

# Effect of vampires on society

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When you hear the word vampire you probably think of today's modern characters, from Twilight or True Blood. According to the article "Blood Ties, The vampire Lover" By Helen T. Bailie, Today's vampires make up book 53% of today's book sells. Vampires in today's image have become creatures of lust, the dream man of teenage girls all over the world. Before popculturetook over vampires in stories, were monsters of horror. Pre-dating today's pop culture fad, vampires were used to explain things that people didn't understand, something scary and unknown. So what has caused all these changes in vampire stories over time?

Changing them from feared unknown demons to every teens heartthrob. To find out where the change came from we'll look at what the original vampires were thought to be and the legends associated with them/ Then Ill review the early stories of vampires followed by the examination of stories from today's pop culture. Finalizing where the shift came from. Following up with the impact that the impact that these stories could be having on society today. \* \* Vampires date back to practically the dawn of time. But the vampires that originated were thought to be a type of blood- sucking corpse.

The first vampire " sightings" were by the Slavic community back during the middle ages according to an article titled " Was the vampire of the eighteenth century a unique type of dead corpse" written by G. David Keyworth an article about the early legends of vampires. Vampires were originally thought to be created by all kinds of different ways, like women that didn't want to be housewives, or that wanted to do other things rather than cooking, cleaning and tending to the children were often thought to be under the spell of a powerful vampire.

The Slavic people believed that vampires were made from improper burials, being born out of wedlock, or just being born on a certain day. While the Romanian people caught onto the vampire trend quickly after the Slavic, Romanians thought vampires were made from women that didn't eat salt during the pregnancy, and even being the 7th child in the family of the same gender. The ways that vampires were made may seem odd to you and I but they were things that in the early days of the middle ages were considered wrong or different from the norms.

Today's science helps explain most of the things that were thought to be considered the marking of a vampire to be invalid. For example, people believed that swelling or discoloration of the body after deaths were signs that the deceased was going to come back as a vampire. We now know that the rigor mortis sets in and causes most things post mortem that were thought to be signs of vampirism in the middle ages. \* The people of these communities did their best to keep new vampires from rising out of the ground.

They tried to keep animals from crossing over the graves, ensuring a proper burial and placing a ton of boulders and rocks on the graves to keep the corpse firmly in the ground. There has even been pre-staking the person through the heart and then staking them into the ground. Try as they may their preventive measures didn't always work and there was distinct evidence for a vampire being around. Most of these early communities had the same clues that a vampire was running amuck.

When livestock disappeared or turned up dead, blood on the mouth of the body, the body being swelled up holes in the ground, and also vampires didn't eat the garlic given out during church ceremonies. Killing vampires in

the early days was pretty straightforward, drive a stake through its heart, shoot it through the coffin or shove garlic into its mouth. From this of course emerged men that could be hired to track down and kill the vampires through out the town, everything from church priest to an actual vampire hunter, what we would now relate to as someone that was like Van Helsing.

How easily vampires were killed in the stories of the middle ages aren't really explained but considering the need for vampire hunters, I think it would be safe to say it wasn't easy. Though Romania was where the original vampire stories began, vampires apparently thrived in England during the middle ages. (Keyworth 243). Most deaths did occur because of being around old corpses but generally because of the diseases that they carried. An anonymous monk at Byland Abbey wrote majority of the stories of vampires.

The monks and high religious leaders of these towns came up with these legends because they believed in vampires, but they also used them to control the people of their town. By doing the right thing during life you could prevent yourself from becoming a vampire in the afterlife. So basically the religious leaders played on the fears of the towns people to keep them in church and keep them in line. One of the more famous stories of this time was of two brothers that fell down dead one day and were buried only to be seen later that night walking through the town. (Keyworth 245). These stories spread and eventually the whole world was on vampire alert. These stories continued well on into the 1900's eventually dying off slowly as the scientist learned more about humans, the body and how it worked. The first shift in these stories was from the tales of monks to an actual novel written by Bram

Stocker. Dracula, a story still talked about today, Dracula was really the introductory novel to bring vampires into fiction works.

The story of a man that travels to buy property in Transylvania from Count Dracula, realizing shortly after getting to the castle that he is a prisoner and the Count has supernatural powers. Slowly the Jonathans fiances, friend is converted into a vampire, she is sleeping walking and frequently has strange marks on her neck, Van Helsing is called into help but inevitably fails, the friend and Jonathan's wife are both eventually converted. (Spark notes/ count Dracula).

