

Author Spotlight: Yvonne Grace



What does it take to get a television drama from an idea in a writer's notebook to a series watched by millions?

Few people are better placed to answer that question than Yvonne Grace.

Over a career spanning more than three decades, Yvonne has worked as a script editor, producer, development executive and consultant, helping shape some of British television's most successful dramas while mentoring countless writers along the way.

She began her career on *EastEnders*, where she was part of the team behind some of the programme's most successful years. Later, at Granada Television, she worked with emerging talents including Russell T Davies, Sally Wainwright, Kay Mellor and Paul Abbott, helping develop stories and series ideas that would go on to influence British television for years to come.

As a producer, she helped transform the fortunes of *Holby City*, delivering ratings approaching ten million viewers and earning a BAFTA nomination. She later became Executive Producer of *Crossroads*, overseeing a major reinvention of the long-running series and managing a production budget of £11 million.

Today, through her consultancy Script Advice, she continues to work with writers, producers and script editors, helping them navigate one of the most competitive industries in the creative sector.

Her two Creative Essentials books draw on this wealth of experience from different perspectives.

Learning the Craft

In *Writing for Television: Series, Serials and Soaps*, Yvonne provides a practical guide to the realities of writing professionally for television.

Covering everything from finding an agent and working with script editors to structuring stories and understanding what broadcasters are looking for, the book offers a candid look at how the industry really works.

As producer and former BBC Controller of Drama Series Mal Young wrote:

“Yvonne delivers a practical, accessible, no-nonsense guide to the world of writing for popular TV.”

From Idea to Pitch

Her second book, *From Creation to Pitch*, takes readers further into the development process.

Using examples from series such as *Fleabag*, *The Queen’s Gambit*, *Peaky Blinders* and *Happy Valley*, Yvonne explores how successful television dramas evolve from an initial spark of inspiration into projects capable of attracting commissioners, producers and audiences.

The book also includes interviews with leading television practitioners, including Tony Jordan, Ashley Pharoah and Sarah Pinborough, offering readers a rare glimpse into how major television projects are conceived, developed and brought to screen.

Together, the two books form a practical roadmap for anyone looking to build a career in television writing.

As part of our Author Spotlight series, we asked Yvonne a few questions about storytelling, television drama and the changing landscape facing today’s writers.

What first attracted you to writing and developing television drama?

“I’ve always been an absolute story nut.

As a young girl I read anything and everything I could get my hands on. I felt it was essential to read both the classics and contemporary literature, and by my teenage years I was already a voracious reader.

Initially, I thought acting would be my career. But after spending a year touring around in a sweaty van with a Theatre in Education company, I realised it wasn’t performing that fascinated me — it was the scripts.

I became fascinated by writers: how they think, how they work and how stories take shape. Working with writers and getting inside their creative process was something that seemed to come naturally to me.

In late-1980s London, a friend and I discovered a disused theatre space above The Birds Nest pub in Deptford. We founded a theatre development company called The Deptford Wives and hosted script-in-hand readings every fortnight. Television producers and script editors began attending, looking for new writing talent.

Through those connections I discovered script editing. I didn't even know the job existed, but I landed my first television role as a script editor on *EastEnders* and learned the craft on the job.

My path into development, script editing and eventually production was forged through a love of storytelling and helping writers communicate what it feels like to be human. I still love helping writers shape stories for television and watching how much stronger a project can become through collaboration.”

What do aspiring television writers most often get wrong?

“Writers often underestimate the collaborative nature of television.

Writing itself is a solitary activity. Most writers begin with a personal vision they want to share with the world, and television can be an incredible platform for doing that. But the process of making television involves many people, many opinions, many notes and many changes.

The script you begin with is rarely the script that reaches the screen.

My advice to writers starting out is simple: don't be precious about your work. Protect your voice, absolutely, but don't be difficult to work with. Treat every note as an opportunity to improve the material and learn how to become a strong team player.

Television is collaborative by nature, and the writers who thrive are often those who embrace that process.”

How has television storytelling changed since you started in the industry?

“Thirty years ago, Ross Kemp had a full head of hair, and I was starting my career on *EastEnders*.

The television landscape today is almost unrecognisable.

When I started there were four, then five channels, and nobody had heard of Netflix. Today there are countless platforms competing for audiences, and digital technology has transformed both how we watch television and how it gets made.

Drama has always been expensive, but the cost of producing high-end television has risen dramatically. Smaller independent producers increasingly find themselves competing against global streaming giants with enormous resources.

The BBC was a dominant force when I entered the industry. Today, even with the licence fee, it operates within a fiercely competitive international marketplace.

Television has become more fragmented, but also more global. Co-productions, international partnerships and collaborative financing models are increasingly essential.

The opportunities have expanded enormously, but so too has the complexity of the industry.”

What’s the single most important piece of advice you would give a new writer today?

“Be good to work with and be a team player.

But alongside that, get really good at structure.

Don’t shy away from the discipline of outlining and storylining your work. Don’t start writing a television script before you’ve worked out your outline.

All the great television writers I’ve worked with — Sally Wainwright, Russell T Davies and Paul Abbott among them — spend significant time developing structure before they begin writing.

Part of the reason I wrote *Writing for Television: Series, Serials and Soaps* was because I saw so many talented writers lacking confidence when it came to outlining, structuring and developing stories.

Good structure doesn’t limit creativity.

It enables it.”

Final Thoughts

One of the most striking things about Yvonne’s career is that it spans the entire journey of a television project — from early story development and script editing through to production, commissioning and audience delivery.

That breadth of experience is increasingly rare.

For aspiring writers, her books offer more than writing advice. They provide insight into how the television industry actually functions, how projects are developed, and how writers can position themselves to build sustainable careers in an ever-changing landscape.

Because great television doesn’t begin with a camera.

It begins with an idea — and knowing what to do with it next.