

He has very rigid views on treatment and medicine and this limits his perceptions:

He does not initially believe or understand Van Helsing's vampire theory

He has to see Lucy as a vampire before he fully understands

Seward also suspects that Renfield may be linked with Dracula, but does not act upon it

He sees similar symptoms in Mina as he saw in Lucy, but overlooks this again and thinks it is her fragility as a female that has made her weak

Therefore, he concludes that Mina must be kept out of the mission to kill Dracula

When he is asked to join the hunt to kill Dracula, he admits that he is not someone who is accustomed to hunting:

However, it is evident that he found it thrilling

His desire to see Dracula's demise spurred him to forsake his scientific theories and embrace folklore and tradition to destroy the vampire

Dr Seward is an important figure in this novel as he represents Victorian views on science and modern advancements

However, even though he is a man of science, through his love for characters like Mina and Lucy, we see a kinder side and one that is driven by a **sense of duty**



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Dr Van Helsing

Van Helsing is first introduced through **Dr Seward** as his **old professor and mentor**:

He is therefore older than the rest of the characters

He is key in Dracula's destruction:

He unites the group and leads them in their mission to kill the vampire

He is the bridge between modern medicine and ancient tradition and folklore:

He uses blood transfusions to initially treat Lucy

He notices the two puncture wounds on Lucy's neck

His understanding of folklore and tradition, as well as superstition and the occult, is what helps the men to free Lucy's soul and also destroy Dracula

Mina Harker describes him as "good" and "of a noble nature":

She describes his features in detail and she describes his physical appearance as strong and powerful

While he is also an outsider like Dracula, he is accepted by the group and Dr Seward's opinion of him means that he is not feared like Dracula is:

However, he is charming, like Dracula, and is able to befriend those around him

He also has a quick temper, like Dracula, but uses his influence to do good

He is therefore presented as the direct opposite of Dracula

Van Helsing is open-minded enough to bring in symbols and relics from tradition and religion to help them in their quest:

Dr Seward shows a skepticism that Van Helsing does not have, as he is more open-minded and scholarly

He was also willing to embrace folklore and old medicines, such as garlic, to drive off vampires

His views oppose those of Dr Seward, as he is able to embrace information that is not scientific and logical, whereas Dr Seward's views are firmly grounded in modern medicine:

He is, therefore, able to think on multiple levels and use multiple theories to come to a conclusion

His medical skills do not save Lucy or Renfield, but his knowledge of the occult and superstition ends up saving Mina from eternal damnation

Van Helsing is also more liberal in his views with women:

He comments on Mina's intelligence by stating that she has a "man's brain"

Van Helsing's strength in character is shown when he travels to Castle Dracula and he resists the female vampires:

He also succeeds in killing them and freeing their souls

He also destroys the castle before anyone else can be affected

The narrative is rarely told from Van Helsing's perspective:

The most notable example of this is near the end of the novel, when he goes to destroy the castle and leaves a dying Mina protected in the forest

Other characters

Lucy Westenra

Lucy is a 19 year old who is introduced as Mina's best friend:

She is described as beautiful and flirtatious

She is from a wealthy aristocratic family

At the start of the novel, three men propose to her:

She rejects two of the men, Dr Seward and Quincey P Morris

She accepts Arthur Holmwood's proposal as she states that she is in love with him

She expresses her sadness over having to reject two men which reflects a vanity and self-indulgence that would have been seen as vulgar at that time

Shortly after her engagement, she holidays in Whitby with her family and Mina joins her:

During her stay there, she begins to sleepwalk and Mina finds her in a cemetery with a red-eyed creature leaning over her

She is Dracula's first victim in England:

She becomes a part of the undead

Once she becomes a vampire, Van Helsing and Arthur Holmwood manage to destroy her and free her soul

Her attractiveness and voluptuousness are emphasized as she becomes a vampire:

She is seen as impure and evil

Her purity has been taken away and replaced with something unacceptable

Her transformation reflects Victorian society's views on sex and promiscuity during that time

When Arthur drives a stake through her heart, her soul is released and the purity returns to her

Arthur Holmwood

Arthur Holmwood is Lucy's fiancé and an aristocrat

He is mentioned through letters that Lucy sends to Mina:

He is not actually present for a significant part of the novel

Arthur is concerned for Lucy and asks his friend, Dr Seward, to examine her to try to treat her illness

He returns when Lucy becomes a vampire and takes it as his duty to free her soul by driving a stake through her heart:

He feels that he is connected to Lucy through the blood transfusion even though they did not marry

He then joins the group in order to kill Dracula:

He uses his position and fortune to pursue Dracula and travel to Transylvania to kill him

Arthur is clearly shaken by Lucy's death and the aftermath and breaks the masculine stereotypes that were prevalent in Victorian England by crying when he is alone with Mina

Quincey P. Morris

Quincey P. Morris, along with Holmwood and Dr Seward, is a suitor who was trying to win Lucy's hand in marriage

He is from Texas in the USA:

He therefore provides a contrast to the British characters

He is described as being educated and polite

He is also portrayed as courageous

It is clear that he is in his element when he is hunting and clearly enjoys hunting Dracula

He is described by the other characters as a born leader and is also instrumental in destroying Dracula:

His courage never falters and his eagerness to help Mina is evident

He dies during the battle with Dracula:

However, he is not forgotten, as Mina and Jonathan name their son after him

Renfield

Renfield is a patient at Dr Seward's asylum

Dr Seward has taken a keen interest in him and his behaviour

Renfield lines up spiders and traps flies and eats them, as he believes this will prolong his life

He appears to have a connection with Dracula and his behaviour becomes more agitated when the Count is close to the asylum

He later allows Dracula to enter the asylum and, as a result, Dracula is able to attack Mina

However, he attempts to fight the vampire, which leads to his own demise

Dracula: Themes

- ☐ Good vs evil
- ☐ Gender roles
- ☐ Science vs superstition
- ☐ The fear of the unknown/the "other"

What is Stoker's intention?

Stoker highlighted the importance and power of religion

He is suggesting that religion has a firm place in society despite the advancements of science and technology:

- The vampires were powerless against religious symbols and objects
- Lucy's soul was saved, not by science or technology, but by religion

Stoker was trying to highlight the importance and significance of religion to a society who were beginning to question its values. He uses religious imagery from the start of the novel and this is embedded throughout: