

# DRACULA

A DRAMA IN TWO ACTS ADAPTED BY  
*Laramie Dean*  
FROM THE NOVEL BY  
*Bram Stoker*



**CLASSROOM STUDY GUIDE**

## Introduction

*Dracula* is a highly theatrical exploration of the evil that lurks inside all of us, and how it can become all-consuming, draining our humanity and turning us into monsters.

## Playwright Bio

Laramie Dean was born and raised on a ranch in northeastern Montana. His move to the “big city” of Missoula in high school allowed him to take drama classes at Hellgate High School, opening up a theatrical world of possibilities.

Laramie earned his BFA in acting at the University of Montana before moving across the country to work on his PhD in playwriting at Southern Illinois University in Carbondale. Since then he has performed, written, and directed numerous plays, including *Othernatural*, a one-man show, which was performed at Stage Left’s Left Out Festival in New York City and again at Missoula’s own Crystal Theatre.

For the past several years he has been commissioned by the Montana Repertory Theatre to compose plays for their Educational Tour: *The Gorgon Sisters* in 2014, *Bronte to the Future* in 2016, and *Morgan and Merlin* in 2018. He was also recently commissioned by Storytree Theatre to write *Ladies Among Lions*, a play about the heroines of Shakespeare.

Laramie is currently enjoying his dream job as the theatre director right back at Hellgate High School, where he has recently written and directed adaptations of *The Wizard of Oz*, *Dracula*, *Frankenstein*, and *Little Women*. Visit him at [bylaramiedean.com](http://bylaramiedean.com).

## Synopsis

Count Dracula travels from his castle in Transylvania to England with the intent of creating more vampires like himself. But little does he know that one woman may possess enough strength to destroy him forever.

## Characters

**COUNT VLAD DRACULA:** A 500-year-old Transylvanian vampire. Drinks blood to maintain his youth and immortality. Having bled dry most of his homeland, he seeks to conquer England.

**MINA MURRAY HARKER:** A young Englishwoman engaged to Jonathan Harker. Former paramour of Abraham Van Helsing.

**JONATHAN HARKER:** A young up-and-coming British solicitor. Engaged to Mina Murray.

**LUCY WESTENRA:** Mina's best friend with whom she grew up; a young woman skating dangerously close to the edge of sanity.

**ABRAHAM VAN HELSING:** A young British doctor, once in love with Mina. Was engaged to Lucy. An expert on diseases of the blood and metaphysics, including hypnotism and vampires.

**R.M.RENFIELD:** Once a solicitor in Harker's firm, driven mad by Dracula, now his willing slave. Believes that eating smaller forms of life will grant him immortality.

**BRIDE 1:** One of Dracula's vampire wives; she is the youngest.

**BRIDE 2:** Dracula's middle bride; usually sides with Bride 1.

**BRIDE 3:** The eldest and most powerful of Dracula's vampiric wives.

**CAPTAIN OF THE DEMETER:** Russian captain of the ship taking Dracula from Transylvania to England.

**ATTENDANT:** Worker at Van Helsing's asylum.

**BUTLER:** Works for Lucy.

**GYPSY:** Powerful Transylvanian in charge of making certain that Dracula reaches his castle safely.

**NOSFERATU:** The undead.

**ASSORTED MONSTERS:** Vampires, monsters, and werewolves who inhabit the underworld. They may also act as stagehands, changing furniture between scenes.

## Themes

Betrayal, death, love, relationships

## Pre-Read Questions

- ★ What comes to mind when you hear the name Count Dracula? What do you picture?
- ★ What adaptations of *Dracula* are you familiar with?
- ★ Who is your favorite Halloween character or creature?
- ★ What kind of creature is Count Dracula?
- ★ What genre would you classify *Dracula* as?
- ★ What elements make a good horror story?
- ★ What is an adaptation? Name an example of an adaptation you know.

## Pre-Read Activities

### Drawing Dracula

- ★ There are many different ways that artists portray Dracula, from the Count on Sesame Street to the 1930s Dracula.
- ★ Tell students they are going to create their own rendition of Dracula. What does he look like? Does your Dracula have fangs? A cape? Or something completely different?
- ★ Provide students with paper and coloring utensils to create their own version of Dracula. Give them about 10 minutes to create their Dracula.

- ★ Once students are done, have them name their creation and present it to the class.
- ★ Discuss:
  - » What inspired your Dracula?
  - » Is there anything you wish you had time to add? Anything you would take away now?
  - » What is your favorite characteristic of your Dracula?

