



Bass Reeves: Legendary American Lawman

Teacher Guide

This document is addressed to the instructor. Other documents in this lesson packet are addressed to students.

Overview:

Deputy U.S. Marshal Bass Reeves was a highly respected and wildly successful peace officer in western Arkansas and neighboring Indian Territory for over thirty years, starting when he was first commissioned by Judge Isaac Parker in 1875. His life saw the enormous transformations that swept through the country during the Civil War, the days of the “wild west” in the federal territories, and the settling of the frontier. His adventures as he fought and captured thousands of outlaws made him famous in his own time. This lesson tells the story of Reeves, his world, and the deeds that made him a legend.

Lesson Prompts:

This lesson includes a prepared PowerPoint presentation that tells the story of Bass Reeves. There are also document-based questions drawn from primary sources, suggested videos, critical thinking questions, and a brief multiple-choice quiz which can be used to supplement the presentation as time allows. Before the presentation, you might start the class by asking students if they have ever heard of Bass Reeves, and if so, where.

Other questions for engagement and discussion before the presentation could include:

What kinds of challenges would an African American man face in law enforcement in the decades after the Civil War? What was happening across the country from 1865-1895?

When you think about the “Old West,” what people or events come to mind? What role did Black Americans play as settlers, cowboys, soldiers, or entrepreneurs in that era?

Have you ever seen or read a [Western](#)? Which ones? Did you find the stories interesting? Which characters or plot points stick out in your memory? Do you think they were mostly historically accurate, wildly fictionalized, or a balance of fact and imagination?

Vocabulary:

caliber	commute	controlled burn	credible	definitive	desperado
embellish	exonerate	marksmanship	notorious	posse	pungent
ruse	sea change	vagabond			



Standards and Learning Objectives

The College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards

CIVICS

D2.Civ.3.9-12. Analyze the impact of constitutions, laws, treaties, and international agreements on the maintenance of national and international order.

D2.Civ.5.9-12. Evaluate citizens' and institutions' effectiveness in addressing social and political problems at the local, state, tribal, national, and/or international level.

D2.Civ.8.9-12. Evaluate social and political systems in different contexts, times, and places, that promote civic virtues and enact democratic principles.

D2.Civ.10.9-12. Analyze the impact and the appropriate roles of personal interests and perspectives on the application of civic virtues, democratic principles, constitutional rights, and human rights.

HISTORY

D2.His.1.9-12. Evaluate how historical events and developments were shaped by unique circumstances of time and place as well as broader historical contexts.

D2.His.2.9-12. Analyze change and continuity in historical eras.

D2.His.3.9-12. Use questions generated about individuals and groups to assess how the significance of their actions changes over time and is shaped by the historical context.

D2.His.5.9-12. Analyze how historical contexts shaped and continue to shape people's perspectives.

D2.His.6.9-12. Analyze the ways in which the perspectives of those writing history shaped the history that they produced.

D2.His.8.9-12. Analyze how current interpretations of the past are limited by the extent to which available historical sources represent perspectives of people at the time.



ELA

D4.1.9-12. Construct arguments using precise and knowledgeable claims, with evidence from multiple sources, while acknowledging counterclaims and evidentiary weaknesses.

D4.2.9-12. Construct explanations using sound reasoning, correct sequence (linear or non-linear), examples, and details with significant and pertinent information and data, while acknowledging the strengths and weaknesses of the explanation given its purpose (e.g., cause and effect, chronological, procedural, technical).

D4.7.9-12. Assess options for individual and collective action to address local, regional, and global problems by engaging in self-reflection, strategy identification, and complex causal reasoning.

AP US HISTORY

KC-4.3.I.B Frontier settlers tended to champion expansion efforts, while American Indian resistance led to a sequence of wars and federal efforts to control and relocate American Indian populations.

KC-5.3.II.i Reconstruction and the Civil War ended slavery, altered relationships between the states and the federal government, and led to debates over new definitions of citizenship, particularly regarding the rights of African Americans, women, and other minorities.

KC-5.1.II.C U.S. government interaction and conflict with Mexican Americans and American Indians increased in regions newly taken from American Indians and Mexico, altering these groups' economic self-sufficiency and cultures.

KC-5.3.II.C Efforts by radical and moderate Republicans to change the balance of power between Congress and the presidency and to reorder race relations in the defeated South yielded some short-term successes. Reconstruction opened up political opportunities and other leadership roles to former slaves, but it ultimately failed, due both to determined Southern resistance and the North's waning resolve.

KC-6.2.II.C As migrant populations increased in number and the American bison population was decimated, competition for land and resources in the West among white settlers, American Indians, and Mexican Americans led to an increase in violent conflict.

KC-6.2.II.D The U.S. government violated treaties with American Indians and responded to resistance with military force, eventually confining American Indians to reservations and denying tribal sovereignty.



KC-6.3.II.C The Supreme Court decision in Plessy v. Ferguson that upheld racial segregation helped to mark the end of most of the political gains African Americans made during Reconstruction. Facing increased violence, discrimination, and scientific theories of race, African American reformers continued to fight for political and social equality.

AP ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION

- 4.A Develop a paragraph that includes a claim and evidence supporting the claim.
- 4.B Write a thesis statement that requires proof or defense and that may preview the structure
- 4.C Qualify a claim using modifiers, counterarguments, or alternative perspectives.
- 6.A Develop a line of reasoning and commentary that explains it throughout an argument.
- 6.B Use transitional elements to guide the reader through the line of reasoning of an argument.
- 6.C Use appropriate methods of development to advance an argument.
- 8.B Write sentences that clearly convey ideas and arguments.
- 8.C Use established conventions of grammar and mechanics to communicate clearly and effectively.



AP African American Studies

Bass Reeves

LO 2.17.A Explain how the expansion of slavery in the United States South affected relations between Black and Indigenous people.

EK 2.17.A.2 Many African Americans were enslaved by peoples of the five large Indigenous nations. When Indigenous enslavers were forcibly removed from their lands by the federal government during the Trail of Tears, they took the African Americans they had enslaved with them.

LO 2.23.A Describe enslaved and free African American men's and women's contributions during the United States Civil War.

LO 3.4.A Explain how Reconstruction-era reforms were dismantled during the late nineteenth century.

EK 3.4.A.1 After the election of 1876 and the Compromise of 1877, some states began to rewrite their state constitutions to include de jure segregation laws.

LO 3.5.A Explain how the introduction of Jim Crow laws impacted African Americans after Reconstruction.

EK 3.5.A.1 The term "Jim Crow" originated in the 1830s as a derogatory term for African Americans. Jim Crow laws were local and state-level statutes passed primarily (but not exclusively) in the South under the protection of the Supreme Court's decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896).