

ENGLISH LEARNING FOR CURIOUS MINDS



Episode #620
Bass Reeves | The Real Lone Ranger
7th Jul, 2026

Transcript	3
Key vocabulary	26
Language spotlight	35
Quiz	39
Listening Comprehension Multiple Choice Questions	39
True or False	41
Fill in the Blank	41
Vocabulary Practice	42
Answers	45

Transcript

[00:00:05] Hello, hello, hello, and welcome to English Learning for Curious Minds, by Leonardo English, the show where you can listen to fascinating stories and learn weird and wonderful things about the world at the same time as improving your English.

[00:00:21] Today it is part two of our three-part mini-series on Tales from The Wild West.

[00:00:28] In part one, we looked at Wyatt Earp: perhaps the most famous [lawman](#)¹ of the [frontier](#)², but one who wasn't all that good at following the law himself.

[00:00:40] Today, we're going to meet someone who almost certainly had a more extraordinary life.

[00:00:46] A man who made over three thousand arrests, who was never seriously wounded [in the line of duty](#)³, who spoke multiple languages and used [elaborate](#)⁴ disguises to bring [fugitives](#)⁵ to justice.

¹ person who enforced the law

² the edge of an area where people were settling and building towns

³ while doing his job

⁴ very detailed and carefully planned

⁵ people running away from the law

[00:01:00] A man who was also almost entirely [forgotten to history](#)⁶: Bass Reeves.

[00:01:07] It is an amazing story, so let's not waste a minute, and get right into it.

[00:01:15] It is 1902, in Muskogee, in Oklahoma.

[00:01:20] A young man is wanted for murder.

[00:01:24] He has discovered that his wife has been having an affair, and in a [fit of rage](#)⁷,

he pulls out his revolver and shoots her dead. He turns the gun on himself, but

somehow the bullet misses, only [grazing](#)⁸ the side of his head.

[00:01:45] He survives, and instead of turning himself in, he [flees](#)⁹ the murder scene.

[00:01:53] Unfortunately for him, Muskogee, Oklahoma is also the [hunting ground](#)¹⁰ of

one of America's most feared [marshals](#)¹¹, a man who has arrested thousands of

criminals over a career [spanning](#)¹² four decades: Bass Reeves.

⁶ no longer remembered by most people

⁷ a sudden burst of extreme anger

⁸ lightly touching and causing a small injury

⁹ runs away quickly from danger

¹⁰ an area where he regularly looked for something or someone

¹¹ law officers with special duties

¹² lasting across

[00:02:13] The young man, presumably, knows that the [odds are stacked against him](#)¹³

.

[00:02:20] The accounts of what happened next vary.

[00:02:24] Some have Bass Reeves following his target all the way into the wilderness, arresting him after a long chase. Others have Reeves tracking the man down at his home, and a tense [standoff](#)¹⁴ [ensuing](#)¹⁵, with Reeves telling the man he can either [give himself up](#)¹⁶, or he'll be shot dead.

[00:02:48] Eventually, the man gives himself up, is [taken into custody](#)¹⁷, is [charged](#)¹⁸ and [sentenced](#)¹⁹. He escapes the [death penalty](#)²⁰ and ends up serving eleven years in prison.

¹³ he has very little chance of success

¹⁴ a tense situation where neither side gave in

¹⁵ happening next

¹⁶ surrender, stop resisting

¹⁷ arrested and kept by the authorities

¹⁸ officially accused of a crime

¹⁹ officially given a punishment by a court

²⁰ punishment by execution

[00:03:04] For Bass Reeves, this man, Bennie, would be just one of the thousands of criminals he [apprehended](#)²¹, and the story of how he was brought in is [unremarkable](#)²² apart from one detail: the man he arrested was his son.

[00:03:25] Now, we will return to this a little later in the episode, but first let me paint you a picture of the early life of Bass Reeves.

[00:03:37] He was born in Crawford County, Arkansas, in 1838.

[00:03:43] He was born into slavery, and given the name Bass. Just: Bass, no surname, as slaves in the American South weren't generally given family names. The name Reeves would come later, from the family that owned him.

[00:04:02] His owner was a man named William Steele Reeves. He was a farmer and Arkansas state [legislator](#)²³.

