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In Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, the title character is omnipresent. To the protagonists of the novel, the difficulty of escaping his power and ultimately defeating him is often overwhelming because he is always with them in some way, shape, or form. Throughout the novel, there are several displays of Dracula's considerable physical, emotional, and mental control. Moreover, there are constant reminders of Dracula, such as Mina's scar, which allow him the opportunity to have an effect on his victims even when he is nowhere near. First of all, Dracula possesses supernatural strength. According to Van Helsing, he has "the strength of twenty men" (Stoker 219). He can change the weather at will and also controls animals, in particular wolves, rats, and bats. This power over animals is extensive, as evidenced by the hordes of rats he sends to attack Lord Godalming, Morris, Harker, and Van Helsing (also referred to as the "Crew of Light") (Johnson 77). Conversely, Dracula's more complex powers are less recognizable than his ability to control weather and animals. These bone-chilling, manipulative skills are far more subtle and require the Crew of Light to invent new forms of protection. The force of Dracula's more discreet supernatural powers lies in the fact that they are cannot be easily contained or avoided. Stoker effectively portrays the invasive, unsettling, and uncontrollable qualities of Dracula's presence by having Dracula's mist form play a crucial role in the novel (Johnson 76). The mist greatly disturbs Mina, and understandably so. She says, "I felt the same vague terror which had come to me before, the same sense of some presence" (Stoker 251). She describes his transformation, "as if he had stepped out of the mist-or rather as if the mist had turned into his figure" (Stoker 251). The downside to the mist form is that Dracula can only use it at night. The mist form is not the only one of <https://assignbuster.com/the-same-vague-terror-draculas-methods-of-gaining-control-and-establishing-dominance/>

Dracula's powers that daylight deactivates. Dracula is also unable to take on his bat form in daylight. When he can utilize the power at night, he can travel much more inconspicuously and quickly. In his bat, mist, and dust forms, his movements are much less restricted. Dracula is most often associated with his bat form because his vampire and bat manifestations share certain characteristics, including night vision, sharp fanged teeth, flight, and bloodsucking. Van Helsing outlines many of the features that make Dracula such a deadly creature: "He can see in the dark, no small power this, in a world which is one half shut from the light... He came on moonlight as elemental dust, as again Jonathan saw those sisters in the castle of Dracula... He can be as bat, as Madam Mina saw him on the window at Whitby, and as friend John saw him so near house, and as my friend Quincy saw him on the window of Miss Lucy" (Stoker 211). Furthermore, Dracula's dust and mist forms allow him even greater flexibility in his mobility than his bat form, as evidenced by his entrance into Lucy's sealed tomb, where he is able to "slip through a hairbreadth space" (Stoker 211). The fact that as dust or mist, Dracula can easily gain entrance to places that are purposefully closed, such as Lucy's tomb and the Harkers' bedroom, adds to his power and omnipresence. A locked door is supposed to invoke a sense of security, and when that security is violated, the protagonists become even more uneasy. It tortures both the characters and the captive audience to never know when this monster could slide beneath a door or through a crack. Allowing Dracula these abilities was genius on the part of Stoker because it raised the stakes of the struggle between Dracula and his victims. The protagonists can take all the defensive measures that they want, but Dracula can always slip past them. Perhaps the most deliberately diabolical of <https://assignbuster.com/the-same-vague-terror-draculas-methods-of-gaining-control-and-establishing-dominance/>

