

BOOK STUFF

"Books are the quietest and most constant of friends; they are the most accessible and wisest of counsellors, and the most patient of teachers." — Charles W. Eliot

Vampires Through the Ages!

Quick Quiz

1. What is a collection of vampires called?
2. What medical disorder was often attributed to a vampire attack?
3. Why is Transylvania associated with vampires?
4. What film is generally regarded as the very first vampire movie?
5. Who is Count Dracula's arch rival?



Strange Facts!

"Vampire hysteria and corpse mutilations to "kill" suspected vampires were so pervasive in Europe during the mid-eighteenth century that some rulers created laws to prevent the unearthing of bodies. In some areas, mass hysteria led to public executions of people believed to be vampires."

"One of the most famous "true vampires" was Countess Elizabeth Bathory (1560-1614) who was accused of biting the flesh of girls while torturing them and bathing in their blood to retain her youthful beauty."

"In 2009, a sixteenth-century female skull with a rock wedged in its mouth was found near the remains of plague victims. It was not unusual during that century to shove a rock or brick in the mouth of a suspected vampire to prevent it from feeding on the bodies of other plague victims or attacking the living. Female vampires were also often blamed for spreading the bubonic plague throughout Europe."

The Vampire Bride

by Henry Thomas Liddell

"I am come—I am come! once again from the tomb,
In return for the ring which you gave;
That I am thine, and that thou art mine,
This nuptial pledge receive."

He lay like a corse 'neath the Demon's force,
And she wrapp'd him in a shroud;
And she fixed her teeth his heart beneath,
And she drank of the warm life-blood!

And ever and anon murmur'd the lips of stone,
"Soft and warm is this couch of thine,
Thou'lt to-morrow be laid on a colder bed—
Albert! that bed will be mine!"

The extract is taken from Bram Stoker's novel, Dracula, written in 1897. In this extract, Johnathan Harker records in his journal his private thoughts and feelings about Count Dracula and his castle.

I only slept a few hours when I went to bed, and feeling that I could not sleep any more, got up. I had hung my shaving mirror by the window, and was just beginning to shave. Suddenly I felt a hand on my shoulder, and heard the Count's voice saying to me, "Good morning." I started, for it amazed me that I had not seen him, since the reflection of the mirror covered the whole room behind me. Having been startled I had cut myself slightly, but did not notice it at that moment. Having answered the Count's greeting, I turned to the mirror again to see how I had been mistaken. This time there could be no mistake, for the man was close to me, and I could see him over my shoulder. But there was no reflection of him in the mirror! The whole room behind me was displayed, but there was no sign of a man in it, except myself!

This was startling, and coming on the top of so many strange things, was beginning to increase that vague feeling of uneasiness which I always feel when the Count is near. But at that instant I saw the cut had bled a little, and the blood was trickling over my chin. I laid down the razor, turning as I did so half round to look for some sticking plaster. When the Count saw my face, his eyes blazed with a sort of demoniac fury, and he suddenly made a grab at my throat. I pulled away and his hand touched the rosary beads which held the crucifix. It made an instant change in him, for his anger passed so quickly that I could hardly believe that it was ever there.

"Take care," he said, "take care how you cut yourself. It is more dangerous that you think in this country." Then seizing the shaving mirror, he continued, "And this is the wretched thing that has done the mischief. Away with it!" And, opening the window with one wrench of his terrible hand, he flung out the mirror, which was shattered into a thousand pieces on the stones of the courtyard far below. Then he left the room without a word. It is very annoying, for I do not see how I am to shave, unless in my watch-case or the bottom of the shaving pot, which is fortunately made out of metal.

When I went into the dining room, breakfast was prepared, but I could not find the Count anywhere. So I ate breakfast alone. It is strange that as yet I have not seen the Count eat or drink. He must be a very peculiar man! After breakfast I did a little exploring in the castle. I went out on the stairs, and found a room looking towards the South. The view was magnificent, and from where I stood there was every opportunity of seeing it. The castle is on the very edge of a terrific cliff. A stone falling from the window would fall a thousand feet without touching anything! As far as the eye can reach is a sea of green tree tops, with occasionally a deep rift where there is a chasm. Here and there are silver threads where the rivers wind in deep gorges through the forests. But I am not able to describe beauty, for when I had seen this view I explored further. Doors, doors, doors everywhere ... and all locked and bolted. In no place, except via the windows in the castle walls is there an available exit. The castle is a prison, and I am its prisoner! **Consider how a sense of fear and tension is created here.**

The Vampire Conundrum

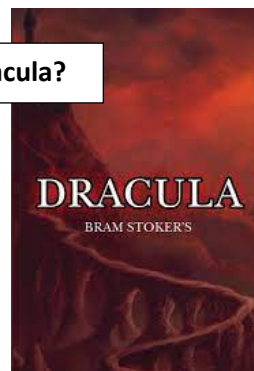
Summarised from a collection of essays by English professor, John Sutherland who is well known for writing inventive analyses of 'real world' questions applied to literary texts One essay queries, "Why isn't everyone a vampire?"

'The 'inextinguishably gabby Van Helsing' explains to his friends that the nature of the vampire's threat is to create, effectively, an epidemic of vampires who, as the un-dead, can only ever continue their dastardly work of infecting the innocent. If this is so, Sutherland muses, how come civilisation still exists? He calculates that if one vampire works at the restrained rate of affecting one victim a year, who dies in the course of the year to become in turn, a vampire, then within thirty-one years, the vampire population will have reached 2 billion. No one would have seen the arrival of the sixteenth century! **Is Sutherland right?**

1. Coven/clan/clutch/brood/pack
2. Anaemia "bloodlessness"
3. Due to the influence of Bram Stoker's 1897 novel Dracula and subsequent books and many films the tale has inspired.
4. Nosferatu (1921)
5. Professor van Helsing

Quick Quiz Answers

Have you read Dracula?

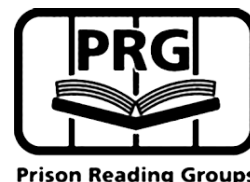


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