



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 King Wallis Vidor. Then, answer questions about it.

King Wallis Vidor 1894–1982

Born in Galveston in 1894, King Wallis Vidor grew up with the movies. Over the course of his career, he directed both silent and sound films and worked with many of Hollywood's top stars, from Charlie Chaplin to Audrey Hepburn.

Vidor began his career in film as a teenager, working as a projectionist in a Galveston theater.

His first hit came in 1925, with *The Big Parade*, the highest grossing silent film of all time. Shot partly in Texas, the film follows Jim Apperson, an idle young man who joins the army to fight in World War I. In France, Jim experiences the horrors of combat and loses a leg in battle. Vidor's film emphasizes the human costs of war.

Later masterpieces in Vidor's career include *The Crowd*, *Stella Dallas*, *Duel in the Sun*, *War and Peace*, and an adaptation of Ayn Rand's controversial novel *The Fountainhead* starring Gary Cooper and Patricia Neal.

Often drawn to social themes, Vidor hoped his films would "help humanity to free itself from the shackles of fear and suffering that have so long bound it with iron chains."

A sculpture of the Tin Man from *The Wizard of Oz* stands in the front yard of Vidor's childhood home in Galveston. Vidor directed the film's Kansas scenes as a favor to MGM. The fanciful sculpture is a memorial to this Texan's remarkable life in American film.

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

1. How did King Wallis Vidor get his start in the film industry?
2. What theme did Vidor's first hit film, *The Big Parade*, attempt to address?

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.** Vidor is quoted as saying that he hoped his films would "help humanity to free itself from the shackles of fear and suffering that have so long bound it with iron chains." Based on his films described in the episode, what do you think his quote means?