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# The Peculiarities Of Epistolary Form, Themes And Characters In Dracula

## Form, Structure, and Plot

The novel *Dracula*, written by Bram Stoker; it was released in the 19th century, is a deftly organized structure that is written in epistolary form (an epistle is an ancient term for letters), which is a novel based on letters, that has the narration take place in the forms of letters. The epistolary novel is an absorbing literary technique, because it authorizes a writer to include numerous narrators in his story. This means the story can be told and interpreted from multiple viewpoints. *Dracula* is mainly narrated by numerous narrators who also serve as the novel's main protagonists; Stoker added an extra element to the story with infrequent newspaper clippings to make a connection with the events not directly witnessed by the story's characters. By formatting his novel in the episodic format, Stoker augmented the reading experience, helping it to be a surprise and thrill classical story become clearer and seem more believable to the reader (Epistolary - Examples and Definition of Epistolary). The book itself is four hundred and eight pages long and contains twenty-seven chapters. The novel begins with Jonathan Harker, {a young English lawyer} as he travels to Transylvania. Harker plans to meet with one of his clients, Count Dracula, in order to complete a property transaction. When Harker arrives in Transylvania, the locals react with horror after he reveals his destination of Castle Dracula. Though this uncertain him vaguely, he continues. The baleful howling of wolves through the air as he arrives to his destination. When Harker meets Dracula, he realizes that the man is pale, haggard, and strange. He becomes further concerned when Dracula lunges at his throat right after he cuts himself while shaving. Soon after, Harker is seduced by three female vampires, whom he even barely escapes from. He then figures out Dracula's secret which is being a vampire and survives by drinking live human blood. Harker assumes that he is going to be Dracula's next victim. So he attacks the count, but it was unsuccessful. Dracula leaves Harker trapped in castle and then, along with 50 boxes of dirt, where he departs for England. (*Dracula*. Encyclopædia Britannica,.)

## Theme

In the novel, *Dracula* there is a central idea of being trapped with a feeling of helplessness and fear of overcoming himself after he realizes that he has become even more trapped. Stoker expresses this by his expression throughout the excerpt of his novel. Stoker uses diction to set the tone of his book. One example where Stoker uses tone to show the fear of being trapped is where he begins to question things like the previous incidents that had occurred, "What does it mean that he could control the wolves, as he did, by only holding up his hand in silence. How was it that all the people at Bistritz and on the coach had some terrible fear for me?..(Stoker 37)

One of the main themes of *Dracula* is the role of good and evil. There are characters that are either on two different sides - some good, others evil. The only obvious character that is 'evil' is Count Dracula, however if you pay attention to what some of the other characters have to say, it is sometimes make you wonder whether they are either good or evil. It is not always easy to

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figure out whether a character has an element of goodness in them, one of the ways to tell is by what they are dressed. We all know that Dracula is on the evil side, however the way he dresses also tells you about his personality. He is described early on, when Jonathan Harker first meets him as 'A tall old man...clad in black from head to foot, without a single speck of colour about him anywhere'. (Stoker) This is the colour which we associate with evil, even . The way that garlic and a crucifix can suddenly create an immense barrier between the two, means it must have a great symbolic meaning. And the way that good people wear white and are described as 'white figures' and evil people wear black and are described as a 'tall black figure' indicates that these colours show a true distinction between the two. Then there is a theme called appearances versus reality and it is of Dracula during the day (aristocrat) is his appearance, but in reality he is a vampire. His aristocracy is only a persona to lure people.

