

# Shay's rebellion by leonard richards book review examples

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## **Book Review: Shay's Rebellion by Leonard Richards**

It is evident that many experts have been insisting that most of the history books have long maintained that Shay's Rebellion (1786-1787) the Massachusetts insurgence that caused George Washington to come out of retirement and eventually sped the ratification and the revision of the U. S Constitution was a revolt of poor, obligated farmers. However, University of Massachusetts Amherst history lecturer Leonard L. Richards has a different take on it. In his Shay's Rebellion: The American Revolution's Final Battle, Richards examines the individualities of the rebels and contends that they were normally not underprivileged by the least, and that scholars have misinterpreted the reasons of this key revolt.

It is clear that the author wanted to show his version about the rebellion. There had been other versions written that all say different things but Richards manages to write it from his point of view. He shows that the importance of Shays' Rebellion has never been completely respected, chiefly for the reason that Shays and his followers have constantly been looked at as a small group of poor farmers and debtors that were just going around protesting local civil power. In shay's Rebellion: The American Revolution's Final Battle, the author shows that this perception is not really the case. In his eyes, it is misleading, that the rebellion was much more widespread than formerly thought, and that those that were involved in the rebellion and their supporters essentially symbolized entire communities— the poor and the wealthy, the powerful and those that were weak, even associates of some of the greatest Massachusetts families.

It is clear from reading the book that Richards examined everything

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carefully. By means of careful inspection of contemporary records, as well as a long-neglected but invaluable list of the contributors, Richards delivers a clear picture of the insurrection, taking the spirit of the rebellion, the motives for the revolt, and its long-term influence on those that were involved, the state of Massachusetts, and the country as an entirety. Shay's Rebellion, nevertheless apparently a local affair, was the revolution that provided a rise to contemporary American democracy.

Richards undoubtedly performed intense research with the book. He did a good job making sure that the right facts were brought to light. When he was doing all of the research in the Massachusetts state archives, Richards happened to stumble across a list of 4000 individuals who, upon contributing in and losing the Shays Rebellion, had put their signature a promise of faithfulness to the state of Massachusetts so as to be given forgiveness. Actually, this list was in hardly legible handwriting and had never been interpreted. The books did a wonderful job when it showed that the amazing breakthrough happened when Richards made the decision to get a hold of this list, decode the names, and then discover who all the people were, individual by individual. What he produces is a very revealing and much more precise account of the rebellion by showing what was left out and how the research was done. In this light, the author did a good job because he was able to show how information was incorrect by showing how he did the research. Most books when they have a contradiction in regards to a certain subject normally do not go to the extremes as Richard had done in his book, Through what appeared to be many months of particular, persistent research, the author was finally able to prove that we, currently, have a lot

of various misconceptions in regards to rebellion. For the most part, Richards finds a way to come up with a point that insurgents were more upset by very understandable exploitations by the Boston-focused Massachusetts state government than by shortage or the poverty issue. He also displays that the most key issue in recruiting rebels was their group connection. People got involved almost completely as part of a clan, and this clarifies why some towns had extensive contribution and others had little. However, Richards does do a good job of being able to flesh out who the opponents and leaders were.

Richards furthermore does a pretty decent job of connecting how the rebellion fit in with the national movement to form a stronger union among the states. This occurred in Philadelphia the next year at what was recognized as the Constitutional Convention. It is obvious that the author was passionate in showing that the rebellion played a an extremely significant part in our history that numerous today do not entirely respect, and Richards does an amazing job of bringing all the material together so that it will make sense.

Last, three things. The first thing, after reading this book there is a much better accepting of why the rural parts of the new nation had this fear in regards to Hamilton and his determination to make sure the Federal control was strong. Because this information was explained thoroughly, the reader should come away with having a much better understanding for Hamilton's mastermind of work. If anyone reads it, will as well because the data is displayed clearly. The second thing, it helped a whole lot that Richards himself is a man that obviously knows a lot about history in regards to

Amherst, Massachusetts, in the center of Shays country. As a reader, they will get the feeling that Richard is clearly driven in making sure readers are clear about the rebellion. In other words, while reading the book, it is apparent that he has a lot of passion for what he was writing. The tone comes across as if he is out to set the record straight and in some ways he was able to accomplish that objective. The idea that he wrote this book to prove that there was some miscalculation about the rebellion shows that it was subject that was very close to his heart. The third thing, seemingly the possessive form of Shays all through the book was spelled "Shay's".

