George   English 10833--
Dracula
ASSN 3: Analyzing *Dracula* in the Context of Victorian Culture

Purpose: **This assignment asks you to write an analysis that shows where and how *Dracula* responds to or is influenced by parts of Victorian culture.**

Remember that we started the semester assuming that the novel tells us as much about Victorian England as it does vampires. As Nina Auerbach and David Skal argue, "In the guise of fantasy, Bram Stoker wrote a novel true to the dislocating experience of his bewildered contemporaries" as they tried to negotiate threats from technology, immigrants—especially of Eastern European descent, shifting gender roles, repressive sexual mores, infectious diseases, crumbling imperial policy, and the prospect of evolutionary reversion (xi). In addition, the editors note "the staggering range of Bram Stoker's knowledge and awareness," including everything from the latest research in neurology and psychiatry to the beginnings of feminism and new theories about sexual behavior.

Most of us still don't have Stoker's "staggering range of . . . knowledge" about Victorian England, but we *do* all know much more about late 19th century British society than we did in August. Now it's time to use that information to help each other understand the novel better. For instance, if you've learned a lot about the impact of Darwin on Victorians, show us where Stoker deals with this topic in the novel and what he has to say about it—perhaps his fears about the possibility of "devolution." And if you know lots about Victorian technology, can you suggest what Stoker knows about the subject and how he feels about these modern gadgets? And if you've read up on Vlad the Impaler, do you think Stoker really *did* model Dracula after him, or, more importantly, what would it tell us about how to understand the character if he did? You do not need to use your own contextual research; you may use classmates' research or mix and match. Try combining two or three pieces of context: Stoker and Oscar Wilde OR Jack the Ripper and Sherlock Holmes.

NOTE: You may do more research on Victorian culture, but do not look up literary criticism on *Dracula*, especially articles that connect it to the culture. That's thinking we need to do ourselves.

Whatever pieces (1-3) of the Victorian context you choose, **your analysis should** (grading criteria):

- provide fairly detailed contextual information (not a bunch of generalizations: "Victorians were upset by Darwin's book") drawn from **at least three outside sources** (primary sources, if possible.) You may use any information/ideas from your own research or your classmates' research papers on eCollege (properly cited, of course!), from class discussion, or class readings to help you "set the scene." Typically, this will come first in your essay and comprise about 1/3 of your paper.

- demonstrate effective, valid, accurate use and documentation of outside sources: summaries and paraphrases that use your own language, quotations used effectively for emphasis, source boundaries clearly marked with attributive tags and in-text citations, complete and accurate Works Cited. Serious problems with documentation will lower your score by at least one grade step.

- use *They Say/I Say* templates to introduce your ideas and those of others. (When using info from your own paper, you don't need to quote & cite yourself.)

- provide a close reading of *Dracula* supported with specific textual evidence (use quotes!).

For example, you might report what you've learned about the "new" and the "true" woman, then apply this information to the book: Which kind of woman is Lucy? Provide specific descriptions, events, or passages from the novel to support your answer. If you decide that Lucy *is* a new woman, what does Stoker reveal about his attitudes towards the "new woman" through her?

Your thesis might go something like this: In *Dracula*, Bram Stoker uses the character of Lucy Westenra to criticize the emergence of the "new woman" in Victorian society because he fears disruption of the male-dominated society in which he lives.

Hint: Potential Pitfall. Be sure you argue about/analyze *Dracula*. You need to do more than simply point at things in the novel. In other words, don't tell us all about Victorian technology, then talk about the novel by saying, "Look, there's a train and telegram in this chapter." Instead, your paper should discuss what the new technology and its role in the plot show us about *Stoker's reaction* to technology. **Key questions here are: "What is Stoker's argument about x topic?" OR "What do we better understand about x topic now that we know that…?"**

Another Hint (more grading criteria)**:** The best papers will show that you have read *Dracula* and research on its context carefully and thoughtfully – and they will show me that by discussing telling but often-overlooked details. The best papers will also show me that the writer has done some independent thinking: you may use notes from class discussions but try to go beyond them. Degree of difficulty in topic selection matters: an A paper is one that does the difficult thing well.

IMPORTANT DATES:

In-class work day	**Mon 10/31**
Complete draft due for peer review	**Wed 11/2**
In-class revision	**Fri 11/4**
Portfolio due	**Mon 11/7**

The Portfolio includes all work for the assignment:
Left side in this order: author's note, final draft, rough draft with peer comments
Right side in this order: dated work from 11/4, dated work from 10/31