

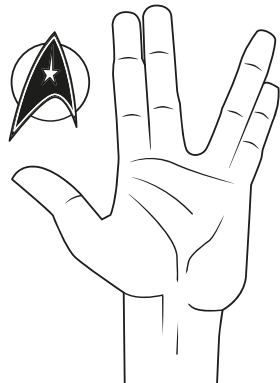
STAR TREK

SCI-FI • 1966 • RATED: PG • 50 MINS • SEASONS: 3
WILLIAM SHATNER, LEONARD NIMOY, DEFOREST KELLEY

The crew of the *Starship Enterprise* – Captain Kirk, Mister Spock, et al – explore the far reaches of the galaxy in search of intelligent life and alien civilizations. They try to promote peace and justice, but the sentiment isn’t always returned.

In the 1960s, the Space Race and the challenge to put a man on the moon captivated millions. *Star Trek* rode that wave of interstellar interest with a series all about exploring uncharted corners of the Milky Way galaxy. What makes the *Enterprise* crew’s mission so intriguing and relatable here on Earth is that the challenges they find in space – issues such as intolerance, racism, and greed – are similar to those here.

Created by Gene Roddenberry, the show takes its cues from westerns and adventure novels – and would go on to inspire waves of other space dramas, including *Star Wars* and *Firefly* (see p91), to say nothing of all the *Star Trek* sequels, from *Voyager* (see p134) to the recent *Discovery* (see p135).



Set only some 200 years from now, the main cast is led by commanding officer James T. Kirk (William Shatner) and consists of science officer Spock (Leonard Nimoy), chief medical officer Leonard McCoy (DeForest Kelley), engineer “Scotty” (James Doohan), communications officer Uhura (Nichelle Nichols), helmsman Sulu (George Takei), and navigator Chekov (Walter Koenig). Of course, with that many personalities travelling the stars, some conflict is inevitable.

The fair-minded Kirk often finds himself advised in two directions by the emotionless-yet-reasonable Spock – who has mixed human and alien-Vulcan heritage – and the more passion-driven McCoy. Likewise, the other cast members reflect a diversity of genders, races, and nationalities, pointing a spotlight on the polarization of its era, the 1960s, and a more enlightened future ahead. One notable exchange between Captain Kirk and Lieutenant Uhura features the first kiss between a fictional white male and a fictional black female to premiere on US network television, a big deal at the time.

The crew faces many formidable challenges, from beleaguered Starfleet compatriots – such as a crew member stricken with megalomania and imbued with the power of telekinesis – to a litany of alien species. The lizard-like Gorn make a notable appearance in this series, as do the yeti-inspired salt vampires. Those monster-like creatures are joined by more humanoid races, such as the Klingons and the Romulans, names that will be familiar to most people whether you’re a Trekkie or not.

A word of caution: the series’ original pilot may throw you. It features a slightly different cast – instead of Captain Kirk, you get to travel the spaceways with Captain Pike (Jeffrey Hunter). After the pilot was rejected, Hunter withdrew from the show, paving the way for Shatner to star in a second more successful pilot.

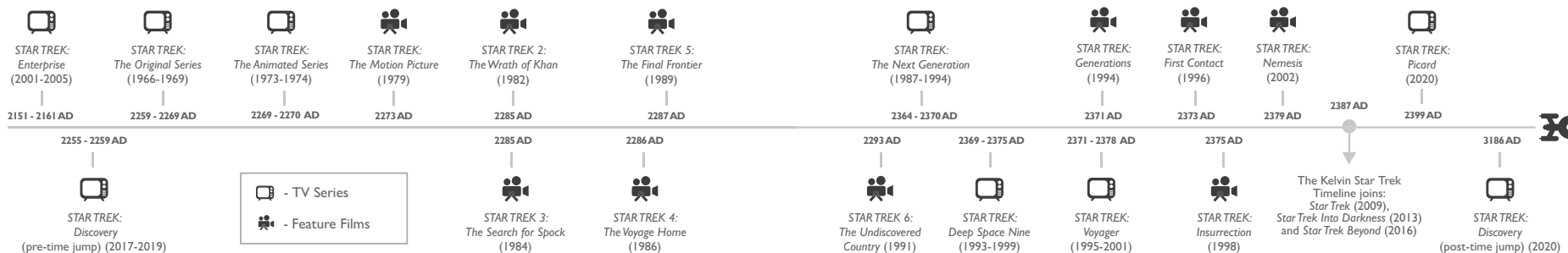
Likewise, the array of dazzling space gizmos can be a bit overwhelming. As well as the warpdrive (the thing that makes the ship go really fast) and phasers (guns that, don’t forget, can be set to stun), there are also transporters that can beam you down to a planet’s surface, and tricorders, devices that can be used to do everything from detecting radiation to recording memories (which comes in handy with all the space mischief going on around).

