

## **Shay's Rebellion: The straw that broke the Articles back**

American freedom from Great Britain wasn't guaranteed after the Declaration of Independence. The Revolutionary War was very costly. Many states had to raise taxes in order to pay off this debt. Shay's Rebellion is the name given to a series of protests in 1786 and 1787 by American farmers against state and local enforcement of tax collections. Although farmers took up arms (weapons) in states from New Hampshire to South Carolina, the rebellion was most serious in Massachusetts, where bad harvests, economic depression, and high taxes threatened farmers with the loss of their farms. The rebellion took its name from its symbolic leader, Daniel Shays of Massachusetts, a former captain in the Continental army during the Revolutionary War.

The uprising in Massachusetts began in the summer of 1786. The armed rebels occupied courthouses to avoid paying taxes and losing their land. The rebels next tried to capture the federal arsenal at Springfield in order to obtain more weapons for their cause.

Under the Articles of Confederation, the U.S. Government had no standing army to stop Shay's Rebellion. The state of Massachusetts had to use their militia and a private army to stop Shays and his supporters. The state militia, commanded by Gen. Benjamin Lincoln, crushed the rebels in several engagements in the winter of 1787.

Shays' Rebellion greatly alarmed politicians throughout the nation. Many Americans feared that the Articles of Confederation made the U.S. Government too weak and unable to protect the country from threats. Shays' Rebellion figured prominently in the debates over the framing and ratification of the Constitution.

1. ***Which weakness(es) on your chart in Step 1 did Shays' Rebellion match up with and why?***
2. ***Why was Shay's Rebellion significant? (What did it make the founding fathers realize they needed to do? Think about the "sinking ship" of the Articles of Confederation...what comes next??)***

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