Cultural Adaptations of Dracula

Earlier Legends

Myths and legends of vampires go back to Egyptian, Chinese, Greek, Babylonian, Assyrian, and other Eastern cultures of antiquity. Ancient ideas about how to destroy a vampire include:

* Burial of the corpse at a crossroads (Bohemia)
* Chaining the corpse to the grave with wild roses (Bulgaria)
* Piling stones on the grave (Ireland)
* Burying the corpse face down which confuses them so that they can not escape upwards (Poland)
* Placing a lemon in the corpse’s mouth (Saxony)
* Burying poppy seeds in the grave, because the undead can’t resist obsessively counting them and ignore everything else, so that they won’t bother the family (Prussia)
* To rid a strigoi generated by a cat or dog walking over or under an unburied body, bury a bottle of wine near the person’s grave, then in 6 weeks dig it up and share it with those you wish to protect. (Cazanesti, Romania)

Here is a more extensive list of early vampire legends: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/dna/place-lancashire/plain/A273566](http://news.bbc.co.uk/dna/place-lancashire/plain/A273566)

Dracula Adaptations: Early Stage and Film

There are four major categories of modern vampires:

* The folkloric vampire
* The female vampire
* The aristocratic vampire
* The "unseen force"

Stage Adaptations

Bram Stoker protected his rights to produce his work on the stage. The first reading of the play-script was at Lyceum Theatre on May 18 1897, it was 5 acts and 47 scenes, over 5 hours long. It was first licensed for dramatization in the mid 1920’s.

The first play was in 1924, and was a great hit. It changed the image of the gaunt Dracula with bad breath into a suave man. There were lots of magic effects including flash boxes, demonstrations of hypnosis, and a coffin where the vampire corpse vanished. The critics did not respond well to this play, but the fans liked it a lot.

The play first came to America on October 5, 1927. It was restaged in 1977, and got average reviews. Since 1970, at least 9 other theatrical versions have been staged, including 3 musical productions.

Film Adaptations

The earliest known film was made in 1921 in Hungary and it was probably called Death of Dracula. There are no remaining copies of the film available, but the filmbook still exists. The movie was similar in theme, but there was no blood sucking, just hypnotizing.

In March 1922 Nosferatu opened in Berlin. When Florence Stoker found out about the film, she sued them and the court ordered all copies to be destroyed in 1925. However, copies of the film kept popping up and still exist today.

The 1931 film adaptation of Dracula is considered the most successful. It stars Bela Lucosi as Dracula, Edward Van Sloan as Van Helsing, and Dwight Frye as Reinfeild. These became iconic roles for them.

In 1931 another Dracula was filmed using the same set, except using the set at night. This film was in Spanish.

In 1958 there was a successful movie called Dracula or The Horror of Dracula, then another called Count Dracula in 1978. I Am Legend was initially a vampire novel written by Richard Matheson. There was a vampire soap opera called Dark Shadows, which ran from 1966 – 1971, where Dracula saw Mina’s picture in a newspaper and thought she was a reincarnation of his long lost wife.

In 1979 there was yet another film made named Dracula, which downplayed the horror of the story and focused on the romantic aspects and the campiness and humor. Then in 1992 there was an adaptation called Bram Stoker’s Dracula by Francis Ford Coppola, which won 3 Oscars and focused on the redemptive power of love.

Several humorous adaptations came out, including Abott and Costello Meet Frankenstein (1948), Love at First Bite (1979), and Dracula: Dead and Loving it (1995).

Recent Popular Adaptations

Anne Rice: The Vampire Chronicles

In the world of The Vampire Chronicles, the vampires are descended from 2 Egyptian nobles, Akasha and Enkil, who worship Osiris, and a spirit who wants a corporeal existence possesses them. The spirit entered them through wounds, and they create other vampires to help them gain flood for the spirit. Once created, the spirit connects the other vampires via a weak telepathic link.

The vampire’s of Anne Rice’s world have the following traits:
* Sustained by blood
* Immortal
* Christian symbols and other religious relics have no power over them
* Can survive in the sun
* Fire will destroy them
* Wooden stakes, garlic, and other folklore items are ineffective
* Reflected in mirrors, photographable, and need no invitation to enter
* Have souls
* Some, but not all sleep in coffins
* Unusually attractive with magnetic personalities
* Blood drinking is erotic for both the vampire and the prey
* Turning into a vampire is when the vampire drinks most of the victim’s blood, then the victim has to drink the blood of the vampire
* Many vampires are concerned with morality issues

**Buffy the Vampire Slayer**

In the Buffy universe, the world used to be filled with regular demons and humans, but then the demons fled to different places. During this time, there became “half demons” who were mixed blood. A vampire is a corpse inhabited by a demon, with the following traits:

* No shape shifting
* Turn to ash/dust when killed
* Killed by decapitation, penetration of heart with wood, or fire
* They are burned by direct sunlight but can function during the day
* Affected by religious symbols
* Can cross running water, and enter a church
* Don’t need to sleep in a coffin or bed of native earth
* No reflection
* Cast a shadow
* Can be photographed
* Do not breathe
* Can not enter a home unless invited
* No soul or concern for moral issues
* There is a scientific means of rendering vampires incapable of harming humans, one vampire is “tamed” by a chip implanted in his brain by a mysterious government agency

**Comte de Saint-Germain – novels by Chelsea Quinn Yarbro**

Saint-Germain became a vampire when he offered himself as sacrifice to the pre-Etruscan “god” of his people

* Over four thousand years old
* Requires his native earth for rest
* No reflection
* Finds sunlight harmful
* Heals rapidly
* Physically vulnerable
* Human appearance
* Requires intimacy from humans and only takes blood in an erotic exchange and emotional release
* He offers his partners the vampire life, but once they become vampires he can no longer share his bond with them
* Has great wisdom and generosity
* Is prepared to die to save others
* Often risks his life by practicing medicine in cultures that vilify him
* Seems to have already solved his moral issues
* Does not require death to survive, only blood
* Chose a life of goodness and mercy
* Retained his immortal soul and body

**The Vampire Diaries**

The first family that became vampires did so to avoid dying in a plague. They went to a witch to protect them from the rampant disease and the witch made them into the first vampires. These vampires have:

* Mind compulsion
* Emotional control
* Healing powers
* Immortality
* Super durability, heightened senses, super speed, and super strength

Their weaknesses are:
* Wood: if they are wounded with wood it will make them severely weak, and a wooden stake through the heart will kill them
* Exposure to fire or sunlight will result in permanent death
* Decapitation
* Heart extraction
* Vervain exposure
* Uninvited invitation
* Broken neck, though not fatal, will leave a vampire unconscious for several hours
* Magic
* Lack of blood, if a vampire doesn’t get enough blood they will desiccate and mummify
* Werewolf bite is lethal
* Vampire Bloodline, if the Original vampire is killed, all the vampires who have been turned by it may die as well.
** The only way to kill an Original is with a dagger dipped in white oak ash that dates back to the Original. The dagger can only be handled by humans, if any demon attempts to kill an Original with the dagger, they will die.

Forgetting Sarah Marshall

* In the popular Hollywood film, Forgetting Sarah Marshall, Jason Segel’s character Peter Bretter writes and performs a musical with Dracula as the protagonist, and Van Helsing as the antagonist. Bretter presents Dracula as a sympathetic figure, and claims “he’s a person just like everyone else, and just wants to be loved.”

Sources