



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 Cyrus Rowlett Smith. Then, answer questions about it.

Cyrus Rowlett Smith 1899–1990

"C. R." Smith, pioneering president of American Airlines, when asked what drew him to aviation, responded, "Vigorous people . . . whose vision doesn't stop at the horizon." He was essentially describing himself.

Cyrus Rowlett Smith was born in the small Texas town of Minerva. After his father abandoned the family, nine-year-old Cyrus began working a series of odd jobs. Despite never graduating high school, he studied business at The University of Texas. Working as an accountant for a power company, Smith quickly climbed the corporate ladder.

In 1934, when Smith became president of American Airlines, the fledgling company was getting by delivering air mail, and postal revenues were capped by government regulations. Smith knew that to increase earnings he had to think bigger. He persuaded aircraft designer Donald Douglas to expand his DC-2 model to accommodate twenty-one passengers—enough to make passenger-only travel profitable. The resulting DC-3 gave American Airlines the freedom to operate without relying on mail pay, and other airlines soon followed suit.

In 1942, Smith left the company to serve in the Army and helped organize its worldwide air transport system. He returned a highly decorated major general and resumed control of American. In 1968, he left again to become President Johnson's commerce secretary.

Named to the Aviation Hall of Fame, Smith died in 1990. He is buried at Arlington National Cemetery.

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

1. What change did Cyrus Rowlett Smith make to American Airlines that dramatically changed the company?
2. Why did Smith leave American Airlines in 1942?

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.** Passenger airlines revolutionized the way we travel. What do you think will be the next big revolution in travel? Explain your answer.