A More Perfect Union

A Teacher’s Guide with Historical Background and Lesson Plans

Colonial Williamsburg®
“Temple of Liberty,” engraved by James Trenchard, in *Columbian Magazine, or Monthly Miscellany* 2, no. 1 (January 1788): frontispiece. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Rare Book and Special Collections Division. This allegorical scene depicts Concordia (standing), Clio (sitting, writing in open book), and Cupid (standing, holding the Constitution) in front of a thirteen-column temple labeled “Sacred to Liberty Justice and Peace.”
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Signed copy of the Constitution of the United States; Miscellaneous Papers of the Continental Congress, 1774–1789; Records of the Continental and Confederation Congresses and the Constitutional Convention, 1774–1789, Record Group 360; National Archives.
A More Perfect Union
Historical Background

The United States under the Articles of Confederation

Historian John Fiske labeled the 1780s the “critical period of American history.” The decade was a time of great peril for the young nation. America’s difficulties emerged from a complex set of changes related to the end of the Revolutionary War, rising tensions among the thirteen states, and a weak national government operating under the Articles of Confederation.

The Articles of Confederation were drafted in 1776 and approved by the Second Continental Congress the following year, but weren’t ratified until four years later. The Articles established a weak national government that left the country vulnerable and disunited. With the states protective of local rights and having little allegiance to a national government, many people insisted that the United States should be nothing more than “a firm league of friendship.” After the end of major military operations in 1781, some states began largely ignoring the Confederation government. They frequently refused to pay congressional requisitions and consistently sent to Philadelphia men of inferior talent and quality. Few people believed that a nation as large and diverse as the United States could be ruled by a strong government while simultaneously preserving individual freedoms and liberties. In the interests of stability and security, it seemed wiser to allow the states to govern their own territories with the national Congress serving as a coordinating body.

Several economic and diplomatic crises in the mid-1780s made the Articles’ shortcomings abundantly clear. At the end of the Revolutionary War, American commerce slowed considerably as military contracts evaporated and spending declined. Meanwhile, pent-up demand for manufactured goods led to a dramatic increase in imports from Great Britain. American exports, however, increased at a much less
robust pace. The resulting economic downturn led to severe deflation and made both public and private debts more burdensome. Bankruptcies, unemployment, and poverty increased throughout the nation.

Diplomatic troubles added to America’s economic woes. In July 1783, for instance, the British government closed its ports at home and in the British Caribbean to American shipping. This action delivered a double blow to the United States: it weakened the young nation’s budding maritime industries and limited its ability to export food surpluses overseas. There were also diplomatic troubles with Spain, which possessed the North American territories west of, and the navigation rights to, the Mississippi River. In 1784, Spain closed the Mississippi to American trade, a move that blocked access to the southwest territories of the United States. Because the Confederation government was weak, neither Great Britain nor Spain felt compelled to yield to American diplomatic demands to remove the damaging trade restrictions.

The Push for Reform and the Road to Philadelphia

Many American leaders began to realize that the Articles of Confederation needed to be overhauled. Fortunately, constitutional precedents for how to proceed were already in place. Soon after the Declaration of Independence was signed in 1776, the states began writing their own constitutions. This process gradually established several fundamental principles that later guided leaders in Philadelphia: 1. New systems of government should be written only by specially selected constitutional conventions, not by state legislatures; 2. The products of the conventions must be ratified by the broader population; 3. Constitutions were to be viewed as legally superior to ordinary statutory laws; and 4. Republics based on written constitutions should have a standardized structure, with a legislature, an executive branch, and an independent judicial branch.

The initial push for national reform emerged from the growing concerns of Virginians. In March 1785, representatives from Virginia and Maryland met to discuss and resolve contested navigation rights on the Potomac River, which forms part of the border between the two states. James Madison, who attended the meeting, viewed the face-to-face discussions as a model for solving the nation’s larger problems. He convinced the Virginia General Assembly to issue a call for a national convention to reform the economic and commercial elements of the Articles of Confederation. The resulting Annapolis Convention convened in September 1786. Although the convention was regarded as a failure (only five states sent delegations), its representatives called for another national convention to be held the following spring in Philadelphia. In the meantime, Madison began working on an entirely new system of government, which would later be known as the Virginia Plan.