[00:04:11] Bass's early life is not [well documented](#)²⁴, and what we know about Reeves's early years comes largely from accounts he gave much later.

[00:04:23] There are three things worth pointing out.

²¹ caught and arrested

²² ordinary; not special

²³ a person who helped make laws

²⁴ recorded in detail

[00:04:27] The first is that, from a young age, he was [physically exceptional](#)²⁵. He was tall, 190 centimetres as a grown man, and was [extraordinarily](#)²⁶ strong. People were always talking about his hands in particular: enormous hands, and one of his [signature](#)²⁷ moves was to grab a criminal by the throat.

[00:04:52] The second is that he had an extraordinary ability to read people: to watch, to listen, to understand what someone was thinking before they said it, to [figure out](#)²⁸ what someone's next move would be before they knew it themselves.

[00:05:12] And the final thing is that he was an excellent shot.

[00:05:17] This was unusual for slaves, as they weren't typically given access to guns by their owners, for obvious reasons. Bass Reeves must have been trusted enough, and he was trained with firearms, primarily for hunting and pest control on his master's farm.

[00:05:38] He was so good that at local shooting competitions, he was eventually asked not to enter so that other men had a fair chance of winning.

²⁵ unusually strong or fit

²⁶ extremely

²⁷ special and well-known

²⁸ understand or find the answer

[00:05:49] He was unusual in his abilities, and this meant that he was [relieved of](#)²⁹ the more [arduous](#)³⁰ tasks that most slaves were made to do, and instead became the “personal servant” of his master’s son, George.

[00:06:06] He was still a slave, still the legal property of another man, but his role became more of a [butler](#)³¹ or personal servant rather than a [field labourer](#)³².

[00:06:20] And interestingly enough, one account has it that he asked his master, George Reeves, if he could learn to read and write.

[00:06:31] George refused, but said that instead he would teach him how to use weapons, which perhaps [hints at](#)³³ what was considered more dangerous: a slave who could read and write or a slave who could shoot.

²⁹ freed from (a duty or task)

³⁰ very difficult and tiring

³¹ a servant who managed a large house

³² a worker who worked on a farm

³³ suggests without saying directly

[00:06:46] Now, when the Civil War broke out in 1861, Bass went with his owner's son, George, who had been [called up](#)³⁴ to serve in the [Confederate](#)³⁵ Army. Bass would have been in his early 20s at the time.

[00:07:02] And at some point during the war, Bass and George had a [confrontation](#)³⁶, an argument. The exact circumstances are unclear: some accounts say it was over a card game, some say it was over an order that Reeves refused to follow.

[00:07:23] Whatever happened, Bass hit George.

[00:07:27] And in the Confederacy, for a slave, [striking](#)³⁷ a white man was a potential [death sentence](#)³⁸.

[00:07:36] Bass Reeves fled.

[00:07:39] He crossed into Indian Territory, the area west of Arkansas that is now the state of Oklahoma.

³⁴ ordered to join the military

³⁵ connected to the southern states during the American Civil War

³⁶ an angry argument or conflict

³⁷ hitting or very noticeable

³⁸ a court decision that he would be executed

[00:07:47] And for those of you who aren't so familiar with the geography of the US, we're talking the central, southern bit of the United States, immediately above Texas.

[00:08:00] Now, Indian Territory in the 1860s was unlike anywhere else in North America.

[00:08:08] It had been established in the 1830s as the destination for the so-called Five Civilised Tribes, the Native American groups who had been [forcibly](#)³⁹ removed from their homelands in the American South in a [catastrophic](#)⁴⁰ series of events known as the Trail of Tears.

[00:08:29] Tens of thousands of Native people had been [marched](#)⁴¹ westward [at gunpoint](#)⁴². Thousands had died on the journey. This territory — Indian Territory — this was what remained to them. It was a sort of [ghetto](#)⁴³, [albeit](#)⁴⁴ a very large one in a very large country.

³⁹ by force

⁴⁰ causing great damage or suffering

⁴¹ made to walk in a group

⁴² while being threatened with a gun

⁴³ an area where a group of people was forced to live apart from others

⁴⁴ although

[00:08:51] And by the time Reeves arrived, it was a complex, [multilingual](#)⁴⁵, [multicultural](#)⁴⁶ place. These “Indians”, these Native Americans, were not one, single people. The nations had their own governments, their own courts, their own laws.

