

Creating the Constitution

Primary Source**James Bowdoin's Account of Shays' Rebellion**

James Bowdoin was governor of Massachusetts during Shays' Rebellion. In this document, he recounted the event and its significance.

Directions: *Read the excerpt and answer the questions that follow.*

The rebels, under Daniel Shays, Luke Day, and Eli Parsons, soon gathered a force in that vicinity [of Springfield], of 2000 men, and on the 25th of January advanced in a menacing manner towards the arsenal [warehouse]. Gen. Shepard sent an aid-de-camp [officer] to inquire the design of the movement, and to warn Shays of his danger. The answer was, that they *would have* possession of the barracks [warehouse]; and they immediately marched to within 250 yards of the arsenal. They were again warned that if they approached nearer, they would be fired on; still they advanced. He then ordered the artillery to be pointed at the centre of their column [group]. The cry of murder then arose from the rear of the insurgents, and the whole were struck with panic and confusion. Shays lost all control over them, and they fled . . . 10 miles, leaving 3 dead and 1 wounded. . . .

Good frequently springs from evil. Shays's Rebellion served to impress on the public mind a belief of the necessity of a new form of National Government. It may be doubted, whether the present United States Constitution would have been adopted, if that rebellion had not predisposed the minds of the people in favor of an energetic [powerful] government.

1. How many men did Shays gather together?

2. What were the rebels going to do? How were they stopped?

3. **Draw Conclusions** Why did Governor Bowdoin state that "good frequently springs from evil"?
