



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 Karle Wilson Baker. Then, answer questions about it.

### Karle Wilson Baker 1878–1960

Karle Wilson Baker was Texas's most celebrated poet in the first half of the twentieth century.

Born in Arkansas in 1878, Baker followed her parents to Nacogdoches in her early twenties. She soon fell under the spell of her adopted state, writing about the role of Texans in the American drama.

In her novel *Family Style*, she portrays the impact of the East Texas oil boom on a single, small community. Another novel, *Star of the Wilderness*, is set against the backdrop of the Texas Revolution.

But Baker was best known for her poetry. Writer Dorothy Scarborough praised Baker's attention to the details of ordinary lives, describing her as the "singer of quiet things." Baker's collection of poems *Dreamers on Horseback* was nominated for the 1931 Pulitzer Prize.

Baker was a popular professor at Stephen F. Austin State Teachers College. In 1952, she became a charter member of the Texas Institute of Letters.

Baker died in 1960. Her early poem "The Tree" describes her lifelong commitment to writing: "My life is a tree . . . pledged . . . to stand hard against the storm. . . / (But high in the branches of my / green tree there is a wild bird singing: / Wind-free are the wings of my bird: / She hath built no mortal nest.)"

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

1. How did Karle Wilson Baker draw inspiration from her adopted state for her writing?
2. In 1931, Baker's poetry was nominated for which award?

**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. **Making Inferences.** Baker uses the metaphor, "My life is a tree..." to describe her commitment to writing. Explain what you think she meant by this comparison.