



YONKERS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

US History and Government
Regents Review

The Articles of Confederation

THE ARTICLES OF CONFEDERATION, 1781–1789

The first constitution of the United States was the **Articles of Confederation**. This constitution, proposed by the Second Continental Congress in 1777, went into effect in 1781 after all 13 states had ratified, or approved, it. The Articles of Confederation reflected the colonists' fear of a strong central government and the desire of the individual states to protect their powers. As a result, the Articles created a weak national government.

An Alliance of Independent States

The Articles set up a confederation among the 13 states. A confederation is an alliance of independent states in which the states give as much power as they choose to the central government, while keeping the greater part of the power and remaining sovereign. The Articles were more like a treaty among the states than a plan of centralized government.

Achievements of the Confederation Government

The government under the Articles of Confederation had the power to make treaties, declare war, and receive ambassadors. The Confederation also made some notable achievements:

1. Successful conclusion of the American Revolution
2. Negotiation of the Treaty of Paris of 1783, ending the war and setting the United States border at the Mississippi River
3. Passage of the Land Ordinance of 1785 and the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, which (a) set the pattern by which new states could join the nation, and (b) prohibited slavery in the Northwest Territory

Weaknesses of the Confederation Government

The Confederation government proved too weak to deal with the problems during the critical period of the 1780s. There was no single national currency, because the states could also coin money. The Congress could not tax the people directly but had to ask the states for funds. The government lacked a president to direct operations. The Congress did not have the money to raise an army without the consent of the states.

The new nation soon suffered severe economic problems, while its government was unable to command respect at home or abroad. However, all 13 states had to agree before the Articles could be changed, so it was nearly impossible to change this constitution.

Governments of the United States: 1781 and 1789

How the Weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation Were Corrected by the Constitution	
Articles of Confederation	Constitution of the United States
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • States have most of the power. The national government has little. • No executive officer to carry out the laws of Congress. • No national courts. Only state courts exist. • Congress is responsible to the states. • Nine out of 13 states have to approve a law before it can go into effect. • Congress has no power to tax. • Congress can not regulate trade among the states. • Each state coins its own money. There is no national currency. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • States have some power, but most power is given to the national government. • A President heads the executive branch of the government. • Both national and state courts exist. • Congress is responsible to the people. • Laws may be passed by a majority vote of both houses of Congress. • Congress given the power to tax. • Congress given the power to regulate interstate and foreign trade. • Only the national government has the power to coin money.

Name: _____

- 1) Which idea had a major influence on the authors of the Articles of Confederation?
 - 1) Three branches of government are needed to protect liberty.
 - 2) The central government must have the power to levy taxes and to control trade.
 - 3) All of the people must be granted the right to vote.
 - 4) A strong central government threatens the rights of the people and the states.

- 2) The Articles of Confederation created a
 - 1) republic with a chief executive
 - 2) league of free and independent states
 - 3) government with legislative and judicial branches
 - 4) strong central government

- 3) Which governmental problem occurred under the Articles of Confederation?
 - 1) The Supreme Court issued a series of unenforceable decisions.
 - 2) The states frequently did not cooperate with each other.
 - 3) The President often ignored the advice of his Cabinet.
 - 4) Congress constantly overrode the President's vetoes.

- 4) Which statement *best* explains why the Articles of Confederation established a weak rather than a strong central government?
 - 1) The absence of national problems made a strong government unnecessary.
 - 2) Americans were following the plan of government set up in the Declaration of Independence.
 - 3) Colonial experiences under Great Britain had created a fear of unlimited government.
 - 4) Revenues were not adequate to support a strong central government.

- 5) The Articles of Confederation and the United States Constitution are similar in that *both* provide for
 - 1) the power of judicial review
 - 2) a lawmaking body
 - 3) an elected chief executive
 - 4) a system of Federal taxation

- 6) The lack of a national executive and judiciary under the Articles of Confederation suggests that the founders of the American republic
 - 1) prized national unity above the sovereignty of the states
 - 2) feared a strong central government
 - 3) risked tyranny for the sake of effective national government
 - 4) copied the British constitution

- 7) What was an important accomplishment of the central government under the Articles of Confederation?
 - 1) formation of a national policy relating to Native American Indians
 - 2) elimination of debts from the Revolutionary War
 - 3) development of guidelines for the admission of new states into the Union
 - 4) removal of all British troops from North America

- 8) The authors of the Articles of Confederation established a decentralized political system mainly to
 - 1) assist the southern states in their efforts to gain a manufacturing base
 - 2) prevent the abuses of power that had existed under British rule
 - 3) cancel state debts incurred during the Revolutionary War
 - 4) promote the common goal of national sovereignty

- 9) A major intention of the framers of the Articles of Confederation was to
- 1) weaken the American people's primary loyalty to their individual states
 - 2) give Congress control of interstate and foreign commerce
 - 3) limit the central government's opportunities to infringe upon the people's liberties
 - 4) model the new government after Great Britain's government
- 10) In the 1780's, many Americans distrusted a strong central government. This distrust is *best* shown by the
- 1) plan of government set up by the Articles of Confederation
 - 2) development of a Federal court system
 - 3) constitutional provision for a strong President
 - 4) lack of debate over the ratification of the United States Constitution
- 11) Which statement is accurate about governmental power under the Articles of Confederation?
- 1) State governments had the power to collect taxes, coin money, and control trade.
 - 2) The states with the largest populations had the most votes in Congress.
 - 3) The central government was made stronger than state governments.
 - 4) The executive branch of the central government was more powerful than the legislative and judicial branches.
- 12) A major criticism directed against the Articles of Confederation was that power was allocated primarily to
- 1) military leaders
 - 2) state governments
 - 3) the electoral college
 - 4) the national government
- 13) Which statement *best* describes governmental power under the Articles of Confederation?
- 1) A strong chief executive headed a unified central government.
 - 2) The power of the states greatly exceeded the power of the central government.
 - 3) A balance of power existed among the three branches of the central government.
 - 4) Power was shared equally by the central government and the states.
- 14) A major problem of the government under the Articles of Confederation was that the
- 1) courts of the national government had nearly unlimited power
 - 2) national government could levy and collect unlimited taxes
 - 3) President could make major decisions without the approval of Congress
 - 4) Congress depended on the states for men and money to support an army
- 15) The *main* weakness of the government of the United States under the Articles of Confederation was that the government
- 1) depended too heavily on the military for support
 - 2) did not have enough power to rule effectively
 - 3) gave larger states more power than smaller states
 - 4) had no authority to borrow or coin money
- 16) A major reason why the Articles of Confederation were abandoned as a basis for government is that the Articles
- 1) placed too many restrictions on the activities of individual citizens
 - 2) denied citizens the right to vote directly for Senators
 - 3) denied state governments the right to regulate trade within the states
 - 4) did not give the Federal Government enough power to rule effectively