



Discussion Questions

If you read Bram Stoker's *Dracula* before reading *Dracul*, how did it shape your expectations? Has reading *Dracul* changed how you see the original story?

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Dracul is the story not only of
Bram Stoker but of his sister
Matilda and their older brother
Thornley. Was there one of these
protagonists with whom you identified with the most? How did each
contribute to solving the mystery?

The novel is inspired by real notes and texts that Bram Stoker left behind. Discuss the interplay of fiction and history in *Dracul*. How did your sense of the story change after reading the Authors' Note?

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How is *Dracul* shaped by its setting? How do the customs and expectations of its place and time affect the way people react to the supernatural threat at hand?

Dracul moves between two time frames, one detailing the terrible things Bram saw as a child, the other bringing the reader into Artane Tower to face the horrible being that hunts him. How do the authors use this two-tiered structure to create anticipation? How do the scenes set in the tower change the way you read the chapters about Bram's childhood?

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The text known as Dracula's Guest was excised from the original Dracula manuscript and later published by Bram's widow, Florence, as a short story in 1914. Have you read Dracula's Guest? How does it bridge the gap between Dracul and Dracula?

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There have been countless adaptations of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*—other books, television shows, movies, radio dramas, and stage presentations. What original ideas or narratives did *Dracul* add to the larger legend?

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In this novel, Ellen Crone is both a monster and a prisoner. How did learning about her past change the way you perceive her? How did it change the way you look at *Dracula*?

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The final entry of Bram Stoker's journal gives readers some insight into the lives that the characters will come to lead twenty-two years following the events of the novel.

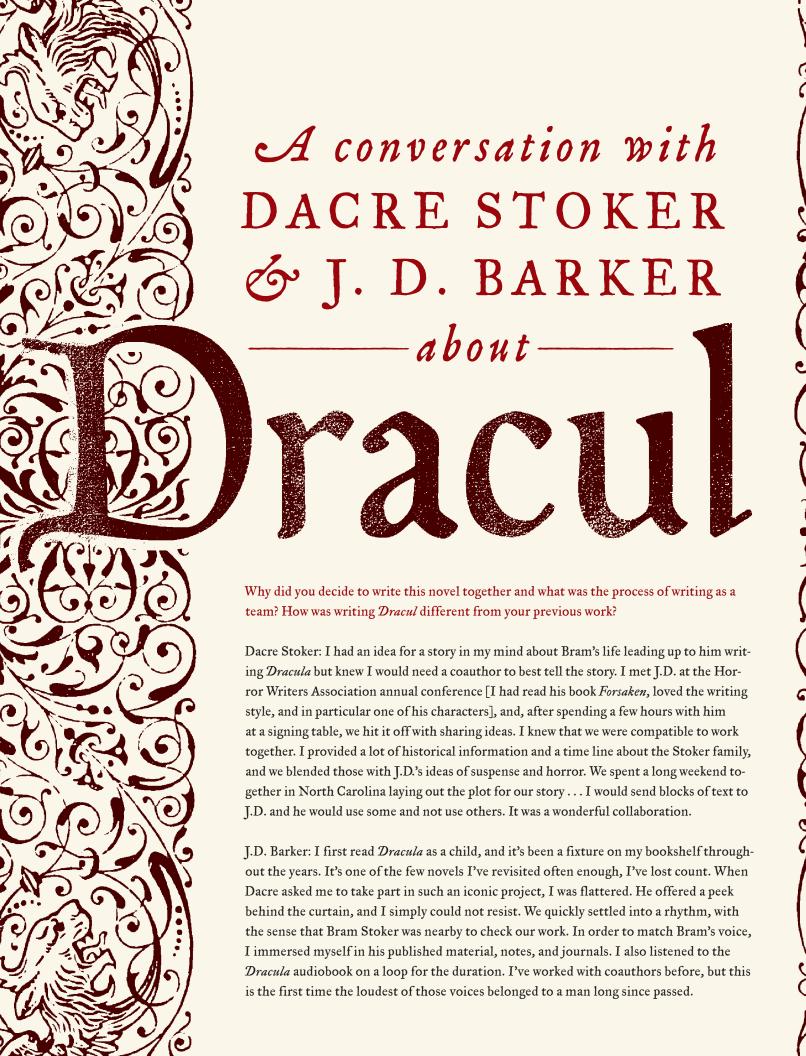
What do you imagine will happen to the siblings?