### **Research Project: Dracula**

- ★ Divide students into groups and have them research the origins of Dracula.
  - » How did the character of Dracula come about? What is the character's origin story?
  - » When was the original *Dracula* published? What was the reaction?
  - » How has the original novel been adapted? What was the first? What's the most popular?
  - » How do people describe Dracula? What characteristics do they mention?
  - » What surprises you about Dracula?
- ★ Decide how students will share a summary of their research. Will they do a scene reenacting it? An oral presentation with a visual component? Will they create a quiz? Give students a way to demonstrate what they've learned.

### **Research Project: Author**

- ★ Divide students into groups and give them a limited amount of time to research the author of the original horror novel, Bram Stoker.
  - » Who was Bram Stoker?
  - » What was his background?

- » How many horror novels did he write?
- » What inspired his version of *Dracula*?
- » Was he a “successful” writer?
- » Was there any criticism of his writings?
- ★ Decide how students will share their knowledge. Will they create a scene based on what they’ve learned? An oral presentation with a visual component? Will they create a quiz? Give students a way to demonstrate what they’ve learned.

### Adaptation Exercise

- ★ Divide students into groups. Give each group a short poem as their source material. The point is for students to work quickly.
- ★ Discuss the definition of adaptation, and adaptations that students may know.
  - » Adaptation definition: to make something suitable for a new purpose, to modify, to alter
- ★ The goal of the exercise is to have students adapt the poem into a scene. They don’t have to use the words of the poem, but the scene must be connected to the poem. Remind students that they are making something suitable for a new purpose. That means the adapted version must have theatrical qualities.
  - » What characters can be derived from the poem?
  - » What location can the scene take place in, as indicated by the poem?
  - » What conflict can be derived from the poem?
- ★ The scene should be less than one minute. Give groups time to discuss, create, rehearse, and present.
- ★ Afterward, discuss the similarities and differences in the scenes. Hopefully there will be differences! This will show students that there is not just one way to adapt material.

- ★ Also, discuss the process. What were the challenges? How did they modify and alter for a new purpose?

### Dracula Adaptation Exercise

- ★ As a class, read a small section from the original *Dracula* text.
- ★ Discuss the definition of adaptation, and adaptations of *Dracula* that students may know.
  - » Adaptation definition: to make something suitable for a new purpose, to modify, to alter
- ★ Divide students into groups. Each group will have a copy of the original section. Their first task is to identify characters, locations, and possible lines of dialogue.
- ★ Next, groups are to discuss, decide, rehearse, and come up with a one-minute section of a scene. This is an exploration, rather than an assessed assignment. How do you adapt? What are the challenges?
- ★ After groups present, discuss the similarities and differences in the scenes. Hopefully there will be differences! This will show students that there is not just one way to adapt material.
- ★ Also, discuss the process. What were the challenges? How did they modify and alter for a new purpose?

### Spooky Monologues

- ★ *Dracula* is classified as a gothic horror play/novel. Have students create their own monologue surrounding a horror story.
- ★ Students can write the monologue as if they are telling the story to an audience or from the perspective of a character in the story.
- ★ Once students finish writing their monologues, have them present. Then discuss:
  - » What elements did you include to make the story horror themed?
  - » What inspired your story?

- » Did anyone's monologues scare you? If so, which one and why?
- » What makes a good horror story?

### **Transylvania & England Tableaux**

- ★ Explain to students that this play takes place in two different places: Transylvania and England in the 19th century/Victorian Era.
- ★ Put students into groups and have them create a tableau for what they think Transylvania looks like. What kind of people would be walking around? What is the atmosphere like? Then have them create a tableau that represents England. Remind students to focus on how these two tableaux contrast one another.
- ★ Afterward have students present their tableaux and then discuss:
  - » From an audience's perspective, what was the contrast in the two locations?
  - » What tone did the Transylvania tableau have? How about the England one?
  - » What stood out about any of the tableaux you saw? What surprised you?
  - » What challenges did you face when creating these tableaux? How did you overcome them?
  - » What kind of people would live in Transylvania versus England? What did you see in the tableaux?



## Close Reading Analysis Questions

Close reading is an analysis tool. Students read a text multiple times for in-depth comprehension, striving to understand not only **what** is being said but **how** it's being said and **why**. Close reading takes a student from story and character to drawing conclusions on author intention. Close reading prompts students to flex their thinking skills by:

- ★ Teaching students to engage with a text.
- ★ Teaching students to be selective. We can't highlight everything in the text, only the most important elements.
- ★ Teaching students to make educated decisions. All conclusions and opinions must be backed up with a text example.

Have students analyze *Dracula*, individually or in groups, using the following text-dependent questions:

### Read One: What is happening?

1. What is Mina afraid of?
2. How does Harker describe his journey to see the Count?
3. What is Lucy seeing when she goes to the cliffs?
4. Describe Mina's dream.
5. What does Lucy mean when she says, "He is one of them now"? Who do you think "them" is?
6. Why does Mina go to see Van Helsing? Describe their relationship.
7. Who do you think Renfield's master is?
8. What happened to the captain of the ship?
9. Why does Dracula want Harker to stay longer?
10. How does Dracula react to Harker cutting himself?

