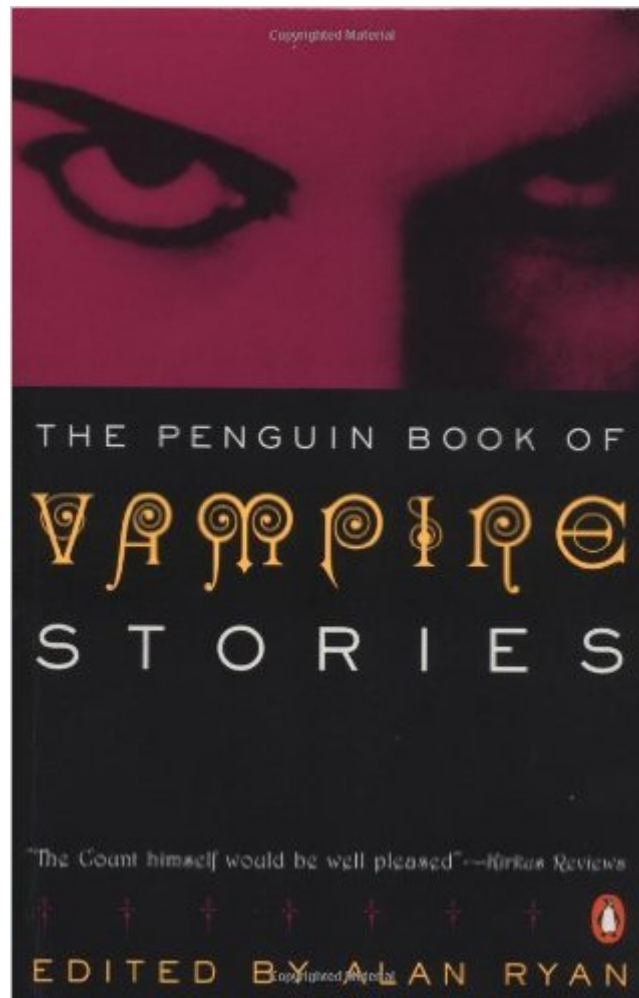


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The Penguin Book Of Vampire Stories



Synopsis

They're lurking under the cover of darkness; and between the covers of this book. Here, in all their horror and all their glory, are the great vampires of literature: male and female, invisible and metamorphic, doomed and daring. Their skin deathly pale, their nails curved like claws, their fangs sharpened for the attack, they are gathered for the kill and for the chill, brought frighteningly to life by Bram Stoker, Fritz Leiber, Richard Matheson, Robert Bloch, Charles L. Grant, Tanith Lee, and other masters of the macabre. Careful; they are all crafty enough to steal their way into your imagination and steal away your hopes for a restful sleep.

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Customer Reviews

Alan Ryan has assembled here both a history of vampire short fiction and a compelling collection of never-lose-their-edge stories. The volume contains the very first vampire story to appear in English, fragments of Byron's vampire stories, a chapter Stoker never included in *Dracula*, excerpts from the "penny-dreadfuls" popular at the turn of the century, and several of the most important works for the genre, including the full text of the story *Carmilla*. Ryan introduces each story with a bit of background information and the author's place in the pantheon, which is helpful because many of these authors are otherwise unknown or known only within genre literature. This is the single best anthology available for a real introduction to vampire literature.

In the last couple of decades, vampires have been emasculated and neutered. Modern

sensationalist authors have turned vampires into forbidden lust objects and sensitive outcasts, rather than the embodiments of pure evil that they're supposed to be. If you're unhappy with the insufficient horror of current vampire tales, track down this collection or one like it. (At least some editions of this volume, originally from 1987, will be difficult to find, but you could also try to locate a different collection that features the old stories I will discuss here.) Enthusiasts will know that vampires were significant in medieval folklore, especially in Eastern Europe, and the earliest of the stories here reflect these true robust traditions. We get "The Vampyre" by John Polidori (1819) and "Varney the Vampyre" by James Malcolm Rhymer (1845), both of which were incredibly influential for all subsequent horror writing. Another early treasure in this book is a lost chapter from Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897). After this, writers started to get creative with the vampire mythos, growing the literary tradition in fascinating and always frightening ways. This collection's greatest find is the stupendous "Shambleau" by C.L. Moore (1933), a terrifying early landmark for both horror and science fiction. Other old favorites include "Revelations in Black" by Carl Jacobi (1933) which explores the connections between vampires and insanity; and "Over the River" by P. Schuyler Miller (1941), a truly disturbing and upsetting tale of a man who has become a vampire against his will and is rejected by his loved ones. On the fun side, don't miss the freaky supermodel vampire in Fritz Leiber's "The Girl with the Hungry Eyes" (1949) or Robert Bloch's actor who plays a vampire way too well in "The Living Dead" (1967). By the time we get to the 70s and 80s we get early goodies from excellent and still active authors such as Chelsea Quinn Yarbro, Ramsey Campbell, and Tanith Lee. The emerging modern development of vampire literature can be seen in "Unicorn Tapestry" by Suzy McKee Charnas (1980), which is stronger than today's unscary schlock but is a chilling omen of the currently rampant vampire-as-forbidden-lover motif. Fans of real horror and real vampires must pick up this collection, or one with similar story selection, that compiles these important and truly scary old classics. [~doomsdayer520~]

