

## **Books Worth Revisiting: A Kiss of Vampire Fiction**

Vampire fiction, as one might expect, has become one of the most popular of genre fictions. Originally viewed as a subset of horror fiction, it has developed and mutated into several other genres. Vampirism can now be found in fantasy and science fictions, as well as serious historical fiction, and it is the hottest trend going in romance fiction. Here are three important “must-reads” of the vampire world.

**Dracula by Bram Stoker / BR 08277; RC 31689; RC 40864 (Spanish version):** This is the gold standard of vampire novels, but when Bram Stoker (1847-1912) published Dracula in 1897, he likely never imagined the cult of vampire fiction that would follow. Strictly speaking, Dracula is an epistolary novel, meaning that the whole tale is told through the device of letters and journal entries. Don't think that seeing any of the myriad Dracula movies has made reading the novel unnecessary. The story is multilayered, fast-paced, and very tense, and many of the interesting details never make it to the screen. The story opens with a real estate transaction in Transylvania (modern Romania) that goes horribly wrong. Readers who remember a time before e-mail and cell phones will be able to appreciate the anxiety of characters being out of touch for weeks and months at a time. Dracula's actual appearances in the story are few, and the rest of the characters spend their time desperately searching for him and guarding against his attacks, while wondering if they have the ability to destroy the creature before it is too late for them all. Of particular interest for some readers will be the helpfulness of “new technology,” such as the typewriter and the Dictaphone. Despite its horror effects, the novel is suitable for young adult readers. There is some violence, and sophisticated readers will pick up on the subtle sexual undercurrents.

**Interview with the Vampire by Anne Rice / RC 11056; RC 61222; also available as a BARD download:** When this novel was published in 1976, it created a best-selling sensation, launched the author's very popular Vampire Chronicles, and introduced the world to that irrepressible fiend, Lestat. What even Rice's most avid readers tend to overlook, however, is that the vampire of the title is a young man named Louis, and it is his story that the young reporter takes in on his tape recorder. Louis de Pointe du Lac, the last son of a decaying Louisiana family, is made a vampire by Lestat for the most prosaic of reasons: Lestat wants to use Louis' ancestral home to shelter his dying father. Thus begins the relationship between two of the most antithetical of

vampires. Louis is gentle, guilt-ridden, and horrified at what he has become and at what is expected of him. Lestat, caustic and cruel, revels in his evil ways and constantly mocks Louis for his squeamishness. When Lestat perversely creates Claudia as a companion for Louis, neither vampire is quite prepared for the dangerous, clever woman trapped in a child's body that Claudia becomes. When Claudia begins searching for other vampires, Louis and Lestat have a terrible falling out, forcing Louis and Claudia to flee to Europe. They do find what they seek in Paris, but the results threaten to destroy them all. This novel contains graphic violence and a strong undercurrent of sexuality and may be too intense for some readers.

**The Historian by Elizabeth Kostova / RC 60713; also available as a BARD**

**download:** What if Dracula was a real vampire and had managed to survive into the twentieth century? This is the premise behind this novel published in 2005 that features historians, archivists, and librarians as its heroes and gives a gracious nod to Stoker's Dracula. When a young girl discovers an odd book and a packet of old letters in her father's library, she sets in motion the latest installment in a dangerous hunt for an ancient adversary. The odd little book mysteriously appears among the books and papers of various scholars who then feel compelled to discover its origins and meaning. A promising young historian sets out on the quest when his mentor disappears within minutes of their last meeting, leaving behind a pool of blood. Soon, the historian encounters a young woman from Hungary, a world-renowned vampire authority, who turns out to be the unknown daughter of his mentor. Together, they begin retracing the steps of Vlad Tepes (1431-1476), the unbelievably cruel ruler of Wallachia, whose blood-soaked deeds as Vlad the Impaler and nickname of "Dracula" have formed the basis of the famous vampire legend. Their search takes them from Boston to Istanbul, where they receive invaluable help from a group of equally concerned researchers. The quest takes them behind the Iron Curtain into Hungary and Bulgaria, where vampires are not the only dangers. As the fate of the mentor hangs in the balance, the searchers ponder the link between Dracula and the Greek Orthodox Church. All the hunters must use every ounce of knowledge that they possess to overcome an evil greater than anything the world has ever seen. This book, with some violence and mild sexual situations, is suitable for all adult readers. Mature young adult readers will also enjoy the story, although familiarity with European history is helpful for a fuller appreciation of the plot.