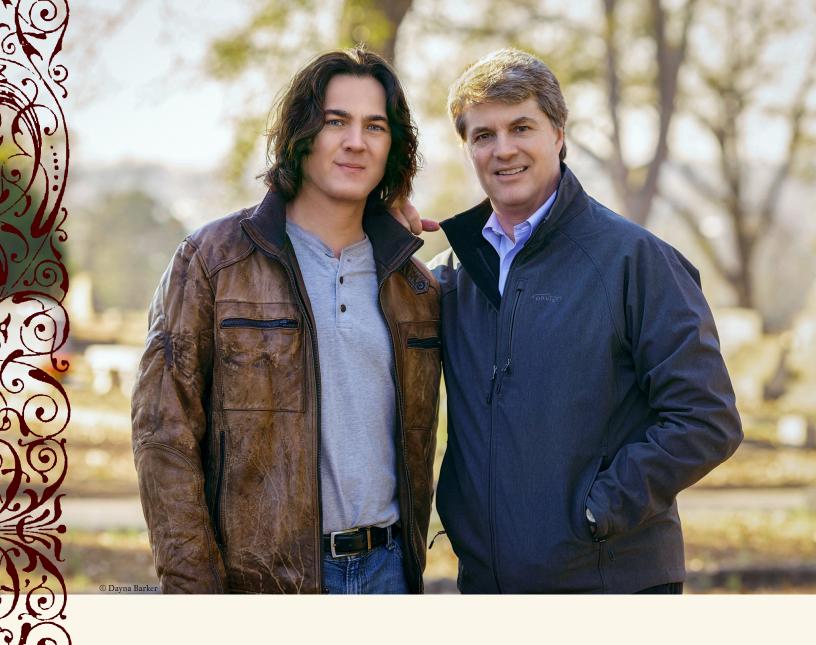
Upon reading the Authors' Note, do you believe that there is any truth behind the events that Bram Stoker detailed in *Dracula* and the first 101 unpublished pages that *Dracul* is based on?

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What did you find to be the most terrifying moment of the novel?
What is it about the *Dracula*legend that has made
it so enduringly frightening?

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What kind of research did you do for the book? While researching, did you travel to all the locations the story takes place in?

DS: We needed to include real events in Bram's life while weaving them together in a fictional manner to create a narrative that would hold suspense. We created a time line of actual events and merged in fictional events in a way that the reader would have a difficult time telling the difference. We dissected Bram's notes for *Dracula*, the *Dracula* typescript, the short story *Dracula*'s *Guest*, and *Makt Myrkranna* [an early version of *Dracula*]. I spent time in Dublin and Whitby, visiting all the significant locations that we used in *Dracul*; of course, some of them no longer exist. We felt that in order to be true to Bram's style of writing in *Dracula* and to properly portray a sense of realism, we needed to be historically and geographically accurate.

JDB: My wife and I have a ten-month-old baby girl at home, so my travel is currently limited to late-night diaper runs. Having visited the actual locations, Dacre was instrumental when it came to describing many of the places in the novel. Others required substantial research. While these locations may exist today, they are far different than they were in 1868. A site central to the story was destroyed by the German navy in World War I—we had to piece together its condition in Bram's day.

Do you believe Bram Stoker really thought of *Dracula* as a true account?

DS: I believe that Bram was a master at making his readers feel that he believed the story was real. Remember, *Dracula* was written in 1897, a time when the occult was in vogue, mesmerism was an emerging science, and the supernatural was . . . well, felt to be quite possible. There

are two lines in the novel *Dracula* that I believe sum up how Bram felt: "I want you to believe, to believe in things which you know to be untrue," and "There are mysteries which men can only guess at, which age by age they may solve only in part." In addition, I am reminded of a line in the 1992 film *Bram Stoker's Dracula*. J.V. Hart included in his screenplay a similar thought: "The strength of the vampire is that people will not believe in him."

JDB: For any author, fiction works best when those lines blur. If permitted, a character can graduate from a simple sketch on the page to a living, breathing being. Someone with the singular desire to tell you his story. In other cases, fictional characters aren't so fictional. When reading *Dracul* and *Dracula*, it's impossible to not draw correlations between the people in Bram's story and those in his real life—his family, friends, and acquaintances. During his earliest years, Stoker experienced some horrific events at a time when his imagination was most susceptible. You can't help but wonder how that shapes a person's thoughts as he grows older. Did he believe in monsters? We may never know. But I can comfortably say he hedged his bets just in case.

What is the significance of the instructions Bram Stoker left for the disposition his body upon his death?

