

FUN-FESTIVE

FRIGHTENING FACTS AND FICTION

Everyone is familiar with the chilling tale of Dracula. Some even know that this masterpiece was penned by Bram Stoker in 1897 but, did you know that the story of the bloodsucking Count is based on a real life monster?

Vlad 'Tepes' Dracula was a cruel fifteenth century ruler of Wallachia, now known as Romania. 'Dracula', translated from Romanian, means 'son of the Dragon'. Vladislavs 'Tepes' Dracula was born in 1431 in Sighisoara, Romania, in a stone house that can still be seen today. His father, after whom he was named, was the governor of Transylvania and a Knight of the Order of the Dragon. The young Vlad was destined to follow in his father's footsteps. However, when the Turks occupied Constantinople they became a threat to Vlad's father's kingdom. In a decision that would affect and change the course of his son's life forever, Vlad sided with the Turk forces and his two young sons, Vlad and Radu, were offered as a guarantee.

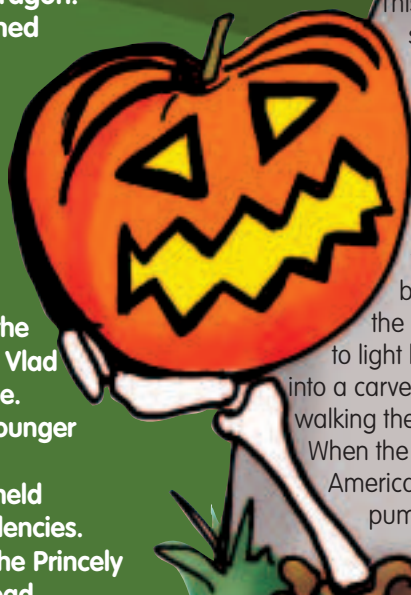
So, at the tender age of 11 Vlad, and his younger brother Radu, were sent away as hostages. Many believe that it was during this time that Vlad was held captive that he developed his cruel and bloodthirsty tendencies. In 1456 Vlad returned to Wallachia to be crowned at the Princely Court. During his reign, word of his merciless killings spread through Europe. His favourite punishment for lawbreakers and anybody he deemed dishonest was to impale them on a stake and therefore he became known as Vlad the Impaler.

After the Turks declared war, one story tells of how Vlad impaled twenty thousand Turks. It was such a horrific sight that the Turkish sultan had to retreat.

In December 1476 Vlad Dracula was killed in battle against the Turks near the town of Bucharest. He was decapitated and his head was sent to the sultan in Constantinople as a gift. Vlad's remains are apparently buried at Snagov, an island monastery. He is still regarded as a hero to this day in Romania.



WHAT IS A JACK 'O LANTERN?



This is a pumpkin carving of a scary face with a candle placed inside and is a popular American Halloween tradition. It comes from an Irish myth about a man nicknamed 'Stingy' Jack who tricked the Devil and paid the price by being banished to roam the Earth with only a burning coal to light his way. Jack put the coal into a carved-out turnip and has been walking the Earth ever since. When the tradition made it to America, they discovered that pumpkins make perfect jack 'o lanterns.

FUN FACT: Pumpkins are actually a fruit and are native to America!



FIGURE OF SPEECH: PERSONIFICATION

A personification is a figure of speech that gives inanimate (non-living) objects human traits and qualities such as emotions, physical gestures and sensations.

Example: The wind tickled my face and sang in my ears.

Describing the wind using the words 'tickled' and 'sang' gives it human characteristics and is therefore a personification.

PRACTISE PERSONIFICATIONS

Identify which of the following sentences are personifications:

- The car engine coughed and sputtered to life in the early morning.
- The dog barked loudly at the little boy on the bicycle.
- The ringing school bell ordered me to hurry to class.
- The snow fell to the ground in a whisper.
- The sunflowers looked like a field of smiling faces.
- The river flowed through the forest.
- The river giggled through the forest.
- The curtains danced in front of the windows.
- The windows all have curtains.
- The creamy chocolate was for a birthday party.
- The chocolate was naughty, but I ate it anyway.
- The jack 'o lanterns grinned cheekily in the dark.

Answers: 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 11, 12

TRICK OR TREAT!

Halloween is celebrated in many countries like America, the United Kingdom and Australia on 31 October.

Where does Halloween come from?

It dates back 2000 years to the ancient Celtic festival Samhain (pronounced sow-in). The Celts lived in what is today Ireland, the United Kingdom and northern France and they celebrated their new year on 1 November. This day marked the end of the Summer harvest and the beginning of a cold, dark winter. The Celts believed that on the night before new year the ghosts of the dead returned to earth. Huge bonfires were lit and crops and animals sacrificed. To avoid being recognised by the ghosts people would wear masks when leaving home. As the years passed these traditions changed into what we know today – dressing up for Halloween and trick or treating around the neighbourhood.

THE CREATOR OF COUNT DRACULA

Abraham 'Bram' Stoker, the author of the famous horror story of a bloodthirsty immortal called Dracula, was born in 1847 in Dublin, Ireland, and died 20 April 1912 in London.

In his early life, Stoker was bedridden until the age of seven. After outgrowing his childhood ailments he went on to excel as an athlete. He became a theatre critic until he met his idol, the actor Sir Henry Irving. From 1878 until Irving's death 27 years later, Stoker acted as his manager. During this time he began to write a series of short stories. His masterpiece, Dracula, was published in 1897.

He did most of his research for the story of Dracula in Romania and especially focused on the ruthless 'Vlad the Impaler' for inspiration. Dracula became a very popular novel and later theatre and film productions proved just as successful. Bram Stoker wrote several other books, but none received as much success as that of Dracula.



MAKE YOUR OWN PERSONIFICATIONS

The cups and plates _____ on the shelf during the storm.

The _____ sea _____ as the waves crashed to shore.

The rain _____ as it fell.

The trees _____ as the wind _____ through them.

The chocolate cake seemed to _____ "Eat me now!"

Fill in the missing words or phrases to form a personification in the sentence:

