

John Henry

Fastest Steel
Drivin' Man
around



Why hello there. My name is John Henry!
I am the fastest steel drivin' man around!

I work on the railroads hammering the
rails down into the ground. Folks like to
say I was born with a hammer in my
hands. I knew early on that all I wanted
to do was work with a hammer and drive
steel on the railroads. I went to work on
the rails in West Virginia and boy did my
boss love me! He used to keep a bucket of

ice water to cool down my hammer in
between driving the nails in. When one of
the other steel drivers was sick, I did my
work plus theirs! I'd go down the rails
with a hammer in each hand! One day a
man came to my boss with a new
invention-a steam drill! We all laughed
because we didn't need that steam drill!

But, he told my boss that if I beat the
drill, he would let him keep it for free!

The next day everyone stood around and
watched the contest between that machine
and me! Back and forth we went. I'd be in
the lead, then the drill, then me, then the
drill again. Eventually, I won that contest!

John Henry



reading checkup

Name _____

1. Why did John say his boss loved him?

2. Why was John Henry famous?

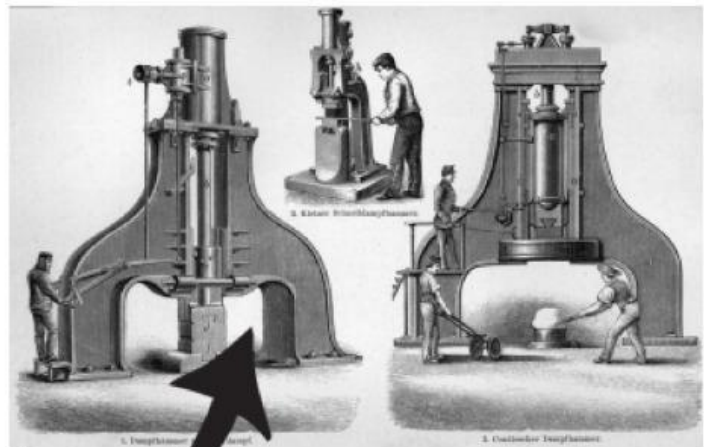
3. Describe John Henry's problem in the story.

4. What do you think happened after the contest?

The Amazing John Henry

No one is sure if John Henry was a real man or just a folk hero. What do you think?

He worked as a "steel-driver"-a man that hammers a steel drill into rock to make holes for explosives to blast the rock away.



A steam hammer

John Henry died with a hammer in his hand!

John worked on the railroads in West Virginia.



Fact^{or} fiction

Name _____



A statue of John Henry.



The Great Bend Tunnel in West Virginia where John Henry is said to have worked. Do you think he was a real person?

What was one event from the story that is an exaggeration?

1

Which event is most likely a fact?

2

Explain your thinking!

3