

John Henry

Joan Baez

When John Henry was a little baby boy, sitting on the his papa's knee
Well he picked up a hammer and little piece of steel
Said Hammer's gonna be the death of me, lord, lord
Hammer's gonna be the death of mine

The captain said to John Henry
I'm gonna bring that steam drill around
I'm gonna bring that steam drill out on the job
I'm gonna whup that steel on down

John Henry told his captain
Lord a man ain't nothing but a man
But before I'd let your steam drill beat me down
I'd die with a hammer in my hand

John Henry said to his shaker
Shaker why don't you sing
Because I'm swinging thirty pounds from my hips on down
Just listen to that cold steel ring

Now the captain said to John Henry
I believe that mountain's caving in
John Henry said right back to the captain
Ain't nothing but my hammer sucking wind

Now the man that invented the steam drill
He thought he was mighty fine
But John Henry strove fifteen feet
The steam drill only made nine

John Henry hammered in the mountains
His hammer was striking fire
But he worked so hard, it broke his poor heart
And he laid down his hammer and he died

Now John Henry had a little woman
Her name was Polly Anne
John Henry took sick and had to go to bed
Polly Anne drove steel like a man

John Henry had a little baby
You could hold him in the palm of your hand
And the last words I heard that poor boy say
My daddy was a steel driving man

So every Monday morning
When the blue birds begin to sing
You can hear John Henry a mile or more
You can hear John Henry's hammer ring