



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 Dorothy Scarborough. Then, answer questions about it.

Dorothy Scarborough 1878–1935

In 1925, an anonymous novel called *The Wind* spotlighted the West Texas town of Sweetwater. *The Wind* told the tragic tale of Letty Mason, a Virginian who moves to Sweetwater during the drought-stricken 1880s. By book's end, Letty has committed murder and suicide—driven in part by the relentless West Texas wind.

Reviewers praised the book for depicting the West with “cold truth.” However, many Texas readers attacked *The Wind*—and argued that only a Yankee could have written it.

The Wind's author was revealed to be Dorothy Scarborough, a native Texan. She spent several childhood years in Sweetwater, but lived most of her career in New York, yet all seven of her novels were set in Texas.

By the time Lillian Gish starred in the 1928 film version of *The Wind*, the story included a happy ending—and Sweetwater's Chamber of Commerce invited Scarborough back for a visit.

Dorothy Scarborough was also a respected folklorist. She called herself a “song catcher.” She believed radio threatened the survival of folk songs, and she traveled around the Appalachian Mountains recording centuries-old ballads with a hand-powered Dictaphone. Scarborough believed these folk songs told stories about a community's values and its collective history.

Novelist, folklorist, a catcher of songs, Dorothy Scarborough took inspiration from America's regional cultures and, in doing so, preserved the creative expressions of ordinary people from times past.

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

1. How is Texas portrayed in Dorothy Scarborough's famous work *The Wind*?
2. Why did Scarborough feel it was important to preserve folk songs?

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.** Why do you think Scarborough used the expression “song catcher” for her work as a folklorist?