[00:09:11] Bass Reeves settled among these people. He learned their languages, five of them, which he could speak fluently. He farmed. He built a life.

[00:09:23] During this time, he got to know the Territory [like the back of his hand](#)⁴⁷: the paths, the hiding places, the people, the [feuds](#)⁴⁸, and the networks. Which routes went where and who used them. Which families were connected. Who to trust and who not to. Who [held grudges](#)⁴⁹ against who.

[00:09:45] In 1865, the Civil War ended, and with it came the Thirteenth Amendment and the [abolition](#)⁵⁰ of slavery.

[00:09:55] Bass Reeves was a free man.

⁴⁵ able to speak several languages

⁴⁶ including people from different cultures

⁴⁷ very well and in great detail

⁴⁸ long and bitter arguments between people or groups

⁴⁹ stayed angry about something for a long time

⁵⁰ the ending of it by law

[00:09:59] He returned to Arkansas, and settled just over the border, in a town called Van Buren. He got married, set up his own farm, and had children, eventually eleven in total. For a decade or so, he lived quietly, [minding his business](#)⁵¹, working his farm, raising his family.

[00:10:22] Then, in 1875, a man named Isaac Parker arrived in Fort Smith, Arkansas, to take up the position of federal judge for the Western District of Arkansas, the district that covered Indian Territory.

[00:10:40] Now, Parker was a [stickler](#)⁵² for justice, and was known as the Hanging Judge.

[00:10:48] In twenty-one years [on the bench](#)⁵³, he sentenced 160 men to death, 79 of whom were hanged.

[00:10:57] He was strict, [moralistic](#)⁵⁴, and completely convinced of his own [righteousness](#)⁵⁵, that he was doing the Lord and the State's work.

⁵¹ quietly focusing on his own life

⁵² a person who strongly insisted on rules

⁵³ working as a judge

⁵⁴ strongly focused on what was right and wrong

⁵⁵ the belief that he was morally right

[00:11:08] His belief was that Indian Territory was in dire⁵⁶ need of order, and he was willing to be ruthless⁵⁷ in his pursuit⁵⁸ of it.

[00:11:20] And interestingly enough, one more progressive⁵⁹ element of his worldview⁶⁰ was that, compared to most men of his time, he was unusually willing to hire Black deputies⁶¹.

[00:11:34] And as for the Territory itself, well, it was a pretty lawless⁶² place, and enforcing the law was a problem.

[00:11:44] For starters⁶³, it was vast⁶⁴. It covered just under 200,000 square kilometres, which is an area roughly the size of England and Wales put together.

⁵⁶ very serious and bad

⁵⁷ not showing kindness or pity

⁵⁸ the act of trying to achieve it

⁵⁹ supporting new and fair ideas

⁶⁰ his way of seeing and understanding the world

⁶¹ officers who helped a senior law officer

⁶² without respect for the law

⁶³ first of all

⁶⁴ very large

[00:11:57] It had little [formal](#)⁶⁵ internal [law enforcement](#)⁶⁶ of its own. Fugitives from Kansas, Texas, Missouri, and Arkansas had learned that if you crossed into Indian Territory, most lawmen wouldn't follow.

[00:12:14] Parker needed deputies who knew the Territory. Who knew the people. Who spoke the languages. Who could survive alone out there for days or weeks at a time.

[00:12:28] Bass Reeves fit that description better than almost anyone alive.

[00:12:34] In 1875, at the age of thirty-seven, Bass Reeves was [appointed](#)⁶⁷ as a Deputy United States Marshal. He was one of, if not the first, Black men to hold that position west of the Mississippi River.

[00:12:51] It would be a position he would hold for thirty-two years, and it is not an [overstatement](#)⁶⁸ to say that he had a [legendary](#)⁶⁹ law enforcement career.

[00:13:02] He made over three thousand arrests. He killed a reported fourteen men [in the line of duty](#), all of them, by every account, in [self-defence](#)⁷⁰.