“To boldly go where no man has gone before...”

Captain Kirk

For all its technology, though, *Star Trek* is really about the core belief that in the future humans will see past differences, and evolve. On the *Enterprise*, humankind is noble and the crew is open-minded in its exploration of other worlds and cultures. Even when Kirk and crew beat their enemies, they sometimes reach out to their defeated foe offering help. That’s something the world could still learn from *Star Trek* today.

THE PRIME STAR TREK TIMELINE



CREATOR: Gene Roddenberry
PRODUCTION CO: Desilu Productions, Norway Corporation, Paramount Television



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THE OFFICE (US)

COMEDY • 2005 • RATED: 15 • 22 MINS • SEASONS: 9
STEVE CARELL, JENNA FISCHER, JOHN KRASINSKI

It's another nine to five at the Dunder Mifflin Paper Company. The firm is teetering on the brink, and so are the staff. But just like a cookie in your lunch box, something can come along every episode to make you smile.

An ill-matched group of clock-watching, paper-pushing, pen-stealing colleagues work at a struggling paper company in Scranton, Pennsylvania. Their needy boss, Michael Scott (Steve Carell), is a relentless cheerleader, desperate to be loved. But his efforts to win over his staff have the tendency to fall flat. Everyone seems to be going through the motions, one meeting at a time. Yet there is

still plenty on the agenda for this group of co-workers, and following their everyday lives, documentary style, turns out to be a bonus.

The Scranton office is staffed by a group of ultimately loveable characters, even if they don't all come across as such when you first meet them. There's Jim Halpert (John Krasinski), a likeable salesperson who has ambitions beyond playing practical jokes. Dwight Schrute (Rainn Wilson), the target of most of Jim's pranks, is an awkward grump who secretly needs his colleagues so much he would probably turn up at weekends if he could. Pam Beesly (Jenna Fisher) is the shy receptionist with hidden depths (and Jim's

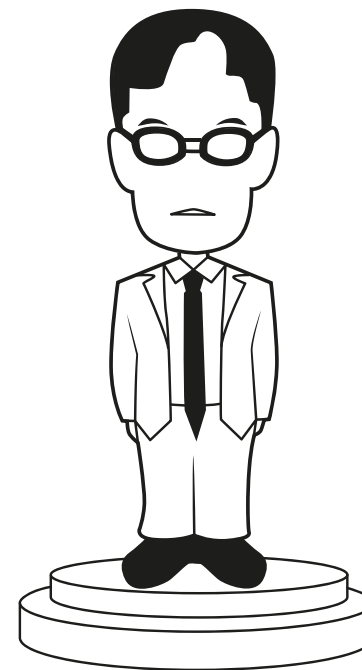
partner in crime). Add in others such as world-weary Stanley Hudson (Leslie David Baker), cat-obsessed Angela Martin (Angela Kinsey), flirty Kelly Kapoor (Mindy Kaling), and dour-faced HR executive Toby Flenderson (Paul Lieberstein), and you have the recipe for comedy gold.

The show is based on the British series of the same name (see p153), and many of the US characters are inspired by their UK counterparts. In its first season, *The Office* perhaps photocopied its parent show a bit too closely, though. American audiences weren't so used to the dark edge and cringeworthy humour. But gradually, the series found its own identity. Its portrayal of boring office life and irritating co-workers remains, but with a touch more optimism in the mix.

