

Vampires and popular culture essay sample

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BUSTER**

Vampires have been subject of fascination since the first reference to them in 1046 in a book of psalms written by a Slavic priest. Although, the first use of the English word vampire was in a short story in 1734, it is referenced earlier in many German and Serbian writings. Most civilizations have some form of vampire lore, and there are hundreds of folktales about the evils of the vampire. But modern culture has surpassed even the most energetic believer from ancient times. Vampires and their followers have become a large subculture in the past two decades

Hollywood was the first to change the image of the vampire from the ugly zombie like creature to the suave seducer of women. This raw sexuality attracted women and men alike- women wanted to be seduced by him and men wanted to be him. In the 1960's, Dark Shadows a gothic soap opera featured the brooding Barnabas Collins whose tragic love tore the hearts of viewers. In the 1990's we had Buffy the Vampire Slayer and it's offshoot, Angel, another tragic love affair and the first glimpse at a vampire with a heart (or soul to be technical).

The 1980's saw the Goth movement in fashion, music, and clubs. Their fascination with death and the macabre blended well with the vampire movement that came shortly after it. Elements of medieval, Victorian and many other influences combine in Goth to create a dark brooding persona- all appropriate to vampires.

Another major influence, and one that started the vampire culture movement, was Anne Rice's The Vampire Chronicles a series of books that created a whole sub world of a vampire lifestyle. This was enhanced by the

hit movie based on her book *Interview with a Vampire*, starring two of Hollywood's pretty boys- Tom Cruise and Brad Pitt. — as vampires. Now we are seeing vampires that preach abstinence- the *Twilight* series, and a new series from HBO about Southern vampires entitled *True Blood*.

But why the fascination with a creature- no matter how sexy- that sucks blood? Perhaps the true fascination goes beyond the looks or sexual tensions- it goes to the most basic fear of all- death. Vampires for all their tragedy and evil do defy death. They are nearly immortal and as long as they are careful- pretty much invincible. Because of this immortality they live the lives we only dream of. Traveling the world , never having to worry about obligations or day to day problems. Disease and sickness don't affect them , they can do what they want when they want. This is true basis of our fascination and the real reason we idolize them.

Also teens and young adults in particular are drawn to the outcast character that doesn't need acceptance to be who he is. They see a whole culture that is made of creatures that are different from those around them yet have a loyalty to each other. This provides a comfort to those who have a lack of stability in their home life or who have problems not understood by their schoolmates.

Interestingly, the vampire fans range through all ages. While the younger crowds see a vampire as the wild uninhibited soul, older fans tend to see vampires as a way to stop the clock. Think of being able to stop aging to continue just as you are, mature – past all those awkward teen and young adult problems, yet not too old to enjoy life. To be made a vampire right at

your prime- that would be a dream. To never have to worry about growing old, weak and sick- not to be dependent on anyone for your most basic needs - hence the attraction of the vampire to the older fan.

Vampires, for whatever reason, have come to stay in our popular culture and, while this may be disturbing to some, are part of the world in which we live. They represent both dreams and nightmares to us and are the embodiment of immortality. We will always debate their reality- even though science and logic say there is no such thing as a vampire. ‘

Nevertheless, they fuel our imaginations and their influence generates hundred of thousands of dollars in revenue each year. Not bad for a creature that doesn't exist!!