

Name: \_\_\_\_\_



## THE REAL DRACULA

*The real-life Dracula wasn't a vampire. But he was a bloodthirsty murderer!*

Five hundred years ago, in a place called Transylvania, there was a man everyone called Dracula. He lived in a huge stone castle in the mountains. There, in the castle's dark rooms, Dracula tortured and killed thousands of people. Even after he died, stories of his bloodthirsty ways terrified people across Europe.

But this Dracula wasn't a vampire in a story or movie, he was a real man. Vlad Dracula (for that was his name) was a prince who ruled over a region of the country we now know as Romania.

Despite his nasty ways, people probably would have forgotten all about Prince Dracula if it hadn't been for Bram Stoker, an Irish writer. During the late 1800s, Stoker was a newspaper editor, a theater critic, and a fiction writer.

One day, someone told Stoker the story of the cruel Dracula; he was fascinated. He went to the library and learned all he could about the real-life Dracula. He read old legends in which the evil prince was said to drink the blood of his victims. So, he decided to turn Dracula into a true vampire.

In 1897 he published his masterpiece, *Dracula*. The book is about a British man named Jonathan Harker who goes to Transylvania. There, in a dark stone castle, he meets the strange Count Dracula. As Jonathan soon learns, the count is a vampire who sleeps in a coffin and survives by biting the necks of human victims and sucking their blood.

The book was a huge hit. Thanks to Stoker, vampires became the world's most popular monster. Dozens of books, plays, movies, and TV shows have been inspired by Stoker's Dracula.

But for Stoker, writing Dracula wasn't much fun. While he was writing, he started acting strange. He had always been a gentle man. But suddenly, he started acting mean. His temper grew violent.

Fortunately, Stoker became his sweet old self when he finished the book. "I don't know what happened," he told his family. "While I was writing the book, I seemed to be possessed by an evil spirit."

Maybe it was the spirit of the nasty Prince Dracula!