

# Traditional & Folk Songs with lyrics & midi music

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## Ballad of Accounting

Ballad of Accounting  
(Ewan MacColl)

In the morning we built the city  
In the afternoon walked through its streets  
Evening saw us leaving

We wandered through our days as if they would never end  
All of us imagined we had endless time to spend  
We hardly saw the crossroads and small attention gave  
To landmarks on the journey from the cradle to the grave,  
cradle to the grave, cradle to the grave

Did you learn to dream in the morning?  
Abandon dreams in the afternoon?  
Wait without hope in the evening?

Did you stand there in the traces and let 'em feed you lies?  
Did you trail along behind them wearing blinkers on your eyes?  
Did you kiss the foot that kicked you, did you thank them for  
their scorn?  
Did you ask for their forgiveness for the act of being born,  
act of being born, act of being born?

Did you alter the face of the city?  
Make any change in the world you found?  
Or did you observe all the warnings?

Did you read the trespass notices, did you keep off the grass?  
Did you shuffle up the pavements just to let your betters pass?  
Did you learn to keep your mouth shut, were you seen but never heard?  
Did you learn to be obedient and jump to at a word,  
jump to at a word, jump to at a word?

Did you demand any answers?  
The who and the what and the reason why?  
Did you ever question the setup?

Did you stand aside and let 'em choose while you took second best?  
Did you let 'em skim the cream off and give to you the rest?  
Did you settle for the shoddy and did you think it right  
To let 'em rob you right and left and never make a fight,  
never make a fight, never make a fight?

What did you learn in the morning?  
How much did you know in the afternoon?  
Were you content in the evening?

Did they teach you how to question when you were at the school?  
Did the factory help you, were you the maker or the tool?  
Did the place where you were living enrich your life and then  
Did you reach some understanding of all your fellow men,  
all your fellow men, all your fellow men?

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recorded by Ewan MacColl on "Black And White" (1972)  
and by Dick Gaughan on "Live in Edinburgh" (1985)

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"Written in 1964 as theme music for the BBC radio-series 'LANDMARKS',  
this is a summing-up song, an accounts sheet. Its Brechtian style and  
deceptive simplicity mark it as unique among MacColl's  
compositions"

MJ