

Kaylee Petersen

Professor Starrantino

ENGL 1010-07

4 April 2014

Within the Written Word: The Value of Vampires

It is believed that stories were first shared to help communities survive; today, they are for our education and delight. Literature has been molded by grand protagonists like Odysseus, King Arthur, and Peter Pan, whereas today we have Edward Cullen, Daenerys Targaryen, and Klaus Mikaelson. Characters of the past are fading away and now the public is overcrowded with vampires, other magical beings, and high school drama; these succeed in current media, but it's evident that writers are lacking valuable skills seeing as there is little variation in ideas and they only survive on their quips. Today, society wants everything fast and easy but they should reopen and use the classics as a standard for reading and writing skills because such books keep our modern society from dumbing down, they present valid examples and analyses of human nature and are intellectually stimulating. "Most children and young adults demonstrate a surface understanding of a range of materials appropriate for their age. Only small percentages of children and young adults can reason effectively about what they are reading or writing" (Applebee, 5). The ability to read is important as ever, but the ability to understand and think critically about the written word is decreasing. The writing levels have dropped, spelling and grammar rules are disappearing, and the classics are losing their glimmer and are being left in the dusty bookshelves. It must be asked, whether or not the written word is an art form this world can afford to lose.

Contemporary art is all the mass seems to desire, which pushes the classics and originals into the shadowed corners. Inside libraries, there are all sorts of stories to explore such as Bram Stoker's world in *Dracula* as well as Stephanie Meyer's *Twilight*. Though the idea of vampires reign through both stories, they are distinctly different in style, time periods and characterization; just because the latter story is newer doesn't mean it should win over the former just because it's current and recent. Time should definitely progress man's creativity and nature, but it appears that mankind might be going downhill if modern books are all about lame quips and reused ideas instead of thought provoking lines and intrinsic values preserved in society.

There used to be definite levels of writing, different formats used according to their purpose, starting at the bottom with grocery lists, working through notes and blogs and closing at the top with published articles and dissertations. Nowadays those categories have merged into two levels: simple scribbles for a list of necessities, or of the academic standard where even the authors are often confusing themselves on their own sentences. Published writers are beginning to vary on these two lines, unable to find that fine balance once known so well. For example, when Thomas Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence, it was written in a script style of the time, using language everyone understood- even those who could not read. However when this famous document is shared with school kids as well as most adults, it becomes complicated, confusing, and sophisticated to a point that it's easily misunderstood. In the course of less than 300 years, humanity has come so far and yet are falling behind in the basic principles of the English language itself. The evolution of language is acknowledged and necessary, but today the English language has declined as much as it has advanced. This is a problem that affects everyone once they're old enough to start understanding the shapes and sounds of dialect.

Our advanced communication in society is a large part of what separates humanity from the animal kingdom, and it is only hurting everyone by dropping these standards. Mankind was on a roll for a long time with works such as Homer's epic poems, and the Holy Bible, which lasted for several eras until the last half century or so- about the time that mankind began to be very distracted with evolving technology. By reading from assorted time periods, one can easily see the differences and declination of the written word. Bram Stoker wrote in his story *Dracula*, "He has allowed us to redeem one soul already, and we go out as the old knights of the Cross to redeem more. Like them we shall travel towards the sunrise. And like them, if we fall, we fall in good cause." Poetry is an art form that touches the soul and leaves a mark; this is something the populace used to find within the language of books. However, now the vast majority of the public read fast-paced and flimsy grounded stories like Stephanie Meyer's *Twilight* which include lines such as, "Do I dazzle you?" This latter book is filled of high-tension and hormonal-crazed moments that many readers experience pleasure reading; to write something that is enjoyed is a remarkable skill but those hasty pieces that construe such a story don't grip the soul compared to classics such as *Dracula*.

Individuals who compose for humankind should aspire to write not the basic action-filled and lusty novels, but should desire to create a story that will serve as a classic tale. The definition for 'classic' has varied through dictionaries and people's understanding, but bound together they create the idea of something that will last in the minds and hearts of those who experience it. A similar meaning claims that a classic novel is one that can be read over and over again, and something new is learned and experienced with each reading. The problem for *Twilight* is that the story holds no ground, asks for nothing, and binds the reader to an unreliable loyalty that usually flies out the window with the next big thing. The difference with *Dracula* is

that it asks for the readers to understand, to experience, and to learn: to find the human nature of the characters, the lack and fill of humanity through the times, and to find faith not just in the book itself but in the reader's own life. A classic story isn't selfish, but it is an understanding that the reader will walk away with a piece of their heart lost, and another piece found.

Classic, characteristic and concrete in form- this is how stories should be written. The more a human can learn from a book, the more their personal character is formed. While programs have been formed to encourage children to pick up storybooks and read on their own, the desired results are still lacking. "It is time to ensure that these children get the good start they need" (Applebee, 28). It is supposed that one aid that's guiding good books out the window are the textbooks used for schooling. These large pamphlets are packed with quotes and tidbits of information- covering large spectrums of material but carrying little substance; these students are given a vague surface of words without solid structure. Such textbooks should not be used as often as they are today, used in a vast majority over the real books- what they're often telling the readers about- and giving limited facts without decent value. By the simple act of bringing in books to read for classes instead of textbooks, this will help lead students of all ages to a new respect and possibly even a love of books; they will be less likely to begrudge opening the pages of a book and excited to do more on their own. Once an acceptance of the written word has been found, there are new intellectual paths to be established and walked down. It is possible to bring back up the strong standards of reading, writing and reasoning, and it's about time action was taken to improve the writing and reading standards of today's youth. It's time classics are used as a standard for the written word, and the growing youth have better opportunities to read original works that are intellectually stimulating. Let not such a beautiful language be allowed to decline within this world, but let them rise once again into meaningful words of art.

Works Cited

- Applebee, Arthur N., Langer, Judith A., and Mullis, Ina V.S. "Learning to Be Literate in America: Reading, Writing, and Reasoning. The Nation's Report Card." *Eric.ed.gov* National Assessment of Educational Progress, Princeton, NJ. 1987 March.
- Meyer, Stephanie. *Twilight*. New York: Little, Brown and Co., 2005.
- Stoker, Bram. *Dracula*. 1897 New York: Oxford University Press, 1990.