

# John Henry

Zora Neale Hurston [1]

mark for figurative language, rhythm, meter, rhyme scheme, and archetypal patterning

John Henry driving on the right hand side  
Steam drill driving on the left  
Says 'fore I'll let your steamdrill beat me down  
I'll hammer my fool self to death, Lord!  
I'll hammer my fool self to death.

John Henry told his captain  
When you go to town  
Please bring me back a nine-pound hammer  
And I'll drive your steel on down, Lord!  
I'll drive your steel on down.

John Henry had a little woman  
The dress she wore was red  
Says I'm going down the track, and she never looked back,  
Says I'm going down the track, and she never looked back,  
I'm going where John Henry fell dead, Lord!  
I'm going where John Henry fell dead.

The captain asked John Henry  
What is that storm I hear?  
He says captain that ain't no storm  
'Tain't nothing but my hammer in the air, Lord!  
Nothing but my hammer in the air.

Who's going to shoe your pretty lil feet?  
And who's going to glove your hand?  
Tell me who's going to kiss your dimpled cheek  
And who's going to be your man? Lord!  
Who's going to be your man?

My father's going to shoe my pretty lil feet  
My brother's going to glove my hand  
My sister's going to kiss my dimpled cheek  
John Henry's going to be my man, Lord!  
John Henry's going to be my man!

Where did you get your pretty lil dress?  
The shoes you wear so fine?  
Lord, I got my shoes from a railroad man  
My dress from a man in the mines, Lord!  
My dress from a man in the mines.

## Endnote

[1] Zora Neale Hurston and Dorothy Waring, Polk County: A Comedy of Negro Life on a Sawmill Camp with Authentic Negro Music in Three Acts, Zora Neale Hurston: Collected Plays, eds. Jean Lee Cole and Charles Mitchell (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 2008) 309-310.

**“Where the Girl Rescued Her Brother”**

<b><i>Method</i></b>	<b><i>Example</i></b>	<b><i>Meaning</i></b>
<b>figurative language</b>		
<b>rhythm</b>		
<b>meter</b>		
<b>archetypal pattern</b>		
<b>symbolism</b>		

What character archetype do both texts share?

How do Buffalo Calf Road Woman’s horse and John Henry’s hammer function as archetypes?

How might you describe the theme and/or plot pattern archetype in the two selections.