

Do not write on this sheet. You must turn it in with your essay.



Dracula – Bram Stoker

Critical Analysis Essay

A.P. ENGLISH LITERATURE & COMPOSITION
Archbishop Moeller High School, Mr. Rose

Choose one of the following prompts and respond to it in a well-crafted essay. See page 2 for tips and reminders on composition. You are expected to use your book for supports. Remember to document all quotations by giving the page number in an in-line citation: Example: “quote” (20).

I. Epistolary Narrative: *Dracula* relies on journal fragments, letters, and newspaper clippings to tell its story. Why might Stoker have chosen to narrate the story in this way? Do letters and journal entries make the story seem more authentic or believable to you? Likewise, discuss the significance that many of the male protagonists are doctors (Dr. Seward) or men of science (Dr. Van Helsing). Why is this important to the story?

II. Biblical allegory: How does the novel invert Christian narrative, imagery, and symbolism in its description of Count Dracula's reign of terror? For instance, what specific elements of Stoker's story parallel scenes or images from the New Testament? Why might this subversion of Christian tradition be significant?

III. Role of women: Discuss the roles of Lucy Westenra and Mina Harker in the novel. How are the two women similar? Different? What accounts for their differences? To what extent does the novel depend on both of these women to propel the narrative forward?

IV. Dracula Imagery: Describe the use of imagery in *Dracula* and how it adds to both the atmosphere of the story and character development. Explore the question in the context of the following assertion: Dracula is all things to all people.

V. Blood motif: “The blood is the life!” cries Renfield. With the asylum patient’s remark in mind, what is the significance of blood in the novel? Stoker uses blood to show evidence of love (Lucy’s numerous blood transfusions), evil (Dracula’s main food source) and religion (Mina’s “vampire baptism”). Explore these various uses of blood in the novel and make a conclusion about why it was blood that Stoker chose to use as his most blatant object of symbolism.

VI. Science and Faith: What role do science, medicine, folklore, and religion play in *Dracula*, and to what degree do they entail moral culpability? Contrast particularly the professional authority of Dr. Seward and Professor Van Helsing with their occasional manipulation of legal detail or haphazard usage of scientific tools or sacred objects.

VII. Religion and Faith: Dracula and his minions can be held off with many religious symbols (crucifix, holy eucharist, etc.), and religion is called upon many times throughout the novel. Jonathan Harker writes, “Faith is our only anchor” in his journal and many times he witnesses Transylvanians cross themselves as he passes on his initial jaunt to Dracula’s castle. Explore the role of religion in *Dracula*. Aside from the obvious religious nature of Van Helsing’s weaponry, there is clearly something deeper in the novel in regard to religion. Uncover Stoker’s use of religion and Dracula’s role as literary anti-Christ.

VIII. Madness and Faith: What is the difference between madness and faith? How does the character of Renfield stand up to this question? Does he develop, both as a character and a moral agent, and if so, how?

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Tips:

1. Read the question carefully and be sure your essay addresses the question directly.
2. Write a thesis statement (your assertion or claim).
 - Your thesis should make a clear and specific observation about the text in answer to the prompt.
 - Your thesis should be a strong, clear, and debatable assertion that can be supported by the text.
3. Make an outline of the supports for your thesis statement.
 - Your supports should specifically reference evidence from the text.
 - Be sure to use at least one direct quotation in each body (support) paragraph.
4. Be sure to include an introduction and conclusion.
 - An introduction should situate your essay in context, moving from general to specific, leading up to your thesis.
 - A conclusion should show the significance of your thesis statement and not simply repeat your introduction or your thesis.
5. Write out a draft of your essay: double-space and write in pen.

Simple 5-paragraph format – NOTE: You are not restricted to this structure.

- I. Introduction (concludes in thesis statement with blueprint)
- II. Body: Support paragraph 1
 - Details and quotations
- III. Body: Support paragraph 2
 - Details and quotations
- IV. Body: Support paragraph 3
 - Details and quotations
- V. Conclusion