⁶⁵ official

⁶⁶ the work of making sure people obeyed the law

⁶⁷ officially given the job or position

⁶⁸ a statement that makes it seem bigger or more important than it was

⁶⁹ very famous and admired

⁷⁰ protecting himself from harm

[00:13:14] Amazingly enough, while hundreds of his fellow US marshals were being killed doing exactly the same job, he was never seriously injured. There is one account of him getting shot in the leg, but if this did happen, it didn't seriously trouble him. He was going out and bringing in criminals right up into his late 60s.

[00:13:40] And he didn't bring people in one at a time, either.

[00:13:44] On his best single trip, he brought in seventeen men, all chained together on an open wagon.

[00:13:53] He was paid for every criminal he brought in, and the fees could [add up⁷¹](#) considerably.

[00:14:00] In the case of the seventeen-man [haul⁷²](#), the fee he collected came to around nine hundred dollars, which is something like \$35,000 in today's money.

[00:14:13] And as to how he would go about the business of capturing criminals, well, there have been entire books written about these legendary arrests.

[00:14:24] His skin colour was an immediate advantage; lawmen tended to be white, so most [outlaws⁷³](#) simply wouldn't expect a black man to arrest them.

⁷¹ become a larger total

⁷² a large amount captured

⁷³ criminals who lived outside the law

[00:14:36] But as his reputation continued to grow, he had to find more and more [ingenious](#)⁷⁴ ways of getting close enough to his target to arrest them without being shot at first. The key thing was disguising his identity, and the fact that he was an officer of the law, until the very last minute.

[00:14:58] He would sometimes ride into [outlaw territory](#)⁷⁵ as a travelling preacher, his Bible open on the [saddle](#)⁷⁶ in front of him. Wanted men would approach him for company, share his [campfire](#)⁷⁷, tell him things. He would make the arrest the following morning, or in some cases, the men would awake to find he had put the [handcuffs](#)⁷⁸ on while they were still asleep.

[00:15:23] He went in as a farmer, as a [drifter](#)⁷⁹, as an old man. On at least one occasion, he dressed as a woman and walked into the camp of men he was seeking.

⁷⁴ very clever and inventive

⁷⁵ an area controlled or used by criminals

⁷⁶ the seat placed on the horse for riding

⁷⁷ a fire made outdoors for warmth or cooking

⁷⁸ metal rings used to lock a person's wrists together

⁷⁹ a person who moved from place to place without a permanent home or job

[00:15:36] He was a **physically imposing**⁸⁰ man, 190 centimetres tall, and very strong.

Disguising this wasn't easy. But Reeves had apparently learned a way to make himself seem **considerably**⁸¹ smaller on horseback, so he could approach his target without them realising who he was.

[00:15:58] He was a fantastic shot, **deadly quick**⁸² to pull out his gun but also incredibly accurate at long range. There is one account of him **downing**⁸³ a target at a reported 450 metres. Now, that's most likely a serious **exaggeration**⁸⁴, and there are question marks over whether his gun could even shoot that far, let alone hit a target, but it gives you an idea of his reputation.

[00:16:29] He was almost killed multiple times.

[00:16:32] Once, a pair of outlaws caught him. They had their guns pointed straight at him. Before killing him, they asked if he had any last words.

⁸⁰ looking strong and powerful

⁸¹ a lot

⁸² extremely fast, especially in a dangerous situation

⁸³ shooting or bringing down

⁸⁴ something described as bigger or better than it really was

[00:16:45] Reeves said he had a letter from his wife in his pocket, and would very much like to read it before he died. He handed over the letter to his [captors](#)⁸⁵, his hand [quivering](#)⁸⁶. One took the letter, and when his eyes looked down, this gave Reeves the [split second](#)⁸⁷ he needed to grab him by the throat and pull out his [pistol](#)⁸⁸.

[00:17:10] As it happens, Reeves couldn't have read that letter even if he'd wanted to. Bass Reeves never learned to read or write, and was one of the few [illiterate](#)⁸⁹ deputies. For most agents of the law, this would be a problem, as when you arrest someone, you need to read them the [warrant](#)⁹⁰ for their arrest.