It has the "s's". Of course it does appear to be wrong, but at the end of the day, it appears to be how instructor Richards decides to spell it. The interesting thing with all of that is the fact that nothing was taken away from the book. His points were still laid out perfectly.

Richards does a good job by making the point that in earlier popular belief, it has been extensively held that the farmers revolted because of their being pulled into a global marketplace, which eventually pulled them directly into debt. However, this somewhat simplistic observation does manage to miss out on some many vital elements, to which Dr. Richards beautifully lends great information. The standard causes of course ran much more deeper than that. First and foremost, the farmers were being overloaded and forced to pay creditors at the advantage of Revolutionary War pledgeholders, who were usually, either associates of the Massachusetts Government or carefully connected to someone who was at the time.

Eventually, the author finds a way of showing how their revolt ended up aiding in the approval of the Establishment that people actually enjoy today.

Richard's book likewise manages to provide a little differing to popular thought, that the agriculturalists of the Shay's Rebellion did in reality achieve victory. Even though they were not for the Constitution and their rebellion was put down, it did have an outcome in substantial tax relief from the lawmakers.

Also the book is much more interesting because to further expand his points, Richard uses some cameo appearances in the book. For example, he uses Mumbet, aka Elizabeth Freeman, and she was the woman the decided to sue in order to gain her freedom. Upon the result of her positive lawsuit, everyone of the slaves in Massachusetts were set free. The story of this woman shows up in Richard's book for her part in protecting from the Watchdogs, the valuables of Theodore Sedgwick, for where she was working and also serving as her legal advice.

The interesting thing about the book, is that at just over 200 pages, this is a read that is quick and read, with no unnecessary information to just take up time or just fill more pages. It is obvious that Richard writes concisely and as mentioned earlier done a wonderful job of bringing in new light on the Shay's Rebellion event.

However, on the flip side of things there are some areas where it may be understandable about Richards point of view. In other words, some may have issues in his information. For example, some could argue that the idea that Shays' rebellion " caused" the Constitution is possibly overstated. In fact, Richard himself brought up this issue in his book. He made the point that other thought it alarmed all over the colonies, nevertheless it was not the single event of its kind all through the era after the " revolution" and

preceeding the ultimate arrangement that the Articles of Confederation needed some kind of amending.

Another conflicting view that Richard brought up against him was the idea that it was not likely for the Shays' insurgents to compete with the Constitution for the reason that the rebellion took place under the Articles of Confederation, and a legitimate agreement, at which the Constitution would be framed, rather than the Articles edited, had yet to take place.

Richard goes on to explain how the previous is proved to be factual by those that do not agree with his work. He states that they believe that the rebels were "overtaxed" is a matter of opinion, and typically founded upon a prejudice against taxation, and that prejudice founded upon the myth that the Founders were opposite to the revenue system. These people according those who opposed Richard were not (the "too extremist. They basically are accusing Richards of making it look as though the British were just evil.

Suffice that the British forced prevailing tax laws in power to take care of war debt incurred from defending the colonies/colonizers in contrast to the Indians and French, for which defense the Explorers did not pay any type of money, though they were trading with the enemy, and did not want to pay a cent when it was all over. Richards of course had information in the book that was able to go against other misleading ideas.

In the end, the book was a good piece written in order to set the record on information that Richard felt was mislead. He does an excellent job with bringing in the facts and making sure that everything is current. The book was an easy read because all of the data talked about in the book was done

in order to prove his point that the rebels and contends that they were normally not underprivileged by the least.

## **Works Cited**

Richards, Leonard L. " Shays's Rebellion: The American Revolution's Final Battle." New York City: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003. 1-216.