Name: Date:

U.S. History New Nation

Directions: Read the section on Shay’s Rebellion and answers the questions that follow in complete sentences.

The crisis of the 1780s was most intense in the rural and relatively newly settled areas of central and western Massachusetts. Many farmers in this area suffered from high debt as they tried to start new farms. Unlike many other state legislatures in the 1780s, the Massachusetts government didn't respond to the economic crisis by passing pro-debtor laws (like forgiving debt and printing more paper money). As a result local sheriffs seized many farms and some farmers who couldn't pay their debts were put in prison.

These conditions led to the first major armed rebellion in the post-Revolutionary United States. Once again, Americans resisted high taxes and unresponsive government that was far away. But this time it was Massachusetts's settlers who were angry with a republican government in Boston, rather than with the British government across the Atlantic.

The farmers in western Massachusetts organized their resistance in ways similar to the American Revolutionary struggle. They called special meetings of the people to protest conditions and agree on a coordinated protest. This led the rebels to close courts by force in the fall of 1786 and to liberate imprisoned debtors from jail. Soon events flared into a full-scale revolt when the resistors came under the leadership of Daniel Shays, a former captain in the Continental Army. This was the most extreme example of what could happen in the tough times brought on by the economic crisis. Some thought of the Shaysites (named after their military leader) as heroes in the direct tradition of the American Revolution, while many others saw them as dangerous rebels whose actions might topple the young experiment in republican government. Shay’s Rebellion demonstrated the weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation and the need for a stronger central government.

**Questions:**

1. What problems did farmers have in Massachusetts that caused them to rebel?

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1. What did the actions of Daniel Shay and his followers demonstrate about the Articles of Confederation?

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