



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 John Graves. Then, answer questions about it.

John Graves 1920–2013

Writer John Graves was born in Fort Worth in 1920 and grew up hunting and fishing on the Trinity River.

During World War II, he joined the Marines and served in the Pacific, until he was nearly killed by a Japanese grenade on the island of Saipan. Graves recovered from his wounds but lost sight in his left eye.

In 1957, Graves was still relatively unknown as a writer when he took a three-week canoe trip down the Brazos River, whose waters were threatened by a plan to construct flood-control dams along its length.

Graves chronicled his journey in the book *Goodbye to a River*, which gracefully commingles history, nature, folklore, and philosophic reflection. Since its appearance in 1960, the book has never been out of print and is now considered a Texas classic.

Graves used his earnings to buy land near Glen Rose, which he developed into a working ranch dubbed "Hard Scrabble." Between fence-mending and cow-chasing, Graves wrote about the land and people of Texas. "In a way," he once said, "I was trying to explain Texas to myself."

When Graves died in 2013, he was among the most beloved of Texas writers. His small but rich body of work is notable for its intelligence, integrity, and elegance as well as for its insight into the human use—and misuse—of nature.

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

1. What inspired John Graves's book *Goodbye to a River*?
2. What did Graves purchase with the money he earned as a writer?

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.** Graves said he was "trying to explain Texas to myself." Do you think that writing about something is a good way to understand it better? Why or why not?