

1. At daybreak on July 16, 1794, about fifty men armed with rifles and clubs marched to the house of John Neville, regional supervisor for collection of the federal excise tax in western Pennsylvania. They demanded that Neville resign his position and turn over to them all records associated with collection of the tax on domestically distilled spirits. He refused. Shots were fired.

The Whiskey Rebellion, as it is traditionally known and studied, had begun. Before it was over, some 7000 western Pennsylvanians advanced against the town of Pittsburgh, threatened its residents, feigned [pretended] an attack on Fort Pitt and the federal arsenal there, banished seven members of the community, and destroyed the property of several others. President Washington nationalized 12,950 militiamen from New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia—an army approximating in size the Continental force that followed him during the Revolution—and personally led the "Watermelon Army"\* west to shatter the insurgency [rebellion]. . . .

Source: Thomas P. Slaughter, *The Whiskey Rebellion:*

*Frontier Epilogue to the American Revolution*, Oxford University Press, 1986

*\*Watermelon Army was a nickname by whiskey tax rebels mocking the physical fitness and fighting skills of federal troops, particularly those from New Jersey.*

- A) According to Thomas P. Slaughter, what was **one** problem that resulted from the collection of the federal excise tax in western Pennsylvania?

2. To Major-General Lee

Sir:—I have it in special instruction from the President [George Washington] of the United States, now at this place, to convey to you the following instructions for the general direction of your conduct in the command of the militia army, with which you are charged.

The objects [reasons] for which the militia have been called forth are:

1st. To suppress the combinations [groups] which exist in some of the western counties in Pennsylvania, in opposition to the laws laying duties upon spirits distilled within the United States, and upon stills.

2nd. To cause the laws to be executed.

These objects are to be effected in two ways:1 By military force.

- 2 By judiciary process and other civil proceedings.

The objects of the military force are twofold:1 To overcome any armed opposition which may exist.

- 2 To countenance [approve] and support the civil officers in the means of executing the laws

Your obedient servant,  
Alexander Hamilton

Source: Alexander Hamilton to Major-General Henry Lee, October 20, 1794,

Henry Cabot Lodge, ed., *The Works of Alexander Hamilton*, Volume VI,

G.P Putnam's Sons (adapted)

- A. According to Alexander Hamilton, what action is President George Washington ordering in response to the Whiskey Rebellion?

- B. According to Alexander Hamilton, what is **one** reason President Washington gave this order?

3. . . .The [whiskey] rebellion has long been interpreted as a milestone in the creation of federal authority, and in most respects that is its chief significance. Certainly to the Federalists, who had long been striving for a strong national government, it was a major test: the new government successfully crushed organized and violent resistance to the laws. As Hamilton put it, the rebellion "will do us a great deal of good and add to the solidity [stability] of every thing in this country". .

Source: Richard H. Kohn, "The Washington Administration's Decision to Crush the Whiskey Rebellion, *The Journal of American History*, December 1972

A) According to Richard H. Kohn, what was the significance of the Whiskey Rebellion?

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4. **Summary: Historical Context-** Write at least one full paragraph answering the writing prompt below.

Put these documents into context by explaining the story that surrounds them. • What was happening in the United States at the time of the Whiskey Rebellion (1790's)?

- Why was the Whiskey Rebellion such a crucial test for American democracy?
  - In your opinion, what may have happened if Washington responded differently to the rebellion?
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