

A. VAMPIRES IN HISTORY

For centuries, stories about blood-sucking corpses – the living dead – have been told around the world. At the same time, offerings of fresh blood – the symbol of life and strength – have been made to gods in different cultures.

In most legends, vampires look like humans, but some appear as bats, dogs or spiders. The ancient Greeks believed that the spirits of the dead could be called from their resting place by fresh blood.

The modern word *vampire* comes from a word which means ‘witch’ in several east-European languages.

East Europeans believed that vampires were ordinary people who had been born cursed (*maudits*), met bad luck, died tragically, or lived bad lives. After death, their task was to spread evil. They had magic powers and could change their shape, especially into wolves. They drank blood and turned their victims into vampires.

From Mac Donald Fiona & Celev Penko *Dracula*
(Bram Stoker) Book House Brighton, p.42, 2007

A. Vampires in History: (level 1)

- 1) Fresh blood is a symbol of _____ and _____
- 2) How are vampires described according to legends? _____

- 3) Where does the modern word “vampire” come from? _____
- 4) What did Eastern Europeans believe on vampires? _____

- 5) What magical powers did they have? _____

B. Becoming a vampire: (level 2)

What can turn a human into a vampire? Read the text and HIGHLIGHT 4 pieces of information you understand.

B. BECOMING A VAMPIRE

According to legend, there are many things that can turn you into a vampire – or make people think you are one – including :

- * a physical abnormality, such as an unusually hairy body.
- * being born prematurely.
- * being the seventh boy or seventh girl in a family.
- * being looked at by a witch.
- * your mother being frightened by a black cat before you were born.
- * not being buried properly.
- * being murdered.

C. Scientific explanations: (level 3)

Read for pleasure and get ready to explain 5 facts in French.

C. SCIENTIFIC EXPLANATIONS

In the 18th century, educated people began to doubt the existence of vampires. They argued that it was stupid and superstitious to believe in monsters. They also suggested scientific reasons why dead bodies change their appearance after death. The flesh of the fingers shrinks back from the nails, making them look longer, like claws. Gums shrink, making teeth look long and fang-like, and gases inside a dead body make it swell, turn blood-red, and sometimes twist and turn. Blood and other fluids may trickle from the mouth.

Around 1750, rulers in eastern Europe banned people from digging up dead bodies to look for signs of vampirism. But then writers began to take interest in traditional tales.

Within 70 years, vampire stories were rediscovered, and became very fashionable, along with other tales of horror and suspense.