This book came out in 1987 and contained 32 works by as many writers. It's also been published as *Vampires: Two Centuries of Great Vampire Stories*. There were 30 tales and two excerpts from novels. The collection focused on works from the United States -- just over half the selections -- and Great Britain -- most of the rest -- with three from Ireland and Germany. Vampire tales from other parts of the world such as Russia, France and Eastern Europe were excluded. The works ranged from the 1810s to the 1980s. From the early 1800s there were Lord Byron's "Fragment of a Novel" (written in 1816 but published later), John Polidori's "The Vampyre" (published in 1819, the first vampire tale of any importance in English, very influential), and an excerpt from the first vampire

novel in English, James Malcolm Rymer's *Varney the Vampyre* (1845-47). From the later 1800s, there was "The Mysterious Stranger," an anonymous tale translated into English in 1860 from the German, one of the few works in the book actually set in Eastern Europe, with a fair amount of background on the creation and behavior of vampires. There were also "Carmilla" (1872), the story by Sheridan Le Fanu, likewise set in the East, containing an unforgettable female of the species; "Good Lady Ducayne" (1896) by then popular Victorian writer Mary Elizabeth Bradden; and "Dracula's Guest" by Bram Stoker, which is believed now to be from an early draft of *Dracula* that was later published separately by his widow. Bradden's story added a scientific dimension to the tradition, as the victim was drugged with chloroform and the vampire received transfusions. From first two decades of the 1900s, there were stories by the English writers M. R. James ("An Episode of Cathedral History"), E. F. Benson ("The Room in the Tower") and Algernon Blackwood ("The Transfer") -- all especially strong on atmosphere -- and the American writers Mary Wilkins Freeman and F. Marion Crawford. The tale by Freeman ("Luella Miller"), published in 1903 and set in New England, was the first American tale in the collection. Nothing remotely related by Poe was included ("Berenice," "Ligeia," or "The Fall of the House of Usher"). Nor anything by the other 19th century U.S. masters of the macabre -- Hawthorne and Bierce -- they didn't write in this genre. From the 1930s, there were pulpish stories by American authors, many of them from *Weird Tales* magazine (Clark Ashton Smith, Manly Wade Wellman, Carl Jacobi, August Derleth, C. L. Moore). Most of these lacked the rich atmosphere in the best stories of writers like Le Fanu, James and Benson. The story by Moore, "Shambleau" (1933) introduced explicit sexuality and, influenced by SF, an alien vampire on another planet. From the 1940s came "Over the River" (1941) by Peter Schuyler Miller, which communicated vividly a primitive vampire's rather basic point of view, and an often-reprinted story by Fritz Leiber, "The Girl with the Hungry Eyes" (1949). This work reimagined the supernatural, setting it in the present-day city and using a vampire to embody the world of advertising and rampant consumerism. From the 1950s and 60s, there were tales by Cyril Kornbluth ("The Mindworm") and Robert Bloch, where elements of black humor began to creep in, as well as by Charles Beaumont and Richard Matheson. From the 1970s, British authors returned after a half-century of omission, with a rare vampire tale from a modern master of psychological horror, Robert Aickman (not his best), and a comic one by Ronald Chetwynd-Hayes about a werewolf's marriage to a vampire. In the latter story, the times had changed and it was the vampires/werewolf who were most "human" and a man of the cloth who was the villain. (Seventy years before, Stoker's vampire had been a servant of the Devil and a menace to Christian souls.) There was also a story of sexual obsession by American writer Charles L. Grant. Finally, with the 1980s, the collection tried to

show the range of recent writing available: a tale by the editor, Alan Ryan, linking vampirism and Christianity, psychological horror by Ramsey Campbell, and something from the world of fantasy and Gothic romance by Tanith Lee. From the U.S., there were tales set in the present day by Suzy McKee Charnas and Chelsea Quinn Yarbro -- American locales with urbane vampires of European heritage -- and Steve Rasnic Tem -- modern psychological horror. It appeared that these writers were preferred here to the more popular King and Rice. The work by Charnas was a memorable chapter from her novel *The Vampire Tapestry*, in which the worlds of a psychologist and a vampire clashed and each was affected. The times had continued to change, now a vampire could undergo analysis, and a number of the tales showed the vampires as opponents of evil or attractive opponents in themselves. For this reader, the most interesting things in the collection were the very early pieces -- not especially gripping but of historical interest -- the tales strong in atmosphere and psychological horror (Le Fanu, Benson), the imagination and themes of C. L. Moore, the humor of Kornbluth and the work by Charnas. Least interesting were many of the pulpish pieces from the 1930s and later ones relying heavily on fantasy. With the vampire genre, the more variety the better, and it would've been nice to read a few more early tales from authors elsewhere in Europe (Charles Nodier, Théophile Gautier, Gogol, Alexei Tolstoy). Or a fairy tale by a modern writer like Angela Carter, or modern works by Eastern bloc authors that used vampires as symbols of Communism and capitalism. Other relevant anthologies include Peter Haining's *The Vampire Omnibus* (1995), Leonard Woolf's *Blood Thirst: 100 Years of Vampire Fiction* (1997) and Otto Penzler's 1,056-page *The Vampire Archives* (2009). Half the stories in Penguin appear in Penzler, but the type in Penguin is much easier to read. A collection focused only on older stories is *Dracula's Guest: A Connoisseur's Collection of Victorian Vampire Stories* (2010).

Rather than a collection of modern-day stories, this collection features tales through the ages that start from the 1816 and range until the publication of the book. Among the edition are several classics, such as George Gordon and Lord Byron's "Fragment of a Novel," an excerpt from "Varney the Vampire, or, The Feast of Blood" by James Malcom Rymer, Bram Stoker's "Dracula's Guest" and "Carmilla." Modern writers include Robert Bloch's "The Living Dead" and Tanitha Lee's "Bite-Me-Not or, Fleur de Feu."

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