



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 Margo Jones. Then, answer questions about it.

### Margo Jones 1911–1955

Texan Margo Jones revolutionized American theater. At a time when few professional drama companies existed outside New York, Jones fought for regional productions and new voices. Her enthusiasm earned her the nickname the “Texas Tornado” and led Tennessee Williams to describe her as a combination of Joan of Arc, Gene Autry, and nitroglycerine.

Born in Livingston in 1911, Jones trained in Denton and Dallas but soon learned that professional theater opportunities were limited to New York and Los Angeles.

Jones spent time in those cities but returned to Texas determined to create the best theater in America. She said, “I saw no reason why I couldn’t have it in Houston.” She soon proved to be one of the nation’s most promising young directors. She championed young playwrights such as Tennessee Williams, Jerome Lawrence, and Robert Edwin Lee and directed the premieres of *The Glass Menagerie* and *Inherit the Wind*.

In 1947, in Dallas, Jones founded America’s first modern professional resident theater, which in turn launched the regional theater movement throughout the nation. Hers was also America’s first professional theater-in-the-round, using minimal sets on a stage surrounded by the audience.

Jones died in 1955, just as her dream of a decentralized American theater came to fruition. Today, strong regional theater companies continue to thrive throughout America.

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

1. How did playwright Tennessee Williams describe Margo Jones?
2. What two features of the theater Jones founded in Dallas were considered “firsts” in American theater?

**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.** Why do you think the success of Jones’s Dallas theater launched the regional theater movement throughout the nation?