[00:17:34] But Reeves had an [exceptional](#)⁹¹ memory. When he received an arrest warrant for the first time, he would ask someone to read it [aloud](#)⁹² to him. He would

⁸⁵ people holding him prisoner

⁸⁶ shaking slightly

⁸⁷ a very short moment

⁸⁸ a small gun held in one hand

⁸⁹ unable to read or write

⁹⁰ an official document allowing them to arrest someone

⁹¹ unusually good

⁹² in a voice that could be heard

look at the document, and remember which warrant referred to which person, through the shapes of certain letters or which warrant had a tear or a coffee stain on it.

[00:17:58] And when it came to the arrest, he would rifle through his [satchel⁹³](#), find the appropriate warrant, and be able to [recite⁹⁴](#) it from memory.

[00:18:09] And there is one more detail.

[00:18:11] For much of his career, he worked alongside a Native American partner, someone who could move through the Territory even more easily than Reeves could, and who knew the land and the people in ways that even Reeves did not. Remember this, as it'll be relevant in a minute.

[00:18:31] So, for almost thirty years, Bass Reeves had been doing exactly this: hunting dangerous fugitives through lawless territory, [putting his life on the line⁹⁵](#) almost every day, and [miraculously⁹⁶](#), [living to tell the tale⁹⁷](#).

[00:18:49] And then, in 1902, he heard the news that his son was on the list of wanted men.

⁹³ a bag carried over the shoulder

⁹⁴ say it from memory

⁹⁵ risking his life

⁹⁶ in a surprising way that seems impossible

⁹⁷ surviving dangerous events

[00:18:57] We have no record of why Bass Reeves volunteered himself to be the one to bring him in.

[00:19:04] To some people, it's an example of his [devout⁹⁸](#) belief in law and order.

[00:19:10] To others, it's more practical: he thought he had the best chance of saving his son's life, and his son was more likely to [accept his fate⁹⁹](#) if it was his father that brought him in.

[00:19:24] Whatever the motivation, it worked. His son [surrendered¹⁰⁰](#) without a fight, escaped the death sentence, served eleven years in prison, and [by all accounts¹⁰¹](#), was a [model citizen¹⁰²](#) on his release.

[00:19:40] Still, Bass Reeves had arrested his own son and handed him over to a court he knew was highly likely to sentence him to death. He said nothing about it, by any account. He was just doing his job.

⁹⁸ having or showing deep commitment

⁹⁹ accept what was going to happen

¹⁰⁰ gave up and stopped resisting

¹⁰¹ according to everyone who knows about it

¹⁰² a person who behaved very responsibly

[00:19:57] It is the kind of thing that, were it done by a white man, no doubt would have been turned into a film. The great American lawman who will not bend the rules even for his own child. The **integrity**¹⁰³ that costs everything.

[00:20:14] But it wasn't made into a movie, and the story of Bass Reeves **faded into** **obscurity**¹⁰⁴.

[00:20:22] By the early 1900s, Indian Territory was being **absorbed**¹⁰⁵ into what would become the state of Oklahoma. The districts that Reeves had **patrolled**¹⁰⁶ for thirty years were being **wound down**¹⁰⁷. The Territory, as it had existed, was ending.

[00:20:41] Reeves was not a young man any more. But he did not retire. He took a job as a city police officer in Muskogee and carried on working until he had to stop for health reasons.

[00:20:57] He died in 1910, at the age of 71. It was not marked with great ceremony, no great **obituary**¹⁰⁸ in the newspaper or large funeral.

¹⁰³ honesty and strong moral principles

¹⁰⁴ gradually became forgotten

¹⁰⁵ taken into something larger

¹⁰⁶ travelled around to keep them safe

¹⁰⁷ gradually brought to an end

¹⁰⁸ a newspaper article about his life after he died

[00:21:09] Indeed, to this day, nobody knows where he is buried.

[00:21:16] And as for why he was simply forgotten, well, the simplest explanation is that he didn't [fit the mould](#)¹⁰⁹ of the Wild West hero.

[00:21:26] The myth of the West was built on white heroes. People like Wyatt Earp, who you heard about in the last episode, and who certainly had a less heroic life than Bass Reeves.

[00:21:40] As a black man, Reeves's story was [destined](#)¹¹⁰ to be forgotten.

[00:21:46] There is one theory, however, that the story of Bass Reeves is widely known, just under a different name: The Lone Ranger.

