

The Dollar-a-Year Man

How John Lomax set out to record American folk music

A In the early 1930s, folklorist, platform lecturer, college professor and former banker John Avery Lomax was trying to recapture a sense of direction for his life. For two decades he had enjoyed a national reputation for his pioneering work in collecting and studying American folk songs; no less a figure than President Theodore Roosevelt had admired his work, and had written a letter of support for him as he sought grants for his research. He had always dreamed of finding a way of making a living by doing the thing he loved best, collecting folk songs, but he was now beginning to wonder if he would ever realise that dream.

B Lomax wanted to embark on a nationwide collecting project, resulting in as many as four volumes, and 'complete the rehabilitation of the American folk-song'. Eventually this was modified to where he envisioned a single book tentatively called American Ballads and Folk Songs, designed to survey the whole field. It called for firsthand field collecting, and would especially focus on the neglected area of black folk music.

C In 1932, Lomax travelled to New York, and stopped in to see a man named H.S. Latham of the Macmillan Company. He informally outlined his plan to Latham, and read him the text of an earthy African American blues ballad called 'Ida Red'. Latham was impressed, and two days later Lomax had a contract, a small check to bind it, and an agreement to deliver the manuscript about one year later. The spring of 1932 began to look more green, lush and full of promise.

D Lomax immediately set to work. He travelled to libraries at Harvard, the Library of Congress, Brown University and elsewhere in order to explore unpublished song collections and to canvas the folk song books published over the past ten years. During his stay in Washington, D.C., Lomax became friendly with Carl Engel, Music Division chief of the Library of Congress. Engel felt that Lomax had the necessary background and energy to someday direct the Archive of Folk Song. Through funds provided by the Council of Learned Societies and the Library of Congress, Lomax ordered a state-of-the-art portable recording machine. More importantly, the Library of Congress agreed to furnish blank records and to lend their name to his collecting; Lomax simply had to agree to deposit the completed records at the Library of Congress. He did so without hesitation. On July 15, 1933, Lomax was appointed an 'honorary consultant' for a dollar a year-.

E Together with his eighteen-year-old son Alan, he began a great adventure to collect songs for American Ballads and Folk Songs, a task that was to last for many months. Lomax's library research had reinforced his belief that a dearth of black folk song material existed in printed collections. This fact, along with his early appreciation of African American folk culture, led Lomax to decide that black folk music from rural areas should be the primary focus. This bold determination resulted in the first major trip in the United States to capture black folk music in the field. In order to fulfill their quest, the two men concentrated on sections of the South with a high percentage of blacks. They also pinpointed laboring camps, particularly lumber camps, which employed blacks almost exclusively. But as they went along, prisons and penitentiaries also emerged as a focal point for research.

F The recordings made by the Lomaxes had historical significance. The whole idea of using a phonograph to preserve authentic folk music was still fairly new. Most of John Lomax's peers were involved in collecting-songs the classic way: taking both words and melody down by hand, asking the singer to perform the song over and over until the collector had 'caught' it on paper. John Lomax sensed at once the limitations of this kind of method, especially when getting songs from African-American singers, whose quarter tones, blue notes and complex timing often frustrated white musicians trying to transcribe them with European notation systems.

G The whole concept of field recordings was, in 1933 and still is today, radically different from the popular notion of recording. Field recordings are not intended as commercial products, but as attempts at cultural preservation. There is no profit motive, nor any desire to make the singer a 'star'. As have hundreds of folk song collectors after him, John Lomax had to persuade his singers to perform, to explain to them why their songs were important, and to convince the various authorities - the wardens, the trustees, the bureaucrats - that this was serious, worthwhile work. He faced the moral problem of how to safeguard the records and the rights of the singers - a problem he solved in this instance by donating the discs to the Library of Congress. He had to overcome the technical problems involved in recording outside a studio; one always hoped for quiet, with no doors slamming or alarms going off, but it was always a risk. His new state-of-the-art recording machine sported a new microphone designed by NBC, but there were no wind baffles to help reduce the noise when recording outside. Lomax learned how to balance sound, where to place microphones, how to work echoes and walls, and soon was a skilled recordist.

Questions 1-5

Complete the summary below.

Choose **NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS** from the passage for each answer.

Write your answers in boxes **1-5** on your answer sheet.

JOHN LOMAX'S PROJECT

Lomax began the research for this project by looking at 1..... that were not available in book form, as well as at certain books. While he was doing this research, he met someone who ran a department at the 2..... in Washington. As a result of this contact, he was provided with the very latest kind or 3..... for his project.

Lomax believed that the places he should concentrate on were 4..... in the South of the US. While he and his son were on their trip, they added 5..... as places where they could find what they were looking for.

