

Neil Jordan, *Interview with the Vampire* (US, 1994)

Script: Michael Christopher, Anne Rice, Neil Jordan
Camera: Philippe Rousselot
Music: George Fenton, Elliot Goldenthal
Studio: Warner Bros.

Louis: Brad Pitt
Lestat: Tom Cruise
Claudia: Kristen Dunst
Armand: Antonio Banderas
Santiago: Stephen Rea
Madeleine: Domiziana Giordano
Reporter: Christian Slater

Anne Rice's best-selling romantic horror tale about the origins of a centuries-old vampire inspired this popular, atmospheric chiller. One of director Neil Jordan's major Hollywood productions, the film stays close to its source material, retaining the frame of a young reporter (Christian Slater) interviewing a man who claims to be a 200-year-old vampire. Major deviations from the plot of the novel:

- The subplot of Louis's brother is removed. In the film, the human Louis is driven to desperation by the death of his wife at childbirth.
- The story of Louis's attachment to a mortal woman, Babette, is missing.
- Lestat's father is absent from the film. Of Lestat's past we know slightly more than Rice allows us: he was made into a vampire in Paris, where he initially lived. Several times in the film, he emphasizes the fact that he was not allowed to choose whether he wants to live as an immortal bloodsucker.
- Unlike in the novel, Lestat's motives for converting Louis into a vampire are not related to mercantile appetites.
- Louis and Claudia's journey through Eastern Europe is omitted.
- Lestat does not follow Louis to Paris, and is not responsible for Claudia's destruction.
- Unlike the novel, which leaves Lestat's future in obscurity, the film grants him rejuvenation at the end.

Fans of the novel raised numerous objections, particularly after Rice initially spoke out against the casting of Cruise as Lestat; further casting difficulties followed the death of River Phoenix, whose role as the interviewer was assumed by Christian Slater. Rice later recanted her objections, and the combination of thrills and gothic romance proved popular with audiences.

1. Compare your impression of Rice's Lestat to his portrayal in the film. Which aspects of his persona are highlighted by Jordan? How is his appeal changed?
2. One of the main motifs in the film is that of sunrise. Where does this motif appear? What is its function in the film? How does it shed light on Louis's character?
3. Statues are another recurrent image in the narrative. A statue coming to life is the first thing Louis sees with his new, vampiric, eyes. Where else does the film story mention/allude to statues? How is this theme relevant to the life story of Louis?
4. How do you make sense of Lestat's "resurrection" at the film's end? How is this alternation of the novel's plot motivated?
5. What has changed in the dynamics between Louis and Lestat from the novel to the film?