[00:21:58] Now, this was a radio programme first broadcast in 1933 about a [fictional](#)¹¹¹ [masked](#)¹¹² hero who has a native American companion called Tonto. He was a [crack](#) [shot](#)¹¹³. He was alone. He was mysterious. He had a horse called Silver.

¹⁰⁹ match the usual type or pattern

¹¹⁰ certain or likely

¹¹¹ invented; not real

¹¹² wearing something that covered the face

¹¹³ a person who shot very accurately

[00:22:18] The **parallels**¹¹⁴ with Bass Reeves are **striking** enough that several historians believe Reeves was the direct inspiration for the character.

[00:22:29] This is **disputed**¹¹⁵, I should add; many lawmen worked with Native American companions, and wearing disguises and being a crack shot could equally be elements of any Western story rather than being directly inspired by Reeves.

[00:22:46] What can't be disputed is that if the Lone Ranger was inspired by Bass Reeves, the **protagonist**¹¹⁶ needed to become white to be acceptable to a mass American audience.

[00:22:59] The Native American companion stayed, as did the skill with a gun and the **penchant**¹¹⁷ for disguise. The **heroic agency**¹¹⁸, the man doing the arresting, the man taking all the risks, was simply transferred from a Black man to a white one.

[00:23:18] So, to wrap things up, the Wild West of popular imagination is a story about white men. Cowboys and outlaws and sheriffs. That story is real in the sense that those men existed.

¹¹⁴ similarities

¹¹⁵ disagreed about

¹¹⁶ the main character in the story

¹¹⁷ strong liking

¹¹⁸ the ability to take brave action and make things happen

[00:23:33] But the actual West was a far more mixed place. There were black cowboys and black lawmen, Chinese labourers who built much of the railway network, the Native and Mexican communities who were there before everyone else arrived.

[00:23:50] The myth of the Wild West, and the Hollywood version, was built by selecting some of those people and [conveniently](#)¹¹⁹ ignoring the rest.

[00:24:01] Someone like Bass Reeves lived an exceptional life yet was almost forgotten to history.

[00:24:08] He spent thirty-two years doing the hardest law enforcement work in America. He made three thousand arrests. He brought his own son to trial. He never [bent the rules](#)¹²⁰.

[00:24:20] He just happened to be the wrong colour.

[00:24:25] OK then, that is it for today's episode on Bass Reeves.

[00:24:29] As a reminder, this was part two of a three-part mini-series on stories from the Wild West.

[00:24:36] In case you missed part one, it was on Wyatt Earp.

¹¹⁹ in a way that was easy or useful

¹²⁰ did not follow the rules exactly

[00:24:39] And next up, in part three, we'll look at the Wild West from a completely different angle: through the story of Geronimo, the Native American leader.

[00:24:49] You've been listening to English Learning for Curious Minds by Leonardo English.

[00:24:54] I'm Alastair Budge, you stay safe, and I'll catch you in the next episode.

[END OF EPISODE]

Key vocabulary

Word	Definition
Lawman	person who enforced the law
Frontier	the edge of an area where people were settling and building towns
In the line of duty	while doing his job
Elaborate	very detailed and carefully planned
Fugitives	people running away from the law
Forgotten to history	no longer remembered by most people
Fit of rage	a sudden burst of extreme anger
Grazing	lightly touching and causing a small injury
Flees	runs away quickly from danger
Hunting ground	an area where he regularly looked for something or someone
Marshals	law officers with special duties
Spanning	lasting across
Odds are stacked against him	he has very little chance of success

Standoff	a tense situation where neither side gave in
Ensuing	happening next
Give himself up	surrender, stop resisting
Taken into custody	arrested and kept by the authorities
Charged	officially accused of a crime
Sentenced	officially given a punishment by a court
Death penalty	punishment by execution
Apprehended	caught and arrested
Unremarkable	ordinary; not special
Legislator	a person who helped make laws
Well documented	recorded in detail
Physically exceptional	unusually strong or fit
Extraordinarily	extremely
Signature	special and well-known
Figure out	understand or find the answer