The Philadelphia Convention (May– June 1787): Competing Plans, Competing Interests

The Constitutional Convention convened in Philadelphia in late May 1787 with twelve state delegations in attendance (only Rhode Island refused to participate). The Convention achieved such broad-based participation largely because of a popular uprising in western Massachusetts in the fall of 1786. Known as Shays’ Rebellion, the uprising involved several thousand farmers taking up arms to protest land foreclosures and the imprisonment of citizens who could not pay their debts during the hard economic times. Shays’ Rebellion raised fears across the nation that the
United States, with a central government unable to preserve peace and order, was sinking into chaos.

The various crises facing the nation were serious enough to draw George Washington out of retirement to join the Virginia delegation in Philadelphia. Washington was the most prominent delegate at the Constitutional Convention, and his popularity and prestige gave the gathering considerable legitimacy. Members recognized his importance and elected him to chair the Convention. The other delegates in Philadelphia were also men with wealth, influence, and national political experience. Nearly three-quarters of the delegates were former members of the Continental Congress, and most of the remaining representatives had served in the Continental Army.

Serious discussions began on May 29, with Edmund Randolph proposing James Madison’s Virginia Plan. The plan’s fifteen resolutions called for a radically different national government, with a bicameral legislative branch having membership proportional to each state’s population, a national judiciary, and an executive branch headed by a president selected by the legislature. Because this government would be “national & supreme” in all matters, state laws were to be subjected to congressional review and possible veto. If it had been passed without amendments, the Virginia Plan would have created, in the words of historian John Murrin, “a sovereign parliament for America.”

As they debated the details of Madison’s proposal, delegates from the smaller states grew increasingly uneasy, especially because of the proposed proportional membership of the bicameral legislature. To prevent smaller states from being marginalized, William Paterson of New Jersey offered an alternative proposal. The New Jersey Plan, as it was known, was more modest in scope than the Virginia Plan. The plan preserved the power of the states by retaining a unicameral legislature in which each state had one vote. It also gave the national government the power to tax and proposed a national judiciary and a plural executive branch (with its members selected by Congress). Thus, one month after the Convention opened, two very different plans were on the table—neither of which received a majority of support. Many delegates began to worry that the Constitutional Convention might end in failure.

Compromising Toward Our Constitution (June–September 1787)

On June 19, the Constitutional Convention rejected the New Jersey Plan by a vote of seven states to three. The small-state delegations, however, still disliked many elements of the Virginia Plan, which they believed diminished their national influence and eroded state sovereignty. The gridlock was broken on July 5 when a committee examining the powers and responsibilities of the new Congress proposed changing the Virginia Plan. The committee suggested, instead of proportional representation in both houses, equal representation for states in the upper house and proportional representation in the lower house. Known as the Connecticut Compromise (after Roger Sherman and Oliver Ellsworth of Connecticut who proposed the idea), the plan was accepted by the full Convention on July 16 on a five states to four vote, with the Massachusetts delegation divided. Several weeks later, the Convention abandoned the Virginia Plan’s proposed federal veto over state laws in return for the adoption of the
Constitution’s supremacy clause. Finally, the Convention decided to enumerate the powers of the Congress. These powers were wide-ranging, but their enumeration placed specific limitations on the legislature. Limitations were also placed on the states, including prohibitions on printing/coinage money, engaging in diplomacy, and imposing duties on commercial imports. Madison was upset by some of these compromises, but the changes led to the development of American Federalism—that unique process whereby both the states and the federal government retain significant powers and responsibilities.

