



Student Name:  
Class Period:  
Date:

## Meet the Originals

*Texas Originals* is a radio series about people who made an impact on Texas. You can hear it online and on radio stations around the state. Read or listen to the episode on Elmer Kelton. Then, answer questions about it.

### Elmer Kelton 1926–2009

Author of more than forty Westerns, the writer Elmer Kelton depicted the South Texas Plains with both romance and realism. These were qualities that Kelton knew well, having spent his entire life in the region.

Born in 1926, Kelton grew up on the McElroy ranch near Midland, where his father was the general manager. Young Elmer, with his poor eyesight and love of books, realized he would never become the cowboy his father wanted him to be. Instead, he enrolled at The University of Texas in Austin, majoring in journalism.

After serving in the Army during World War II, Kelton returned to Texas to work as an editor for farm and ranch journals. But he also wrote fiction, and gradually gained fame as an authentic voice of Western literature.

His 1973 novel *The Time It Never Rained*, set in the drought-stricken Texas of the 1950s, ushered in a new kind of Western—one concerned with the modern day rather than a bygone era of pioneers and cattle drives.

Kelton once explained, “I can’t write about heroes seven feet tall and invincible. I write about people five feet eight and nervous.”

In 1995, Kelton was voted the “greatest western writer of all time” by the Western Writers of America. *The Time It Never Rained* is now remembered as his finest work, and a lasting contribution to Texas literary history.

**Check for Understanding:** Answer the questions below based on evidence from the episode on Elmer Kelton. Refer to the text included above if needed.

1. Elmer Kelton is most commonly known for which genre of literature?
2. The episode describes Kelton’s novel *The Time It Never Rained* as being a “new kind of Western.” What made it different from previous westerns?

**Going Further:** Write or discuss your answer to the question below, supporting your answer with evidence from the episode or additional information you have learned in class.

3. **Creating Connections.** In what ways might future climate events, like a drought or hurricane, affect Texas’s population, settlement patterns, or economy? Explain.