

Student worksheet: Porphyria (Vampire Syndrome)



Part 1: speaking

Discuss questions 1–3 with your partner or group.

1. What do you know about vampires?
2. What time of day are vampires supposed to prefer?
3. What do vampires do in order to survive?

Part 2: vocabulary

A. You're going to read an article about porphyria. Before you read, look at the words and practise saying them. The stressed syllables are in bold.

aversion
disfigurement
fang
fictional
folklore
millennia
phenomenon
porphyria
prevalent
recede
stem cell transplant
supportive
(to) surmise
vampire



B. Complete the definitions using words from A.

1. _____ : group of rare metabolic disorders, characterized by blistering of the skin and oversensitivity to sunlight
2. _____ : describes care which provides encouragement or help without curing a disease
3. _____ : something that spoils a person's appearance
4. _____ : move further away; cover less area
5. _____ : long, sharp front tooth often seen in animals such as dogs and snakes
6. _____ : traditional stories of a particular group of people
7. _____ : thousands of years
8. _____ : a feeling of strong dislike
9. _____ : something that is observed to happen or exist
10. _____ : existing very commonly or existing often
11. _____ : something that is imaginary
12. _____ : replacement of damaged blood cells in bone marrow with healthy ones
13. _____ : guess about something from available evidence

Part 3: Reading

A. Click the link to read the text. Then answer the questions.

[Vampire myths originated with a real blood disorder](#)

1. Porphyria could be the source of the vampire myth because...

- A. it was reportedly caused by vampires.
- B. it was found in kings and queens of Europe.
- C. it has symptoms supposedly shared by vampires.

2. People with porphyria avoid going outside during the day...

- A. as it causes hair loss.
- B. because of the effect of sunlight on their skin.
- C. due to their fear of sunlight.

3. One of the long-term effects of the condition is...

- A. growing overly-long incisors that resemble the fangs of animals.
- B. tooth loss.
- C. shrinkage of the gums.



4. In the past, people with porphyria were advised to drink blood...

- A. to improve their night vision.
- B. to make up for defective red blood cells.
- C. to prevent their urine becoming discoloured.

5. If people with porphyria eat garlic, it can cause

- A. a recurrence of the condition and considerable pain.
- B. very bad breath.
- C. increased sulfur content in the blood.

6. The myth of vampires having no reflection may be linked to...

- A. the lack of mirrors.
- B. the Christian beliefs of the time.
- C. the facial disfigurements of porphyria.

B. Complete the sentences with the words and phrases in the box.

stem cell transplant supportive myth classified physician

1. Porphyria is a rare condition for which there is no cure, however, patients can receive _____ care, e.g. pain relief.

2. Another treatment option is _____ which has been used successfully in people with a particular type of porphyria (bone marrow porphyria).

3. Several type of porphyria were _____ in 1911 by Hans Gunter who also has an extremely rare type of porphyria, congenital erythropoietic porphyria (Gunther disease) named after him.

4. In **1890** George Harley, Scottish surgeon and _____ studied a 27-year-old who also excreted reddish urine and an "unusual nerve disturbance after taking sulphonal". Sulphonal is a type of sedative and sleeping medicine which is no longer used.

5. Bram Stoker may have known about the _____ of vampires when he wrote *Tales of Count Dracula*.