**Directions:** Answer the questions below on a separate piece of notebook paper. Remember to use a proper heading (your name, the date, your period, and Ms. Fetbroth).

*Complete the following tall tale exaggerations*: (2 points each)

1. It was so loud in the cafeteria that

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2. It was so cold outside that

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*Read the tall tale of John Henry: The Steel-Driving Man. Answer the questions that follow.*

**John Henry: The Steel Driving Man**

**A West Virginia Legend**

**retold by** **S.E. Schlosser**

Now John Henry was a mighty man, yes sir. He was born a slave in the 1840's but was freed after the war. He went to work as a steel-driver for the Chesapeake & Ohio Railroad, don't ya know. And John Henry was the strongest, the most powerful man working the rails.

John Henry, he would spend his day's drilling holes by hitting thick steel spikes into rocks with his faithful shaker crouching close to the hole, turning the drill after each mighty blow. There was no one who could match him, though many tried.

Well, the new railroad was moving along right quick, thanks in no little part to the mighty John Henry. But looming right smack in its path was a mighty enemy - the Big Bend Mountain. Now the big bosses at the C&O Railroad decided that they couldn't go around the mile and a quarter thick mountain. No sir, the men of the C&O were going to go through it - drilling right into the heart of the mountain.

A thousand men would lose their lives before the great enemy was conquered. It took three long years, and before it was done the ground outside the mountain was filled with makeshift, sandy graves. The new tunnels were filled with smoke and dust. Ya couldn't see no-how and could hardly breathe. But John Henry, he worked tirelessly, drilling with a 14-pound hammer, and going 10 to 12 feet in one workday. No one else could match him.

Then one day a salesman came along to the camp. He had a steam-powered drill and claimed it could out-drill any man. Well, they set up a contest then and there between John Henry and that there drill. The foreman ran that newfangled steam-drill. John Henry, he just pulled out two 20-pound hammers, one in each hand. They drilled and drilled, dust rising everywhere. The men were howling and cheering. At the end of 35 minutes, John Henry had drilled two seven foot holes - a total of fourteen feet, while the steam drill had only drilled one nine-foot hole.

John Henry held up his hammers in triumph! The men shouted and cheered. The noise was so loud, it took a moment for the men to realize that John Henry was tottering.

Exhausted, the mighty man crashed to the ground, the hammer's rolling from his grasp. The crowd went silent as the foreman rushed to his side. But it was too late. A blood vessel had burst in his brain. The greatest driller in the C&O Railroad was dead.

Some folks say that John Henry's likeness is carved right into the rock inside the Big Bend Tunnel. And if you walk to the edge of the blackness of the tunnel, sometimes you can hear the sound of two 20-pound hammers drilling their way to victory over the machine.

3. How do we know this is a tall tale? (4 points)

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4. How does the author characterize John Henry in this story? (4 points)

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5. How do the railroad company and John Henry decide to solve the problem of Big Bend Mountain being in the way of the railroad? (1 point)

a.) They decide to build around it

b.) They decide to give up building the rail road

c.) They decide to drill through it

6. Which of the following is NOT an example of a tall-tale exaggeration found in the story?

a.) “And John Henry was the strongest, the most-powerful man working the rails.”

b.) “A blood vessel had burst in his brain.”

c.) “John Henry, he just pulled out two 20-pound hammers, one in each hand.”

7. Read the following sentence: “Some folks say that John Henry's likeness is carved right into the rock inside the Big Bend Tunnel.”

Using your context clues, what does “likeness” mean?

a.) Image

b.) Story

c.) Life