



Reading Comprehension Practice - 10 Oct

Special class

In 1889, a San Francisco tavern called the Palais Royale debuted a hot new attraction: a modified Edison phonograph that, when a customer inserted a nickel, played music from a single wax cylinder. Electrical sound amplification was still years away, so customers had to insert stethoscope-like tubes into their ears to hear anything, ideally toweling down the tubes afterward to remove earwax ahead of the next listener.

Despite this unwieldy setup, the machine reportedly brought in more than \$1,000 (some \$34,000 today) in less than six months, and coin-operated music machines soon proliferated in bars, at drugstores and even in new listening parlors across the country. Alas, poor sound quality meant selections couldn't be soft or subtle. By the early 1900s, the machines struggled to compete against player pianos and other automated instruments that could entertain whole venues with higher-quality audio—and without requiring patrons to stick foreign objects into their delicate ear canals.

But record players continued to improve in quality and volume, and pay-to-play phonographs made a huge comeback in the 1920s, paving the way for the jukebox era. In 1927, the Automatic Musical Instrument Company unveiled the first amplified, multi-record coin phonograph. Jukeboxes—they took on this nickname in the 1930s in reference to African American "juke joints" of the South—introduced the world to music on demand, for far less than buying a record (and on better equipment than people had at home). The boxes also reshaped the recording industry, as labels began releasing music specifically designed for post-Prohibition barrooms and cafés. Jukebox operators came to account for a majority of record sales, as they frequently changed out selections to keep customers dropping nickels.

Over the next couple of decades, jukeboxes would see their numbers dwindle as fans turned to other sources of entertainment, including increasingly high-fidelity home stereos, television and the transistor radio, where Top 40 countdowns now introduced listeners to hits. "Sound of jukebox is fading melody," reported one Associated Press headline in 1982, estimating jukebox numbers in the United States had fallen by more than half since the 1950s, while video games became the main draw in coin-operated entertainment. Yet decades later, jukeboxes—many now digital—continue to ring out across the U.S. And the idea that public establishments should offer a curated selection of recorded music, whether individual patrons like it or not, has become nearly ubiquitous. We're living, and listening, in a world these machines created.

unveiled
covered

1889
1900
1920
1950
1980

1982

universal, present everywhere

Q1. According to the passage, the initial decline of coin-operated music machines in the early 1900s was caused by:

- (A) their unwieldy setup and the unhygienic nature of their ear-tube listening system.
- (B) the increasing popularity and superior fidelity of home stereo systems.
- (C) the widespread adoption of broadcast media like television and transistor radios.
- (D) their poor sound quality and competition from higher-quality automated instruments.
- (E) the rise of video games as the main draw in coin-operated entertainment.

offer
1950

1980

1985

Q2. What does the author imply by stating 'We're living, and listening, in a world these machines created'?

- (A) That digital jukeboxes, though less common, continue to be a highly profitable segment of the entertainment industry.
- (B) That society is now negatively saturated with inescapable, corporately-controlled background music. → too dramatic
- (C) That the "music on demand" concept pioneered by the jukebox directly led to the development of personal streaming services. 005 keyword
- (D) That the jukebox's most significant legacy is the now-ubiquitous practice of playing curated music in public spaces.
- (E) That the recording industry's business model is still primarily shaped by the need to create hits for public venues. → 005

Q3. What can be inferred from the passage about the type of music that became popular during the jukebox era?

- (A) It featured hits that were already popular from Top 40 radio, which listeners wanted to hear on demand.
- (B) It was mostly limited to the African American "juke joint" music from which the machines got their nickname.
- (C) It was likely upbeat and dynamic, designed to be heard in lively public spaces like barrooms.
- (D) It consisted primarily of soft and subtle selections, made possible by new amplification technology.
- (E) It was music created exclusively for jukeboxes and was not available for purchase by the public.

→ contrary

→ 605 info

Q4. The tone of the passage can be best described as:

- (A) deeply nostalgic and ~~sentimental~~, lamenting the decline of a superior form of entertainment.
- (B) primarily analytical and ~~economic~~, focusing on the jukebox's role in the recording industry's business model.
- (C) informative and appreciative, tracing the cultural and technological history of an object.
- (D) strictly academic and ~~technical~~, focusing only on the mechanical evolution of the phonograph.
- (E) critical and dismissive, arguing that the jukebox promoted a low quality of commercial music.