There were also important compromises regarding the presidency. Many delegates were unhappy with the Virginia Plan’s proposal for a president to be elected by the legislature to a seven-year term but who was ineligible for reelection. Although many Americans were suspicious of executive power, a small group of delegates, including James Wilson and Alexander Hamilton, argued that the president should be elected independently of the legislature. This position eventually led to the creation of the Electoral College whereby the states select the chief executive.
As the debates continued into August, the importance of presidential powers grew, in part, because George Washington tacitly let it be known that he would be willing to serve. As a result, the president was given command of the military and control over diplomacy. It was during these discussions that the Convention developed the principle of checks and balances. In essence, each branch of government had a primary function, but its activities were commingled with the others to prevent any one branch from acting in isolation and without restraint. For example, the president was given a role in recommending legislation to Congress as well as a limited veto over legislation. The Senate, on the other hand, was given the task of ratifying diplomatic treaties negotiated by the executive branch.

Throughout August, many of the debates also focused on slavery. These deliberations were often heated but eventually led to a series of compromises that enabled the Convention to complete its work. Crucial problems regarding slavery remained unresolved, however, and were left to subsequent generations of Americans. The first important matter concerned representation. Initially debated in June, many southern delegates had wanted slaves to be counted fully in population figures to boost their states’ power in the new government. Realizing that slaves would never be treated as equal political citizens, northern delegates objected. Eventually, the Convention adopted the Three-Fifths Compromise, which counted five slaves as three free people in representation calculations. The rule was generally viewed as a compromise, but it actually favored the South by greatly enhancing its national power until the Civil War. Returning to the slavery issue in August, debate over the Atlantic slave trade caused additional ill will. Representatives from Georgia and South Carolina insisted that the trade be preserved intact while other delegates, such as George Mason from Virginia (a slave owner himself), condemned the commerce as barbaric. Insulted by such accusations, South Carolina’s delegation claimed that Virginians, who had the largest enslaved population in the union, simply wanted to drive up the prices of their own slaves. Unable to resolve the matter, the Convention adopted a clause prohibiting the national government from outlawing America’s participation in the slave trade until 1808. Finally, a clause was added to the Constitution that required the return of slaves who escaped to any free state. Despite the fact that many delegates opposed slavery and would not even allow the word to be used in the Constitution’s final draft, they agreed with Madison’s practical argument that, “great as the evil is, a dismemberment of the union would be worse.”

The judiciary received much less attention from the Convention, although most delegates supported the creation of a federal court system. But the Constitution’s details in Article III were so vague that the first U. S. Congress later had to pass the Judiciary Act of 1789 to flesh out the courts’ structure (such as the number of justices on the U. S. Supreme Court) and more fully lay out the role of the courts within the national legal system. The delegates in Philadelphia were also silent on the crucial issue of judicial review.

As the Convention was concluding in early September, Gouverneur Morris of New York realized that the Constitution lacked a preamble. Therefore, he drafted one almost as an afterthought. Morris asserted that the Constitution was a product not of a “firm league of friendship” among various sovereign states (as the Articles of Confederation had been) but of “We the People of the United States.” The new government’s purpose was to “form a more perfect Union,” to enable Americans to “secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity.”

On September 12, George Mason proposed inserting a bill of rights into the new Constitution. Although several state ratifying conventions would later demand additional protections for individual rights, the delegates unanimously rejected the idea. The Convention finished its work five days later. Several prominent delegates refused to endorse the final document, but thirty-nine remaining delegates signed and forwarded the new government framework to the Confederation Congress, suggesting that it should be effective after ratification by nine states.

**Debating the Constitution — Federalists vs. Anti-Federalists**

Like the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia, the year-long national debate over ratification
was a remarkable moment in American history. Throughout the United
States, Americans from all walks of life vigorously debated the wisdom of
replacing the Articles of Confederation with the Constitution.

