

# 5 THINGS YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT BRAM STOKER AND *DRACULA*

- † Contrary to popular belief, Bram Stoker did not model his monster after fifteenth-century prince Vlad Tepes (also known as Vlad the Impaler and Dracula). In fact, it was sheer coincidence that led him to the name entirely; he happened upon it in a book from Eastern Europe and felt that it fit his character so well that he wove it into his outline. Other than the name, Stoker knew virtually nothing about Vlad Tepes.
- † Bram Stoker was an avid admirer of American poet Walt Whitman's work. When he was still in college, Stoker wrote Whitman a letter singing his praises (though he delayed sending it for four years). The pair did not meet until a decade later, but Whitman's influence can be seen in Stoker's work, including *Dracula*.
- † Though Stoker never set foot in Transylvania, he did vacation in another one of his novel's settings: the Yorkshire village of Whitby. At the time, it had become popular as a Victorian resort town. It was in Whitby's library that Stoker read a book about middle-European history and came upon the name that would become an integral part of vampire folklore: Dracula.
- † Oscar Wilde and Bram Stoker were contemporaries in London's theater circle. Just as he was beginning to work on his notes for *Dracula*, Wilde's scandalous homosexual affair and (what was considered to be) his homoerotic work *The Picture of Dorian Gray* placed him in ill repute with the general public—and his friends. Those first pages of Stoker's notes reflect the influence that Wilde had on him—including a painters' inability to capture Dracula's image on canvas (a detail later omitted).
- † Several major elements of vampire mythology originated from Stoker's novel. He was the first person to incorporate using garlic to repel a vampire, which was taken from folklore; vampiric weakness in sunlight, which was exaggerated heavily in later films and books; and, perhaps the most important contribution: the rule that states when a vampire's victim dies, he/she becomes a new vampire.