



Bass Reeves: Legendary American Lawman

Suggested Videos

Legendary Lawman: Deputy U.S. Marshal Bass Reeves (News On 6/KOTV, 2022)

<https://youtu.be/PBmMtN1VMow>

(5 minutes, 37 seconds)

“The Legend of Bass Reeves” (Muskogee, OK - LoyalTV E12, 2018)

<https://youtu.be/ZgDh7TkVFGg>

(5 minutes, 52 seconds)

The Bass Reeves Trilogy – Sidney Thompson (Fort Worth Public Library, 2021)

<https://youtu.be/SMZU2amGrhs>

(1 hour, 45 minutes)

U.S. Marshal Bass Reeves featured in new Netflix film (5News – Fort Smith, 2021)

<https://youtu.be/rHJ3jbXim34>

(51 seconds)

Legends & Lies : Bass Reeves, The Real Lone Ranger (Fox News, 2015)

<https://vimeo.com/232747588>

(41 minutes, 35 seconds)

Why the first U.S. cowboys were Black (The Guardian, 2020)

<https://youtu.be/KkmD-vpQ4Qs>

(7 minutes, 34 seconds)

The Fearsome Bass Reeves (Larry Elder, 2022)

https://youtu.be/PqDQGalpn_4

(36 minutes, 16 seconds)



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Video Discussion Questions

Legendary Lawman

The narration refers to Judge Parker, who Bass Reeves served under as U.S. Marshal, as the “hanging judge.” How did Parker get this name? What does this label indicate about the kind of justice outlaws (like the men Reeves arrested) on the frontier received?

For decades, Bass Reeves was largely forgotten – until historians pieced together his story almost a century after his death. Why did Reeves disappear from the history of the Old West for so long? What can institutions like the U.S. Marshals Museum do to help keep alive the memory of Reeves and others who served in his era?

“The Legend of Bass Reeves”

This video features the Three Rivers Museum in Muskogee, Oklahoma. Much of the Bass Reeves story was kept alive by local historians in the Marshal’s old stomping grounds: Fort Smith, Van Buren, Muskogee, and the surrounding areas. In your community, what efforts are underway to keep local history alive? Which people or events are significant?

The Bass Reeves Trilogy

What distinguishes “historical fiction” from other genres of fiction? How much dramatic license can an author take with historical people/events before the work *stops* being historical and becomes mere fiction? What works of historical fiction have you read?

U.S. Marshal Bass Reeves featured in Netflix film

Fort Smith Mayor George McGill says that he hopes the film depicts Bass Reeves “the way he really was.” Since around 2007, the people of Fort Smith, Arkansas have embraced Reeves as a hometown hero. Why do you think this is? Which figures from the places where you have lived are promoted and celebrated by locals?

Legends and Lies: Bass Reeves

Which real quotations from historical figures, performed by actors in this program, struck you the most? Why? Having already seen and read some material on Bass Reeves, what new information or perspectives were new or surprising to you?

Why the first U.S. cowboys were Black

When you read or hear the word “cowboy,” what pictures or ideas immediately jump into your mind? What do cowboys look like, and what kind of activities are they engaged in? How does watching this video or learning about Bass Reeves change these pictures?

The Fearsome Bass Reeves

Some media repeat the claim that the Lone Ranger was based on Bass Reeves as fact. But historian Roger McGrath argues there’s no evidence for a connection. Why?