



Exploring Senior Cycle Texts

Dracula by Bram Stoker

Please note: *Dracula* by Bram Stoker is a novel included as part of the Prescribed Material, as both a single text at higher and ordinary level and a comparative study option, for the Leaving Certificate English Examination in 2026 and 2027.



About this extract: Jonathan Harker, the narrator, is travelling on business to Transylvania to meet Count Dracula at his castle. He is staying at an inn recommended by Dracula.

This extract is taken from the Simon and Schuster 2014 edition of the text

'He and his wife, the old lady who had received me, looked at each other in a frightened sort of way. He mumbled out that the money had been sent in a letter, and that was all he knew. When I asked him if he knew Count Dracula, and could tell me anything of his castle, both he and his wife crossed themselves, and, saying that they knew nothing at all, simply refused to speak further. It was so near the time of starting that I had no time to ask anyone else, for it was all very mysterious and not by any means comforting.

Just before I was leaving, the old lady came up to my room and said in a hysterical way:—

"Must you go? Oh! young Herr must you go?" She was in such an excited state that she seemed to have lost her grip of what German she knew, and mixed it all up with some other language which I did not know at all. I was just able to follow her by asking many questions. When I told her that I must go at once, and that I was engaged on important business, she asked again:

"Do you know what day it is?" I answered that it was the fourth of May. She shook her head as she said again:—

"Oh, yes! I know that! I know that, but do you know what day it is?"

On my saying that I did not understand, she went on:

"It is the eve of St. George's Day. Do you not know that to-night, when the clock strikes midnight, all the evil things in the world will have full sway? Do you know where you are going, and what you are going to?" She was in such evident distress that I tried to comfort her, but without effect. Finally, she went down on her knees and implored me not to go; at least to wait a day or two before starting. It was all very ridiculous but I did not feel comfortable. However, there was business to be done, and I could allow nothing to interfere with it. I therefore tried to raise her up, and said, as gravely as I could, that I thanked her, but my duty was imperative, and that I must go.

She then rose and dried her eyes, and taking a crucifix from her neck offered it to me.'





Please note:

- The following tasks might be completed over a series of lessons or as part of a unit of learning
- Students may wish to complete some tasks individually or in pairs/groups
- Tasks might be completed orally and/or in written format
- Students may also wish to engage in a think, pair, share activity for some tasks.



Support your answers with reference to the text.

1. In the first paragraph, choose and explain three phrases that infer the old couple are frightened of Dracula.
2. In the second paragraph, choose and explain two ways the old lady shows her anxiety about the narrator going to the castle.
3. How does the author use language and structure to create tension?

Looking at structure:

- What is the first thing in the extract that attracts your interest? Why?
- How does the writer keep the reader interested? Highlight two or three places where he does this.
- In what ways does he change the reader's attitude towards a) the old couple and b) the narrator as the extract develops?
- If you did not already know the story, would you want to read more? Why?

Looking at Language:

- What effect does the writer create by using the following phrases:

when the clock strikes midnight

all the evil things in the world will have full sway

was in such evident distress

went down on her knees and implored me not to go

- How do the underlined words contribute to this?
- How does the narrator's reaction build up further tension for the reader?

4. The text is from the opening chapter of the novel.

How has the writer structured the text to interest you as a reader?

Think about:

- what the writer draws your attention to at the beginning
- how and why the writer develops his theme as the extract continues
- any other structural features you find interesting.

