

Bram Stoker

When people talk about horror stories they often think about the most famous vampire novel of all time – Dracula. Many people don't know that this spooky tale about a blood-sucking monster, which is set in Transylvania, was actually penned by a Dublin man – Bram Stoker.

Bram, or Abraham, was born on 8th November, 1847 in Clontarf on Dublin's Northside. As a young boy, Bram suffered from an unknown illness but, luckily for him, he recovered in time to attend Trinity College, Dublin where he studied mathematics and was a hugely successful athlete. He was always interested in philosophy, history, art and drama and began his career as a theatre critic with the Dublin Evening Mail. He would later go on to manage the famous Lyceum Theatre in London, which was owned by Henry Irving.

In 1878, Bram married Florence Balcombe from Marino in Dublin. Florence was very beautiful and had been a girlfriend of another famous writer, Oscar Wilde. Bram and Wilde would later become good friends. Bram and Florence had one son, Irving Noel Thornley Stoker. Bram had many notable friends including Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, who wrote Sherlock Holmes, and the American artist James Abbott McNeill Whistler. He was a keen fan of American writer, Walt Whitman.

Bram and Florence lived in London while he managed the Lyceum Theatre. He travelled extensively with its owner, Henry Irving, during this time also. He visited the USA on many occasions and was even invited to the White House twice, where he met Theodore Roosevelt and William McKinley. Surprisingly, however, Bram never ventured to Eastern Europe even though his most famous work Dracula would be set there.



Bram began writing Dracula in 1897. He was inspired by visits to Whitby in England, Slains Castle in Scotland and the tombs in St. Michan's Church in Dublin. This gothic or horror novel is based on the character of

Bram Stoker

Vlad Dracula, a vampire, who lives in a remote castle in Transylvania. He was influenced a great deal by European folklore and developments in science at this time, so many believe this led to some of the key ideas used in his writing. The original script was named *The Undead* but Bram later changed the title to what we know it by today. This script had been lost for many years but was discovered in a barn in Pennsylvania in the early 1980s. It showed Bram's corrections and notes, which provide clues about his inspirations for the novel.

Stoker died in London on 20th April, 1912. Nobody has determined the cause of his death for definite but his ashes are interred in Golders Green Crematorium. Later on his son's ashes were placed in the same urn. Many people still visit this site today.

Nowadays, *Dracula* is probably best known due to the many films and TV series that have been based on it. The Dublin actor, Jonathan Rhys Myers, portrayed Vlad Dracula in one such TV series. In Ireland, an annual Bram Stoker festival is held in Dublin each year to commemorate the writer's achievements and memory. He remains one of the country's most famous literary figures.



Bram Stoker Questions

Read each question carefully before writing a full answer. Remember to refer to the text as you do this.

1. When and where was Bram Stoker born?

2. Describe Bram's early life.

3. Who did Bram marry and what family did he have?

4. What fact might people find surprising when they consider Bram's travels?

5. What influences may have lead Bram to writing Dracula? What clues do we have to go by?

6. What type or genre of novel does Dracula belong to?

7. Why is Bram Stoker's Dracula so famous to this day?

Bram Stoker Questions

8. If you were to meet Bram Stoker today, what two questions would you most love to ask him about his life or writing?

9. List three suitable adjectives you would use to describe the novel Dracula.

10. Can you list any other books or novels which have also been written about the subject of vampires?

Bram Stoker Answers

1. When and where was Bram Stoker born?

Bram was born in Clontarf, Dublin in 1847.

2. Describe Bram's early life.

Bram was ill as a boy but he went on to study at Trinity College, Dublin. He enjoyed philosophy, art, drama and history. His first job was as a theatre critic. He was a talented athlete.

3. Who did Bram marry and what family did he have?

He married Florence Balcombe and had one son, Irving Noel Thornley Stoker.

4. What fact might people find surprising when they consider Bram's travels?

Bram never travelled to Eastern Europe where Dracula is set.

5. What influences may have lead Bram to writing Dracula? What clues do we have to go by?

He may have been influenced by new scientific discoveries and European folklore. We may use his notes and corrections in the original script to find clues.

6. What type or genre of novel does Dracula belong to?

It is a gothic or horror fiction novel

7. Why is Bram Stoker's Dracula so famous to this day?

It has been made into many films and TV series.

8. If you were to meet Bram Stoker today, what two questions would you most love to ask him about his life or writing?

Accept reasonable answers

9. List three suitable adjectives you would use to describe the novel Dracula.

Accept three appropriate adjectives.

10. Can you list any other books or novels which have also been written about the subject of vampires?

Accept appropriate books and novels