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ACT@R: EVA

By Jimmy Hissong THE BATTALION

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tage, opene It's pretty much the general consensus among college students that tests are hard, professors are tough and textbooks are boring. At least students aren't damned to walk the earth with an eternal y of profes hunger for human blood, assuming the previously enrolled vampires have already graduated.

fine arts The vampire legend invented more than a century ago has ineering, grown to common trick-or-treater knowledge today. Speculation presentative on the size of vampire hype would place it slightly below wereho chose the wolves, but significantly ahead of the creature from the black lagoon. Frankenstein and vampires tie. Dracula would likely win e memori a fight, though. he 1999 col

Hungarian myths dating back to the 12th century form the backbone for many of the character traits of the modern vampire. as the right d. "We need The fear of ghouls such as the Incubus and Succubus, who rose from the grave and sucked the blood of the living, predate memorialize Dracula.

Overland Imaginative authors have developed and evolved the vampire creature into an immortal being with the ability to climb walls and an Antonie transform into a bat.

"For the most part, everything we think of as a legend or myth is created by a literary writer," said Dr. Dennis Berthold, a prodesign is fessor of gothic literature. rs really pu

Berthold said nearly all of the stories surrounding fang-bearto this," h ing, garlic-hating vampires can be traced to a single source: Bram Stoker's "Dracula," published in 1897. The imagination and innovation of Stoker's work have encouraged a number of artists to explore the undying topic for more than a century.

Silent filmmakers of the 1920s furthered the vampire legend by bringing the impossible abilities of vampires to a screen before the 27 stuan audience's very eyes. Writers such as Anne Rice have modernured in the ized various vampire tales, renewing their popularity for modern readers

"Roughly speaking, the vampire is pretty much a creation of modern literature," Berthold said.

Berthold said perhaps the reason the myth and legend surrounding a race of undying bloodsuckers has grown to the extent they have over the years is that most vampire works incorporate a sense of realism. Stoker and other authors use pseudo history.

There really was a count living in Transylvania centuries ago, and while he wasn't the nicest guy, he likely hasn't roamed the earth for the past five centuries.

The count's queer habit of impaling his enemies on roadside pkes earned him the nickname of Vlad the Impaler, but history and storytelling have renamed the count Dracula.

"A vampire changing into a bat strictly comes out of Stoker's novel, and of course it makes sense because there really are such metaphor. Sex is definitely

things as vampire bats. But about the worst thing they've ever done is bite some cattle," Berthold said.

Rice also frequently incorporates a sense of reality into her works of fiction. Her novel "Interview with a Vampire," later turned into a film, centers around a seemingly non- . fictional interview with a man who claims to be a vampire.

"If we get scared by things that are really weird, we aren't really scared because we know it can't happen," Berthold said. "It's not as scary as a more realistic kind of literature. You could be scared for a moment, then get over it and dismiss it as a fairy tale."

While vampire tales might make it difficult for a chosen few to walk unescorted at night, there is a general limit to their acceptance by the masses as a source of real terror.

"They are probably one of the scariest monsters, but then again they kind of remind me of mosquitoes," said Keri Bell, a sophomore English major.

Regardless of some believability issues, vampire tales have survived, while stories, such space as alien clowns tend to entertain minimal success.

Vampire legends tend to deal with two basic human infatuations Death and sex.

"It speaks to some kind of human need to be able to deal with mortality and the possibility that the body will decay or change in some sort of way, and it becomes a way of confronting your own death. You aren't just the same as your body," Berthold said.

Tones of sensuality are just as evident. "The stories are always about a female in distress," Berthold said. "It's late at night. Somebody's chasing her and wants to get her alone. They may not really want to,

suck her blood; it's just a

right on the surface in many stories."

Although vampire stories and vampire superstitions tend to be commonly known, the acceptance of the existence of vampires is still confronted by skepticism.

"If vampires were real and they were really immortal, we'd have them running around everywhere," Berthold said.

Based on that idea, Texas A&M has a lot of work to do to meet its diversity vision for the year 2020 (which by the way is exactly 558 years since the supposed emergence of the vampire, Dracula.) The vampire presence in and around A&M is still extremely minimal.

Ryan McCabe, a senior finance major, believes students who sleep a lot during the day and are on the prowl at night are likely candidates for modern-day vampires.

"I don't know about vampires. I know I am not a vampire, but I am more active at night. I guess that's because cell phone minutes are free after nine. Plus I sleep all day," McCabe said.

> Vampires or not, the American Red Cross Brazos Valley Blood Bank said it is more than ready to serve the area's needs. Nonvampires are likely to receive preferential treatment, however.

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