

# Blood and Treasure

Bela Lugosi must be turning over in his grave—that is, if the stake through his heart would allow that. Mr. Lugosi, as you may know, became famous as Dracula in the 1931 movie based upon Bram Stoker's novel of a villainous Transylvanian blood-sucking vampire. For more than a century, Dracula and vampires in general were spooky cinema stalkers, usually dispatched with a sharp object in the chest.

But now, they are a cultural phenomenon and a billion-dollar business.

CBS News is reporting that some crazed American teenagers are actually biting each other, even drawing blood at times. Apparently the internet is full of vampire-type activities, primarily posted by nutty fans of the *Twilight* series of books and movies.

For those who lack a frame of reference about Romanian folklore, a vampire is a creature who can live forever but must drink blood to survive. Dracula was the big daddy, but now there are all kinds of vampires living in neighborhoods near you. At least that's according to author Stephenie Meyer, whose *Twilight* books have sold more than 100 million copies worldwide. Ms. Meyer specializes in creating young, attractive vampires who are not all bad like old Bela, the pasty, nasty icon. No, the *Twilight* undead can be romantic and emotional, and the kids just love 'em.

At the movies, the three *Twilight* flicks have grossed close to a billion and a half dollars and have glamorized the fanged creatures almost beyond belief. Want to be cool? Suck a little blood, stay out all night.

So why is this happening? Boredom, that's why. Many kids today spend nearly every waking moment stimulated by some kind of machine. The younger crew is texting, playing video games,

listening to up-tempo music on headphones, or networking on their personal computers. All day, all night, these machines are available. After a while, real life means little. It's too slow. Everything comes quickly on the machines. The kids are wired all the time.

Enter the world of the supernatural. Vampires don't need school or jobs; they just float around having dramas. And they look great. Even their big long teeth are sparkling white. Their hair is perfect. When Bela Lugosi emerged from his coffin, wolves howled. When these *Twilight* vampires show up, plastic surgeons take notes.

When I was ten years old, the hula hoop was the big trend. THE HULA HOOP. Now, most ten year olds know all about these vampire types and their werewolf friends. And some of the kids are actually acting this stuff out in real life, at least according to CBS News. So what is to be done?

Actually, nothing. If you believe the worldwide book sales and film grosses, there aren't enough stakes in the world to kill this vampire movement. These people may be dead, but boy, are they living large.