

Canadian Railroad Trilogy

Gordon Lightfoot

This song is very long. If necessary, you can omit the verses in grey marked Optional.

Part 1 (energetic, not too fast)

All: There was a time in this fair land when the railroad did not run
When the wild majestic mountains stood alone against the sun
Long before the white man and long before the wheel
When the green dark forest was too silent to be real

OPTIONAL: But time has no beginning and the history has no bound
As to this verdant country they came from all around
They sailed upon her waterways and they walked the forest tall
Built the mines, mills and the factories for the good of us all

All: And when the young man's fancy was turned into the spring
The railroad men grew restless for to hear the hammers ring
Their minds were overflowing with the visions of their day
And many a fortune lost and won and many a debt to pay

Part 2 (faster)

All: For they looked in the future and what did they see?
They saw an iron road runnin' from the sea to the sea
Bringin' the goods to a young growin' land
All up from the seaboards and into their hands

OPTIONAL: Look away sad days
Across this mighty land
From the eastern shore
To the western strand

OPTIONAL: Bring in the workers and bring up the rails
We got to lay down te track and tear up the trails
Open your heart, let the life blood flow
We got to get on our way 'cause we're movin' too slow

All: Bring in the workers and bring up the rails
We're gonna lay down the tracks and tear up the trails
Open your heart, let the life blood flow
We got to get on our way 'cause we're movin' too slow
Get on our way 'cause we're movin' too slow

Part 3 (slow, ballad style)

All: Behind the blue Rockies the sun is declinin'
The stars they come stealin' at the close of the day
Across the wide prairies our loved ones lie sleeping
Beyond the dark ocean in a place far away

OPTIONAL: We are the navvies who work upon the railway
Swingin' our hammers in the bright blazin' sun
Livin' on stew and drinkin' bad whiskey
Bendin' our backs 'til the long days are done

All: We are the navvies who work upon the railway
Swingin' our hammers in the bright blazin' sun
Layin' down track and buildin' the bridges
Bendin' our backs 'til the railroad is done

Part 4 (faster, like Part 2)

All: So over the mountains and over the plains
Into the Muskage and into the rain
Up to St. Lawrence on the way to Gaspé
Swingin' our hammers and drawin' our pay

All: Layin' 'em in and tyin' 'em down
Away to the bunkhouse and into the town
A dollar a day and a place for my head
A drink to the livin', a toast to the dead

Part 5 (same energy)

All: Oh, the song of the future has been sung
All the battles have been won
On the mountaintops we stand
All the world at our command
We have opened up this soil
With our teardrops and our toil

Part 6 (energetic but not tooo fast, like Part 1)

All: Oh, there was a time in this fair land when the railroad did not run
When the wild majestic mountains stood alone against the sun
Long before the white man and long before the wheel
When the green dark forest was too silent to be real
When the green dark forest was too silent to be real
And many are the dead men — — —
Too silent — — to be real — — —