Lucy seemed to be anaemic since she was pale and she faints, however, in reality, she was transforming into a vampire. Also Feminist Mina and Lucy represents the new form of femininity. They mention the 'New Woman' which is a woman who does not care about the social norms in Victorian society and there is Sexual desire

Lucy and the Three Vampire Sisters represents the underlying sexual desires. During the Victorian Era, men and women could not express their sexual desire to one another, as it would be seen as a sin of lust. An example "The fair girl went on her knees and bent over me, fairly gloating. There was a deliberate voluptuousness which was both thrilling and repulsive, and as she arched her neck, she actually licked her lips like an animal, till I could see in the moonlight the moisture shining on the scarlet lips and on the red tongue as it lapped the white, sharp, teeth" (Stoker 50). This particular passage describes the mixed feelings men had towards forward women; temptation made the "unnatural" occurrence of female sexual advances desirable. (Reflection and Rebuke of Victorian Society) Lucy and the Three Sisters represent the sin of lust and how their sexual behaviours can affect others. For example, the Sisters try to seduce Harker, thus causing him to feel his sexual desires emerging, however, due to his religious beliefs, he continues to suppress his urges until after marriage. finally the last theme is Religion, Throughout the novel religion is the most prominent theme. Dracula can be seen as the alter-ego of God. He uses many concept of Christianity, like the Holy Communion, and perverts it to fit his needs. He also has many followers, like Renfield, the Sisters, and Lucy and has inhuman characteristic, like God.

## Point of view

The structure of this novel helps to identify the situation of one of more, it help you get to know each position of a person, explore each position, and examine methodically of the detail of the structure, and what they have learned. This structure helps allow one to see things from someone else's perspective of their own view. By replaying a scene in which it occurred from the viewpoints of all the characters, one may get a clearer picture of what actually happened, how the other person sees the situation, of there motivation. For instance Mina states in her diary: "I have been working very hard lately, because I want to keep up with Jonathan's studies, and I have been practicing shorthand very assiduously. When we are married I shall be able to be useful to Jonathan, and if I can stenograph well enough I can take down what he wants to say in this way and write it out for him on the typewriter, at which also I am practicing very hard... I may show it to Jonathan some day if there is in it anything worth sharing, but it is really an exercise book" (Stoker 67).

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## Character

An analysis of the main characters gives a more deep understanding of Dracula. The major characters in the story are Count Dracula, Jonathan Harker, Dr. Van Helsing, Mina (Murray) Harker, Lucy, Dr. John Seward, Arthur Holmwood, and Quincey P. Morris. Dracula is the greatest vampire, who in life had been a man of legend ("Dracula"). This is because Dracula is actually based on a real fifteenth-century family (SparkNotes Editors). He is supposed to be a descendant of the Prince of Wallachia Vlad Dracula (SparkNotes Editors). Vlad was exceptionally smart and infamously violent. He enjoyed a gory career just like Count Dracula (SparkNotes Editors). Vlad has a reputation for slaughtering beggars, forcing women to consume their babies, and piercing his enemies on long spikes (SparkNotes Editors). Dracula is similar to sin: at first sin looks pleasing, and fun; but only after committing it, does it show how destructive it actually is. Count living in a castle in the Carpathian mountains, near present-day Romania (or Transylvania), Dracula is a member of an ancient family of warriors, some of whom fought against the Huns, the Turks, and other invaders in Central Europe in the Middle Ages. Dracula is also a vampire, or an Undead being that sleeps at night, turns into a bat at will, and must feed on the blood of the living to survive. At the beginning of the novel, Dracula is doing business with Jonathan Harker, an English solicitor's assistant, in order to buy property in London; as the novel progresses, Dracula comes to London, bringing with him 50 wooden boxes filled with sacred earth, in which he sleeps to restore and preserve his powers. Eventually, Dracula is tracked down by Harker, Van Helsing, Seward, and others, as he feeds on the blood of the women Lucy and Mina; the group then destroys Dracula's boxes and, eventually, Dracula himself, by stabbing him in the heart and a stake, and cutting off his head, freeing his soul.

Jonathan Harker is a young solicitor, who is naïve and at first does not take any heed in the warning he got while on his way to Count Dracula's castle. Once he finds himself a prisoner, he is very inquisitive to discover the truth about Count Dracula, and figuring out a way to escape. It is only after Dracula attacks Mina, that Jonathan changes from a self-doubting, thinking man into a vicious warrior, always sharpening his knife (SparkNotes Editors). It is in this way that Jonathan is the dynamic character, for he becomes almost completely opposite of what he was in the beginning of the story.

