
Dracula: Themes Of Good Vs. Evil

There are many works of literature that play on the idea of what is good and what is bad. In the novel *Dracula*, Bram Stoker provides a controversial conception of good versus evil. In the novel, evil is seen through the characters and concepts that contradict the overall societal opinions. The good refers to the ideas and people that conform to society, and also those who remove this evil from their world. This can be seen with Count Dracula and the Crew of Light, Christianity and black magic, and promiscuity and purity. This theme of good vs evil in the novel reflects Victorian perspectives in a religious way.

The main depiction of good versus evil in the novel is very clearly Dracula versus Van Helsing and the Crew of Light. Count Dracula is quite literally depicted as an evil being. During one of their first encounters, Jonathan Harker describes that, after cutting himself while shaving, Dracula had “eyes blazed with a sort of demonic fury...” (Stoker 38). This was prior to Harker discovering Count Dracula was a vampire, yet he still noticed the evil within him. In addition to this, Count Dracula is evil because he is a being who opposes their fundamental beliefs. Helsing speaks on how they are not very knowledgeable about Dracula. He explains, “All we have to go upon are traditions and superstitions... Yet must we be satisfied... because, after all these things, tradition and superstition, are everything” (341). While they cannot be completely sure about Dracula, they know that he is evil and kills innocents mercilessly, all on the basis of their traditions and superstitious beliefs. On the contrary, Van Helsing and the Crew of Light are portrayed as good. These men are the ones who sought out to kill the vampire, and justify this by stating it is God’s command. Helsing states, “Thus are we ministers of God’s own wish... He have allowed us to redeem one soul already, and we go out as the old knights of the Cross to redeem more” (460). He describes him and his men as equals to the medieval Crusaders, who fought in order to take back the Holy Land. In this case, Helsing and the others are saving the world from evil by killing Count Dracula, thus taking back the souls he had tainted with his evil. Again, this goes back to how they conform to their society’s idea of what is good or evil, and because they are destroying the evil, they are seen as good.

Christianity versus black magic is another example of good versus evil in Stoker’s novel. Christianity is essentially the norm in this setting, while black magic is complete heresy. There are a number of times where Christianity is seen to be the characters’ form of protection from evil. Before leaving to Castle Dracula, Harker is begged by an old woman to stay another day. She warns, “It is the eve of St. George’s Day... when the clock strikes midnight, all the evil things in the world will have full sway...” (7). She then offers Harker the crucifix that was around her neck. Although he finds it to be idolatrous, he is forced to accept it, but later on agrees that it has kept him safe. At one point, Mina tells Harker that they must keep their faith in God, and He will give them the help they so need. Christianity is even seen as a form of solace. When Mina’s forehead is burned by the communion wafer, she begins crying out that she is unclean, but Van Helsing comforts her by telling her “that scar shall pass away when God sees right...” (427). In these cases, and many more throughout the novel, it is evident that the country’s religion is very influential in their personal lives and, because of its influence, is heavily enforced. Anything that goes against their religious beliefs is evil. This is how they explain Dracula’s history and how he became the monster he is now. Van Helsing explains that those in Dracula’s family were great, but “were scions who were held by their coevals to have had

dealings with the Evil One” (344). Black magic is said to be the cause of the terror these people have endured. This sort of worship was against that of the country, and as a result led to the greatest evil ever known.

The last example of good versus evil is purity versus promiscuity, typically seen through the behaviour of women. Bram Stoker’s idea of purity is portrayed through Mina Harker. Van Helsing praised her for how pure she was. He told her husband, Jonathan Harker, “She is one of God’s women, fashioned by His own hand... So true, so sweet, so noble, so little an egoist, and that, let me tell you, is much in this age, so sceptical and selfish” (268). Mina is the purest image there is of a woman. Helsing describes her to be created specifically by God to be this way. She is honest, caring, and ethical, just as women were expected to be in this society. Another woman who is close to Mina in terms of purity is Lucy. Lucy was proposed to three separate times in a single day. The men that proposed loved her for her qualities, one of the men even describing her as an honest woman. However, Lucy does make remarks that go against societal values. For example, she questioned why a woman could not marry three men, but she admits that the thought itself is heresy. This changed completely when she became a victim to Count Dracula. The men described how “The sweetness was turned to adamant, heartless cruelty, and the purity to voluptuous wantonness” (301). The image here is basically describing that Lucy, who was once seen as a pure woman, is now the exact opposite. She is now viewed as a woman who is uncaring, brutal, and overtly sexual. She is deemed evil now because of this since she no longer conforms to society’s expectations of a virtuous woman, rather than being called evil because she is a vampire. The same can be said about the three women Jonathan encountered early on. Jonathan wrote, “There was something about them that made me uneasy, some longing and at the same time some deadly fear. I felt in my heart a wicked, burning desire that they would kiss me with those red lips” (55). The women were definitely vampires, but this is not what gives Jonathan fear. It is the sexual temptation they cause within him that is evil. He describes this longing as wicked, implying that he knows it is wrong. These women and Lucy, unlike Mina, were sexualized and no longer pure. This is the main reason they are so evil in the eyes of these men.

Bram Stoker explores a new meaning of what is good and what is evil in his novel, *Dracula*. This is seen in regards to religion, sexuality, and in *Dracula* and *Van Helsing*. Count Dracula is the most evil being of all, while Van Helsing and the Crew of Light are depicted as saviours among men for destroying him. Black magic is blasphemy, and is the reason for all the pain and suffering of these people. Christianity, of course, is what protects them, even those who are not firm believers. Lastly, a woman’s purity is what makes her good, and promiscuity is seen as unclean and immoral. In conclusion, rather than simply being something that is either inherently good or evil, the virtue of these things is instead determined by societal standards and moral values.