Not much goes on at Dunder Mifflin. Only the coffee pot is refreshed. The repetitive hamster wheel of the working day provides a solid theme to explore – and one many people can relate to – but the show keeps going through nine seasons by allowing its characters to grow. In the first few seasons, most of the narrative is set in the office or the warehouse. From a hideous training session and endless, needless meetings, to a performance review that is the stuff of nightmares, and a team-building office Olympic games, there is plenty to empathize with and laugh about. But as things progress, you get to see more of the characters in their out-of-office lives.

*“What're you doing?
I am in the fight of my life
against this computer and
every sale counts!”*

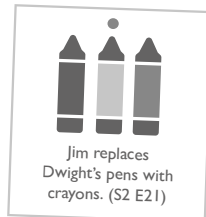
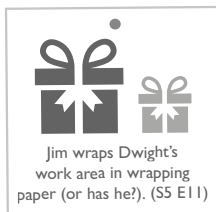
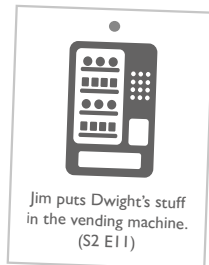
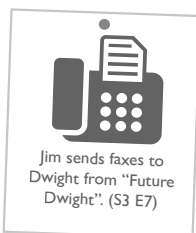
Dwight (S4 E3)



You even get to meet one of the fictional crew working on the Dunder Mifflin documentary – if you can believe it.

As much as these changes move the narrative along, a little something of what made the series so good in the first place does end up getting lost on the way here. However, even as *The Office* clocks in for its final episode, its own performance review remains strong. Pull up an uncomfortable desk chair, help yourself to a mug of weak coffee in a “Number One Boss” novelty mug, and enjoy.

CLASSIC PRANKS JIM HAS PLAYED ON DWIGHT



CREATORS: Greg Daniels, Ricky Gervais, Stephen Merchant PRODUCTION CO: Reveille Productions, NBC Universal Television, 3 Arts Entertainment, Deedle-Dee Productions, UMS, Universal Television

FRIENDS

COMEDY • 1994 • RATED: 15 • 22 MINS • SEASONS: 10
JENNIFER ANISTON, COURTENEY COX, MATTHEW PERRY

Living in New York City is tough, but not if you've got great friends by your side. This cult series follows six adults as they try nabbing their dream jobs, dip their toes in the dating pool, and have fun together.

Meet your new six best friends: Rachel (Jennifer Aniston), Monica (Courteney Cox), Phoebe (Lisa Kudrow), Chandler (Matthew Perry), Joey (Matt LeBlanc), and Ross (David Schwimmer). This long-running comedy begins with a woman leaving her fiancé at the altar, and ends with that same woman falling in love again. But what happens in between is a wild, hilarious ride.

After Rachel leaves her husband-not-to-be, she's high on her newfound independence, moving into a New York City apartment with her friend, Monica. The lives of Rachel and Monica quickly intersect with Monica's brother, Ross; his friends, Chandler and Joey; and Monica's former roommate, Phoebe.



CREATORS: David Crane, Marta Kauffman
PRODUCTION CO: Bright/Kauffman/Crane Productions, Warner Bros. Television

With six very diverse personalities swirling around each other, expect plenty of love triangles in this sitcom.

“It’s a moo point [...] It’s like a cow’s opinion; it doesn’t matter. It’s moo.”

Joey (S7 E8)

The biggest relationship drama, however, involves Rachel and Ross, whose “we were on a break!” scene inspired countless memes and sparked plenty of debates at real-life dinner tables about who was in the right and who was in the wrong. Meanwhile, Chandler and Monica’s relationship is smoother sailing, but they aren’t without their ups and downs.

The main *Friends* cast broke new ground in the TV world when they all banded together in 2002 to demand equal pay and higher salaries – \$1 million an episode, to be exact. This was a record-breaking move and saw women getting the same pay as men. “We were in a position to get it,” Matt LeBlanc, who played Joey, told *HuffPost* when asked how those salary negotiations went down. This decision opened the door for future stars to demand seven figures per episode, such as the cast of *The Big Bang Theory* (see p268).

Star wages aside, you’ll find yourself falling so quickly for these characters, it’ll be hard to decide which friend is your favourite.

LIVING SINGLE

COMEDY • 1993
RATED:TV-PG (US) • 30 MINS

Do you know what inspired *Friends*? Set in Prospect Heights, Brooklyn in the '90s, *Living Single* follows the lives of six successful African-American pals living under the same roof.