Supporters of the new constitution adopted the name “Federalists”
to describe themselves. Their opponents eventually took the name “Anti-
Federalists.” Federalists were mainly leaders from urban or commercial
regions that frequently engaged in interstate and international commerce;
Anti-Federalists tended to be men from agrarian counties that participated
primarily in local trade. Going into the state ratifying conventions, the
Federalists had several advantages. First, they had many well-known
politicians and writers on their side, including George Washington, Benjamin
Franklin, James Madison, and Alexander Hamilton. These well-tested men
of national experience knew and trusted one another. The Anti-Federalists, on
the other hand, were generally men of local outlook and perspective. While
prominent leaders in their counties and states, they knew few fellow Anti-
Federalists elsewhere, making it difficult for them to coordinate their messages
in the national campaign to sway public opinion. Nevertheless, the Anti-
Federalists made several compelling arguments. They argued that successful
republican governments could exist only in small countries where “the feelings and interests of the people
at large” could truly be represented and where men in power would be held strictly accountable to the people.
Above all, Anti-Federalists feared that a distant and powerful central government would eventually
become hostile to the needs and liberties of ordinary people.

The Federalists countered the Anti-Federalists in several ways. In particular, Madison, Hamilton, and
John Jay wrote a series of brilliant essays defending the Constitution. Eventually published as The Federalist
Papers, these essays argued that the Constitution should be ratified because it would bring political and
economic stability to the nation while protecting the people’s fundamental liberties and freedoms. In
Federalist No. 10, for example, Madison pointed out that factions and political instabilities occur in both
small and large republics because differing opinions and interests are inherent in all human societies. The best way
to protect against faction, Madison said, was “to extend the sphere” of government, just as the Federalists

"Alexander Hamilton," engraved by E. Prud’homme, New
York, New York, ca. 1835, after a painting by Archibald
Robertson. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and
Photographs Division.
were proposing with the Constitution. In a large republic with multiple factions, no single group could dominate the government. Instead, various parties would have to compromise and accommodate others’ points of view. Thus, individual freedoms would be better protected and political stability preserved.

Ratification

The thirteen state ratifying conventions were held beginning in late 1787. In December 1787, Delaware, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania ratified the Constitution by wide margins. Georgia, Connecticut, and Massachusetts ratified in January and February 1788. By May, both Maryland and South Carolina had ratified. On June 21, New Hampshire became the ninth state to ratify, thus ensuring that the Constitution would be adopted. But the two largest states in the union—Virginia and New York—were politically divided and had not yet voted. Eventually, both states narrowly voted to ratify, largely on the promise that a bill of rights would be written to more securely protect individual liberties. By mid-1788, eleven states had ratified the Constitution. (North Carolina ratified on November 21, 1789. Rhode Island ratified on May 29, 1790.) A year later, then-congressman James Madison drafted the amendments that became the Bill of Rights. By April 1789, the first U. S. Congress and George Washington assumed the reins of power. Through crises, compromise, and statesmanship, the United States had survived its critical period and emerged “a more perfect Union.”

Glossary

adopt(s/ed/tion) — to accept formally and put into effect.

agrarian — agricultural.

amendment(s) — a change in wording or meaning in a law or bill.

Anti-Federalist(s) — an opponent of a strong centralized national government; opposed the U. S. Constitution during the debate over its ratification.

Articles of Confederation — 1781 plan establishing a limited national government in the United States. The Articles were replaced by the U. S. Constitution.

bicameral — a form of government having two legislative bodies.

Bill of Rights — the first ten amendments added to the U. S. Constitution in 1791, which protect certain individual rights and privileges, including freedom of religion, speech, press, and assembly; the right to a speedy jury trial in criminal cases; and protection against excessive bail and cruel and unusual punishment.

checks and balances — a system in which each branch of government is able to check, or control, the actions of the other branches. See also separation of powers.

commerce — the exchange or buying and selling of goods on a large scale involving transportation from place to place.

compromise(s) — a settlement of differences in which each side makes concessions.

confederation — an association of political entities for a common purpose; a group of states united under a weak central government.

