

When John Henry was a little baby
A sitting on his papa's knee
He picked up a hammer and a little piece of steel
Said, "Hammer's gonna be the death of me," Lord, Lord
"Hammer's gonna be the death of me."

Well, the captain said to John Henry
Gonna bring me a steam drill 'round
Gonna bring me a steel drill out on the job
Gonna whup that steel on down,

John Henry said to his captain
"A man ain't nothin' but a man
And before I let that steel drill beat me down
I'll die with a hammer in my hand,

John Henry was driving on the mountain
And his hammer was flashing fire
And the last words I heard that poor boy say
"Gimme cool drink of water 'fore I die,

John Henry said to his shaker
"Shaker, why don't you sing?"
"I'm a throwin' nine pounds from my hips on down
Just listen to that cold steel ring,

John Henry said to his shaker
"Shaker, why don't you pray?"
"Cause if I miss this little piece of steel
Tomorrow be your burying day,

John Henry, he drove fifteen feet
The steam drill only made nine
But he hammered so hard that he broke his po' heart
And he laid down his hammer and he died,

They took John Henry to the graveyard
And they buried him in the sand
And every locomotive comes a roaring by, says
"There lies a steel driving man",

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