



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 Walter Prescott Webb. Then, answer questions about it.

Walter Prescott Webb 1888–1963

Walter Prescott Webb remains one of Texas's most significant and influential scholars.

Born in 1888, Webb grew up in Stephens County. In 1904, an Atlanta literary magazine published a letter written by a young Webb asking how he could become a writer. Remarkably, a New Yorker named William E. Hinds read the letter and became Webb's benefactor, sending him books, money, and encouragement. With Hinds's support, Webb entered The University of Texas in 1909, where he eventually received a doctorate.

Webb taught at his alma mater throughout his career. He served as director of the Texas State Historical Association and spearheaded the creation of *The Handbook of Texas*, the definitive encyclopedia of the state's history. In 1958, he served as president of the American Historical Association.

As a scholar, Webb made his name with *The Great Plains*, his 1931 study that shows how the distinctive climate and geography of the American West shaped the region's history. In 1950, a survey of historians identified the book as the single most important work in U.S. history written since the turn of the century.

Webb died in 1963. In a memorial, J. Frank Dobie described him as "the most powerful thinker I have ever known." "Most historians deal with the past as the past," said Dobie. "Webb dealt with it as a guide to the future."

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

1. How did Walter Prescott Webb become known to William E. Hinds, his eventual mentor and benefactor?
2. Name three ways Webb contributed to the study of history during his career.

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.** Webb was described by J. Frank Dobie as a historian who dealt with the study of history "...as a guide to the future." Do you think studying our past can help guide our future?