

LITERATURE 6A

TEACHER'S NOTES

AUTHOR: Bram Stoker
TITLE: *Dracula* (Chapter 1)
THEMES: Transport and travel (Unit 12)
Geographical features (Unit 9)
WRITING: A letter
THINK LITERATURE: Characters in danger

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Abraham “Bram” Stoker (8 November 1847 – 20 April 1912) was an Irish author. He was born in Dublin where he also went to university to study mathematics. His father helped him get a job as a civil servant in Dublin Castle, a popular place with the British royals. It is possible that working in such an unusual location, with its towers and endless, dark rooms, might have inspired him as a writer and influenced his development of a gothic atmosphere in *Dracula*. Despite his professional position in Ireland it is clear Stoker’s real passion was writing. He worked as an unpaid writer for a local newspaper in his spare time, producing articles and reviews. Stoker eventually left his job in Dublin Castle to concentrate on his literary interests. In London, he met and became a close friend of one of the greatest actors at that time - Sir Henry Irving, with whom he worked and developed literary projects. Although he published 19 books in his lifetime, the 1897 Gothic novel *Dracula* is his most famous work.

INTRODUCTION

As vampires appear in a wide range of literature, including young adult literature, as well as figuring extensively in popular culture, start by brainstorming associations by writing ‘vampire’ on the board and asking for students to suggest words, names and places that come to mind.

START THINKING ...

1 1. The extract takes place when Harker is travelling to *Dracula*’s castle. Ask students how we would travel to another European country today (plane, car, maybe train) and ask them how they think people travelled hundreds of years ago (horse, carriage, by foot). Elicit the idea that journeys were much harder and more dangerous.

2. Ask students if they like vampire stories or know people who do. What do they like about them? Are vampires always bad? Ask if they have heard of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* or the *Twilight* Saga and ask them what happens in these stories. If any students are fans of these stories they might also tell you about the difference between vampires, zombies and the undead! Try and work towards a general consensus on why vampire stories are so popular.

For question 3 you could start by eliciting the kinds of emotions we feel when watching horror film or

reading ghost stories – *spooky, scary, strange noises, fear, brave, goosebumps* etc.

Optional extension

On a map of Europe (better if it is an old map) get students to plot a route for Harker to take from Whitby to Transylvania. This will involve some research but will have the effect of making the extracts easier to visualize.

- 2 Read through the introduction to the scene to establish the setting and context.
- 3 Students read through the questions. Check for understanding and remind them to refer closely to the text to find the answers.

Answers

- 1b. Although the geographical location is mentioned, the emphasis is on history – draw students’ attention to the use of the word ‘stormy.’ Having established that the literal meaning is heavy rain with wind or thunder and lightning, point out that the glossary defines it as ‘violent.’ Elicit the idea of metaphor – describing one thing by linking it to something else - if appropriate.
- 2b. The woman is friendly but the fact she asks him if he is ‘Herr Englishman’ is Harker’s reason for saying he was ‘evidently expected.’

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Answers

- Harker** – b ‘making enquiries as to details’, d ‘pretended he could not understand my German.’
Dracula – e and f ‘telling him to secure the best seat on the coach.’ d is also possible – the letter is in English so it suggests Dracula speaks a foreign language g – he refers to ‘my beautiful land.’
Elderly Lady – a – she follows her husband in not volunteering information. c – ‘he and his wife crossed themselves’ f – she tells the man to get the letter.
Elderly man – a – he is especially unwilling to communicate information, c – see above in the elderly woman’s answers, f – he acts on Dracula’s instructions.

VOCABULARY

- 5 Using the instructions, check students understand the meaning of ‘synonym’ and ‘antonym.’ Read through the sentences one at a time to check comprehension of any unknown vocabulary. Working individually, students match a word from the box to each sentence. Ask individual students for answers.

Answers

- 1 happy 2 dawn 3 mutters 4 talkative 5 chaos 6 nobleman

ROLE PLAY

- 6 Put students in pairs or small groups. Monitor the 'write down reasons why they think it is a bad idea' stage. Ask students for ideas and write them on the board so students have enough to sustain the dialogue. Students develop and practice their dialogue. They can then perform them to another pair/group or select some dialogues to be performed in front of the class.

LISTENING

- 7 Before students listen, ask them to discuss the following questions:
Do you think the man or woman should try to warn Harker?
Do you think they feel pity for him?

Answers

- 1 She's 'hysterical', 'upset,' she mixes up her languages, she is clearly scared for him and tries to warn him of the dangers of continuing with his journey.
- 2 He is not scared by her warnings, although he does say 'I did not feel comfortable leaving.' He seems sorry for her and tries to assure her there is nothing to worry about.
- 3 They seem to think something is wrong - they watch Harker and talk to each other repeating certain words (ask students which words they think these are).

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Answers

- 1 follow 2 shakes 3 comfort 4 know... day
5 driver 6 pity

AUDIOSCRIPT

Just before I was leaving, the old lady came up to my room and said in a hysterical way: 'Must you go? Oh! Young Herr, must you go?' She was in such an excited state that she mixed her German all up with some other language which I did not know at all. I was just able to follow her by asking many questions. When I told her that I must go at once, she asked again: 'Do you know what day it is?' I answered that it was the fourth of May. She shook her head as she said again: 'Oh, yes! I know that! I know that, but do you know what day it is?' When I said that I did not understand, she went on: '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 come out? Do you know where you are going, and what you are going to?' She was so unhappy that I tried to comfort her, but without effect. Finally, she went down on her knees and said please don't go; at least to wait a day or two before starting. It was all very ridiculous but I did not feel comfortable leaving. However, there was business to be done, and I could allow nothing to interfere with it. I thanked her, but explained my duty was imperative, and that I must go. [...]

When I got on the coach, the driver had not taken his seat, and I saw him talking to the landlady. They were evidently talking about me, for every now and then they looked at me, and some of the people who were sitting on the bench outside the door—came and listened, and then looked at me, most of them with pity. I could hear a lot of words often repeated, strange words, for there were many nationalities in the crowd...

WRITING: A LETTER

- 9 Begin by asking students why letters are a useful way of telling a story (they can describe what someone does and sees in a natural way as they are written for someone else, in this case, Harker's fiancée). Help students if necessary to identify and underline the key information in the text. Students can write the letter in class or for homework.

THINK LITERATURE

- 10 Demonstrate the idea by using the following example (this can be sketched on the board): someone is standing on top of tall building. There is nothing to protect them if they fall. A says 'Be careful – don't stand close to the edge!' Elicit possible responses from B. – 'I know what I'm doing / I'm not scared of heights / I'm perfectly safe / There's nothing to be afraid of / What could possibly happen?' Use further examples if you think they are necessary. Working in pairs, students develop exchanges 1-4 and read them out loud.