

A Turning Point: Shays's Rebellion

Kerri Lehmann and Carolyn Johnson

April 29, 2014

APUSH Period 4 Alberti

A turning point in history can occur as result of a new idea, influential person, or an event. Turning points may result in an immediate shift in the course of history or in ongoing repercussions that changed the way history was shaped overtime. After considering the different types of turning points there are, my partner and I wanted to choose an event that drastically changed the course of history so much that the effects may still be seen today. With that in mind, we considered many events including the exploration of Lewis and Clark, the Louisiana Purchase, the Market revolution, and Shays's Rebellion. After looking into the effects of Shays's Rebellion, we started drawing the conclusion that Shays's Rebellion was the straw that broke the camel's back in terms of toleration with the government under the Articles of Confederation. Because we believe Shays's Rebellion was a major turning point in the course of American history and because the Whiskey Rebellion may be paired with it to excellently display the immediate shift in federal power, we chose to research Shays's Rebellion as a turning point.

In order to begin researching our selected topic, we first read generalized accounts of the event to get a good grasp on the direction we wanted to take with the project and the point we wanted to argue. After this preliminary research, we began looking at more detailed and credible sources, to be cited and used for notecards. We used several books as secondary sources as well as an article from a specialized encyclopedia accessed via online database. For primary sources, we examined the U.S. Constitution and several letters written by prominent political figures of the time period regarding the issue of Shays's Rebellion. From the acquired information my partner and I composed our thesis "Starting as an uprising against unfair property seizure in Massachusetts, Shays's Rebellion became a revolution of an even greater scale because it sparked in people a desire for a stronger federal government and increased the urgency for the gathering of the Constitutional Convention, an assembly that forever changed

the frameworks of the United States government.” With our thesis in mind, we conducted our further research by reading books about Shays’s Rebellion and its repercussions and taking note cards on the details we deemed important.

The method of presentation that we chose is a website. We decided that out of the project options, a website would work best for our topic as well as our individual talents. Being technologically inclined, we made the decision to set up a website where different headings and subheadings would direct the reader to different sections and aspects of our topic. Along with detailed and relevant information, we included various multimedia aids to engage the reader and support the text. With the spread of technology and media use, it made sense to present our project in this very modern manner.

Shays’ Rebellion fits into the category of turning points because it led to a major shift in the frameworks of the United States government. The uprising instilled in many Americans a fear of future rebellions. It made a lot of people, including many politicians, reconsider their preconceived notions about how much power the federal government should be allowed. Until that point, it was believed by many Americans that federal power should be extremely limited. But when Shays’s Rebellion occurred, and the weak government under Articles of Confederation was unable to swiftly terminate it, people began to change their opinions. The rebellion was the driving force that brought upon the Constitutional Convention, where the entire system of the U.S. government would change forever. Shays’s Rebellion can be considered a turning point due to its effect on this convention, and therefore, the future of the U.S. government.