Relieved of	freed from (a duty or task)
Arduous	very difficult and tiring
Butler	a servant who managed a large house
Field labourer	a worker who worked on a farm
Hints at	suggests without saying directly
Called up	ordered to join the military
Confederate	connected to the southern states during the American Civil War
Confrontation	an angry argument or conflict
Striking	hitting or very noticeable
Death sentence	a court decision that he would be executed
Forcibly	by force
Catastrophic	causing great damage or suffering
Marched	made to walk in a group
At gunpoint	while being threatened with a gun
Ghetto	an area where a group of people was forced to live apart from others

Albeit	although
Multilingual	able to speak several languages
Multicultural	including people from different cultures
Like the back of his hand	very well and in great detail
Feuds	long and bitter arguments between people or groups
Held grudges	stayed angry about something for a long time
Abolition	the ending of it by law
Minding his business	quietly focusing on his own life
Stickler	a person who strongly insisted on rules
On the bench	working as a judge
Moralistic	strongly focused on what was right and wrong
Righteousness	the belief that he was morally right
Dire	very serious and bad
Ruthless	not showing kindness or pity
Pursuit	the act of trying to achieve it

Progressive	supporting new and fair ideas
Worldview	his way of seeing and understanding the world
Deputies	officers who helped a senior law officer
Lawless	without respect for the law
For starters	first of all
Vast	very large
Formal	official
Law enforcement	the work of making sure people obeyed the law
Appointed	officially given the job or position
Overstatement	a statement that makes it seem bigger or more important than it was
Legendary	very famous and admired
Self-defence	protecting himself from harm
Add up	become a larger total
Haul	a large amount captured
Outlaws	criminals who lived outside the law

Ingenious	very clever and inventive
Outlaw territory	an area controlled or used by criminals
Saddle	the seat placed on the horse for riding
Campfire	a fire made outdoors for warmth or cooking
Handcuffs	metal rings used to lock a person's wrists together
Drifter	a person who moved from place to place without a permanent home or job
Physically imposing	looking strong and powerful
Considerably	a lot
Deadly quick	extremely fast, especially in a dangerous situation
Downing	shooting or bringing down
Exaggeration	something described as bigger or better than it really was
Captors	people holding him prisoner
Quivering	shaking slightly
Split second	a very short moment
Pistol	a small gun held in one hand

Illiterate	unable to read or write
Warrant	an official document allowing them to arrest someone
Exceptional	unusually good
Aloud	in a voice that could be heard
Satchel	a bag carried over the shoulder
Recite	say it from memory
Putting his life on the line	risking his life
Miraculously	in a surprising way that seems impossible
Living to tell the tale	surviving dangerous events
Devout	having or showing deep commitment
Accept his fate	accept what was going to happen
Surrendered	gave up and stopped resisting
By all accounts	according to everyone who knows about it
Model citizen	a person who behaved very responsibly
Integrity	honesty and strong moral principles

Faded into obscurity	gradually became forgotten
Absorbed	taken into something larger
Patrolled	travelled around to keep them safe
Wound down	gradually brought to an end
Obituary	a newspaper article about his life after he died
Fit the mould	match the usual type or pattern
Destined	certain or likely
Fictional	invented; not real
Masked	wearing something that covered the face
Crack shot	a person who shot very accurately
Parallels	similarities
Disputed	disagreed about
Protagonist	the main character in the story
Penchant	strong liking
Heroic agency	the ability to take brave action and make things happen

Conveniently in a way that was easy or useful

Bent the rules did not follow the rules exactly

Language spotlight

1. The odds are stacked against someone

- **Meaning:** To be in a situation where success is unlikely because conditions are unfavourable.
- **Synonyms:** be at a disadvantage, face an uphill battle, have little chance of success
- **Antonyms:** have the advantage, be in a strong position, have the odds in your favour
- **Examples:**
 - With very little money and no experience, **the odds were stacked against** the young entrepreneur.
 - Even though **the odds were stacked against** her, she managed to win the competition.

2. Like the back of his hand

- **Meaning:** To know something extremely well and in great detail.
- **Synonyms:** know inside out, know thoroughly, be very familiar with

- **Antonyms:** know very little about, be unfamiliar with, be clueless about
- **Examples:**
 - Our guide knew the city **like the back of his hand**, so we never got lost.
 - She knows the school rules **like the back of her hand** after working there for twenty years.

