Menu

• Books, web-site, quizzes
• No film
• Sample exam questions
• Bram Stoker
• Victorian England
• Bram Stoker’s Dracula
Sample Exam Questions

1. Who was Vlad Tepes? When did he live? Where did he rule? What made him a convenient prototype of Bram Stoker’s Dracula?

2. Compare the German accounts of Vlad Tepes and his rule to those found in Romanian folklore. What kind of portrait emerges from the former? From the latter? How can you explain this divergence?

3. From the position of a present-day Romanian familiar with the national history, justify the actions of Vlad Tepes as a ruler. Give reasons for why the stories depicting Vlad as a monster can be seen as biased and untrustworthy. Your answer must show awareness of the historical situation during Vlad’s reign in Wallachia; the challenges he had to face from both outside and inside the country; and the peculiar position he occupied vis-à-vis the European West.
Bram Stoker (1847-1912)

• Irish civil servant
• Writer, drama critic
• Begins writing horror stories under the influence of Sheridan Le Fanu (“Carmilla,” 1872)
• Close relationship w/ actor Henry Irving; manager of Lyceum Theater
• Novel—mixed reviews
• Play—failure
Dracula, the Novel (1897)

- Stoker used histories of Romania written by Western scholars, plus books on Transylvanian folklore (Madame Emily de Laszkowska Gerard’s *Land Beyond the Forest* [1888])
- Stoker was the one who put together Vlad the Impaler and folkloric beliefs in vampirism to produce the figure of the bloodsucking count
- Story told in a combination of diary entries, letters, newspaper articles, telegrams, business notices, etc. Adds authenticity, “documentariness” to narrative.
- Events presented through the eyes of late 19th cen. Englishmen
Victorian England (1837-1901)

- Most of the period—time of prosperity, economic growth, imperialistic expansion
- Sense of national supremacy, social stability
- Pillars of Victorian society:
  - Religious belief, sacredness of family values
  - Civic and social habits
  - Dogma of moral responsibility
  - Belief that one’s character & abilities are sufficient to provide a respectable social position
  - Family roles: men—hard-working providers, women—angelic housekeepers
The Late Victorian Period (mid 1870s-late 1890s)

- The foreign threat:
  - Germany surpasses England in industrial output; the rise of US begins
  - uprisings in the colonies
  - large influx of immigrants (esp. from Eastern Europe)

- Social tensions: unemployment, underpaid working class, urban poverty, crime, prostitution

- The rise of the “new woman” as a threat to traditional family and gender balance

- (Social) Darwinism and the fear of “reverse evolution”
Points of Anxiety

- Boundaries (foreign vs. native; reverse colonization)
- The Animal (reverse evolution)
- Sexual orientation (suppressed leanings, appetites)
- Manhood (sense of vanishing virility; fear of the more potent “stranger,” “outsider”)
- Womanhood (fear of the “dark,” “irrational,” aspects of women’s psyche, sexuality, etc)
- Aristocratism (nobility of character vs. nobility by blood; the latter seen as a conservative force, source of decay, moral disease, etc.)
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<th>Question</th>
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<td>What boundaries does the novel place?</td>
<td>What animals play a role in the novel?</td>
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<td>What is their significance? What boundaries does the vampire cross?</td>
<td>What kind of role? What is Drac’s relation to animals? To “animalness”?</td>
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<td>What boundaries he cannot cross?</td>
<td>What does this suggest about him? Are there any motifs reminiscent of</td>
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<td>Darwin’s evolutionary theory?</td>
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<td>Who are the vampire hunters? By social position?</td>
<td>How are Drac’s daughters described?</td>
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<td>How are they contrasted w/ Drac? What do they fight for/over?</td>
<td>How are they different from Jonathan’s fiancee, Mina?</td>
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<td>What is the relationship b/w them? What is the role of Van Helsing?</td>
<td>How are Mina and Lucy different? What changes in Lucy’s behavior/</td>
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<td>appearance as she approaches vampirism? After she becomes a vampire?</td>
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<td>How do the men respond to these changes?</td>
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Dracula, Boundaries

• Opposition East—West, civilization—non-civilization (9-10)
• Dracula’s trip to England as a foreign invasion (26; 53-54)
• Mobility across space and obstacles
• Penetration of dwelling places and bodies
• Uncrossable boundaries: day/night (inconsistent in the novel), running water, threshold (without invitation)
**Dracula, Animals (Bestiality)**

- Drac rules over animals (wolves, dogs), speaks their language
- Compared to lizard (in his descent down the castle walls; 39), “filthy leech” (53), beast, etc.
- Hairiness (even on the palms!; 23-24)
- Transforms into a dog, bat
- Unusual, inhuman strength (17; 22; 181)
- Renfield’s evolutionary ladder of bloodsucking/ life: flies—spiders—sparrows—cats—humans (71)
**Dracula, Men**

- The Western “Crew of Light”—solicitor, nobleman, doctor, American adventurer, scientist w/ knowledge of the supernatural—crusading against an Eastern nobleman-warrior

- A male bond over victimized women (first, Lucy, later, Mina)

- The struggle vs. the vampire is, at the same time, an intellectual seduction whereby the “master” (VH) introduces his “pupils” to esoteric knowledge

- Displaced sexual energy finds outlet in homoerotic friendship (152)

- Jonathan & Drac’s “daughters”: surfacing of repressed desires? (41-44)
**Dracula, Women**

- Dracula’s “daughters”
  “There was a deliberate voluptuousness, both thrilling and repulsive” (42)
  “…it seemed like the pleasure of fiends” (43)
- Mina vs. Lucy
- Lucy’s “transformation” from an angelic woman into a “fiend”—metaphor for liberated female sexuality?
- Lucy’s body as a battlefield for male potency
- The staking of Lucy: an act of phallic violence?