



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 George Sessions Perry. Then, answer questions about it.

George Sessions Perry 1910–1956

Author George Sessions Perry captured Texas cotton culture like no other writer. Born in 1910 in Rockdale, Texas, he spent much of his career rendering a fictional version of his beloved hometown.

In 1937, Perry sold his first story to the *Saturday Evening Post*, beginning a lifelong relationship with the magazine. Inspired by John Steinbeck and J. Frank Dobie, Perry published his first novel, titled *Walls Rise Up*, in 1939.

Perry's most acclaimed work was 1941's *Hold Autumn in Your Hand*, a vivid depiction of Depression-era cotton farming. The novel recounts a year in the life of a Milam County tenant farmer and reflects Perry's appreciation for rural life, as well as his criticism of the exploitative conditions of sharecropping. A 1945 film adaptation was directed by Jean Renoir.

During World War II, Perry worked as a correspondent covering the Allied invasion of Sicily. He once told a friend that his wartime experiences "de-fictionized" him. Afterward, he focused more on nonfiction and journalism and found his writing in high demand by the country's leading publications.

However, Perry struggled with arthritis and depression and ultimately died at the age of forty-six. His works remain, as one critic wrote, the best picture we have of the state's pre-industrial cotton culture—"a world of subsistence farming and the yearlong ritual of planting and picking."

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

1. What was George Sessions Perry's most acclaimed work, and what subject did it cover?
2. How did Perry's writing change after his wartime experience?

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.** If you were selecting between writing fiction and non-fiction, which would you choose and why?