



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 Scott Joplin. Then, answer questions about it.

Scott Joplin 1868–1917

In the early 1880s, a young African American boy in Texarkana named Scott Joplin was trained in the fundamentals of classical music and opera by his German-born teacher. Born near Linden, Texas, Joplin was the son of a formerly enslaved railroad worker—and a budding musical talent. By his early twenties, he left home to become an itinerant musician.

While living in St. Louis, Joplin encountered a kind of music that juxtaposed a steady, bouncing bass with a syncopated treble: “ragged time,” or “ragtime.” The music was played in saloons and brothels, and in Joplin’s hands, it became high art.

In the late 1890s, Joplin settled in Sedalia, Missouri, where he studied music, performed, and began writing songs such as the “Maple Leaf Rag” and “The Entertainer.” Ragtime was described as the “one true American music” of the day, and Joplin was its king.

Joplin spent his final years in New York City, seeking to produce his opera, *Treemonisha*. Discouraged and in declining health, he died in 1917.

In the 1970s, the world rediscovered Joplin. New recordings were issued. And his music featured prominently in the Hollywood film *The Sting*, which won an Academy Award for its score.

In 1976, Joplin received a posthumous Pulitzer Prize for his unique and lasting contributions to American popular song.

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

1. What are the characteristics of the “ragtime” genre of music for which Scott Joplin became famous?
2. How did the world “rediscover” Joplin’s music in the 1970s?

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.** Based on the episode, what does the word “itinerant” mean?