Dracula was a big step he really brought in the fear of the unknown and represents the fixation on youth. Dracula's first film in the United States dates back to 1931 where the foreign aspect was centralized on, really making him seem like an outsider, from there the next change in Dracula came about in the 1970's where we were introduced to the genre of vampire stories told by the vampire, allowing the audience to feel his alienation, to almost feel sorry for him and even though he was evil to feel an almost compassion for him.

The final shift in the Dracula movies came in 1992, where Dracula was cast as a love struck monster making him even more human, more relatable but on the downside easier to defeat, making him a typical Hollywood character instead of the monster that he began in the late 1800's After the 1970's rendition of Dracula there was another book that came out that really kept the trend going of the relatable vampires.

Anne Rice's *Interview with a Vampire*, along with having the emotional vampires that were alienated from society, these vampires were fully capable of feelings, something that before the 70's really wasn't thought of, her vampires feel guilty, they have fears, hopes, dreams and of course infinite sadness. During this time is also when gender roles really started to be challenged, vampires could now be women. Sometimes the most powerful vampires were in fact women.

Women not playing victim but being the same as their male counterparts took a big shift in most of the vampire novels and stories. The seventies were really a time of change for the vampire stories. The Vampires that were introduced in *Interview with a Vampire* brought the first real sense of sexuality, it had been in stories before but it wasn't mainstream, but erotic sexuality between the vampires and their victims that of course were usually women became a huge part of these stories and the ones that would come after.

But it also introduced homoeroticism, something that was completely taboo, and put a new hot flare into the vampire scene. Sexuality continued to be played up in following books and stories from the subtle cues in *Interview with a Vampire* to the "monsterized aggressive female sexuality to the lesbian vampires of Great Britain's Hammer studio" (Weinstock 4) from this to the BDSM and polygamy of the Anita Blake series. Sex both same and different sex became a huge part of the vampires identity in today's pop culture all starting here.

If the monks that wrote the horror stories of what they thought were real vampires during the middle ages heard the stories of today, they would

probably start flinging holy water while laughing at what society had come to think of the monsters that had plagued their cities. Vampires, which started out as a way to control the city, keep people in line, and to explain the unexplainable. Now you look at Vampires like Edward Cullen, Bill Compton or Stefan and Damon Salvatore, even Selene, which are all vampires and major heart throbs of today.

Everywhere you turn there seems to be another vampire coming out and a huge teenage fan base to follow. The vampires in all of these stories bring a different light to the traditional vampire story, the most famous and noticeable being the vampires of Twilight that sparkle in the sunlight instead of bursting into flames. The characters in these stories are all part of what is described as the emotional vampire, An emotional vampire is defined is a vampire that has turned from his monster tendencies and has started trying to follow human morals and are fighting the struggle. Unknown par 36). This new generation of vampires was created by women for women, according to the article " Fearless Vampire Kissers" about the vampires in today's most popular books and shows, by Bernard Beck. Beck goes on to explain that vampire movies have more or less becomes " chick flicks". In the article " Vampires, Vampires Everywhere" Jeffery Andrew Weinstock explains the main principles of today's vampire stories, the first being that they are always about sex, vampires represent a tabooed sexuality, simply vampires are naughty.

Another part of vampire stories is that vampires themselves are more interesting than the humans that surround them, some how even though they are the undead vampires are more alive than the humans that are

around them. “ Vampires are imperial, selfish, domineering and intensely physical, lurking beneath the human facade is pure animalistic energy” (Weinstock 4). It’s this energy that usually draws the reader to the vampire of the story.

The third main part of any vampire story is that the vampire comes back, weather its because the vampire dies by stake through the heart or the vampire leaving on his own accord for the safety of the humans around them, they always come back, they return because the humans refuse to let them die, refusing to let go. Some stories use voodoo to get them back from the dead, or in twilight Bella simply jumps off a cliff to get her vampires to come back, I wouldn’t always root for the attempted suicide path, it may not be as effective and have some bad consequences.

One of the last pieces of the vampire puzzle is that the vampires are always considered outsiders, or “ other”. Different articles have different theories on what vampires may represent as outsiders weather its coming out of the coffin being like coming out of the closet, so the vampires represent the fear of homosexuality in our society or weather it represents race or even weather it’s a representation of how we just cant seem to escape the gender roles that have been in place for thousands of years.

The simple fact is that the vampire is an outsider in the community that it is in. Maybe this to is part of the allure that draws the females of this generation into these stories, that they are outsiders and the maternal instinct to take care of all things make the female in the stories feel such sympathy in the book, or story that they are in. But how did we get from point A the terrifying animated corpses to point B of the sparkling lover



vampire? The answer is really pretty simple Vampires are a malleable monster that have become what society has made them.

