



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 Walter Leland Cronkite Jr. Then, answer questions about it.

Walter Leland Cronkite Jr. 1916–2009

Newscaster Walter Cronkite—once known as “the most trusted man in America”—launched his career in Texas. Born in Missouri in 1916, Cronkite moved to Houston at age ten and discovered journalism in high school. He was a student reporter at The University of Texas before pursuing journalism full-time.

Cronkite earned national recognition during World War II, covering the fighting in Europe for the United Press. After the war, he moved to television, ultimately becoming the anchorman for the CBS Evening News in 1962.

For two decades, there was scarcely a story Cronkite didn't cover: President Kennedy's assassination, the moon landings, Watergate. Whenever earthshaking events occurred, most television viewers learned about them from Cronkite, and his reporting became closely associated with the average American's point of view. In 1968, when he stated that the Vietnam War was probably unwinnable, President Johnson reportedly said that if he'd lost Walter Cronkite, he'd lost middle America.

Cronkite retired from the CBS Evening News in 1981 but remained a vocal advocate of journalism's role in preserving democracy. He wrote in his autobiography, “The First Amendment, with its guarantees of free speech and a free press, has been at the heart of the American success story.”

Before his death in 2009, Cronkite gave the collected papers from his remarkable fifty-year career to the Briscoe Center for American History at UT Austin.

Check for Understanding: Answer the questions below based on evidence from the episode on Walter Leland Cronkite Jr. Refer to the text included above if needed.

1. Where did Walter Leland Cronkite Jr. first earn national recognition?
2. Cronkite's reporting was said to be closely associated with what viewpoint?

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.** Do you think journalists today are “the most trusted” people in America? Why or why not?