



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 Josefina Niggli. Then, answer questions about it.

### Josefina Niggli 1910–1983

Twentieth-century playwright and novelist Josefina Niggli once wrote, “When I was ... starting out as a writer, I had a shining goal. I was going to present Mexico and the Mexicans as they had never before been presented.”

Born in 1910 to Anglo parents in Monterrey, Mexico, Niggli grew up in both Monterrey and San Antonio, Texas. After graduating from Incarnate Word College, she studied playwriting at the San Antonio Little Theater. National magazines began publishing her short stories and poems. She later moved to North Carolina and earned an MA in drama from UNC-Chapel Hill.

Niggli’s works, written in English for American audiences, often highlighted tensions within Mexican society and between the cultures of Mexico and the United States.

Her most influential work was *Mexican Village*—a 1945 collection of related stories that form a composite portrait of Hidalgo, Mexico. Her play *Soldadera* depicts women soldiers of the Mexican Revolution. At a time when American media often stereotyped Mexicans as villains and louts, Niggli provided an authentic and nuanced view of life across the border.

One New York Times critic wrote, “Niggli sweeps into the discard a whole library of books by Americans purporting to tell us of Mexican life.”

Niggli died in 1983. Her bicultural perspective is now recognized as a critical precursor to the Mexican American writers who followed her.

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

1. Name the two cities that Josefina Niggli spent most of her time when she was growing up.
2. What is the title of the play that Niggli wrote about the Mexican Revolution?

**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.** Niggli worked to fight against Mexican stereotypes with her writing. What stereotypes would you try to fight against if you were an author?