Tips: Summary (notes/table/flow chart) completion

Task guide

This task requires you to find pieces of information in the reading passage in order to fill in the gaps in a summary (or notes or table or flow chart).

This task often, but not always, **focusses on one part** or section of the reading passage, rather than on pieces of information spread throughout the text.

This task requires you to use **exact words** and phrases from the text; the answers therefore all appear in the relevant part of the text. Do not try to use different words that have the same meaning - your answer will be marked wrong even if the meaning is correct.

In completion tasks, the questions **follow the same order as the relevant information in the reading passage**.

Read the instructions carefully. Notice how many words you can use to answer each question. The number of words may vary; you may be asked to write one, two or three words in each question. The instructions will also tell you if you need to use a number for your answer.

In this case, you are asked to complete a summary.

Step-by-step Guide

Step 1 - Locate the task in the text

First of all, you need to **locate the task** in the reading passage. Look for **clues**.

If the task has a **title**, it may refer to something that only **appears** in a particular section of the text.

In this case, the title ('**JOHN LOMAX'S PROJECT**') doesn't really help, because most of the text is about Lomax's project. You will need to look for **clues** in the summary.

- The summary begins: '**Lomax began his research for this project...**'. In which section of the text (**A-G**) does he begin his research? Which sentence in that section refers to him beginning his work?
- The second sentence of the summary refers to **Washington**. Is **Washington** mentioned in the same section of the text?
- The second paragraph of the summary mentions '**the South of the US**'. Which section (A-G) of the text mentions '**the South**'?
- The second paragraph of the summary also mentions Lomax's son. Is his son mentioned in the same section of the text?

Step 2 - Find the answers

Now look for the answers in the parts of the text you identified in step 1.

Remember that you must fill in the gaps with the **exact words and phrases** that appear in the text. However, the rest of the summary does not consist of words and phrases that are all repeated exactly from the text. Instead, the summary uses words and phrases that have the same meaning as those used in the text or that express the same ideas in a different way.

Question 1

Look at the words **before** and **after** the gap.

1 The verb after the gap is 'were'. What kind of word or phrase is required in the gap?

- singular noun
- adjective
- or plural noun?

2 Which word in the text means 'look at' or 'study'?

3 Which word in the text means 'not available in book form'?

Now use your answers for step 2 to find the answer to Question 1.

Question 2

Look at the sentence containing Question 2.

1 What is the word or phrase in the gap likely to refer to?

- the name of a department
- the name of an institution
- or the name of a person?

2 Which word in the text means 'department'?

3 If someone 'runs' a place, they are the manager of it or in charge of it. Which word in the text means 'manager' or 'head'?

Now use your answers for step 2 to find the answer to Question 2.

Questions 3-5

Now answer Questions 3-5 using the same process:

- Try to predict **what kind of word** is required in each gap by looking at the **surrounding context**.
- Look for words and phrases in the text that mean **the same** or express **the same ideas** as those used in the text surrounding the gaps in the summary.

Questions 6-10

Reading Passage 1 has seven sections labelled A-G.

Which section contains the following information?

Write the correct letter A-G in boxes 6-10 on your answer sheet.

NB: You may use any letter **more than once**.

- 6..... a **reference** to the speed with which Lomax responded to a demand
- 7..... a reason why Lomax **doubted** the **effectiveness** of a certain approach
- 8..... **reasons** why Lomax was considered **suitable** for a particular **official post**
- 9..... a **reference** to a **change of plan** on Lomax's part
- 10..... a **reference** to one of Lomax's **theories** being **confirmed**

Tips: Matching information to sections of text

Task guide

This task requires you to **find the sections** in which specific pieces of information appear in the reading passage.

It is possible that the same section will be the answer to **more than one question**. If this is the case, the instructions will tell you that you can use any letter more than once. However, it is also possible that a section or sections of the text will not be the answer to any of the questions. The instructions will not tell you if this is the case, but do not worry if you have not chosen a particular section as the answer to any of the questions, because this may be correct.

Be careful not to choose a section as your answer simply because it contains something on the same general subject as the question. It is likely that **more than one section** will contain information connected with the question, but only one section will contain the precise piece of information asked for in the question.

Beware of '**word spotting**'. Do not choose a section as your answer simply because it contains a word that also appears in the question. Other sections may also contain that word. It is very unlikely that the correct answer will involve simply finding the same word in both the question and a certain section of the reading passage.

Step-by-step guide

The best approach to this task is to:

- read the first question and then look through the text to find the answer to it.
- move to the next question and repeat the process.