DS: Bram left verbal instructions with his wife, and he was clear that he wanted to be cremated. He did not give a reason, but I believe that he wanted to ensure that he was able to rest in peace.

JDB: Ha! This is where Dacre and I differ. My mind loves to take a leap. When someone selects cremation at a time/place in history when it isn't common, the only logical answer is that he's hiding his immortal soul from the vampire staking claim, right?

Bram Stoker wrote the actual location of Dracula's castle in a coded diary entry and guarded that secret until he died. Did you visit the secret location?

DS: Bram wrote a note with coordinates, two lines of longitude and latitude, but in a way they were "coded" or altered to hide the actual location of where the two lines converged. He switched the two numbers, so when switched back from longitude to latitude the coordinates intersect right at Mount Izvorul, an extinct volcano in northern Transylvania in the Călimanului National Park. This was the location for his Castle Dracula. This past summer, I hired a guide and together with my son Parker, and a few other friends, we hiked up Mount Izvorul and had quite an adventure. We made it to the top and left a sealed capsule commemorating our visit to the peak. After meeting with the park officials, they have decided to create a special trail and erect a plaque memorializing the location of Bram's Castle Dracula.

JDB: Not only were the first 101 pages of *Dracula* removed from the manuscript prior to publication but the ending was altered as well. In the original, the mountain on which Dracula's castle stood erupts in a fire-filled blast. Per the original:



Vampire Blood Cocktail



1½ oz. vodka
1½ oz. pomegranate juice
1½ oz. blood orange juice
1 tablespoon agave syrup
1 lime wedge
1 blood orange slice
coated with sugar

Mix all liquid ingredients in martini shaker with ice.

Squeeze in the lime wedge.

Shake vigorously for 15 seconds and pour into chilled martini glass.

Garnish with pomegranate seeds and sugarcoated blood orange slice.



"From where we stood it seemed as though the one fierce volcano burst had satisfied the need of nature and that the castle and the structure of the hill had sunk again into the void." It can't be a coincidence that Bram would write the longitude and latitude of a volcanic peak in Transylvania in his notes, numbers matching the description in his novel so accurately. The fact that he never revealed this as the location of Dracula's castle publicly has left the door open for others to stake claim to the Count's home. I'm not sure how Bram would feel about that.

In his early preface, Bram says that there are several well-known people who appear as characters in *Dracula* whose names he has changed to protect their identities. Who are these people and why is their inclusion significant?

DS: Bram states quite clearly in his early preface to *Dracula* that Jonathan Harker, his wife, and Dr. Seward are friends. He also suggests a familiarity with the scientist, thus changing his name [Van Helsing]. "All the people who have willingly—or unwillingly—played a part in this remarkable story are known generally and well respected. Both Jonathan Harker and his wife [who is a woman of character] and Dr. Seward are my friends and have been so for many years, and I have never doubted that they were telling the truth; and the highly respected scientist, who appears here under a pseudonym, will also be too famous all over the educated world for his real name, which I have not desired to specify, to be hidden from people . . ." By using these real people in his novel, Bram makes a compelling case that his story was real.

JDB: In my mind, it's clear Arminius Vambéry was the inspiration for Van Helsing. I personally see many similarities between Thornley Stoker and Dr. Seward, Matilda Stoker and Mina Harker, even Bram himself and Jonathan Harker.

What is the significance of the *Makt Myrkranna* and why is it referenced in *Dracul*?

DS: Makt Myrkranna, which translates as "Powers of Dark-

ness," is an early draft of Bram's *Dracula* before it was edited and published by Archibald Constable, in London, in 1897. We believe it was edited because the story was far too realistic, and, on the heels of the Jack the Ripper murders, it would have been too scary for the London readers.

Derhaps Bram
Stoker's greatest
secret has yet to be
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JDB: In many ways, Makt Myrkranna represents the story Bram wished to tell. It varies greatly from the Dracula tale familiar to us all and begs the question—Who made the changes and why? In today's publishing world, when we write a novel, we send a single copy to our editor. Our publisher then sends it off to the various other publishers around the world. In other words, they all work from the same draft. In Bram's time, that wasn't the case. He personally mailed his manuscript to each publisher and, in doing so, left bread crumbs behind—hints at his original story removed from the English version. Makt Myrkranna was discovered when an Icelandic first edition of Dracula was translated into English. It's impossible not to wonder what other secrets may still be hiding out there. What will be found when other first editions are translated? Perhaps Bram's greatest secret has yet to be revealed. For now, it only sleeps and waits.

