

# The time john henry and moses were alive

Literature



Mary Pope Osborne's book, "American Tall Tales" gives a great glimpse of what time both of these historical legends lived. Osbourne describes the surroundings, locations and time periods of both of these men. In the notes of this book, she also explains about the time they were born. In this context, we take a look at two heroes John Henry and Mose Humphrey, and the stories that are told about them. We also take a look on what was going on during those times. John Henry was an African American laborer who was tasked with the hammering of steel drills through mountains and rocks for railroad companies.

Mose Humphrey was an 8-foot-tall known resident and volunteer fireman in New York City. John Henry was born a slave in the Southern United States. (Hempel p. 4) It is to be known that John Henry was born in the mid 1800's in the south. He was a slave and then was known to be a worker as a steam drill driver on the railroads. Many laborers died from working this hard labor job from exhaustion, dynamite explosion, falling rock and lethal dust (Osbourne 88). "It is believed that John Henry worked for the C&O railroad during the Reconstruction Period, and at one point they ran up upon Big Bend Mountain, a rock over a mile wide that had to be conquered by drilling through its heart." (Parks p. 2) John Henry was important in the time period he lived in because he was a hero to many. He took on a competition with a machine, the new steam drill machine. He fought for his job while thinking of all the other men who would lose their jobs to a machine.

Henry fought his heart out and hammered away so hard that he ended up ripping himself into two. He then died and is known as an African American hero. The legend Mose was born in 1848 in the Bowery District in New York

City (Osbourne 52). Mose is to be known as a resident and also a volunteer firefighter (Osbourne 52). While reading the story of Mose in Osbourne's book, she explains how well Mose was known. He was eight feet tall and his laughter would shake the town because of how big he was. Mose was a volunteer firefighter among thousands of others as well. During this time period in New York, firetrucks were not invented and there were just wagons with hoses. Mose and thousands of others would have to pull this wagon to where the fire was happening. This time period was shown in the book to be during the mid 1800's, newspaper boys were selling papers for one cent. The new steam engines came about just after the Civil War (Osbourne 52). Mose also was bummed that these machines would take over what he loved doing and what his fellow volunteer workers loved as well. Only about 6 men were needed for these new machines. Mose was also recognized as a hero and legend from the people of his city. Both of these men are known as legends of tall tales, but many debate on whether they were real people or if they are just another myth.

There are songs and plays written about both. The time periods of these men are during the same era. Also, sadly enough in both of these stories, new machinery was coming to life and taking over after the Civil War. Machines started to take on jobs faster and ended up having many jobless.