



Vlad III Dracul
Member of the Order of the Dragon
Born: 1431
Died: 1476

Famous for:
Protecting Eastern Europe from the Ottoman Turks
Being the inspiration for vampires



Vampires are popular characters for horror stories. They are horrible monsters that drink the blood of other people. Some people believe there are real vampires, while others think they are imaginary creatures. But like all stories, the vampire legends are based on truth.

The most *iconic* vampire in world history is Vlad III Dracul. If something is iconic, it means it is the best example of a certain idea. Vlad lived in a country called Wallachia; it was also called Transylvania and is now called Romania.



Vlad's father was Vlad II, a king who belonged to the Order of the Dragon. The Order of the Dragon was a group of Christian rulers who had promised to fight against the enemies of God, especially the Ottoman Turks. They wanted to protect the *Eastern Orthodox Church* from Muslim influence. The Eastern Orthodox Church is located in Eastern Europe and believes in God, Jesus, and the saints.

Vlad's father eventually made a peace agreement with the Ottoman Turks and gave them his two sons as part of that agreement. While he was with the Turks, Vlad III studied the holy book of Islam, literature, horse riding, and the Ottoman style of war.

A group of men killed Vlad II and the Ottomans made Vlad III the new king of Wallachia to make sure it would still belong to them. But Vlad did not listen to the Turks' instructions and instead *rebelled* against them. If someone rebels, they are fighting against someone who has authority over them.

The Ottomans grew afraid of Vlad because he was a cruel and merciless ruler. He tortured his own *subjects* for small crimes. Subjects are people who must listen to a ruler. One story tells how Vlad punished some Turkish messengers because they did not show respect by taking off their hats when they greeted him. He told his soldiers to hammer the hats onto the messengers' heads with giant nails. Of course, the messengers died.





Vlad was called “the Impaler” because it was his favorite way to kill his prisoners. A sharp stick would be pushed through a person’s body and out his mouth. The soldiers doing this would be careful to miss all the *vital organs*. Vital organs are the organs people need to live, like the heart and lungs. The person who was impaled would sometimes live for three days before finally dying of thirst. According to writers, he impaled between 40,000 and 80,000 people – both prisoners and subjects.

Vlad III is called a vampire because historic accounts say he was a *cannibal*. A cannibal is someone who eats human meat. He also drank human blood. The name Dracula comes from the Romanian word meaning “son of a dragon”.

The things Vlad did were so horrible that his own subjects hated him. He was eventually killed and his body buried in a grave with no stone. Nobody knows where exactly Vlad III is buried.

Iconic – the best example of a certain idea

Eastern Orthodox Church – located in Eastern Europe and believes in God, Jesus, and the saints

Rebelled – fought against someone who has authority

Subjects – people who must listen to a ruler

Vital organs – the organs people need to live

Cannibal – someone who eats human meat