The author said, the critic says

Bram's 1897 interview and modern criticism | Studying Dracula | Version 2 | November 2026

In July 1897, shortly after *Dracula* appeared, the journalist Jane Stoddard, writing as "Lorna", interviewed Bram for the *British Weekly* (1 July 1897, p. 185). It is the fullest account we have of what he said about the novel. Stoddard moves between Bram's own words, her report of what he said, and her own comments: those three voices must be read separately.



Bram Stoker, seated three-quarter portrait. Courtesy of the Bram Stoker Estate.

Extracts from the interview

1. He told me, in reply to a question, that the plot of the story had been a long time in his mind, and that he spent about three years in writing it.
2. "It is undoubtedly," he remarked, "a very fascinating theme, since it touches both on mystery and fact. In the Middle Ages the terror of the vampire depopulated whole villages."
3. Mr. Stoker told me that the knowledge of vampire superstitions shown in "Dracula" was gathered from a great deal of miscellaneous reading.
4. "No one book that I know of will give you all the facts. I learned a good deal from E. Gerard's 'Essays on Roumanian Superstitions,' ... I also learned something from Mr. Baring-Gould's 'Were-Wolves.'"
5. Mr. Stoker told me that van Helsing is founded on a real character.
6. "I suppose that every book of the kind must contain some lesson," he remarked; "but I prefer that readers should find it out for themselves."
7. Though Mr. Stoker did not say so, I am inclined to think that the literary agent is to him a nineteenth century vampire.
8. "We have had a magnificent survey of the Empire, and last week's procession brought home, as nothing else could have done, the sense of the immense variety of the Queen's dominions." (on Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee)

Source: the Estate's reading transcription, on the Bram on Dracula page of the Estate website. It has not been collated against the original newspaper page.

Step 1: whose voice?

For each extract, decide: **Bram's direct words**, **Stoddard's report of what he said**, or **Stoddard's own comment**.

Extract	Voice	What exactly is claimed?
1		

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Extract	Voice	What exactly is claimed?
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		

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Step 2: set the author beside a critic

Choose one modern reading and test it against what Bram said.

Critical reading	The argument in a sentence
Stephen Arata, "The Occidental Tourist" (1990)	The Count's arrival dramatises fear of "reverse colonisation" and British decline.
Carol Senf, "Dracula: Stoker's Response to the New Woman" (1982)	Mina embodies the New Woman's competence while rejecting her politics.
Daniel Pick, "Terrors of the Night" (1988)	The novel speaks the language of 1890s degeneration theory.
Franco Moretti, "The Dialectic of Fear" (1982)	The Count is capital: he accumulates and does not consume.

Bram said (extract number)	The critic argues	Agree, extend or contradict?	Is the critic going beyond the evidence? How?

Step 3: what an author's words can and cannot settle

Bram declined to state a moral: "I prefer that readers should find it out for themselves." Does that make every interpretation equally valid? Write a paragraph.

Further reading: Bram on Dracula, and “Critical readings and how to test them” on the Quotations, key terms and critical readings page, on the Estate website.

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