

Name _____

Tall Tales

John Henry's Mountain

John Henry stood on the edge of the mountain, his hammer slung over his shoulder like it weighed no more than a feather. The sun peeked over the horizon, painting the sky in shades of gold and orange. Today was the day he had promised to prove that man could outwork machine. The steam drill, shiny and new, hissed with power, ready for the challenge.



"That drill may be fancy," John said, tipping his wide-brimmed hat to the crowd, "but it doesn't have heart. And heart's what wins the day."

The crowd cheered as the contest began. The goal was to dig a tunnel straight through the mountain. The steam drill puffed and chugged, biting into the rock. But John swung his hammer like a whirlwind. His muscles rippled, and sparks flew with every strike. He sang a deep, powerful song to keep his rhythm: "Swing that hammer, fast and strong, through the mountain all day long!"

Hour after hour, John hammered. Sweat poured down his face, but he didn't stop. By sunset, the steam drill sputtered to a halt, overheating from the strain. John, however, was still going strong. With one last mighty swing, he cracked through the mountain's wall. A ray of light spilled into the dark tunnel.

The crowd erupted into cheers. John Henry had done it! He had outworked the machine.

As the people celebrated, John smiled. "The lesson here," he said, wiping his brow, "is that determination and heart can overcome any challenge, no matter how tough it seems."