Across a Swiss meadow and into its forested edges, the drone dragged a jumbo-size cotton swab from a 13-foot tether. Along its path, the moistened swab collected scraps of life: some combination of sloughed skin and hair; mucus, saliva, and blood splatters; pollen flecks and fungal spores.

Later, biologists used a sequencer about the size of a phone to stream the landscape's DNA into code, revealing dozens upon dozens of species, some endangered, some invasive. The researchers never saw the wasps, stink bugs, or hawk moths whose genetic signatures they collected. But all of those, and many more, were out there.

The researchers, from the Swiss Federal Institute for Forest, Snow and Landscape Research, were field-testing a new approach to biodiversity monitoring, in this case to map insect life across different kinds of vegetation. They make up one of many teams now deploying a suite of technologies to track nature at a resolution and pace once unimaginable for taxonomists.

Today, autonomous robots collect DNA while state-of-the-art sequencers process genetic samples quickly and cheaply, and machine-learning algorithms detect life by sound or shape. These technologies are revolutionizing humanity's ability to catalog Earth's species, which are estimated to number 8 million—though perhaps far, far more—by illuminating the teeming life that so often eludes human observation. Only about 2.3 million species have been formally described. The rest are nameless and unstudied—part of what biologists call dark taxa.

Insects, for example, likely compose more than half of all animal species, yet most (an estimated four out of five) have never been recorded by science. From the tropics to the poles, on land and in water, they pollinate, prey, scavenge, burrow, and parasitize—an unobserved majority of life on Earth. "It is difficult to relate to nonspecialists how vast our ignorance truly is," an international consortium of insect scientists lamented in 2018. Valerio Caruso, an entomologist at the University of Padua, in Italy, studies scuttle flies, a skittering family containing an estimated 30,000 to 50,000 species. Only about 4,000 have been described, Caruso told me. "One lifetime is not enough to understand them all."

group

scraps
↓

small

prey

sloughed

dead
shed

skin

level of
ignorance

criticised,
complained

Taxonomy → branch of scientific
study which names
and categorises diff'n
organisms

-lemming → crowded
eludes → escapes

Q1. What can be inferred from the passage about the future of the field of taxonomy?

- (A) The primary change in the field will be the widespread adoption of drones for sample collection. *narrow*
- (B) It will become a more interdisciplinary field, integrating methods from genetics, robotics, and computer science. *mic learning*
- (C) The problem of 'dark taxa' will be definitively solved within the next few decades by the new technologies. *extreme*
- (D) It will be led by a new generation of scientists, like Valerio Caruso, who are more open to technological innovation. *narrow eg → OOS*
- (E) Traditional methods of human observation and description will be rendered entirely obsolete by full automation. *extreme
OOS*

Q2. The author's tone in the final paragraph can best be described

as:

(A) a call to action for more collaboration between different scientific fields.

(B) disappointed by the slow pace of technological development in AI and genetics.

(C) academically detached, offering a neutral summary of the field's future challenges.

(D) critical of the scientific community for not having enough researchers to tackle the problem.

(E) sobering and urgent, emphasizing that technology is in a race against the rapid pace of extinction.

aca eg
no of researchers
not the issue
in one lifetime --

Never oh
ignorance

Q3. According to the passage, the term 'dark taxa' most closely

refers to:

- (A) species that live in environments without sunlight, such as deep caves or the ocean floor.
- (B) the specific group of insect species that are estimated to be unrecorded by science.
- (C) the vast number of species on Earth that have not yet been scientifically named or studied.
- (D) species that can only be detected through indirect methods like DNA, not by human observation.
- (E) endangered or invasive species that represent a hidden threat to an ecosystem's stability.

hidden
known

unknown

Q3

Q4. The primary purpose of the passage is to:

- (A) critique the limitations of new AI tools in the race to catalog endangered species.
- (B) highlight the work of specific researchers, like Valerio Caruso, and their focus on 'dark taxa'.
- (C) lament the scientific community's vast and persistent ignorance of global biodiversity, especially among insects.
- (D) describe a technological revolution in biodiversity monitoring and explain its urgent necessity in the face of rapid biodiversity loss.
- (E) provide a detailed overview of new technologies, like drones and AI, that are changing the field of taxonomy.

very narrow
distorted

UQ

2 min → reading

vocab Q
30sec
1 min

3 Q
1 min
x
1.5 min

2 min?
4.5 min

6-6.5