



Dracula

Background Information

Bram Stoker

On November 8, 1847, Abraham (Bram) Stoker was born in a small town near Dublin, Ireland.

Stoker suffered from a long childhood illness and spent his entire early childhood in bed.

Doctors used leeches in an attempt to cure his illness.

Bram Stoker continued

Once recovered from his illness, Stoker lived a healthy life which included participating in sports at Trinity College at the University of Dublin.

Although he graduated with a Master's degree in Mathematics, his passion was in the theatre, and he wanted to be an actor.

Bram Stoker continued

In 1871, Stoker began writing theatre reviews for the Dublin Evening Mail. He received no compensation for his work, but it acted as a creative outlet for his passion.

1871

1875

Stoker continued to write and published short stories and novels. His first novel, *The Primrose Path* was published in 1875.

Bram Stoker continued

1

Famous actor and friend, Henry Irving hired Stoker to be the manager of his London theatre the Lyceum.

2

Before moving to London, Stoker married Florence Balcombe in Dublin.

3

In their 34 year marriage, they had one son, Noel.

- While working at the Lyceum Theatre, Stoker continued to write.
- During this time, he published:
 - *Under the Sunset* (1881)
 - *The Snake's Pass* (1890)
 - *The Watter's Mou'* (1895)
 - *The Shoulder of Shasta* (1895)
- However, it was in 1897 that Stoker write his masterpiece and best known work, *Dracula*.
- Although he continued to write, none of his other works received the praise or popularity of *Dracula*

Bram Stoker continued

- When Stoker's friend, Henry Irving, died in 1905, his death supposedly caused Stoker to have a stroke.
- Stoker died 7 years later on April 20th, 1912.

Dracula

- The novel, *Dracula*, is considered a work of gothic fiction, specifically Victorian gothic.
- Gothic fiction is a type of literature that combines elements of both horror and romance.
- Although gothic fiction was no longer a dominant literary genre during the Victorian era, most would say that the genre was entering its most creative period.
- Some examples of Victorian gothic writers:
 - Edgar Allan Poe
 - Charlotte and Emily Brontë (*Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights*)
 - Henry James (*Turn of the Screw*)
 - Mary Shelley (*Frankenstein*)

Dracula continued

■ Gothic literature contains a combination of several of the following elements:

- A deserted (or sparsely inhabited) castle or mansion in a state of ruins or semi-ruins
- Labyrinths/mazes, dark corridors, and winding stairs filled with dusty cobwebs
- Hidden tunnels/staircases, dungeons, underground passages, crypts, or catacombs
- Limited lighting such as moonlight (usually a full moon), candles, flashlight, lantern; often the light disappears: clouds hide the moon, candles go out, flashlights/lanterns are dropped and broken
- The setting is usually threatening natural landscapes, like rugged mountains, dark forests, or eerie moors, exhibiting stormy weather
- Dark secrets surrounding some tormented soul who is left in isolation
- Ominous omens and curses
- Magic, supernatural manifestations, or the suggestion of the supernatural
- A damsel in distress
- The damsel's rescuer; usually a lover
- Horrifying (or terrifying) events or the threat of such happenings

Dracula continued

■ *Dracula* is also considered an epistolary novel.

- An epistolary novel is a novel written as a series of documents. The usual form is letters, although diary entries, newspaper clippings and other documents are sometimes used. Recently, electronic "documents" such as recordings and radio, blogs, and e-mails have also come into use.
- The word epistolary comes from the Latin word *epistola*, meaning a letter.
- Authors use this device to add realism to their works.



The Victorian Era

A Time of Transition

1837-1901

The British Empire and Colonialism

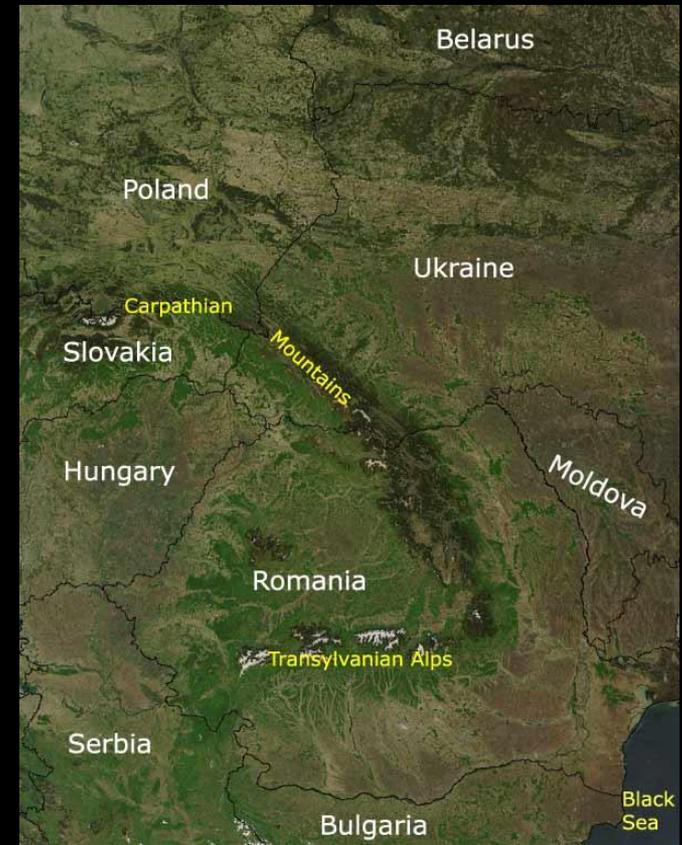
The Victorian Era, under Queen Victoria, represented the high point of the British Empire.

England had colonies in numerous countries as its reach extended to the four corners of the globe.

However, there was a fear that the “uncivilized” colonies in the East were infecting and/or invading the England, the West.

Within the East, people still held many superstitious beliefs where as, in the West, technology and science were developing rapidly during the Industrial Revolution.

Maps of the setting of *Dracula*



During the Victorian Era, gender roles were firmly defined.

Women were considered subordinate to the men and to support her husband and properly raise her children were considered crucial cornerstones of social stability by the Victorians.

The ideal Victorian woman was pure, chaste, refined, and modest.

Women were only expected to be with their husbands, yet it was acceptable for men to have multiple lovers.

If a woman slept outside the confines of marriage, she was considered “ruined” or “fallen.”

Education

- Education was specialized by gender.
 - Women were provided with the opportunity to study “refined” subjects such as history, geography and literature which would provide them with interesting but noncontroversial topics for discussion.
 - Despite the restrictions, some women did excel in "male" subjects such as law, physics, engineering, science and art.
 - These women pioneered the path for the much improved gender equality in modern education.
 - However, it was even said that studying was against women’s nature and could make them ill. They were to stay more or less an "ornament of society."

Images of Victorian Men and Women



The “New Women”

- Towards the end of this period, the “new woman” began to emerge.
 - The “New Women” was a Victorian term for women who sought to break free from the restrictions of the Victorian time in their behavior and social position.
 - These women argued for women’s suffrage, sexual freedom, and the right to work.
 - These women created a heated debate among members of this time period.
- The traditional woman vs. the “new woman” are represented in *Dracula* through the characters of Lucy Westerna and Mina Harker.