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| |  |  | | --- | --- | | **LIFE**  Born in 1847 in Clontarf, County Dublin, Ireland, Bram Stoker is best known as the author of the Gothic horror tale *Dracula*. Although an invalid in early childhood—he could not stand or walk until he was seven—Stoker outgrew his weakness to become an outstanding athlete and football (soccer) player at Trinity College (1864–70) in Dublin, where he earned a degree in mathematics. Stoker was also fascinated by the science of his day—particularly medical science. His older brother, Thornley, was a notable surgeon; some of Thornley’s lectures on brain surgery appear in Bram Stoker’s notes for *Dracula*. In the late nineteenth century, medical science included some exploratory fields that we might not strictly consider science today. For example, Bram Stoker was a member of the Society for Psychical Research, a group of spiritualists whose supernatural and psychic investigations were taken seriously by at least some of their members (notably including Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, creator of mastermind Sherlock Holmes and believer in fairies).  In 1878 Stoker married Florence Balcombe, a celebrated beauty whose former suitor had been Oscar Wilde. Stoker had known Wilde from his student days, having proposed him for membership of the university’s Philosophical Society while he was president. Wilde was upset at Florence's decision, but Stoker and Wilde later resumed their acquaintanceship.  After 10 years in the civil service at Dublin Castle, during which he was also an unpaid drama critic for the Dublin *Evening Mail*, in 1876 Stoker made the acquaintance of his idol, the actor Sir Henry Irving, and, from 1878 until Irving’s death 27 years later in 1905, Stoker acted as Irving’s manager, writing as many as 50 letters a day for him and accompanying him on his American tours.  Turning to fiction late in life, Stoker published his first novel, *The Snake’s Pass*, a romantic thriller with a bleak western Ireland setting, in 1890. His masterpiece, *Dracula*, appeared in 1897. The immensely popular novel enjoyed equal success in several versions as a play and as a film.  After suffering a number of strokes, Stoker died in London on April 20, 1912. Some biographers attribute the cause of death to late-stage syphilis, others to overwork.    Establishing herself as a writer in her hometown, in 1964 she gained recognition for her essay “Notes on Camp.” She published four novels and nine works of non-fiction, and directed four feature-length films. She died in 2004 in New York City.  **KEY IDEAS IN ONG’S *ORALITY AND LITERACY***  How the psychologies of sight and sound differ  Consciousness  Writing as a technology  Language and its influence on self and society  Media in history  How knowing the ancient world helps us understand the present and future | ***Links and Parallels with Oscar Wilde***   * Stoker began writing *Dracula* one month after Wilde was arrested for "gross indecency" in 1895 * In Dublin, both attended Trinity College in the 1870s—though Stoker was there earlier—and were friends * both Irishmen moved to England to become part of the literary, artistic, theatrical world of London in the 1880s and 90s * both were engaged to Florence Bascombe, who later married Stoker * Stoker met Bascombe through Wilde's mother * After Wilde’s trial, Stoker was one of a few of Wilde's friends who did not entirely turn away from him * Scholars have noticed, however, that Stoker erased all references to Wilde in his published and unpublished journals * Wilde released from prison and Stoker publishes *Dracula* in the same year, 1897   **COMMENTARIES ON STOKER**  “Modern critical accounts of *Dracula*, for instance, almost universally agree that vampirism both expresses and distorts an originally sexual energy. That distortion, the representation of desire under the defensive mask of monstrosity, betrays the fundamental psychological ambivalence identified by Franco Moretti when he writes that ‘vampirism is an excellent example of the identity of desire and fear.’ This interfusion of sexual desire and the fear that the moment of erotic fulfillment may occasion the erasure of the conventional and integral self informs both the central action in *Dracula* and the surcharged emotion of the characters about to be kissed by ‘those red lips.’ So powerful an ambivalence, generating both errant erotic impulses and compensatory anxieties, demands a strict, indeed an almost schematic formal management of narrative material.”  − Christopher Craft, “’Kiss Me With Those Red Lips’:  Gender and Inversion in Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*,  *Representations* 8 (1984)  …Women [readers] may wonder why Dracula is the single male vampire in the novel while four of the five women characters are portrayed as vampires - aggressive, inhuman, wildly erotic, and motivated only by an insatiable thirst for blood. In fact the first half of the novel centers on the innocent Lucy Westenra's transformation into a vampire which must be violently destroyed…. Stoker's treatment of women in *Dracula*[, however,] does not stem from [a] hatred of women in general but, as this paper demonstrates, from his ambivalent reaction to topical phenomenon - the New Woman.”  − Carol A Senf, “*Dracula*: Stoker’s Response to the New Woman ,  *Victorian Studies* (1982) | |  |  | |

**Bram Stoker**

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***“***Persistently, an anxious text.”

—Geoffrey Wall on *Dracula* (qtd. in Byron 15)

 