



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 Etta Moten Barnett. Then, answer questions about it.

Etta Moten Barnett

1901–2004

Acclaimed singer and actress Etta Moten Barnett was born in Weimar, Texas, in 1901. By the age of ten, she was singing in the choir of her father's church. Thirty-three years later, at the invitation of Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt, she became one of the first African American women to sing at the White House.

Barnett's career led her to Hollywood, where she appeared in films such as Busby Berkeley's *Gold Diggers of 1933* and *Flying Down to Rio*, starring Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers. These breakthrough roles defied stereotypes for Black women and paved the way for singers and actresses such as Dorothy Dandridge and Lena Horne.

Barnett also starred on Broadway, most notably as Bess in a revival of *Porgy and Bess*. She charmed audiences around the world singing in concerts with the Duke Ellington Orchestra.

In addition to her performing career, Barnett was deeply involved in civic affairs, women's issues, and causes such as African independence. She received citations and honorary degrees for her artistry and humanitarian work. In 1979, she was inducted into the Black Filmmakers Hall of Fame and was named by the Texas Women's Chamber of Commerce one of the twentieth century's one hundred most influential Texas women.

A longtime Chicago resident, Etta Barnett died in 2004, at the age of 102.

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

1. How did Etta Moten Barnett get her start as a singer?
2. Barnett used her platform as a performer to bring attention to what kinds of issues?

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 1934, Barnett performed at the White House for President and Mrs. Roosevelt. Why might this have been controversial at the time?