

A Guide to Writing Vampire Fiction

By Hailey Frenette

Abstract: *This creative writing guide provides a list of questions and things to consider when crafting your own vampire story, using examples from popular vampire books, TV, and movies.*

Choosing a Genre

The first step of the creative writing process is usually to decide on genre. This step may come organically if the idea or inspiration that sparked the writing process is genre specific. Some ideas are obviously suited to be romantic comedies, while others are destined to be epic fantasy from the start; however, if your idea is to write a vampire story, then the genre options are broad.

Most popular teen vampire franchises, like *Twilight* and *The Vampire Diaries*, fall into the paranormal romance genre, but this hasn't always been the most common type of vampire story. For a more classic Dracula-esque vampire, consider leaning into gothic horror elements. Look at the genres of your favourite vampire stories for inspiration or be bold and create something completely unique. Vampires are a character type that can be slotted into most genres of fiction, so be creative. Maybe your story is a mystery starring a vampiric Sherlock Holmes or a space opera sci-fi with alien vampires.

Designing Your Vampire

Once you've decided what type of story to tell, the next step is to design your vampire, including physical characteristics and vampire abilities. There are several common tropes and themes that link vampire stories together, but every author has their own version of these tropes. Use the list of questions below as a guide for creating your vampire character.

- What is your vampire's stance on garlic, mirrors, sunlight, and crossing the threshold?

These are examples of classic vampire weaknesses, and you get to decide how and if they apply to your vampire characters. A trope as simple as an aversion to sunlight has appeared in fiction with many variations. Your vampire may burn up in the sunlight and thus be completely nocturnal, or they may sparkle in the sun like the vampires from *Twilight*. Perhaps your vampire is immune to the effects of the sun due to a daylight ring (*The Vampire Diaries*) or a magical mark on their forehead (*The Mortal Instruments*).

- How are your vampires created?

Every vampire has to come from somewhere, and figuring out how this happens will allow you to consider whether or not to sire any new vampires in your story. There are many variations of the vampire creation myth. In *The Vampire Diaries*, new vampires are created when a human dies with vampire blood in their veins. In *Cirque du Freak*, new vampires are made when a human and a vampire exchange blood through holes pricked in their fingers. In *The Mortal Instruments*, new vampires must be buried and crawl out of their own graves to achieve immortal life. However, not all vampires are made from humans. In *Vampire Academy*, vampires are born from vampire parents. Look at how new vampires are created in your favourite books for inspiration.

You may also want to consider including half-vampires or other vampire species. The vampires in *Vampire Academy* are divided into three distinct types each with their own unique creation myth and place in the vampiric social hierarchy. Similarly, in *Cirque du Freak*, the protagonist is first transformed into a half-vampire before later becoming a full vampire. If you

choose to include these elements in your story, think about how their creation might be different from a regular vampire.

- What does your vampire drink?

Obviously, vampires drink blood, but it's important to consider where that blood comes from. Some vampires kill humans to drink their blood, while others drink straight from the vein without killing their victims. They may hunt their victims, or have access to human volunteers, like in *Vampire Academy*. Other vampires may not drink directly from humans at all. Perhaps your vampire drinks from hospital blood bags (*The Vampire Diaries*), hunts deer in the woods (*Twilight*), or drinks from rats (*Carry On*). You can also consider whether your vampire ever eats human food.

- Does your vampire have any special abilities?

Vampires typically have special skills or abilities that make them more powerful than regular humans. Traditional examples include super strength and speed, immortality, hypnosis or compulsion, and occasionally, flying; however, some vampire stories branch out beyond the classic abilities. The vampires of *Vampire Academy* have access to elemental magic, while some vampires in *Cirque du Freak* have a psychic connection to spiders. Meanwhile, the vampires of *Twilight* are just really good at baseball. Consider equipping your vampire with a mix of the classic and the unique when choosing their abilities.

- What does your vampire look like?

Vampire aesthetics have changed significantly over time, and it's important to decide where your vampire falls on the vampire style scale. Even a hairstyle can say a lot about your vampire. They may be bald with pointy ears like the classic Nosferatu, sport a sharp widow's peak like Dracula, or have a more swoopy style like Edward Cullen. Other aspects of their appearance might reference their vampiric abilities or lifestyle choices. One example of this is their eyes. In *Twilight*, vampires have golden eyes when they've recently fed on animal blood, but red eyes after drinking human blood. Meanwhile, the vampires of *The Vampire Diaries* have eyes that appear normal but become surrounded by black veins when their vampire instincts are activated. Consider how you can make your vampire's appearance unique, and what this would reveal about them.

Other Paranormal Creatures

Once you've determined the lore of your vampires, it might be time to begin expanding the universe of your story. This might involve adding other paranormal creatures. Werewolves, witches, and fairies are popular choices, but you could also incorporate more unique species, like *True Blood's* shapeshifters and were-panthers.

Ask yourself how adding different paranormal creatures into the world might impact your story. This may depend on their relationship to the vampires. Are they allies or enemies? Werewolves appear as the enemies to vampires in many popular vampire franchises, including *Twilight* and *The Vampire Diaries*. In *The Vampire Diaries*, a werewolf bite can even kill a vampire, so it may be prudent to explore how the addition of other paranormal creatures may threaten your vampires.

Consider the History

A perk of immortality is that the vampires in your story can hail from any time or place in history. This may be an important part of your character's background. Aspects of their personality may be influenced by the culture of when they were first turned into a vampire. Your vampire might be a Viking who's been around for a thousand years, a former pirate, a Regency-era gentleman, or a 1970s punk rocker. Alternatively, your vampire might be a newly turned human with no connection to the past. When planning your vampire story, explore how you can incorporate different eras from history to give your vampire a unique perspective and personality. You might want to research some historical periods or take inspiration from your favourite vampires.

Do Your Research

This guide is intended to be a starting point for brainstorming a vampire story, but don't be afraid to branch out beyond this. The best way to research vampire tropes and prepare to write a vampire story is to read and watch vampire content. If you're looking for inspiration, start by reading or watching some of the resources referenced in this guide!

References

- Ball, A. (2008-2014). *True blood*. USA: HBO Entertainment.
- Clare, C. (2007). *City of bones*. Margaret K McElderry Books.
- Mead, R. (2007). *Vampire academy*. Razorbill.
- Meyer, S. (2005). *Twilight*. Little Brown.
- Plec, J. (2009-2017). *The Vampire Diaries*. USA: Outerbanks Entertainment and Alloy

Entertainment.

Rowell, R. (2015). *Carry on*. Wednesday Books.

Shan, D. (2000). *Cirque du freak: A living nightmare*. Little Brown.

Stoker, B. (1897) *Dracula*.