

Study Guide for Vampires of Ottawa

Although Liz's new friend Orli tried to convince her that vampire stories were just old superstitions, Liz wanted to believe that vampires did exist. Her experiences on death row, then at the gloomy Blackwater Estate, soon had her convinced.

Could Liz "rest in peace", fearing that she might be attacked by a vampire during the night? How could she reassure Baron Nicolai Zaba that he was safe when she feared that the vampires would attack him? Were Lobos, Crouch or Simon trying to get rid of the Baron? This is a bloodcurdling mystery that is hard to put down until the plot unwinds.

Pre-reading suggestions

Locate Canada's capital on a map. Using a large, detailed street map of Ottawa and some brochures showing the major attractions of the city, locate the Parliament Buildings, Rideau Hall, 24 Sussex Drive, the Rideau Canal and Nicholas Street. This will help to orient the students with the area. Maps and photos should be readily available from families who have visited Ottawa, or from vertical files in the library.

Some discussion about the superstitions surrounding vampire bats and vampires is in order so that students understand they are just superstitions. Students who are really into this kind of story might enjoy Kin Platt's *Dracula, Go Home!* or an all-time favorite of vampire lovers, Bram Stoker's *Dracula*.

There are some fascinating insights into the origins of a variety of popular superstitions in Julie F. Batchelor and Claudia de Lys' *Superstitious? Here's Why* (Scholastic, Toronto, 1971).

QUESTIONS

Literal

1. Why is Liz visiting Ottawa?
2. What was Liz doing in a jail cell?
3. Many countries have given gifts to Canada. Why did the people of Holland have tulips planted all over Ottawa?
4. Liz ate sarmale and cirositi for dinner at the Blackwater Estate. What kind of dishes are these?
5. Why did the Baron have mirrors hanging on the walls of his rooms?

Inferential

6. Explain the meanings of the following expressions:
 - a. Liz thinks, "My imagination was getting the best of me"
 - b. "curiosity killed the cat"
 - c. "I was examining her with a fine-toothed comb"

7. How thick was the glass on the limousine in which Liz rode to the Arts Center? Why should any car have such thick windows?

Critical

8. How does Eric Wilson establish such a "scary" mood in Chapter 7, when Liz is going to bed at Blackwater Estate?
9. Liz was very angry with Simon Sharples when he referred to her hometown of Winnipeg as "the boonies". How would you feel if someone made fun of your hometown? Why do you think you would feel that way?
10. In this story, as in many of Eric Wilson's novels, there are several references to superstitions. Are you superstitious about anything? How do you feel about superstitions and superstitious people?

Research

11. Are vampires real? Check at least two encyclopedias or dictionaries to see what is said about vampires.
12. The ballet *Swan Lake* was playing at the National Arts Center. Using the index to any standard encyclopedia, find references to the story of *Swan Lake*, and read over the related articles. Can you reconstruct the story in your own words?
13. Using a street map of Ottawa, look up the following place names, and try to locate the buildings which are mentioned. Imagine the routes which were taken by the walking tour, the boat on the canal, and the limousine.
 - o Nicholas Street
 - o Chateau Laurier Hotel
 - o Sussex Drive
 - o 24 Sussex Drive
 - o Rideau Canal
 - o National Arts Center
 - o War Memorial
 - o Basilica Notre Dame
 - o The Mint
 - o Parliament Buildings
 - o Rideau Hall

ANSWERS

1. (p. 3) "I'm in Ottawa to represent Manitoba in the National Public Speaking Contest for schools."
2. (p. 2) Liz was staying in the Nicholas Youth Hostel, which had, at one time, been a prison.
3. (p. 15) "...to thank Canadians for sheltering their Royal Family in Ottawa during the last war."
4. (p. 56) These are Romanian dishes - cabbage rolls and a dough filled with cheese.

5. (p. 49) "...it is said that a vampire will not cast a reflection in a mirror. Whenever the Baron receives a visitor, he first looks at that person's reflection."
 - a. Liz was having so many imaginative thoughts about vampires and death that she was becoming quite upset.
 - b. It can be very dangerous to be caught snooping.
 - c. This means to examine someone or something very thoroughly.
6. (p. 33) The glass was six centimeters thick. Answers about why windows should be so thick will vary.
7. (pp. 57-61) . . . dark stairway . . . whistling wind . . . rumble of thunder . . . gloomy room . . . haunting picture on the wall . . . rattling glass . . . purple roses . . . tapping sound . . . lightening flashes.
8. (p. 53) you can review Liz's response here. Your own response might well be different from hers.
9. Answers will vary.
10. Most reference sources will tell you that vampires are not real. They are legendary figures, most often found in the mythologies of the Slavic countries. Dracula is perhaps the most famous of the fictional vampires.
11. (p. 39) "The ballet tells the story of an enchanted princess who has been transformed into a swan by an evil magician and can only return to human form at night. She falls in love with a prince who vows his love, but then blows it when the magician tricks him into falling for another girl. Instead of the princess being freed from the spell to marry the prince, they are trapped, and can only unite their love for eternity by drowning together in the lake."
12. Use a street map of Ottawa to check places and routes.