



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 Lydia Mendoza. Then, answer questions about it.

Lydia Mendoza 1916–2007

In the 1930s, San Antonio plazas thrummed with music. Among the few female performers were the Mendozas—Leonora and her daughters, including sixteen-year-old Lydia, who captivated listeners with her clarion voice and skillful accompaniment on the twelve-string guitar.

Lydia sometimes performed solo, singing folk and popular songs whose lyrics she'd often learned from gum wrappers. She attracted the attention of a local radio announcer, who offered her \$3.50 a week to perform on air, a godsend for the struggling family.

Mendoza's solo recording career began with Bluebird Records. Her first hit, "Mal Hombre," an indictment of machismo culture, became her signature song. She was a pioneer of Música Tejana, a rich hybrid of conjunto, rancheras, and other styles that captured the passions and heartaches of border life. No matter the song style, Mendoza once said, "When I sing that song, I live that song."

Mendoza went on to perform for large audiences throughout the United States, Mexico, Cuba, and Colombia. Her success opened doors for other Tejana singers. Nicknamed the "Lark of the Border," Mendoza recorded hundreds of songs and toured until a stroke ended her legendary career.

Mendoza was inducted into the Tejano Music Hall of Fame and awarded the National Medal of the Arts. In 1982, she became the first Texan awarded the National Endowment for the Arts National Heritage Fellowship for lifetime achievement.

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

1. Where and how did Lydia Mendoza begin her career?
2. What song style did Mendoza pioneer?

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. **Taking a Position.** What do you think Mendoza meant when she said "when I sing that song, I live that song"?