**Bram Stoker (1847-1912)**, Irish theatre critic and author wrote the Gothic horror novel *Dracula* (1897);

"It is the eve of St. George's Day. Do you not know that tonight, when the clock strikes midnight, all the evil things in the world will have full sway?"-- Ch. 1

Written in **epistolary fashion**, Stoker introduces us to the young solicitor Jonathan Harker as he travels to Transylvania to assist Count Dracula in a real estate transaction. While the first chapter starts off pleasantly enough, Harker soon begins to note odd happenings and details of the people and events he experiences while travelling deeper and deeper into the Carpathians. Gloomy castles standing high in the mountains, odd figures half-obscured by the dark, eerie landscapes with flashing lights, and howling wolves trail Harker as he journeys ... unaware of the mystery and horrors he and his love Mina Murray are soon to become entangled with. Only with the help of such noted characters as Professor Van Helsing, John Seward, Arthur Holmwood, and Quincey Morris does good prevail over evil.

*Dracula* is often referred to as the definitive vampire novel, but it is possible that Stoker was influenced by Joseph Sheridan LeFanu's (1814-1873) Gothic vampire novella *Carmilla* (1872). While Stoker wrote numerous novels and short stories, he is chiefly remembered today as the author of this best-selling novel. It has been translated to dozens of languages, inspired numerous other author's works, been adapted to the stage and film including the first version, *Nosferatu* (1922), starring Max Schreck. *Dracula* is still widely read and remains in print today.

Abraham "Bram" Stoker was born on 8 November 1847 in Clontarf, a suburb of Dublin, Ireland, the third of seven children--William Thornley, Mathilda, Thomas, Richard, Margaret, and George--born to Charlotte Mathilda Blake Thornely (1818-1901) and Abraham Stoker (1799-1876), Civil Servant. He was a sickly child, spending great amounts of time bed-ridden, barely able to walk. However, having fully recovered, in 1864 he entered Trinity College, Dublin to study mathematics, and, despite his earlier years of illness became involved in athletics, winning many awards. He was also elected President of the Philosophical Society. After graduating with honours in 1870 he followed in his father's footsteps and joined the Civil Service with Dublin Castle, which inspired his *The Duties of Clerks of Petty Sessions in Ireland* (1879). From his great love of the arts Stoker also started to write theatre reviews for the *Dublin Evening Mail*. One particular review of a performance of [William Shakespeare](http://www.online-literature.com/shakespeare/)'s *Hamlet* with actor [Sir] Henry Irving (1838-1905) in the lead role led to a great friendship between the two men and in 1878 Irving asked Stoker to be the manager of his Lyceum Theatre in London, England, a position he held for almost thirty years. Later Stoker would publish *Personal Reminiscences of Henry Irving* (2 volumes, 1906) and *Snowbound: The Record of a Theatrical Touring Party* (1908) which includes such theatre-based stories as "The Slim Syrens", "Mick the Devil", and "A Star Trap".

In 1878 Stoker married actress Florence Balcombe (1858-1937) with whom he had a son, Irving Noel Thornley (1879-1961). Stoker left his job in Dublin and the couple settled in London. It was here that Stoker became acquainted with many famous actors and such other notable authors of the time as Sir [Arthur Conan Doyle](http://www.online-literature.com/doyle/), [Oscar Wilde](http://www.online-literature.com/wilde/), and [William Butler Yeats](http://www.online-literature.com/yeats/). While not involved in the theatre, including travelling with them on tours in Europe and North America which inspired *A Glimpse of America* (1886), Stoker started to write novels including *The Primrose Path* (1875), *The Snake's Pass* (1890), *The Watter's Mou'* (1895), *The Shoulder of Shasta* (1895), *Miss Betty* (1898) and short stories collected in *Under the Sunset* (1881).

In 1890 Stoker holidayed in the North-east coast fishing village of Whitby in Yorkshire, where it is said he gleaned much inspiration for his novel *Dracula*. Other works by Stoker include *The Mystery of the Sea* (1902), his Egyptian mummy-themed *The Jewel of Seven Stars* (1903), *The Man* (also titled *The Gates of Life* 1905), *Lady Athlyne* (1908), *The Lady of the Shroud* (1909), *Famous Impostors* (1910), and *The Lair of the White Worm* (1911) which also includes elements found in *Dracula* like unseen evil, strange creatures, inexplicable events, and supernatural horrors.

