

From Buffy to Bella: The Evolution of the Vampire in Pop Culture

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Over the past decade, pop culture has changed its view on vampires. No longer seen as a fearsome murderer, the vampire today is portrayed as a somewhat dangerous but misunderstood foe at worst and as a tender, romantic lover at best. The shift has many people wondering: why the sudden sympathy? There may not be one answer, but the trend towards positive views of vampires in pop culture is spreading.

The bloodthirsty myth owes its origins to Vlad Dracula, a 15th-century Romanian ruler. According to popular legend, Dracula impaled his enemies on large wooden stakes before drinking their blood. It was rumored that Dracula created armies of vampires by cursing the spirits of his victims, forcing them to kill. Later, when Bram Stoker loosely based his 1897 literary classic *Dracula* on this popular Romanian legend, the vampire myth was introduced into mainstream culture.

Stoker's *Dracula* has inspired many novels, movies, and television shows, each medium remained true to the gruesome depiction of the vampire as an ugly, murderous immortal. Eventually, however, the vampire evolved into

a seductive and semi-moral creature, capable of luring prey using its sex appeal but also experiencing true love via its human instincts. Anne Rice's *The Vampire Chronicles* introduced the sexy, powerful vampire Lestat and his companion Louis to the literary work in the 1980s. The popular show *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997), in which a young girl destined to kill vampires falls in love with one, also began to alter the public perception of the vampire in this way.

The handsome, dangerous vampire Angel fell in love with Buffy but struggled with his instinct to kill her while attempting to hide their love from his vampire friends. His internal conflict and their love won the hearts of many teenage fans. Angel was not unlike Edward Cullen, the pale, beautiful hero of Stephanie Meyers' *Twilight* saga. Like Angel, Edward also suffers conflicting feelings of romantic love toward his human girlfriend, Bella and his strong desire to drink her blood. Unlike Angel, however, Edward is a "vegetarian" vampire who chooses to live on animal blood. Readers of all ages sympathize with Edward's angsty emotions and swoon over his 18th-century chivalry, despite the



Edward and Bella, photo courtesy of <http://blog.newsok.com/ofinterest/>

danger he presents.

Since the raging success of *Twilight*, modern pop culture has experienced a vampire explosion. One cannot walk into a bookstore without seeing yet another teen vampire-human romance series on display or ignore commercials for new television dramas starring the beloved bloodsucker character. One well-known example, HBO's *True Blood* (2008); based on the *Southern Vampire* series by Char-

laine Harris, depicts interactions between the vampires and humans of Louisiana; many of the vampires live peacefully amongst humans, feeding on scientifically created blood, and engage in complicated romantic relationships with their mortal neighbors.

How will the vampire evolve next? This mythical monster's subsequent status in the culture of the future remains to be seen.

Ask Gigi

Dear Gigi,
I'm far into my "Four Year Plan," but I've been terribly indecisive about my majors and minors. I'm not behind, because I've worked hard to make sure courses count somewhere, but I'm not sure that what I'm studying right now is relevant to any future dream career. I feel "stuck" in my studies, but it's too late to turn back. How can I manage to make the best of it?

Sincerely,
Queen of Indecision

Dear Queen of Indecision,
Although the Registrar may hate you, your indecision is totally normal! Believe it or not, many college graduates pursue careers completely unrelated to their undergraduate fields of study. Do you have a special talent, unique community experience, or in-depth knowledge of a subject, such as a foreign language? When you are compared to thousands of other job-seeking college graduates, your unique traits may prove to be more marketable than your common degree, so cultivate those skills, and highlight them on your resume or CV. At this point, however, enjoy the explorative journey that college provides. Your remaining semesters are your prime time to take classes that interest you, regardless of whether they fit into a neat category.

Yours truly,
Gigi

What's Up In Raleigh

- April 15: Beach Music and Dancing at North Hills
- April 17: Herb Fest 2010 - <http://www.herbfest.net/>
- April 17: 11th Annual K9-3K Dog Walk in Moore Square
- April 17: Earth Day Celebration at Umstead Park
- April 17 and 18: Turkish Festival at the Expo Center. \$3
- April 17 (10-6) and 18 (1-6): Durham ArtWalk in Downtown Durham
- April 17 at 7 pm: Redress Raleigh Fashion Show at Flanders Art Gallery, \$8