



Charlaine Harris
 New York Times best-selling author of the Southern Vampire Mystery books, also called the Sookie Stackhouse novels

A brief bio



- Born in 1951 in Tunica, Miss., which then was poorest city in the country. Grew up in the Mississippi Delta. Has lived in Tennessee, South Carolina, Arkansas, and Texas.
- "A true daughter of the South."
- Like many writers, she grew up feeling as if she was an outsider.
- "I'm here today because I was one of those moody, misfit children, who never quite fit in with her friends."

Source: Charlaine Harris speech at 2012 Library Of Congress Book Festival.

"I went to a wonderful college. I graduated with no marketable skills whatsoever."




- Rhodes College: Small, private liberal arts college in Memphis, Tenn. Enrolls 1,800 students.
- Mostly white, Christian campus known for beautiful Gothic architecture.




"I went to work for an offset newspaper in a darkroom making \$1.60 an hour."




Photos courtesy of marguefile.com



"Average woman gets lucky."

- In 1978, her second husband gave her an electric typewriter so she could stay home and write.
- Enrolled in a creative writing class taught by a book editor. First mystery, *Sweet and Deadly*, published in 1981.
- Wrote two more books, then spent 13 years on two series, Aurora Teagarden series and darker Lily Bard Shakespeare books. Successful but not blockbusters.
- Her life changed when she was dropped at one point by a publisher in the wake of cuts.

"What shall I do? And I thought why don't I just write the book I always wanted to write? It would be great if I could appeal to a broader readership than just mystery readership. What about if I had an element of the fantastic and then I would pull in science fiction readers? What if I had an explicit sex scene and drew in the romance readers?"

"Honestly, I would have put in directions on assembling an engine if I had thought it would help sales."

The Result: *Dead After Dark*

"I bought it and I started reading it, and I couldn't put it down."

—Alan Ball

- Writer of *American Beauty* (Academy Award); writer and executive producer of HBO's *Six Feet Under*; he wanted to option the books for a TV series called *True Blood* for HBO.
- She described the day he called her as "the most surrealistic moment of my life. The other surrealistic moment was when Anne Rice friended me on Facebook." (Harris is also a *Buffy* fan.)
- On the series 2008 pilot, which Alan Ball wrote and directed, Harris said she thought it was wonderful, but it was much more explicit than the book:
- "You know, I live in a conservative area, and I thought, 'Oh my God, we're just gonna have to leave.' It hasn't been that way at all, though—people love the show." Source: *Writer's Digest*, July-August 2010.



Source: HBO

Who is Sookie Stackhouse?

- Telepathic barmaid Sookie Stackhouse works in a bar in the fictional northern Louisiana town of Bon Temps.
- She is a good Southern girl who has had a Christian upbringing. But her telepathic gift makes her life difficult.
- The first book in the series, *Dead Until Dark*, portrays a time when vampires are starting to come out of the coffin and live among humans thanks to the development of *True Blood*, a synthetic blood product.
- Each subsequent book follows Sookie through adventures involving vampires, werewolves, and other supernatural creatures.
- The book series, which ended in 2013, has been released in more than 30 languages.



Anna Paquin as Sookie Stackhouse in HBO's *True Blood*.



Anna Paquin (Sookie) and Stephen Moyer (Bill Compton)

Season 1, Episode 1: "Strange Love"

Initially the first two seasons followed most of Harris' plotlines with some changes. After that, it deviated from the books a great deal.

One major change; The series is told from multiple characters' viewpoints, while the books are told from Sookie's point of view.



How does Charlaine Harris feel about the changes the show made in the characters and stories she's created?

"I feel OK when I look at my bank account."