Dr. Van Helsing is a philosopher and a metaphysician, who can be strong-willed, and is the only character that possesses an open mind enough to contemplate and address Dracula's evil intentions. Helsing seems to have knowledge of superstitions and folk remedies. He lives in two distinct worlds, the old and the new (SparkNotes Editors). The First is marked by fearful respect for tradition, and the second by ever-progressing innovation (SparkNotes Editors). He envisions his band as "ministers of God's own wish," and reassures his comrades that "we go out as the old knights of the Cross to redeem more" (SparkNotes Editors) (Stoker 283). An eminent professor from Amsterdam, and a learned 'man of science,' Van Helsing was Seward's former teacher; Seward calls him to England to help with the case of Lucy. Van Helsing later leads the group, including Seward, on the hunt to 'truly kill' Lucy and track down and truly kill Dracula. Van Helsing speaks a kind of non-idiomatic, 'choppy' English

Mina is the ultimate Victorian woman, for she wants nothing more than to be a good wife to her husband and to be a good woman in the eyes of God (SparkNotes Editors) Harker's fiancée, and then wife, Mina tends to Lucy, her friend and Arthur's fiancée, during Lucy's illness; it then turns out that Lucy was preyed upon by Dracula. Mina, in turn, has her blood sucked by

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Dracula, and through a 'blood link' formed between her and Dracula, Mina is able to channel his thoughts when hypnotized by Van Helsing.

("Dracula"). In Dr. Helsing words, "She has a man's brain – a brain that a man should have where he much gifted – and a woman's heart. The good Old fashioned her for a purpose, believe me, when he made that so good combination" (Stoker 208). She Proves time and time again that she is equal to the men, who are on this crusade to kill Dracula.

Lucy is Mina's best friend and is an attractive, vibrant young woman. Because She is such an attractive young woman, she has three suitors, Dr. John Seward, Arthur Holmwood, and Quincey P. Morris, from whom she must choose. Lucy chooses Arthur, but does not marry him, due to the fact that she becomes a vampire. After Lucy has turned into a vampire, it compromises her much-praised chastity, and virtue. She is the main reason that Helsing and the rest first start to believe in vampires, and declare war on vampires.

Arthur's fiancée, Lucy is stricken by sleepwalking and then an unknown illness. As it turns out she is being stalked and her blood drunk by Dracula. Lucy is best friends with Mina, who wonders what is happening as Lucy begins to waste away and lose a great deal of blood. Lucy is treated by Seward and Van Helsing, though she later turns into a vampire, and must be killed 'again' in her tomb by Arthur, Van Helsing, and the rest of the group

Dr. John Seward runs the insane asylum near to Dracula's castle. In this asylum, he conducts ambitious interviews with one of his patients, Renfield, in order to understand better the nature of life-consuming psychosis. Although he is not as smart, brave, or in love as some of the other characters, he is a good narrator for the story ("Dracula"). This is because he smart, and brave enough and informed and inquisitive enough for the plot of the story to unfold naturally through his eyes ("Dracula").

Arthur Holmwood becomes Lord Godalming after his father dies. He inherits the title, and he also inherits large estates from Lucy's mother. Arthur is a sensitive, sensible and strong man, and Helsing enjoys him as a colleague. Arthur is strong, because he does whatever circumstances demand. For example, he agrees to kill Lucy's demonic form. He is also generous, for he pays for the whole vampire hunt and lets everyone use his title to gain access to information about Dracula. Quincey Morris is an American from Texas, who proves to be a brave and good hearted man. He is an early American stereotype; he calls ladies "little girl" and he calls Seward "Jack" ("Dracula"). He only seems to be in this hunt on Dracula because of his love for Lucy, otherwise he has nothing great at stake. In the end, he sacrifices his life in order to rid the world of Dracula's influence. fiancé, Arthur is an English nobleman (Lord Godalming) of a somewhat nervous and emotional temperament. Van Helsing convinces Arthur that Arthur must stab Lucy in the heart to 'free her' from her vampirism, and to achieve closure—to realize that Lucy can only be 'safe' when she is no longer forced to exist as an Un-Dead.

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