The storm which was coming was already making itself manifest, not only in the wide scope of nature, but in the hearts and natures of human beings. Electrical disturbance in the sky and the air is reproduced in animals of all kinds, and particularly in the highest type of them all--the most receptive--the most electrical. So it was with Edgar Caswall, despite his selfish nature and coldness of blood. So it was with Mimi Salton, despite her unselfish, unchanging devotion for those she loved. So it was even with Lady Arabella, who, under the instincts of a primeval serpent, carried the ever-varying wishes and customs of womanhood, which is always old--and always new.--Ch. 27

Bram Stoker died in London, England on 20 April 1912. His ashes were mingled with his son's and they now rest in the Golders Green Crematorium in London, England. His wife Florence survived him by twenty-five years and had *Dracula's Guest and Other Weird Stories* published in 1922. Some claim that the story "Dracula's Guest" was actually supposed to be the first chapter for his novel *Dracula*. It also includes such titles as "The Gipsy Prophecy", "The Burial of the Rats", "A Dream of Red Hands", and "The Secret of the Growing Gold".

"We are all drifting reefwards now, and faith is our only anchor."--Ch. 23, Jonathan Harker's Journal, *Dracula*

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BIOGRAPHY 2

Born in Clontarf (near Dublin, Ireland) on November 8, 1847, Bram (Abraham) Stoker is recognized as one of **the most prominent Gothic authors of the Victorian *fin-de-siècle***. An accomplished athlete, journalist, author, biographer, theatre critic and theatre manager, Stoker is best known for his Gothic masterpiece *Dracula* (1897). Like his immortal creation Count Dracula, Stoker's life is shrouded in mystery, from his rumored participation in occult circles, to his purported death from syphilis.

Stoker was educated at Trinity College, "where he won honours in science, mathematics, oratory, history, and composition ("Obituary"). After graduating he entered the Irish Civil Service where he served as Inspector of Petty Sessions (Byron 9). In 1876 Stoker met the actor [Henry Irving](http://www.victorianweb.org/mt/irving.html) and by 1878 had moved to London where he was acting manager at the famous [Lyceum Theatre](http://www.victorianweb.org/art/architecture/classical/3.html). It was there that Stoker entered into fashionable circles through which we learn much of his character and influences. In the same year Stoker married Florence Balcombe, who was also courted by [Oscar Wilde](http://www.victorianweb.org/authors/wilde/index.html). There has been much speculation about the Stokers' family dynamic, some of which suggests that the marriage was loveless (10). The Stokers' only child, Noel, was born in 1879.

Stoker's interest in the supernatural and the occult — which would become a salient focus for his later fiction — may have been rooted in his unidentified childhood illness, which supposedly kept him bed-ridden until the age of seven; this seclusion would be compounded by an interest in Irish folklore, which often concerned tales of bogeys and vampires. In fact, Stoker's later interests included "Egyptology, Babylonian lore, astral projections, and alchemy" (Bedford 211), and he was rumored to be a member of the infamous Order of the Golden Dawn, an esoteric circle of magicians attended by W.B. Yeats and Aleister Crowley; however, today such rumors are largely viewed as apocryphal.

Stoker published his stories since 1872, including the "Crystal Cup" (1872), his first horror tale "The Chain of Destiny" (1875), a collection of children's stories *Under the Sunset* (1881), and his first novel *The Snake's Pass* (1890), but he did not realize fame until the overwhelming success of *Dracula* (1897). The responses in popular periodicals were broad, but generally positive. One 1897 review in the *Athenaeum* even states that Stoker goes "'one better' than others in the [supernatural] field" (Senf 59). He began the novel in 1890 and was influenced by his visit to Whitby, where he discovered in William Wilkinson's *An Account of the Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia* a reference to the historical Dracula (Byron 27). [Originally, the novel was to be entitled "The Undead"] He also researched Eastern European folklore and geography in travel guides, the most well known source being Emily Gerard's *The Land Beyond the Forest* (1888). The reasons for *Dracula's* success are many, and it has become a major focus for stage, musical and cinematic adaptations and, more recently, has become a major focus of academic criticism.

Stoker continued to write Gothic and fantasy fiction, including *The Lair of the White Worm* (1911), which would eventually be made into a cult film, and published Henry Irving's biography, *Personal Reminiscences of Henry Irving* (1906). In 1907, he also entered the debate over censorship with the essays "The Censorship of Fiction" and "The Censorship of Stage Plays," which were published in *The Nineteenth Century* (Byron 28). "Dracula's Guest," an excised chapter from *Dracula*, was published posthumously in 1914.

After being ill since 1906, Stoker died on a Saturday evening April 20, 1912 at 26, St. George's Square S.W. London ("Obituary"). His death, although often attributed to syphilis, was likely due to a stroke.

(a new Dracula thread in General Literature)