

Dracula

Literature



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Bram Stoker wrote his renowned novel, *Dracula*, in the year 1897, in the height of the fashionable if not asphyxiating Victorian era. It has been wildly successful, one of the most recognizable stories ever written, and picked apart by Freudian psychologists for over 100 years. *Dracula* is a literary classic, phallically written or not, which has been a favorite of many readers worldwide.

The text makes reference to mythical creatures, which in the 20th century have substantial scientific merit; the vampire bat, which at even makes a snack of human beings at times, sucking from the toes of feet dangling from hammocks until they are so bloated that they have to crawl back to their homes. If this thought is chilling now, imagine how one felt generations ago, before the common mind was unsensitized to television. At the time of *Dracula's* conception, the notion of vampires was based purely on superstition and speculation.

In the character of Abraham Van Helsing the reader is informed of the characteristics of the vampire. [The vampire lives on, and cannot die by mere passing of time; he can flourish when that he can fatten on the blood of the living. Even more, we have seen amongst us that he can even grow younger; that his vital faculties grow so tenuous, and seem as though they refresh themselves when his special pabulum is plenty. Pg. 252 *Dracula* by Bram Stoker]. Vampires, while made ghoulish in the 1930's in silent film, were a somewhat glamorous creatures to Stoker.

While not the pouting, weepy creatures that the media portrays them as today, the Count definitely had a debonair streak to him. He had three wives (who later descend upon Harker), hounded incessantly after women, and

<https://assignbuster.com/dracula/>

seemed to revel in the deadly sins (gluttony, lust, wrath, etc). Penny tales of vampires as sexual objects were a fairly common theme for years before Stoker even began writing; Varney the vampire, the lesbian Carmilla, being two notable ones. Even these two are good novelty, the majority being trash. But for such a well known story to hold such (now) blatant connotations, was scandalous and progressive.

Rather than page after page of heaving breasts and ripped bodices (though there is quite a bit of that), the book fits in a fair share of lewdness while actually managing to fit a moral at the end to redeem itself of it's page-turning naughtiness. All of this is, of course, very tongue in cheek at times. If one takes the time to think about it, Stoker uses the physical act of vampirism itself as a metaphor for sex; Dracula never once preys upon a man during the course of the story, nor does a woman " feed" from one of her own gender.

Apparently behaving like a glutton is okay, but homosexuality is out. If one goes through the book knowing what to look for, the very passages in question can be pin pointed. First there is lust: [...] her breast heaved softly ... And then insensibly there came the strange change which I had noticed in the night ... the mouth opened, and the pale gums, drawn back, made the teeth look longer and sharper than ever ... and said in a soft voluptuous voice, such as I had never heard from her lips: 'Arthur! Oh, my love, I am so glad you have come! Kiss me! ' -- Bram Stoker, Dracula

Foreplay: Lower and lower went her head as the lips went below the range of my mouth and chin and seemed about to fasten on my throat ... I could feel the soft, shivering touch of the lips on the supersensitive skin of my throat,

<https://assignbuster.com/dracula/>

and the hard dents of two sharp teeth, just touching and pausing there. I closed my eyes in a languorous ecstasy and waited - waited with a beating heart. -- Bram Stoker, Dracula Intercourse: " No man knows till he experiences it, what it is like to feel his own life-blood drawn away into the woman he loves. " -- Bram Stoker, Dracula

And finally, climax: here he lay looking as if youth had been half-renewed, for the white hair and moustache were changed to dark iron-grey; the cheeks were fuller, and the white skin seemed ruby-red underneath; the mouth was redder than ever, for on the lips were gouts of fresh blood, which trickled from the corners of the mouth and ran over the chin and neck. -- Bram Stoker, Dracula Although there can be something said of the passage, " I shall cut off her head and fill her mouth with garlic, and I shall drive a stake through her body. " It seems comparable to the marriage bed of a virginal bride.

During the Victorian Era that this book was written in, the usual age for women to marry was straight from the equivalent of high school- before she can fill her head with the collegiate education of her male counterparts. She is silenced, urged by the opinion that good wives do not gossip or act as anything other than an innocent waif for her man to protect; were not exactly considered her opinion does not stray from his own, or at least verbally. Finally, the " staking", which speaks for itself. The fear of woman's sexuality is apparent in the novel. It is a threat to men and morality.

It indulges the Victorian male imagination regarding the topic of female sexuality. In Victorian England, woman's sexuality behavior was dictated by society's rigid expectations. A Victorian woman only had two options; she <https://assignbuster.com/dracula/>

was either a model of innocence and purity or a wife and mother. A woman could not be anything else, or if she did she was considered a whore, and thus shun by society.

Once Lucy transforms into a vampire she suddenly represents all that is considered forbidden and unclean by both 19th and 20th century societies and must be destroyed or else she will infect other women. Lucy's behavior is indicative of an individual who is battling with her own female sexuality once Dracula infects her. She becomes violent in her own survival for good and evil. Most women of the time will never allow herself to undergo the type of violent and sexual experiences that vampires like Lucy and Mina are forced to encounter. Lucy and Mina in the beginning are the embodiment of pure virtues that are female. Both women are chaste and innocent of the world's evils are totally devoted to their men.

Dracula destroys this by turning the pure woman into their opposites; voluptuous woman with driving sexual desires to seduce the men. [Kneeling on the near edge of the bed facing outwards was the white-clad figure of his wife. By her side stood a tall, thin man, clad in black. His face was turned from us, but the instant we saw we all recognized the Count in every way, even to the scar on his forehead. With his left hand he held both Mrs. Harker's hands, keeping them away with her arms at full tension; his right hand gripped her by the back of the neck, forcing her face down on his bosom.

Her white nightdress was smeared with blood, and a thin stream trickled down the man's bare breast that was shown by his torn open dress. The attitude of the two had a terrible resemblance to a child forcing a kitten's

nose into a saucer of milk to compel it to drink. Pg. 298 Dracula by Bram Stoker]. The last image is very erotic for the Victorian age as it represents what many want, especially the Victorians, however, which will never allow themselves to achieve. It is because of society's influence on the lives of its members that people learn to suppress their true desires.

People are conditioned, by Victorian society at that time, to believe that these natural desires were immoral. There is a profound struggle of the suppression of sexuality for woman. After the men lose Lucy to Dracula they keep a close eye on pure, virginal Mina to make sure she doesn't become infected as well. Dracula mocks the men by telling them the women they love are now his, and thus the men shall be his as well. Dracula is referring to men's fear of their eventual fall from grace if they succumb to the women's blatant sexuality. The three beautiful vampires John Harker encounters in Dracula's castle are both his masculine fantasy and nightmare. The sisters represent what the Victorian man should not want or desire. They are voluptuous and sexually aggressive making their great beauty both a promise of sexual fulfillment and a curse. These forbidden women offer Harker more sexual gratification than his fiancée Mina who is forbidden to express these sexual feelings until she and John Harker are wed. There is no longer such a big of a gap between the sexes in the 21st century as it were in the 1800's. Dracula represents a time in which the issue of sexual gender roles, were much more restraint.

Bram Stoker's novel Dracula represents an escape from that old conflicted and complicated modern society. He offered blatant sexuality that most always went punished; evil doers and lechery was resolved by a stake to the
<https://assignbuster.com/dracula/>

chest, and a decapitated mouth full of garlic. Victorians were given an opportunity to enjoy a few moments of blatant sexuality, and able to rest easy with themselves for doing so with the high-moral ending: The hyper-sexual villains get their come-uppance, the virgin (Mina) gets back her innocence, and the patriarchal vampire hunters leave masculinity intact.