As a society we no longer fear what the people of the middle ages feared, because we have cleared things up through science and technological advances, and our higher reasoning that vampires don't actually exist, so we have turned them more or less into fairy tale creatures. Making them as cute and cuddly as a teddy bear in most cases. These stories focus on love that is worth dying for because today most people have a deep inner fear of never finding that kind of love. Paired with this is the fear of getting old or at least looking like you are getting old, the vampires stories in pop culture coddle those fears.

The article " Meme of the Year: Loving the Undead" states that Vampires are the most relatable among the sci-fi, fiction and fantasy characters. Also most vampires in pop culture are wealthy and devastatingly handsome which plays off two things that have become very important in today's society, money and good looks will get you pretty much anywhere, pick up and news magazine and this will be confirmed. The worlds in Twilight and True Blood are centered around mystery and deception, love and sex, (Unknown2, par 2) The reason that the vampire stories have shifted so much over the course of history is because humans themselves have changed.

Vampires have evolved into what humans want them to be, because they can easily look human and attempt to mesh into our world it brings us to these characters that are full of mysterious and speak to the side in most women that want a bad boy that's good to them. The books of Twilight, True

Blood and Vampire Diaries are flying off the shelves at bookstores and keeping an insane amount of viewers for their movies, or shows.

Adults and teenagers both flocking to these new emotional vampires, now a large part of this is no doubt because of the looks of the men and women cast in these stories. But the shift in vampire stories has left a genre that doesn't have women in their typical role in the kitchen or doing female dominated jobs. But the Females in these stories are falling for the male leads in almost an unhealthy way becoming pretty much dependent on the "men" in their lives to keep them emotionally stable.

It makes you wonder how this could be psychologically affecting the minds of tweens and teens that are obsessed with these stories. The main offender of this is the book and movie phenomenon Twilight, and the "perfect" boyfriend Edward Cullen. Though there aren't enough studies to show the exact effect that literature and movies have on the brain, scientist do know that they have an effect on the mind according to the journal "A Boy Friend to Die For" by Debra Merskin about Edward Cullen being a compensated psychopath.

The point of her article is to prove that Edward Cullen is a compensated psychopath (CP). A compensated psychopath is someone that is innately psychopathic and on the higher end of it but has learned to function in society. In the book Bella becomes completely dependent on Edward willing to almost kill herself to just hear a hallucination, and is willing to give up humanity just to be with him.

Edward is controlling and manipulating of Bella, doing what he thinks is best for her to stay safe but usually just hurting her more in the process. Edward tells her who she can be friends with and when she can hang out with them. He tries to keep her from her best friend because he doesn't approve. Edward also twist the truth when he speaks to Bella telling her only what she needs to know and leaving the rest out, often not even bothering to tell her what's going on at all and Bella just keeps following him.

Edward has so many of the traits in a classic case of compensated psychopath, he doesn't have a real sense of morality, psychopaths also don't have the ability to feel real love, though Edward says he loves Bella the only thing pouring through the novel is the sexual tension, Edward realizes that the instant gratification of drinking Bella's blood would kill her and there would be nothing left for him to gain, this is stereotypical for CP, finding that you have to wait for your prey. (Merskin 155)

All in all, Edward could be a great "man" for Bella but he has so many of the traits the psychiatrist would relate to having CP that it's a little hard to imagine. The Vampire is the bad boy of the paranormal world (Merskin 152) but having teenagers who are still growing and finding themselves subjected to creature that is supposed to be perfect yet exhibits these behaviors is emotionally damaging because these girls project and in turn want to find someone like their fiction character crush. In conclusion vampires are the monsters we make them.

Society changes the image of the vampire due to what they need, they want and what their true fears are. Vampires started out with monstrous legends and those that were sworn to see them all dead. Vampires in Slavic times

were just control elements and explanations of what at the time could not be explained, monsters that stalked the innocent women. Bram Stokers Dracula and Anne Rice's Interview with a Vampire were the next big jumps during the 70's changing them to the beginning of the emotional vampire and introducing the pure naughtiness and sexual aspect, also making them relatable to the public by giving them emotions, hopes and desires.

Finally come to today's pop culture, written by women for women, the irresistible bad boys of today's fiction world, a complete turn around, from ugly disgusting still live corpses to the sparkly vampires that teens and adults around the world have come to know and love. Is this love safe? No most likely not, but we'll just have to see what shift the vampire world makes next, hopefully back in the direction of monster.