



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 William Sydney Porter (O. Henry). Then, answer questions about it.

### William Sydney Porter (O. Henry) 1862–1910

William Sydney Porter—better known by his pen name, O. Henry—was born in North Carolina and died in New York. But his sixteen years in Texas, from 1882 to 1898, made a lasting mark on his life and work.

In Texas, Porter developed an abiding love for the American West. He worked as a ranch hand, a pharmacist, a draftsman; edited his own newspaper; and met his wife. It was also in Texas where Porter was found guilty of embezzling funds from an Austin bank where he worked as a teller. He served three years in a federal prison before being released in 1901.

While behind bars, Porter began writing and selling short stories to major magazines under assumed names.

In those stories, Porter portrays the Lone Star state as a vast place with its own laws. The stories describe in rich detail the ranches, prairies, and settlements of South and Central Texas. Author J. Frank Dobie called Porter's story "The Last of the Troubadours" "the best range story in American fiction."

Today, critics place O. Henry among the lesser stars of literature, but his popularity as an author of short stories has rarely been equaled. The house where he stayed in San Antonio—saved from destruction by the San Antonio Conservation Society—sits at the corner of Laredo and Dolorosa streets. And his former Austin home, now the O. Henry Museum, attracts thousands of visitors annually.

**Check for Understanding:** Answer the questions below based on evidence from the episode on William Sydney Porter (O. Henry). Refer to the text included above if needed.

1. What careers did William Sydney Porter pursue before becoming a writer?
2. How does Porter describe Texas in his writings?

**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.** Why do you think Porter used assumed names to publish his short stories?