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Castle Dracula: Romania's Vampire Home

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Knox, Barbara J. and Stephen F. Brown. *Castle Dracula: Romania's Vampire Home*. Bearport Publishing Company, Inc., 2005. ISBN 1597160008. \$22.60. 32 pp.

Reviewer: AnnMarie Hamar

Reading Level: Primary

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Informational books;

Subject: Castles--Romania--Bran (Brasov) --Juvenile literature; Vlad III, Prince of Wallachia, 1430 or 31-1476 or 7 --Juvenile literature; Dracula, Count (Fictitious character) --Juvenile literature;

Knox successfully weaves together vampire legend and historical fact in this brief history of Bran Castle. Because author Bram Stoker fashioned his character Count Dracula's castle after this landmark it is sometimes referred to as Dracula's Castle. The castle sits on a 200-foot tall rock overlooking the village of Brasov in the region of Romania known as Transylvania. Built during the Middle Ages, it was home to the infamous ruler Prince Vlad of Wallachia, also called Vlad the Impaler for his preferred method of execution. Vlad is also known as "Dracula," or "son of the dragon." The castle is full of hidden tunnels and stairways, and secret rooms. In the 1920's it became home to Romania's royal family. In 1956, the castle was returned to the people of Brasov who turned it into a museum that is now open to the public.

Knox's book is part of Bearport Publishing's series, "Castles, Palaces & Tombs." Like the other books in this series, the text is minimal but informative and illustrations are plentiful and well-done. Each double-page spread includes one interesting bit of trivia that is set off from the rest of the narrative. The "Just the Facts" section of the text includes information on vampire legends, Vlad the Impaler, and Brasov, Romania. Knox also includes a glossary and a timeline of events. Readers who would like to learn more about Bran Castle, vampires or Prince Vlad will find a bibliography and list of websites at the end of the book. In an interesting note at the end of the text, the publisher writes that Knox and her daughter are avid fans of vampire stories and that both would like to go "vampire camping" in Romania.