



## TEACHING WITH *TEXAS ORIGINALS*: LESSON IDEAS

### WRITE YOUR OWN *TEXAS ORIGINALS* SCRIPT:

Ready-made [lesson plan](#) available on the Humanities Texas website.

- Adaptations:
  - o Limit the list to 5–10 *Texas Originals* for students to choose from.
  - o If students write scripts for people already included in *Texas Originals*, then consider requiring them to focus on aspects *not* included in the script found online. Have them start thinking about what details/events were omitted and what remains to be told. Their script will constitute a “Part 2” that complements the original. This will require they do some critical reading to determine what other aspects of this person’s life were important and how to tell that story.

### WAYS TO EXTEND:

#### Create a Gallery Walk

Have students create a one-page document (including the text of their script) and at least 1–2 images/primary sources (like the individual pages on the *Texas Originals* website).

- In-person: these can be displayed around the classroom.
- Online: these can be combined to create a digital timeline or interactive poster (using a free online program like [Timeline JS](#), [Glogster](#), [Canva](#), or [Thinglink](#)) or compiled into a PowerPoint.
  - o If there are multiple entries for the same person, use it as an opportunity for students to think about how different scripts emphasized different things. Was there any overlap in topics? Does the grouping present a more “complete” picture of this person? What kinds of narrative choices do these different versions represent?

#### “Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner”

Have students select three people from Texas history that they would like to invite to dinner.

- Using [Texas Originals](#) (and other online resources like [Handbook of Texas Online](#)) have students create a place card for each dinner guest with a short explanation of what they are known for and why they were invited:
  - o 1 sentence detailing biographical information.
  - o 2–3 sentences describing contributions to Texas history.
  - o 1 sentence explaining why they were invited.
- Have students brainstorm general topics that the people at the table (student included) might talk about over dinner.
- Have students write 2–3 questions they would like to ask each guest and 1–2 questions that they think the guests might ask each other.
- Adaptations/Extensions:
  - o Limit this to a specific time period.
  - o Increase the number of invitees and plan out a seating chart with rationales as to who sits where and with whom.
  - o Have students research how each person might answer the questions asked during dinner.

#### Online Scavenger Hunt

Using *Texas Originals*, create a document that directs students to visit specific pages to look for answers to clues. Clues might address content found in the scripts or the additional images found on each biographical page.

- Group people by topic/time period.
- Organize around a pre-determined theme/topic.



## **GUIDELINES FOR *TEXAS ORIGINALS* WRITERS**

- Scripts can be no longer than 225 words. This is a hard requirement, since all episodes have to be the same length—two minutes. Radio stations won't play the show if their length varies.
- Scripts should provide listeners with a sense of the subject's significance in either Texas or U.S. history.
- Scripts have to strike a balance between 1) offering a view of the subject's whole life and 2) focusing on the most significant aspect (or one of the most significant aspects) of the subject's life and/or career.
- No script can or will be comprehensive. These aren't encyclopedia entries. With some subjects, we may choose to focus on just one aspect of their significance rather than trying to address EVERYTHING about them.
- If possible, use the subject's voice in the script. Or use a quotation from someone else about the subject's achievements or significance.
- Write the script for radio. In other words, write it in a way that makes it easy to read and easy to listen to. Be clear. Avoid long, complex sentences. Radio listeners won't have the option to rewind if they don't understand something, so clarity is paramount. Capture the listener's attention at the beginning and conclude in a way that offers closure. Place the subject in time and space early in the script so listeners can get their bearings. You may find it helpful to read your script aloud to see how it sounds.
- If you can, conclude the script by pointing listeners to a place in Texas they can visit to witness the subject's legacy—a historic home or site, a museum, a building or neighborhood that bears the subject's influence, etc. This isn't always possible, of course, but it's a nice way to end a script if possible.

## **ANATOMY OF A *TEXAS ORIGINALS* SCRIPT**

- Scripts often open with a hook that catches the listener's attention. They don't often begin with the beginning of the subject's life (e.g., Sam Houston was born in ...)
- Scripts usually place the subject in time and space in the first few sentences.
- Scripts identify the person's significance in clear terms.
- Scripts often include a quotation either from the subject or from someone talking about the subject and/or his/her achievements.
- Scripts often close by pointing to a place in Texas where listeners can witness the subject's legacy.