Dracula's tactics is his ability to manipulate his victims' minds. Dracula takes full advantage of the plasticity of a fearful mind by using the power of suggestion and planting ideas. In one of the most horrific scenes of the book, Jonathan believes that he sees "the high lights of the Count's evil face...the awful pallor" and Lord Godalming later says "I thought I saw a face, but it was the only the shadows" (Stoker 221). Dracula makes them think that they were being watched so that they get scared and stop searching for the last coffin of dirt. His most evident mental corruption is his control of Renfield, whom Dracula uses as his lackey and spy, despite the considerable distance between them (McWhir 33). Renfield is Dracula's glorified puppet, who pays a steep price when he tries to cut his own strings. Dracula is also able to affect the Crew of Light's emotions even when he is not with them because of the scar on Mina's forehead. Mina's red scar serves as a perpetual reminder to all the characters of the immediacy of Dracula's threat. The scar is also the external sign of Mina's internal conflict with Dracula. "I [catch] sight in the mirror of the red mark on my forehead, and I [know] that I [am] still unclean" (Stoker 279), she says. Whenever Mina is present, her scar always infuriates the men, as evidenced by what Dr. Seward writes in his diary, "...with the red scar on her forehead, of which she was conscious, and which we saw with grinding of our teeth, remembering whence and how it came" (Stoker 230). Likewise, the scar symbolizes Mina's alienation from Jonathan, Quincy, Van Helsing, and Dr. Seward. She constantly repeats that she is unclean, and she hates that she has not only been attacked by Dracula, but is also permanently marked as a result of it. Physically, this scar causes Mina to bear a resemblance to Dracula. All of the members of the "Crew of Light" know of Dracula's scar: "We all recognized the Count-in every <https://assignbuster.com/the-same-vague-terror-draculas-methods-of-gaining-control-and-establishing-dominance/>

way, even to the scar on his forehead... the red scar on his forehead where Jonathan had struck him" (Stoker 247-251). The scar on Mina's forehead, along with her elongated, sharpened teeth, pale skin, and red lips shows that she is becoming more like Dracula. Especially in that time period, when appearances were of utmost importance, to look like a monster would have been truly terrifying to Stoker's readers (perhaps more so than actually becoming one). Since Mina is starting to look like Dracula, she is a blatant reminder of Dracula's overbearing omnipresence to those who are trying to defeat him. Another flagrant reminder of Dracula's power is his destruction of any evidence of his evil. The diaries are the primary documents that help guide the Crew of Light and benefit them the most in their hunt. Dracula destroys them with a fire that burns until " all the manuscripts [have] been burned, and the blue flames [are] flickering amongst the white ashes" (Stoker 249). Not only is the fire the way that Dracula destroys evidence, but it is also how Stoker incorporates the blue flames from the beginning of the book. When Harker is travelling to Castle Dracula, he sees blue flames in the countryside and is told that they indicate buried treasure. The blue flames that result from the burning manuscripts represent the treasure that the Crew of Light has " unburied", which is the information that they are using to wipe out vampires for the good of all humankind. Dracula's destruction of this treasure is essentially a survival tactic, as it is the surest way to slow them down. The loss of these primary documents are a harsh blow and yet another reminder of Dracula's power. Although Dracula's control is overwhelming, the " Crew of Light" remains perseverant, resilient, and optimistic. Although there are times when escape from Dracula's power seems futile, they fight back fiercely and it pays out in the end. The novel <https://assignbuster.com/the-same-vague-terror-draculas-methods-of-gaining-control-and-establishing-dominance/>

has a happy, yet somewhat bittersweet ending. However, the novel is intriguing by Dracula's impressive arsenal of tactics. By exerting his power physically, emotionally, and mentally, Dracula's fight for survival makes for an incredibly suspenseful novel, a classic piece of literature that has certainly withstood the test of time. While most audiences root for Dracula's defeat, the ingenuity of his tactics calls attention to his intelligence and resilience. Every facet of Dracula's intricate plan, every power he possesses, and every control tactic he utilizes makes his defeat seem like a Herculean task, which makes the final victory of the Crew of Light all the more engaging. Bibliography Stoker, Bram. *Dracula*. A Norton Critical Edition. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1997. 1-327. Print. Johnson, Allan. "Modernity and Anxiety in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*." *Critical Insights*. 72-84. Web. 13 Jan. 2013. McWhir, Anne. "Pollution and Redemption in *Dracula* ." *Modern Language Studies*. 17. 3 (1987): 31-40. Web. 22 Jan. 2013.