Question 6

Step 1 - Decide what you are looking for

1 The question refers to a 'demand' that Lomax responded to. Therefore, you are looking for:

- A something he was required to do
- B something he asked for
- C something he was given

2 Question 6 refers to '**speed**'. Therefore, you are looking for a reference to him doing something:

- A well or badly
- B quickly or slowly
- C easily or with difficulty

Step 2 - Find the answer

Now use your answers for step 1 to find the answer to Question 6.

When you are looking through the text, look for something that matches the ideas or information contained in the question.

In many questions, you will not find words and phrases in the reading passage that mean exactly the same as those used in the question. Instead, you will need to find places in the passage which refer to the idea expressed in the question.

When you have located the section which contains the relevant piece of information, you will be able to answer these questions:

1 What was Lomax required to do?

2 Which phrase in the text means 'very quickly' or 'immediately'?

Now write your answer for Question 6.

Question 7

Step 1 - Decide what you are looking for

1 The question refers to why Lomax '**doubted the effectiveness**' of an approach. Therefore, you are looking for a reference to him:

- A finding out how something worked
- B explaining how something worked
- C thinking that something didn't work very well

2 The question refers to an '**approach**'. In this context, you are likely to be looking for:

- A a route taken on a journey
- B a research method
- C a type of music

Step 2 - Find the answer

Now use your answers for step 1 to find the answer to Question 7.

Look for references in the reading passage that match the ideas and information contained in the question. When you have located the section which contains the relevant piece of information, you will be able to answer these questions:

1 Which approach did Lomax consider ineffective?

2 Which word in the text means 'disadvantages' and refers to this approach, in his opinion?

Now write your answer for Question 7.

Questions 8-10

Now answer Questions 8-10 using the same process:

- Read each question carefully and make sure that you understand exactly what you are looking for in the text.
- Find the section of the reading passage which matches exactly the ideas and

information contained in the question.

Questions 11-13

Choose **THREE** lectures **A-F**.

Write your answers in boxes **11-13** on your answer sheet.

Which **THREE** of the following *difficulties* for Lomax are mentioned *by the writer* of the text?

- A finding a publisher for his research
- B deciding exactly what kind of music to collect
- C the scepticism of others concerning his methods
- D the reluctance of people to participate in his project
- E making sure that participants in his project were not exploited
- F factors resulting from his choice of locations for recording

Tips: Multiple-choice with multiple answers

Task guide

This task requires you to select a specified number of options which correctly answer the question.

This task requires you to ask yourself two things for each option: (a) Is it true according to the text? and (b) Does it correctly answer the question?

Be careful! An option may be true, but it may not answer the question. For example, if you are asked to select 'problems', an option may refer to something that did happen in the text but was not actually a problem.

In these tasks, the options follow the same order as the relevant information in the text.

Sometimes there is one mark for each correct option you choose; sometimes there is only one mark for the whole task, and you have to choose all the correct options in order to get a mark. If only one question number is given, you will know that only one mark will be given. In this task, there are three question numbers (Question 11, 12 and 13), which means that three marks will be given.

Step-by-step guide

The best approach to this task is to:

- take each option one by one
- find the relevant place in the text and
- decide whether the option is one of the answers to the question or not.

Option A

Step 1 - Locate the option in the text

Look at option A and then read through the text. Which section mentions a publisher?

Step 2 - Decide whether the option answers the question

Look through the section you identified in step 1. Answer the questions below and decide whether option A is one of the answers or not.

- 1. What was the name of the publishing company Lomax visited?**
- 2. What was the name of the man he went to see about publishing the book?**
3. How long after they met did this man contact Lomax?
4. Did this man agree to publish Lomax's book?

Using your answers to these questions, decide whether option **A** refers to something that Lomax found [difficult](#).

Option B

Step 1 - Locate the option in the text

Look at option B and then read through the text.

Which section contains three specific references to the kind of music Lomax decided to collect?

Step 2 - Decide whether the option answers the question

Look through the section you identified in step 1. Answer the questions below and decide whether option B is one of the answers or not.

1. What kind of music did Lomax decide to collect?
- 2. What two reasons are given for Lomax deciding to collect this kind of music?**
3. Is there a reference to any other kind of music he considered collecting?
4. Is there a reference to Lomax taking a long time to decide what kind of music to collect?

Using your answers to these questions, decide whether option **B** refers to something that Lomax found [difficult](#).

Options C-F

Now look at options **C-F** and use the same process to decide whether each one is an answer or not:

- Find the relevant part of the text.
- Read that part of the text carefully to find out whether each of the options was something that caused Lomax a problem or not.

Solution:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. song collections | 8. D |
| 2. Library of Congress | 9. B |
| 3. portable recording machine | 10. E |
| 4. rural areas | 11. D/E/F (in any order) |
| 5. prisons and penitentiaries | 12. D/E/F (in any order) |
| 6. D | 13. D/E/F (in any order) |
| 7. F | |