3. Putting your life on the line

- **Meaning:** To risk your life in order to do something.
- **Synonyms:** risk your life, face deadly danger, put yourself in harm's way
- **Antonyms:** stay safe, avoid danger, protect yourself
- **Examples:**
 - Firefighters are often **putting their lives on the line** to save others.
 - The journalist was **putting her life on the line** by reporting from a war zone.

4. Living to tell the tale

- **Meaning:** To survive a dangerous or difficult experience and be able to talk about it afterwards.
- **Synonyms:** survive, come through safely, escape alive
- **Antonyms:** perish, die, not survive
- **Examples:**
 - Very few climbers fell from that height and **lived to tell the tale**.
 - He was lucky to escape the accident and **live to tell the tale**.

5. Bend the rules

- **Meaning:** To break or ignore rules slightly in order to achieve something.
- **Synonyms:** stretch the rules, make an exception, not follow the rules strictly
- **Antonyms:** follow the rules exactly, obey the rules, play by the book
- **Examples:**
 - The teacher refused to **bend the rules** for students who submitted their work late.

- Sometimes managers **bend the rules** to help an employee facing a difficult situation.

Quiz

Listening Comprehension Multiple Choice Questions

1. Why was the young man Bennie wanted by the authorities?

- a) He robbed a bank
- b) He killed his wife
- c) He attacked a marshal
- d) He escaped from prison

2. What was unusual about Bass Reeves's arrest of Bennie?

- a) Bennie escaped twice before being caught
- b) Bennie was a famous outlaw
- c) Bennie was Bass Reeves's son
- d) Bennie was a federal judge

3. Why did Bass Reeves flee during the Civil War?

- a) He wanted to join the Union Army

- b) He got lost during a battle
- c) He stole money from his owner
- d) He struck his owner, George Reeves

4. Why was Bass Reeves especially useful as a Deputy U.S. Marshal in Indian Territory?

- a) He was a lawyer
- b) He knew the Territory and spoke several Native languages
- c) He owned a large farm there
- d) He had served as a judge

5. What job did Bass Reeves take after his work in Indian Territory came to an end?

- a) City police officer
- b) Farmer
- c) Judge
- d) Shop owner

True or False

6. Bass Reeves was born a free man in Arkansas. (True / False)
7. Bass Reeves learned to read and write as a child. (True / False)
8. Isaac Parker was known as the "Hanging Judge." (True / False)
9. On one trip, Bass Reeves brought in seventeen prisoners at the same time. (True / False)
10. Bass Reeves was asked not to enter some local shooting competitions because he was too skilled. (True / False)

Fill in the Blank

11. He has discovered that his wife has been having an affair, and in a ____ of rage, he pulls out his revolver and shoots her dead.
12. Bass's early life is not well _____, and what we know about Reeves's early years comes largely from accounts he gave much later.
13. For a decade or so, he lived quietly, _____ his business, working his farm, raising his family.
14. In twenty-one years on the _____, he sentenced 160 men to death, 79 of whom were hanged.

15. He killed a reported fourteen men in the line of duty, all of them, by every account, in ____-defence.

Vocabulary Practice

16. What does "**fit of rage**" mean?

- a) A long period of sadness
- b) A sudden burst of anger
- c) A serious illness
- d) A difficult journey

17. What does "**apprehended**" mean?

- a) Escaped
- b) Hired
- c) Caught and arrested
- d) Warned

18. What does "**lawless**" mean?

- a) Without laws or respect for laws
- b) Very peaceful
- c) Rich and successful
- d) Full of lawyers

19. What does "**integrity**" mean?

- a) Physical strength
- b) Wealth and power
- c) Honesty and strong moral principles
- d) Good luck

20. What does "**faded into obscurity**" mean?

- a) Became famous around the world
- b) Was forgotten over time
- c) Won an important award

d) Moved to another country

Answers

1. b) He killed his wife
2. c) Bennie was Bass Reeves's son
3. d) He struck his owner, George Reeves
4. b) He knew the Territory and spoke several Native languages
5. a) City police officer
6. False
7. False
8. True
9. True
10. True
11. fit
12. documented
13. minding
14. bench
15. self
16. b) A sudden burst of anger
17. c) Caught and arrested
18. a) Without laws or respect for laws
19. c) Honesty and strong moral principles
20. b) Was forgotten over time