11. What do the Brides do to Harker? How does Dracula react?
12. What does Harker find when he leaves the Brides?
13. Who is at the door when Lucy goes to greet them? Why does Van Helsing oppose Lucy greeting them?
14. How does Harker react when he sees Dracula with Lucy?
15. What happens to Lucy at the end of Act One?
16. Why is Mina mad at Dracula? What happens when she confronts him?
17. Who is Harker apologizing to on page 62?
18. Who is the “bloofer lady”?
19. What does Mina say she has been carrying with her every night?
20. How does Van Helsing say Lucy needs to be buried?
21. Who invited Dracula into England?
22. What happens when Mina stands up to Dracula?
23. Why does Mina ask to be hypnotized?
24. How does Van Helsing survive the Brides?
25. How does Mina defeat Dracula?

### **Read Two: How does it happen?**

1. What do you think the thumping of a heartbeat represents?
2. How does the playwright use Mina and Lucy as a foreshadowing tool? Cite the text to support your answer.
3. Why do you think the playwright includes excerpts from Mina and Jonathan’s journal for the audience to hear? How does it affect you as an audience member?

4. Cite an example of a parallel the playwright uses in the text. How does it help develop the characters?
5. How does the playwright present the audience with a flashback? What information do you gain from it?
6. What is the subtext on page 45–46 when Dracula is speaking to Lucy and Van Helsing?
7. Name one of the symbols in *Dracula*. How does the playwright use this symbol? Why is it important?
8. How do you think Dracula became a vampire?
9. How does the playwright contrast innocence and light with impurity and darkness? Cite an example from the text to support your answer.
10. What tone does the playwright use throughout the play? Cite an example from the text to support your answer.

### **Read Three: Why does it happen?**

1. What are the themes in *Dracula*?
2. What do you think happens next to Mina now that Dracula is gone? Do you believe he is actually dead? Why or why not?
3. In your opinion, do the characters deserve the endings of their stories? Why or why not? Do you believe justice is served?
4. Why do you think the story of *Dracula* has continued to live on from generation to generation?
5. Which line in the play resonated with you the most? Why? What did the author want you to take away from this line?
6. How does the author want you to feel after you read this story?
7. Do you believe this adaptation stays true to the original story of *Dracula*? Why or why not?

## Post-Read Questions

- ★ What is one question you still have about the play?
- ★ Which character resonated with you the most and why?
- ★ Do you recognize yourself in any of the characters?
- ★ What was your biggest takeaway from the play?

## Post-Read Activities

### Identifying Vocabulary

- ★ Put students into pairs and assign each pair a scene. You can repeat scenes with different pairs.
- ★ In pairs have students read the scene with each other. Tell students they will read it three times. The first time they read the scene, tell them to read it purely to get the words in their body.
- ★ The second time students read the scene tell them to underline words whose meanings they are unsure of and circle the words they think are important and hold weight in the scene.
- ★ After the second time, ask students to use context clues to infer meaning for words they don't understand. Allows students to develop a vocabulary list from these words.
- ★ Now have students read the scene for the third and final time taking into account the words they created context clues for and the words they deemed important.
- ★ Once students have read the scene for a third time, have them Google the definitions for the words they were unsure of.
- ★ After students do this discuss:
  - » Why is it important to know what you are saying in a scene?

- » Did any context clues help you? Were you correct on the definitions you decided on?
- » How did the reading change when you identified the most important part of the scene?
- » What was difficult? How did you overcome these challenges?

### **Staging a Flashback**

- ★ On page 30 Mina reads Harker’s journal and the scene transforms into a flashback. Have students read the scene aloud in groups of 3–4.
- ★ Once students read the scene, tell them they are going to create their own flashback scene. Ask students to write a 2–3-minute scene where at least one character has a flashback. This can happen through a journal, like in *Dracula*, or however the students choose.
- ★ Give students 10–15 minutes to write and block their scene. Once they are done, have each group present.
- ★ Ask students in the audience to observe and answer the following questions for each scene:
  - » How did the scene present the flashback? What character had a flashback?
  - » What information did you gain from the flashback?
  - » How was the flashback staged? What transitions were used? Was it clear?
- ★ Once everyone presents, discuss.

### **Identifying Subtext**

- ★ Put students into groups of 3–4 and provide each one with a scene that features *Dracula*. Options include pages 33–37 and pages 45–47.
- ★ Tell students they are going to read the scene three times. The first time they are going to read the scene as is. For the second read ask students to underline the subtext. On the third read ask students to replace the text with what they

believe the subtext means. For example, when the Count says he is hungry students can say, “I want blood.”

