

Bass Reeves: Legendary American Lawman

Critical Thinking Questions

Grades K-2

Explain the word: *crime*. What did Bob Dozier do that made him a criminal?

What is the role of law enforcement? How did Bass Reeves enforce the law?

Americans no longer use the word *outlaw*. Now we use the word *fugitive*. What do these words mean?

A character trait can be good or bad. Bass Reeves was described as “fair and jovial.” What does this mean? Why are these good character traits? Share a few of your good character traits.

Describe how Bass Reeves looked. What skill made him good at his job? How did his “fair and jovial” character help him do a good job?

Do you think Bass Reeves wanted to shoot Dozier? Does the slide deck story agree with your answer?

What is an opinion? What is a fact? Are facts more important than a person’s opinion?

How can we be sure that what we learn about the past is true? What does a good researcher do to get the right information? What is a *legend*?

Bass Reeves learned to speak the languages of many Native American tribes. Do you speak another language? What languages would you like to learn?

A custom is a meaningful practice that people with a common background do, like a tradition. What customs does your family have? What do you like about customs and traditions?

Bass Reeves was a soldier in what war? Do you know someone in the military? Name a branch of the military. (possible answers: Army, Air Force, Marines, Space Force, Navy)

Some laws are good. Others are not good. Give an example of a good law. Why is it good?

Was the Fugitive Slave Act good for some and bad for others? What do we do when a rule is good for some and not for others?

What did the Fugitive Slave Act give U.S. Marshals the right to do?

What do you think this means, “No Sunday west of St. Louis, and no God west of Fort Smith.” This expression was popular. Why did people believe religion was important for peaceful life?

Who joined Bass Reeves when he searched for criminals? How is law enforcement different now from when Reeves was alive? What is the same?

Do you like to wear costumes? How did costumes help Bass Reeves?

Self-defense means protecting yourself from danger. As a U.S. Marshal, Bass Reeves had to protect himself from criminals who would not surrender. Do you know a police officer? How can police officers protect themselves?

Describe how Bass Reeves probably felt when he accidentally killed another Black man as he was fixing his rifle. Reeves was arrested and stayed in jail until he was found not guilty. Explain a time when you got in trouble, even if what you did was an accident.

Imagine being a U.S. Marshal. How would you feel if you found out that your family member had killed another family member? Would you arrest them or let them go? Why did Bass Reeves arrest his son?

When Oklahoma became a state, Black police officers were no longer allowed to arrest white people. How do race problems affect people like police officers and judges today?

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Critical Thinking Questions

Grades 3-8

Explain the word: *crime*. What did Bob Dozier do that made him a criminal? What is the role of law enforcement? How did Bass Reeves capture Dozier?

Research the current job description of an U.S. Marshal. Share the similarities and the differences from what Reeves did to what current marshals do.

Different time periods use different words for the same status or job. When Bass Reeves was a U.S. Marshal, the word outlaw was used. What word is used now? (fugitive) Can you think of the modern versions of these words: *mobile phone, dungarees, stewardess, galoshes, pocketbook*?

Do you think Bass Reeves *wanted* to shoot Dozier? Compare and contrast the slide deck information with your answer.

What is an opinion? Why are facts more reliable than a person's opinion? How can we be sure that what we learn about the past is true? What does a good researcher do to obtain accurate information? What is a *legend*?

In what jobs today is it important to have facts and correct data? Share how incorrect facts or faulty data affects students and society, in general?

A character trait can be good or bad. Bass Reeves was "fair and jovial." What does this mean? Why are these good character traits? Share a few of your good character traits.

Describe how the demeanor of a police officer (or any person) might be different on the job than at home with their friends and family. Have you ever behaved differently at home than at school? If so, share why.

Bass Reeves learned to speak the languages of many First Nations tribes. Which languages would you like to learn and why?

A custom is a meaningful practice that people with a common background do, like a tradition. What customs does your family have? Name a few national customs that have lasted since the United States began?

Bass Reeves was a soldier in what war? Give reasons why people choose to go into the military or law enforcement. Do you know someone in the military? Do you know a police officer?

Who joined Bass Reeves when he searched for criminals? How is law enforcement different now from when Reeves was alive? What is the same?

Self-defense means protecting yourself from danger. As a U.S. Marshal, Bass Reeves had to protect himself from criminals who would not surrender. How can police officers protect themselves when a confirmed criminal resists arrest?

Describe how Bass Reeves probably felt when he accidentally killed another Black man as he was fixing his rifle. Reeves was arrested and stayed in jail until he was found not guilty. Explain a time when you got in trouble, even if what you did was an accident.

Imagine being a U.S. Marshal. How would you feel if you found out that your family member had killed another family member? Name a character trait or a Woodson Principle that you would need to arrest your own family member. Why did Bass Reeves arrest his son?

When Oklahoma became a state, Black police officers were no longer allowed to arrest white people. How do race problems affect our current law enforcement and legal system?

Some laws are just, others are unjust. Who defines what is just?

Give an example of a good law. Why is it good? Was the Fugitive Slave Act good for some and bad for others? What do we do when a law or a rule is good for some and not for others?

What did the Fugitive Slave Act give U.S. Marshals the right to do? Refer to the current job description of an U.S. Marshal. Do you disagree with any of their responsibilities?

What do you think this means, “No Sunday west of St. Louis, and no God west of Fort Smith.” This expression was popular at that time in U.S. history. Why did people believe religion was important for peaceful life? How could faith help govern a person’s behavior or shape a person’s character?