Khadijah (Queen Latifah) leads this five-season show as the editor of independent magazine *Flavor*. She’s surrounded by her cousin and assistant, Synclair (Kim Coles), gossip-

addicted Regine (Kim Fields), lawyer friend Max (Erika Alexander), and roommates Obie (John Henton), and Kyle (Terrence “T.C.” Carson). Together, they experience plenty of love and heartbreak while living together in the building.

The series promoted female empowerment and autonomy, as well as allowing series creator Yvette Lee Bowser to craft a world that didn’t directly cater to a white audience. The cast’s chemistry simply radiates off the screen, which arguably can be attributed to part of the show’s success.

PARKS AND RECREATION

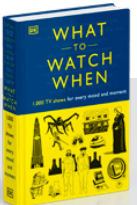
COMEDY • 2009 • RATED: 15 • 22 MINS • SEASONS: 7
AMY POEHLER, CHRIS PRATT, NICK OFFERMAN

This political satire follows the exploits of a fictional Indiana town’s Parks and Recreation Department as its quirky members work together to enrich their community. The fact their projects never go as planned will keep you laughing from start to finish.

The Parks and Recreation Department is no joke – at least that’s how deputy director Leslie Knope (Amy Poehler) sees it. Working to improve the town of Pawnee in Indiana, Leslie is the ultimate go-getter, despite the efforts of department director Ron Swanson (Nick Offerman), who isn’t a big fan of the government and tries to lessen his division’s impact on the community as much as possible. Thankfully, Leslie’s BFF, Ann Perkins (Rashida Jones), is there to help her out on her mission.

The rest of Leslie’s co-workers are all over the place – there’s Tom Haverford (Aziz Ansari), Leslie’s slacker subordinate; April Ludgate (Aubrey Plaza), a cynical intern; Ben Wyatt (Adam Scott), a government official looking to redeem himself; and Chris Traeger (Rob Lowe), an upbeat and health-conscious employee. Rounding out the cast is Andy Dwyer (Chris Pratt), Ann’s goofball ex-boyfriend who plays in a band.

Filed in a mockumentary style like *The Office* (see p153–155), this comedy turns something as straightforward as filling in a pit into a total laugh-riot. Whether the team is displaying inexplicable excitement about miniature pony Li’l Sebastian, getting caught up in the antics of a local cult renting a park, or simply celebrating Galentine’s Day, there’s never a dull moment in Pawnee.

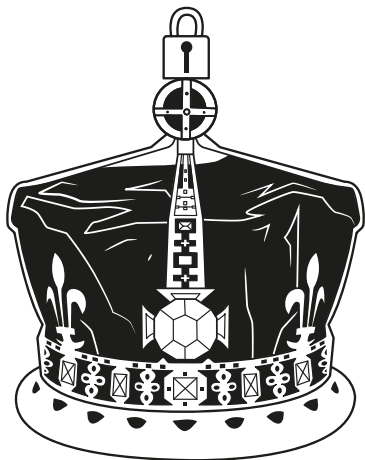


THE CROWN

HISTORICAL DRAMA • 2016 • RATED: 15 • 60 MINS • SEASONS: 3
CLAIRE FOY, MATT SMITH, OLIVIA COLMAN

You may think you know all there is to know about the British royal family, but writer-creator Peter Morgan goes deeper, finding the personal in the pageantry throughout this decades-spanning portrait of Queen Elizabeth II.

Next to the word “continuity” in the dictionary should be a picture of Queen Elizabeth II, who, as much as anyone, has symbolized Britain in its emergence from the austerity of the postwar years into the bold modern age. What Shakespeare did for the Plantagenet kings of the 15th century, creator Peter Morgan has done for Elizabeth in *The Crown*, hiring some of the finest actors of our time to portray the monarch and her family across the decades. First wielding the sceptre is Claire Foy, who plays Elizabeth in Seasons 1 and 2, which span from her



marriage to Prince Philip (Matt Smith) in 1947 to the birth of her youngest son, Edward, in 1964. For the next two seasons, Oscar-winner Olivia Colman inherits the throne, while Imelda Staunton will pick up the reins of power for the fifth and final season.

