



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 Américo Paredes. Then, answer questions about it.

Américo Paredes 1915–1999

The writer and folklorist Américo Paredes was born in Brownsville in 1915. Even as a youth, he saw that a distinct culture had emerged in the Rio Grande Valley—not just Mexican or American, but a blend of both.

After serving as an Army journalist during World War II, Paredes returned to his home state to train as a scholar. In 1956, he became the first Mexican American to receive a doctorate in English from The University of Texas.

Paredes made the border the focus of his forty-year career. He studied and celebrated the distinctive stories and humor of the lower Rio Grande, at the same time fighting to correct prejudice against Mexicans and Mexican Americans.

Paredes described his most famous work of scholarship—titled *With His Pistol in His Hand*—as “two books in one.” It tells the story of Gregorio Cortez, a Tejano ranchhand accused of murder who evaded capture by the Texas Rangers for more than a week. The book is also a pioneering study of the border ballads—or corridos—that later portrayed Cortez as a symbol of courage and resistance.

Paredes also wrote poetry and fiction and inspired writers of the Chicano literary movement in the sixties and seventies.

Paredes died in 1999. He is now regarded as one of the foremost Mexican American scholars of the twentieth century.

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

1. What was the focus of Américo Paredes’s writings?
2. Why did Paredes describe his most famous work, *With His Pistol in His Hand*, as “two books in one”?

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. **Creating Connections.** Paredes wrote about Mexicans and Mexican Americans as a way of fighting against prejudice. At the beginning of his career, in the mid-1950s, what nation-wide movement was gaining momentum?