

0. THE REAL DRACULA - Story Preface

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This coat of arms—once used by a Serbian called Stefan Lazarevic (c. 1377-1427)—depicts the symbol used by members of the Order of the Dragon. Dr. Elizabeth Miller tells us more about that symbol: “The Order of the Dragon adopted as its symbol in 1408 the image of a circular dragon with its tail coiled around its neck. On its back, from the base of its neck to its tail, was the red cross of St George on the background of a silver field.” Image online by Djordjes, via Wikimedia Commons. License: [CC BY-SA 3.0](#)

It was the middle of the 15th century.

Constantinople - formerly the ancient Greek city of Byzantium and the place where Europe and Asia meet - was still in Christian hands. With its great basilica, the Hagia Sophia - later a mosque, now a museum - the city had been the capital of the Eastern Holy Roman Empire since Constantine established it as such in 330 A.D.

Border states like Romania (which centuries later revolted against its twentieth-century dictator, Nicolai Ceausescu) were buffer zones as southeastern Europe battled back the Turks of the Ottoman Empire. (Be sure to look at the maps from top to bottom to see the various stages of the Ottoman Empire.)

Not pleased with the way Europeans had conducted Crusades against the Muslim world, Sultan Murad II's battle-hardened troops took fierce revenge. Eastern Europe became a shield against the onslaught as the Turks conquered territory as far west as Vienna. It wasn't the last time Eastern Europe became a pawn in the hands of opposing super powers.

In the midst of the turmoil, a Wallachian Prince named Vlad and his wife, Princess Cneajna, had a son. The child, who was named for his father, was born in the Transylvanian town of Sighisoara in 1431. The house where Vlad, the child, was born is still standing. Today it is a restaurant.

Vlad, the father, was a favorite of the Holy Roman Emperor Sigismund of Luxembourg. The Emperor bestowed two great honors on Vlad the year his son was born. Inducted into the prestigious Order of the Dragon, Vlad was also made Prince of Wallachia.

The Romanian word for "Dragon" is Dracul and, henceforth, Vlad the father was known by the name "Vlad Dracul" (for Vlad the Dragon). Young Vlad was known as "Vlad Dracula" (for Vlad, son of the Dragon).

The Romanian word *Dracul* has another meaning: "Devil."

See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/THE-REAL-DRACULA-Shadow-of-the-Vampire-The-Real-Dracula>

See [Learning Tasks for this story online at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/THE-REAL-DRACULA-Shadow-of-the-Vampire-The-Real-Dracula>



Constantinople -13th Century

Image online, courtesy chaffee.net website.

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Byzantine Empire

Image online, courtesy the timeline.com website.

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Europe Meets Asia - Satellite View

Image online, courtesy the [Photojournal](#) website from NASA.

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Hagia Sophia - Constantinople

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons. License: CC BY-SA 3.0.

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Eastern Holy Roman Empire - Map

Image online, courtesy Fordham University's [Internet Medieval Sourcebook](#).

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Romania - Map Locator

Image online, courtesy the Aries-Shipping.ru website.

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Sultan Murad II

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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Sighisoara - Map Locator

Image online, courtesy BBC.

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Birthplace - Vlad Dracula

Image, described above, online courtesy [Galen Frysinger](#).

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Sigismund of Luxembourg Names Dracula

Image, described above, online courtesy Web Gallery of Art.

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Order of the Dragon

Image online, courtesy Don Linke.

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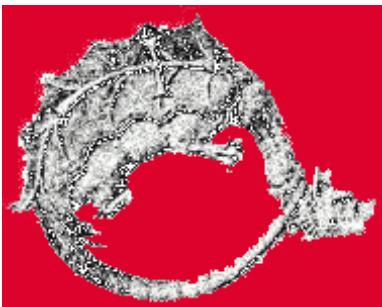


Wallachia - Map Locator

Map image from H. G. Wells, *The Outline of History* (New York, NY: The Macmillan Company, 1921). Image online, courtesy College of Education, University of South Florida.

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Dracul

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