

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions: Read each document. Answer the questions in complete sentences. Use evidence from the documents when needed.**

### **Document A: Shays' Rebellion Textbook Excerpt: *The American Vision***

The property owners' fears seemed justified when a full-scale **rebellion**, known as **Shays' Rebellion**, erupted in Massachusetts in 1786. The rebellion started when the government of Massachusetts decided to raise taxes to pay off its debts. The taxes affected poor farmers in the western part of the state. As the economy grew worse, many found it impossible to pay their taxes and the possible loss of their farms.

Angry at the government's unresponsiveness to their trouble, in late August 1786, farmers in western Massachusetts rebelled. They closed down several courthouses to prevent farm **foreclosures**, and then marched on the state supreme court. At this point, Daniel Shays, a former captain in the Continental Army who was now a bankrupt farmer, emerged as one of the rebellion's leaders.

In January 1787, Shays and about 1,200 farmers headed to a state **arsenal** intending to take weapons before marching on Boston. In response, the governor sent more than 4,000 volunteers under the command of General Benjamin Lincoln to defend the **arsenal**. Before they arrived, Shays attacked, and the **militia** defending the arsenal opened fire. Four farmers died in the fighting. The rest scattered. The next day Lincoln's troops arrived and ended the rebellion.

#### **1) What happened in Shay's rebellion?**

<p><b>Rebellion:</b> An act of violence against the government</p> <p><b>Foreclosures:</b> When you lose your property because you can't pay</p> <p><b>Arsenal:</b> Where weapons are kept</p> <p><b>Militia:</b> Volunteer Soldiers</p>
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#### **A Call for Change**

Wealthy Americans tended to see the rebellion, as a sign that America itself was at risk. They feared that as state governments became more democratic and responsive to poor people, they would weaken property rights and vote to take property from the wealthy.

These concerns were an important reason why many people began to argue for a stronger central government, and several members of the Confederation Congress called on the states to correct issues in the present government. The confederation's failure to deal with conditions that might lead to rebellion, as well as the problems with trade and diplomacy, only added fuel to their argument.

*Source: Excerpt from The American Vision, a high school U.S. History textbook published in 2003.*

#### **2) According to the textbook, how did Americans respond?**

## Document B: Thomas Jefferson on Shays' Rebellion (Modified)

Paris, November 13, 1787

The British have so long hired their newspapers to repeat every form of lies about our being in **anarchy**, that the world has at length believed them, and we have believed them ourselves. Yet where does this **anarchy** exist? Where did it ever exist, except in the single instance of Shays' rebellion? God forbid we should ever be 20 years without such a rebellion.

What country before ever existed without a rebellion? And what country can preserve its liberties if their rulers are not warned from time to time that their people preserve the spirit of resistance? Let the people take arms. The **remedy** is to present them with the facts, **pardon** and **pacify** them.

The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants. It is its natural **manure**. Our Constitutional Convention has [made too much of Shays' rebellion]: and in the spur of the moment [I worry they will over-react].

### Vocabulary:

**Anarchy:** chaos; confusion and disorder

**Remedy:** cure

**Pardon:** forgive

**Pacify:** calm down

**Manure:** fertilizer

*Source: Thomas Jefferson was in France during Shays' Rebellion, but he wrote a letter to a friend about it.*

**1. Thomas Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence. Do you think he wanted to see America form a strong central government? Why or why not?**

**2. According to Jefferson, have the colonies been peaceful or chaotic? Support your answer with evidence from the document.**

**3. Jefferson thinks the people at the Constitutional Convention are over- reacting to Shays' Rebellion. What does he worry they might do as they write the new Constitution? (Note: this answer is not in the document; you need to think).**

**4. What does Jefferson mean when he says, "The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants?"**

**5. How does this document challenge or expand the information you read in the textbook?**