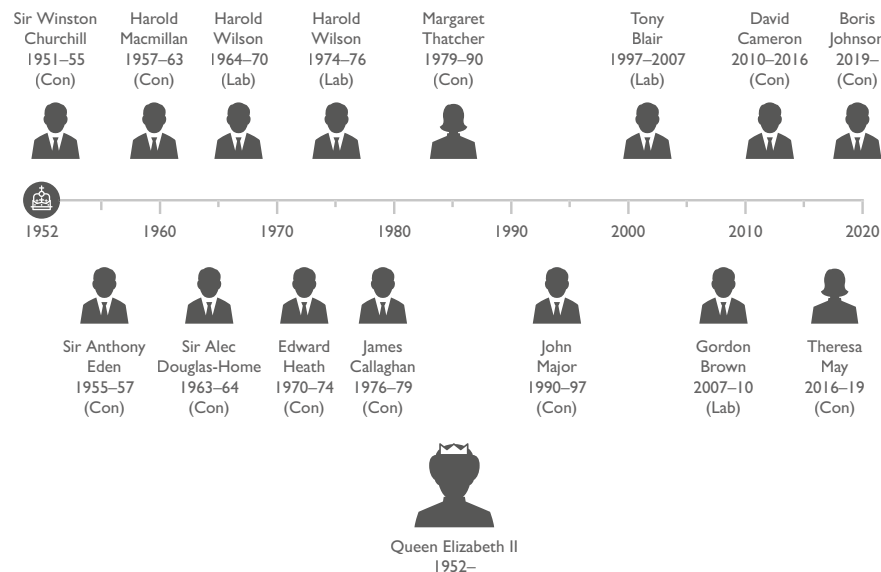
Like Shakespeare, Morgan, who has written or co-written every single episode – a rare and monumental achievement in television – tells a story of changing times through the lens of the monarchy, seeking to find the humans behind the honorifics. Scandals abound: Elizabeth clashes with her sister, Princess Margaret (Vanessa Kirby in Seasons 1 and 2, Helena Bonham Carter in 3 and the upcoming 4), over her love affairs. She also confronts her estranged uncle, the Duke of Windsor (Alex Jennings in Seasons 1 and 2, Derek Jacobi in Season 3), who abdicated as King Edward VIII in order to marry American divorcée, Wallis Simpson. And then there’s the matter of her son, Charles, and his burgeoning romance with Camilla Shand.

Morgan goes far deeper than the tabloid headlines, and the results are sympathetic and even touching. Many episodes explore

“I thought... A young queen, a middle-aged queen, and an old queen.”

Peter Morgan (creator)

BRITISH PRIME MINISTERS IN POWER DURING THE REIGN OF QUEEN ELIZABETH II



events that are less widely known: Charles’s lonely education at Scottish boarding school Gordonstoun (the school has protested over the show’s stern depiction); the Queen’s regret over her response to the 1966 disaster in Aberfan, Wales, in which 144 people, mostly children, were killed by a mining-related landslide; and the relationship of Philip with his mother, Princess Alice, who lived a life of simplicity and poverty as a nun in Greece.

Quirkier story lines present themselves, too: Princess Margaret finds an unexpected bond with the similarly ribald Lyndon Johnson; Winston Churchill protests against the marriage of Elizabeth to Philip because of the startling presence of high-ranking Nazis in the future Duke of Edinburgh’s family tree; and Philip’s obsession with the moon landing.

Morgan has built much of his career around the royal family. He wrote the 2006 film *The Queen*, which won Helen Mirren an Oscar for her portrayal of Elizabeth II navigating the aftermath of Princess Diana’s death. That then led to a 2013 stage play, also starring Mirren, called *The Audience*, which depicted the Queen’s meetings with her first 12 prime ministers. When Netflix wanted to adapt the play, the result, ultimately, was *The Crown*.

Though it has won numerous BAFTAs and Emmys, *The Crown* has raised eyebrows over the staggering sums of money Netflix reportedly invested in the show – however, rumours that it is “the most expensive TV series ever” have been refuted by Morgan as inaccurate. But if there ever was a show that merited the royal treatment, this is it.

CREATOR: Peter Morgan
PRODUCTION CO: Left Bank Pictures, Sony Pictures Television Production UK



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