



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 Arthur John "Jack" Johnson. Then, answer questions about it.

### Arthur John "Jack" Johnson 1878–1946

Jack Johnson was born in Galveston in 1878. He went on to become the greatest boxer in the world and one of America's most famous celebrities. Johnson won the World Colored Heavyweight Championship in 1903 but could not claim the overall title because white fighters refused to face him in the ring.

That changed in 1908 when Johnson beat Tommy Burns to become the first African American World Heavyweight Champion. He defended his title against all comers, including retired champ James Jeffries. Jeffries announced his sole purpose for coming out of retirement was "proving a white man is better than a Negro." Johnson knocked Jeffries down twice before Jeffries gave up in the fifteenth round.

The *New York Times* hoped Johnson's win would "stimulate respect for equality and fairness." To the contrary, unrest and violence followed. Johnson's taste for fast cars and high living fueled the outrage.

In 1913, his relationships with white women led to a trumped-up charge of "transporting women across state lines for immoral purposes." Johnson's only real crime was his success, yet he spent a year in Leavenworth prison.

Despite declining skills, Johnson continued boxing into his fifties. In 1946, at the age of sixty-eight, Johnson died in a car wreck.

In 2002, the city of Galveston renamed 41st Street Jack Johnson Boulevard in honor of its most famous native son.

**Check for Understanding:** Answer the questions below based on evidence from the episode on Arthur John "Jack" Johnson. Refer to the text included above if needed.

1. What prevented Arthur John "Jack" Johnson from claiming the overall boxing title in 1903?
2. The *New York Times* wrote that they hoped Johnson's win would promote equality. What actually happened?

**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.** Explain what the episode means by "Johnson's only real crime was his success."