

John Henry

Leadbelly

John Henry was a li'l baby, uh-huh
Sittin' on his mama's knee, oh, yeah,
Said: "De Big Bend Tunnel on de C & O road
Gonna cause de death of me
Lawd, Lawd. Gonna cause de death of me John Henry, he had a woman
Her name was Mary Magdalene
She would go to de tunnel and sing for John
Jes' to hear John Henry's hammer ring, Lawd, Lawd
Jes' to hear John Henry's hammer ring John Henry had a li'l woman
Her name was Lucy Ann
John Henry took sick an' had to go to bed
Lucy Ann drove steel like a man
Lawd, Lawd, Lucy Ann drove steel like a man Cap'n says to John Henry
Gonna bring me a steam drill 'round
Gonna take dat steam drill out on de job
Gonna whop dat steel on down, Lawd, Lawd
Gonna whop dat steel on down John Henry tol' his cap'n
Lightnin' was in his eye
Cap'n, bet yo' las' red cent on me
Fo' I'll beat it to de bottom or I'll die, Lawd, Law
I'll beat it to de bottom or I'll die Sun shine hot an' burnin'
Wer'n't no breeze a-tall
Sweat ran down like water down a hill
Dat day John Henry let his hammer fall
Lawd, Lawd, dat day John Henry let his hammer fall John Henry went to de tunnel
An' dey put him in de lead to drive
De rock so tall an' John Henry so small
Dat he lied down his hammer an' he cried
Lawd, Lawd, dat he lied down his hammer an' he cried John Henry started out on de right hand
De steam drill started on de lef
"Before I 'd let dis steam drill beat me down
I'd hammer my fool self to death
Lawd, Lawd, I'd hammer my fool self to death"
White man tol' John Henry "Nigger, damn yo' soul
You might beat dis steam an' drill of mine
When de rocks in dis mountain turn to gol'
Lawd, Lawd, when de rocks in dis mountain turn to gol' John Henry said to his shaker
"Nigger, why don' you sing?
I'm throwin' twelve poun's from my hips on down

Jes' listen to de col' steel ring
Lawd, Lawd, Jes' listen to de col' steel ring" Oh, de captain said to John Henry
"I b'lieve this mountain's sinkin' in
John Henry said to his captain, oh my!
"Ain' nothin' but my hammer suckin' win'
Lawd, Lawd, ain' nothin' but my hammer suckin' win" John Henry tol' his shaker
Shaker, you better pray
For if I miss dis six-foot steel
Tomorrow'll be yo' buryin' day
Lawd, Lawd, tomorrow'll be yo' buryin' day" John Henry tol' his captain
"Looka yonder what I see
Yo' drill's done broke an' yo' hole's done choke
An' you cain' drive steel like me
Lawd, Lawd, an' you cain' drive steel like me" De man dat invented de steam drill
Thought he was mighty fine
John Henry drove his fifteen feet
An' de steam drill only made nine
Lawd, Lawd, an' de steam drill only made nine De hammer dat John Henry swung'
It weighed over nine pound
He broke a rib in his lef'-han' side
An' his intrels fell on de groun'
Lawd, Lawd, an' his intrels fell on de groun' John Henry was hammerin' on de mountain
An' his hammer was strikin' fire
He drove so hard till he broke his pore heart
An' he lied down his hammer an' he died
Lawd, Lawd, he lied down his hammer an' he died All de womens in de wes'
When dey heared of John Henry's death
Stood in de rain, flagged de eas'-boun' train
Goin' where John Henry fell dead
Lawd, Lawd, goin' where John Henry fell dead John Henry's lil mother
She was all dressed in red
She jumped in bed, covered up her head
Said she didn' know her son was dead
Lawd, Lawd, didn' know her son was dead John Henry had a pretty lil woman
An' de dress she wo' was blue
An' de las' wards she said to him
"John Henry, I've been true to you
Lawd, Lawd, John Henry I've been true to you" "Oh, who's gonna shoe yo' lil feetses
An' who's gonna glub yo' han's
An' who's gonna kiss yo' rosy, rosy lips
An' who's gonna be yo' man
Lawd, Lawd, an' who's gonna be yo' man?" Dey took John Henry to de graveyard
An' dey buried him in de san'
An' every locomotive come roarin' by
Says, "Dere lays a steel-drivin' man

Lawd, Lawd, dere lays a steel-drivin' man"

Songwriters

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