



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 Alan Lomax. Then, answer questions about it.

### Alan Lomax 1915–2002

Alan Lomax believed every culture has a “right . . . to equal time on the air and equal time in the classroom.” As the director of the Library of Congress Archive of American Folk Song and as a radio and television host, Lomax introduced folksong to popular audiences and promoted it among students and scholars.

His interest in traditional song started when Lomax was a teenager. In the 1930s, Alan accompanied his father, the prominent folklorist John Lomax, on trips to collect folk songs from prisoners, laborers, and cowboys.

As he matured and developed his own professional identity, Alan Lomax also collected oral histories about the stories behind the songs.

Lomax believed that oral traditions are critical to a nation’s literary and cultural heritage. He feared that modern technology and the commercial music industry would erode traditional practices and deplete musical diversity. Lomax’s work to preserve folksong also provided individuals and communities with opportunities to share their creative traditions with a wider audience.

When Alan Lomax died in 2002, his collection included tens of thousands of musical recordings, preserved for future generations. A contemporary wrote, Alan “was in it for the music, not the money. His gift to all of us was to capture voice after voice, song after song that would have vanished into thin air otherwise.”

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

1. What sparked Alan Lomax’s interest in “traditional” song?
2. What did Lomax worry would harm traditional song and decrease musical diversity?

**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.** In addition to recording songs, Lomax recorded the “stories behind the songs.” Why is it important to preserve cultural context for music? Explain.