John Henry by Julius Lester

The stunning 1995 Caldecott Honor Book

John Henry is stronger than ten men, and can dig through a mountain faster than a steam drill. Julius Lester's folksy retelling of a popular African-American folk ballad has warmth, tall tale humor, and boundless energy. Jerry Pinkney illustrates the story with rich colors borrowed from the rocks and the earth, so beautiful that they summon their own share of smiles and tears (Booklist).

A tall tale and heroic myth, a celebration of the human spirit....The story is told with rhythm and wit, humor and exaggeration, and with a heart-catching immediacy that connects the human and the natural world. -- Booklist, starred review

* A Caldecott Honor Book

* Winner of the Society of Illustrators Gold Medal

* An ALA Notable Book

* An NCSS-CBC Notable Children's Trade Book in the Field of Social Studies

* Winner of the Boston Globe/Horn Book Award

* The Horn Book Fanfare List
My Personal Review:
The story of John Henry fleshed out and made magical at the same time. The paintings are evocative watercolors, beautifully done. The language is an interesting mixture of puns and idioms. The story of John Henry is so compelling to my little boy that he resists reading the part where John dies because he just can't stand it. We have to skip over to the page where it explains that you can still hear the hammers ringing out if you listen in the night out front of the White House. He likes that. Odd and mystical. Recommended.

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