

Frederick Jackson Turner



The Question: What is the West?

My Life: (You are a charismatic speaker. Consider sweeping voice inflections and moving embellishments. Bring a book and call it your frontier thesis.)

- I was born in a small frontier town of Portage, Wisconsin in 1861.
- The wide open country where I grew up had a major impact on me.
- I got my PhD at Johns Hopkins University. I wrote the book on American History.
- Every Historian after me from NPR radio personalities to your teacher has to come to terms with my theories.

My Point of View and Personality:

- I am an upper class white male with radical ideas.
- I grew up on the prairie frontiers of Wisconsin so I am a little more rugged than most city-dwelling New York types.
- My frontier thesis tells the world what it means to be American. I first delivered it at the 1893 World Columbian Expo in Chicago. You all should read it.

My Argument: The West is... The Driving Force of American History (The Frontier Thesis):

- What is the single driving force behind American History? Some may say it's freedom and try to use something like Pilgrims and the Declaration of Independence as evidence but I say they're wrong.
 - American History can be summed up with one concept: the frontier.
- The frontier is any unknown area that Americans can control and improve
- Think of it! **Every major event in American History from Jamestown to the Louisiana Purchase has been tied to settling land and making the most of it.**
 - As citizens of the greatest country in human history, it is our solemn duty to spread out and improve the unknown with our brilliant intelligence.
- **When the American Frontier closes, it will be because we've made the most out of the North American continent.**
 - When that happens, we'll move onto making the most out of other countries.

(SAVE FOR ACT 2):

- (To Nat Love and Bass Reeves) I'm proud of you, Mr. Love and Mr. Reeves. Your stories are what America is all about: legendary figures who came from nowhere to define our great nation.
- (To Sitting Bull) Yes, you got me there with Battle of the Little Bighorn. And I'm sorry about the Sun Dance debacle. We were afraid your deep fasting would kill you. The Bureau of Indian Affairs will let those Indians practice that ritual again... starting in 1934.
- (To Don Pico) Your money makes our country great! You've earned those street names!
- (To Fee Lee Wong) Thank you for helping make the Transcontinental Railroad happen.
 - I'll try to add your details to my book but my editor would probably cut it out.
- (To Calamity Jane) Bravo, Miss Jane. Your Wild West shows will keep the legend of the West alive. It gives us a cultural identity that Europeans snobs say we desperately need.
- (To Josefa Segovia) Sorry about the hustle with the land deeds. Part of making the most of the land is getting the right paperwork. If you hate that, try going to a modern DMV.

Bass Reeves



The Question: What is the West?

My Life: (Deliver in a matter of fact way. You are a tough lawman who brings bandits to justice. Consider bringing a sheriff's star as a prop.)

- I was forced to serve in the Confederate Army as a slave to Colonel George Reeves.
- One time, when I was playing cards with the Colonel, he accused me of cheating and struck me. But I fought back and got a death sentence for defending myself. .
- I escaped to Indian Territory. I learned the lay of the land from them.
- I discovered every place where the outlaws hide to escape from the law.
- In 1875, I became a U.S. Marshall and made a career catching bandits. By the time I hung up my badge, I nabbed over 3,000 criminals.
- I even arrested my own son. Don't worry, he straightened himself out after his time in jail.

My Point of View and Personality.

- I am an African American male who serves as a U.S. Marshall. That makes me a radical for my time.
- If Southerners saw me carrying a badge, they'd shake in their boots.
- I see things through a clear and fair lens of right and wrong. This is probably why many historians think I'm the inspiration for the Lone Ranger.

My Argument: The West is...a place for justice:

- Out here in the frontier, there is a chance for good men to stand up for what's right regardless of prejudice.
- If I did not have the opportunity to flee to Indian Territory as a runaway slave, I would be dead. But out here, **I am the law!**

(SAVE FOR ACT 2) Frederick Jackson Turner is Right (to a Point): I agree that the West gives us an opportunity to try new things. What I am doing would be unthinkable in the South.

- **Here is where Turner is wrong:** Everything that is happening to the Indians is wrong!
 - You take away their cultures, languages, and religions.
 - That is not justice! That is the biggest crime you can commit against a people.
 - Also, Mr. Turner if you honestly think the white American way is better, you've obviously never traveled to the Wild West.
 - The Indians taught me everything I know. I would not be the lawman I am today without them.