

Act 5

Polly Ann: One day when John was working, the steam-powered drill rolled into camp.

Worker 1: What's that contraption?

Worker 2: What does it do?

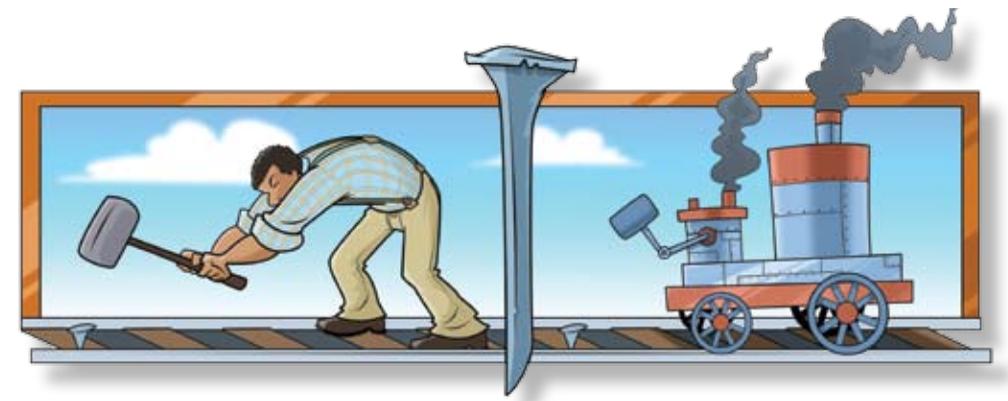
Boss: Why, it's a drill, nothing but a drill. But it runs on steam, and it can do the job of a whole railroad team.

John Henry: Why do you need a machine when you have a team of good hard workers?

Boss: The drill does the work without wasting time. It doesn't complain, it doesn't take pay, and it doesn't take fifty acres!

Worker 1: You mean that drill will do the work, and we won't get our fifty acres?

Boss: That's exactly what I mean. The drill will tear through this mountain, and we can move on to the next job.



Worker 2: That's not fair! We've been working for months to finish this job, and now that we've reached Big Bend Mountain, we're nearly done!

Ma: The workers only had to dig through that mountain. That was all that was left to do before they could get their fifty acres of land.

John Henry: And no drill was going to keep me from my land!

Polly Ann: John got a determined look his face. His muscles clenched, and he gripped his hammer in his fist.

John Henry: Boss, I'll make you a bargain!

Boss: Now, you're a good worker, Henry, but there's nothing you've got that I need, now that I've got this drill.

John Henry: You need a tunnel in Big Bend Mountain! I aim to give you one.

Boss: How do you figure?

John Henry: I challenge your drill to a race. My muscle and hammer against your steel. I'll work side-by-side with that drill. But I'll bet you that I make it through Big Bend Mountain first!



Boss: I'll believe it when I see it!

John Henry: And I won't charge you a dime for my work. But if I win, every worker here gets his fifty acres.

Boss: And if you lose?

John Henry: You win, and we lose our land.

Boss: What's it to me? I'll get my tunnel either way. And John, you're good, but there's no way you'll beat this drill.

John Henry: Then we have a deal?

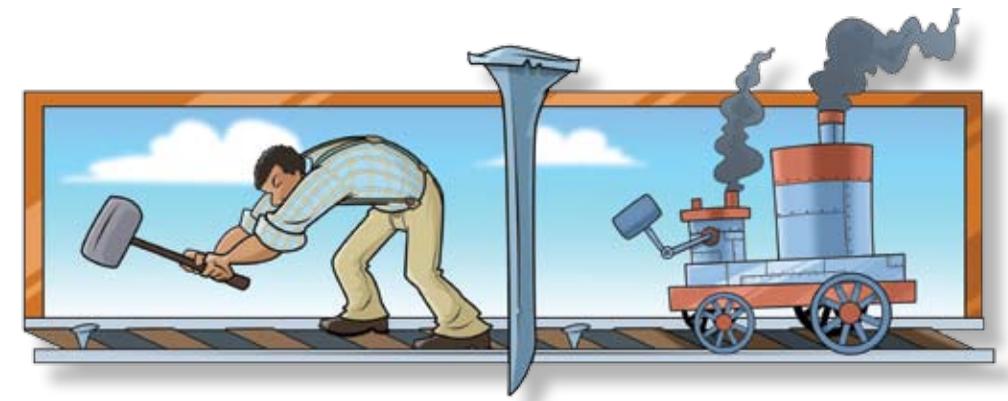
Boss: Yes, Henry, we have a deal!

Polly Ann: With that, John sealed his fate. But it was his only choice. The land meant everything to him.

Ma: It meant freedom for us all.

Worker 1: So Big John stood next to that giant drill . . .

Worker 2: . . . his hammer in his hand and steel in his heart.



Polly Ann: He knew what he had to do.

Ma: And he was going to do it no matter what it took!

Boss: It's time to get this thing done! Ready? Then, on your marks . . . get so . . . go!

Worker 1: John ripped his hammer through that rock like it was paper!

Worker 2: He struck left and right, and with each swing, chunks of mountain smashed into dust.

Boss: But the drill stayed by his side, cutting through rock with ease. I knew I had him beat.

Polly Ann: But John knew that everyone was counting on him, and he knew what had to be done. With every swing, he cried out . . .

John Henry: This is for Polly Ann! This is for Ma! This is for the workers! This is for freedom!

Ma: Swing by swing my baby tore through that mountain. And when the dust cleared . . .