

# The Legend of John Henry's Hammer

(Key) [A]

[A] (Fast) John Henry's pappy woke him up one midnight He said "Before the sheriff comes I wanna tell [E7] (Stop) you, " Said "Listen boy (Slow) [A] Learn to hoist a jack and [D] learn to lay a [A] track , learn to pick and shovel too And take that hammer, It'll do any[E7]thing you tell it [A] to."

John Henry's mammy had about a dozen (Fast) babies. John Henry's pappy broke jail a dozen [E7] times The [A] babies all got sick and when the [D] doctor wanted [A] money. He said, "I'll pay you a quarter at a time startin' tomorrow, that's the pay for a steel [E7] driver on this [A] line."

Then the section foreman said, "Hey! Hammer-swinger! (Stop) Said I see you brought your own hammer boy but, what else can all them muscles do?" and he said, (Slow) [A] "I can hoist a jack and [D] I can lay a [A] track I can pick and shovel too." He said "Can you swing that hammer?" and he said I'll do any[E7]thing you hire me [A] to."

(Key Change) [G]

(Fast) [G] He said "Now ain't you somethin'! You so high and mighty with all them muscles! Go ahead, boy. Pick up that hammer and show me what you can do! He said get a rusted spike and swing that [C] hammer down three [G] times I'll pay you a nickel a day for every inch you sink it to. Go on and do what [D] you say you can [G] do. With a steep-nosed hammer on a four foot switch handle John Henry raised it back till it [D] touched his heels then The [G] spike went through the cross-tie and [C] split it half in [G] two. Thirty-five cents a day for drivin' steel He said "Sweat boy! Sweat! You owe me two more [D] swings!" said "I was [G] born to drivin' steel"

(Key Change) [E]

Well now [E] John Henry hammered in the mountains He'd give a grunt and he give a groan with every [B] swing. The [E] women-folks from miles around [A] heard him and come [E] down. Said watch him make the cold-steel ring "Lord! What a swinger! Watch him make the [B] cold-steel [E] ring" [Ab]

(Key Change) [G]

Then the [G] bad boss come up laughing at John Henry, he said you full of vinegar now, but you bout [D] through, we're [G] going to get a steam drill to [C] do your share of [G] drivin, then what's all them muscles gonna do, huh, John Henry, gonna take a little bit of [D] vinegar out of [G] you. John [G] Henry said I feed four little brothers, and my baby sister's walking on her [D] (Stop) knees, (Slow) now did the [G] lord say that machines oughta [C] take the place of living, then what's a substitute for bread and beans, I saint seen it, do engines get [D] rewarded for their [G] steam? John Henry said to his captain, said a man ain't nothing but a [D] man, but you can [G] bring that steam drill round, and I'll [C] beat it fair and [G] honest, I'll die with that my hammer in my hand, but I'll be laughing, cause you can't replace a [D] steel drivin [G] man

There was a big crowd of people at the mountain, John Henry said to the steam drill how is [D] (Stop) you, said pardon me mister steam drill, I suppose you didn't hear me, I said how you, huh? Can [G] (Slow) you hoist a jack, can [C] you lay a [G] track, can you pick and shovel too, huh? listen this hammer swingers [D] talking to [G] you

G G G G G G G gradually get faster

2000 people hollered go John Henry, then somebody hollered "the mountains [D] caving in", John [G] Henry told his captain, tell the [C] kind folks don't [G] worry, that ain't nothing but my hammer sucking wind, keeps me breathing, this steel driver's [D] muscle I ain't [G] tin

[E] Captain tell the people move back further, I'm at the finish line and ain't no [B] drill, it's [E] so far behind but it ain't [A] got the brains to [E] quit it, when she blows up she'll scatter cross the hills, lord lord, when she blows up she'll [B] scatter cross the [E] hills

Well [G] John Henry had a little woman, I believe the lady's name was Polly Ann, [D] (Stop)

(Spoken) yeah that was his good woman, John Henry threw his hammer over his shoulder and he went on home, early next morning he said come here Polly Ann come here sugar, said ya know I been layin' here watchin' that sun come up and I believe that this is the first time I've seen a sun come up that I couldn't come up with it. Dirty minds. He said Take that hammer Polly Ann and go to that rail road, and when you swing it with the lead man, you tell them that ain't all I could do tell them

[G] (Slow) I could hoist a jack, and [C] I could lay a [G] track, I could pick and shovel too, ain't no machine can, that's been [D] proved to [G] you

(fast) There was a big crowd of mourners at the church house, the section hands laid him in the [D] sand, [G] trains go by on the [C] rails John Henry [G] laid, (Spoken) they slow down and take off their hats, when they come to where he is laying, resting his back, they say "Morning Steel Driver, you sure was a hammer swinger, then they go on by picking up a little speed, clickity clack,

[G] yeah, yonder lies a steel driven man lord lord, yonder lies a [D] steel driven [G] man. yeah, [A] yonder lies a steel driven man lord lord, yonder lies a [E7] steel driven [A] man.