

The whiskey rebellion assignment

[History](#)



Thomas Slaughter's thirteen- chapter chronicle of this event in American history takes great steps toward correcting that oversight. The Whiskey Rebellion was a violent uprising against an excise tax placed on liquor, much like the tax revolt against the Stamp Act that ignited the American Revolution. Of course, the Whiskey rebels saw themselves as upholding the spirit of the Revolution and believed that the politicians in the federal government had forsaken those principles for the quest of personal gain. Slaughter does an outstanding job of telling each side of the story without retorting a strong bias toward either.

He paints the rebellion as a massive communication failure between all involved. The conflict illustrated a deep divide between the eastern and the western regions of the country, setting urban interests against rural interests, localism philosophy against nationalist beliefs, and all of the disparities that are inherent among different social and economic classes. The author describes the federal government and its supporters as having "generally shared a Hobnails-type fear of anarchy as the starting point for their consideration of contemporary politics," while he says that the Whiskey Rebels and their friends "took a more Logician-type stance," believing "that protection of liberty, not the maintenance of order, was the principal task of government." The federal government emphasized the power of the Constitution, while the Whiskey Rebels emphasized the much more radical Declaration of Independence. The Whiskey Rebellion was a turning point in America's history that demonstrated the central government's willingness and ability to enforce its laws in spite of the obstacle of distance from its center of power.

Slaughter divides *The Whiskey Rebellion* into three principal sections entitled Context, Chronology, and Consequence. The first section begins with a comprehensive assessment of the anti-excise tradition which follows late seventeenth-century British philosophy and traces its progression from Walpole excise battle in 1733, through the Stamp Act crisis of 1764 and on through the Anti-Federalist account of the tax provisions of the Constitution of 1787.

In the second section, Slaughter details the debate over the excise, its implementation and the outbreak of both peaceful and violent opposition to it; opposition that occurred not only in Pennsylvania but along the entire reorient. In his final section, and with a trace of personal bias, Slaughter describes the outbreak of violence in the summer of 1794 for which he holds John Manville largely accountable.

Slaughter continues in the final section with Hamilton and Washington deciding to make an example of western Pennsylvania despite the fact that the excise had gone uncollected all along the frontier, and the Watermelon Army fiasco which the Federalists claimed as a victory. Slaughter concludes that, above all else, Federalist policy had deeply divided the country and “ contributed as much as any single event to the birth of the Republican and Federalist parties in the years following 1794. Slaughter has organized his story in a knowledgeable and logical manner, his account is skillful and vivid and he offers his readers fascinating details and insights. Even so, the read was occasionally monotonous and I did discover my mind wandering at points requiring certain passages to be re-read in an attempt to fully appreciate the events being portrayed by the author. The use of maps or <https://assignbuster.com/the-whiskey-rebellion-assignment/>

graphs could have proven extremely useful here in better illuminating the chronological and geographical context of these events. Slaughter provides to the reader neither Of these graphic aids in The Whiskey Rebellion.

Despite the sometimes uninteresting story line (real life events can prove difficult to illustrate otherwise), the book is well documented and presents a realistic depiction of the life of the frontiersmen and how they viewed the oppression of the Easterners. Slaughter also balances the view of the Easterners toward their perceptions and interpretations of the actions of the frontiersmen. The Whiskey Rebellion offers an exceptionally balanced view of the events that took place two hundred years ago on the western Pennsylvania frontier in, for the most part, a very readable form.

Slaughter always manages to give both sides to each issue and interprets the events accordingly. One final compliment to the author and to the book is that I truly appreciated the stories that began each chapter. These real life events painted a vivid picture of life as it was on the frontier and served as great introductions to each new section. The Whiskey Rebellion offers a broad and comprehensive account of the struggle over the whiskey excise while taking into account the political, social and intellectual contexts of the time.