- ★ Once students finish all three of their reads, ask if any groups want to present. Once groups present, discuss:
  - » What was it like identifying the subtext?
  - » Why is subtext important in a play?
  - » How did you know what the subtext meant?
  - » As an actor, why is it important to know your subtext?

### **Developing Symbolism**

- ★ In *Dracula*, the original author and the playwright use the cross as a symbol of light (as noted on page 61). As a class, discuss the importance of symbolism in *Dracula* and why the playwright and author chose the cross as a symbol. After a discussion, create a list of symbols used in *Dracula* (e.g., blood, windows, mirror, sleep).
- ★ After you’ve created a list, assign each group one of the symbols from the list and tell them to create a 1–2-minute scene surrounding the symbol.
- ★ Once each group is done, have them present. After every group has presented discuss:
  - » Why are symbols important?
  - » How does symbolism drive a story forward?
  - » How can you use symbolism when designing a play?

### **Dracula’s Backstory**

- ★ The story never explicitly explains how Dracula became a vampire. Ask students to step into Dracula’s shoes and create a backstory for him. How did he become a vampire? What was his life before he was a vampire? Does he enjoy being a vampire?

- ★ Once students write a short bio or backstory for Dracula, have them write a monologue from his perspective to present their work.

### **Character Costume Design**

- ★ Choose a character and design their Victorian Era costume.
- ★ Based on their personality, what would they wear? What pieces of clothing define them? What colors and textures would they choose?
- ★ Draw a color costume rendering.

### **Poster Design**

- ★ Based on what you've read, design a poster for the play. How would you visualize the play in a single image that would attract an audience? What font would you use for the title? What information other than the title would you include?

### **Staged Scenes**

- ★ Divide students into small groups and assign each group a scene from the play, or a short moment within a scene.
- ★ Give students time to rehearse.
- ★ Each group will present their moment.
- ★ Discuss the scenes afterward.
  - » How did seeing the scenes acted out differ from reading them?
  - » Why is it important to act a scene as well as read it?
  - » Did any of the presentations offer a different interpretation of the characters than yours?

## Creating Music

- ★ The playwright suggests having a student act as a musician for the play. Put students into groups and assign each of them a scene from the play.
- ★ Tell each group to create their own soundscape for this scene. Remind students that music helps create an atmosphere and that they can use it to help them in transitions. Ask students to think about how the music changes from the beginning of the scene to the end.
- ★ Once students are done creating their soundscape, have them present it to the class. The soundscape can include both pre-recorded music and music the students created themselves (with instruments, objects, etc.).

## **Playwright Process**

*Playwright Laramie Dean talks about his process writing Dracula. Have students read and then discuss/reflect on how their perception of the writing process compares to the Playwright's.*

### What was the inspiration for writing this play?

I've been a huge fan of *Dracula* — the novel, the films, the stage plays — since I was seven years old, when I drew my first Dracula comic book and began my own play adaptation. There are so many stage versions of Stoker's novel; I wanted to see what I could bring to the table that was a little different.

### What challenges did you encounter during the writing process?

Trying not to reinvent the wheel, while also being aware of what makes *Dracula* such an exciting story. The Count is not on stage very much in the actual novel, so I had to find ways to bring him forward. Giving him Mina Harker as an adversary was very helpful.



### **What was it like to see the play performed?**

It's always so gratifying to see your work come to life. I wrote *Dracula* for my students in 2016; since then, it's been performed all over the world. I've been fortunate enough to see some recordings of the different productions, and I'm always impressed with the solutions various directors, technicians, and actors come up with.

### **As a playwright, what is your favourite moment/character in the play and why?**

I adore the moment where Mina first confronts Dracula. I love everything Lucy. She's usually presented as an innocent victim of Dracula; here, I wanted to give her more agency. She sees escape from the tedium of day-to-day life for a British woman in the 1890s by embracing the power of Dracula, when there weren't very many options for people like her.

### **Which is harder for you, first drafts or rewrites?**

First drafts, these days. Getting it all out and trying to make sure it all makes sense is a challenge.

### **What's your writing process like?**

I write every day in the summer; during the school year, I give myself four hours on Sunday mornings. I drink coffee, I keep materials — books, photos, comic books — around me that inspire me. I try to power through writer's block when it rears its ugly head, which isn't always the easiest thing to do.

### **What engages you about playwrighting?**

I love to watch how other people — actors, directors, designers — interpret my work and put it on the stage. I don't always agree with their choices, but jeeppers, is it fun to watch how their own creativity brings the story to life!