Connecticut Compromise — a compromise at the Constitutional Convention calling for a two-house legislature with the lower house elected on the basis of population and the upper house representing each state equally. Also known as the Great Compromise.

Constitutional Convention — a meeting held in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in 1787 to consider changes to the Articles of Confederation. The Convention resulted in a draft of the U. S. Constitution.

delegate(s) — representative.

delegation(s) — a group of persons chosen to represent others.

Electoral College — a body of electors in each state that meets every four years to elect the president and vice president of the United States.
enumerate—specify item by item.

executive branch—the branch of government, headed by the president, that carries out laws.

Federalism—a system of government in which power is shared among the state and national authorities.

Federalist(s)—a supporter of a strong centralized national government; supported the U. S. Constitution during the debate over its ratification.

**House of Representatives**—the lower house of the U. S. Congress in which representatives are divided among the states based on the population of each state.

inalienable—in incapable of being alienated, surrendered, or transferred.

**judicial branch**—the branch of government, composed of courts and judges, that interprets and applies laws.

**legislative branch**—the branch of government that makes laws; Congress.

**New Jersey Plan**—a framework for the Constitution, introduced by William Paterson of New Jersey, that called for equal state representation in the national legislature regardless of population.

**posterity**—all future generations.

**preamble**—an introductory statement, especially the first part of a constitution or law, that states the intent of the document.

**quorum**—the minimum number of members who must be present for official business to take place.

**ratification**—official, formal vote of approval.

**ratify(ies/ied/ing)**—to approve or sanction.

**Senate**—the upper house of the U. S. Congress in which each state has two senators.

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separation of powers— the principle and practice of dividing the powers of a government among several branches to prevent abuse of authority.

Shays' Rebellion—a central and western Massachusetts uprising against taxes led by Daniel Shays in 1786 and 1787.

sovereignty—the right of a country or state to rule itself and manage its own affairs.

supremacy clause—a clause in the U. S. Constitution (Article VI, Paragraph 2) establishing the Constitution, federal statutes, and U. S. treaties as the highest form of law in the American legal system, mandating that state judges uphold them even if state laws or constitutions conflict.

term of office—the length of time a person (usually a politician) serves in a particular office.

Three-Fifths Compromise—a compromise at the Constitutional Convention that called for three-fifths of a state's enslaved population to be counted for the purposes of determining legislative representation.

unanimous(ly)—having the complete agreement and consent of all.

unicameral—a form of government having a single legislative body.

uphold—sustain or maintain.

U. S. Congress—the combined legislative bodies of the United States, that is, the House of Representatives and the Senate.

U. S. Supreme Court—the highest federal court in the United States, consisting of a chief justice and eight associate justices, which has jurisdiction over all other courts in the nation.

veto—an executive-level rejection of a bill or law submitted by a legislature.

Virginia Plan—a framework for the Constitution, authored by James Madison and introduced by Edmund Randolph of Virginia, that called for representation in the national legislature based on the population of each state.
**Time Line of Events**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date Range</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 5–Oct. 26, 1774</td>
<td>First Continental Congress</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 10, 1775–March 1, 1781</td>
<td>Second Continental Congress</td>
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<tr>
<td>1781–1789</td>
<td>Confederation Congress</td>
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<tr>
<td>1789–present</td>
<td>U. S. Congress</td>
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1776 May

The Second Continental Congress recommends that the colonies form a new government.

June 12

The Continental Congress appoints a committee to draft the Articles of Confederation.

July 4

The Continental Congress adopts the Declaration of Independence. The document itself is not signed until August 2.

July 12

The Continental Congress begins debating the Articles of Confederation.

1777 November 15

The Second Continental Congress approves the Articles of Confederation and sends them to the states for ratification.

1781 March 1

The Articles of Confederation are ratified.

1783

The Treaty of Paris is signed, officially ending the Revolutionary War. Great Britain recognizes the United States as an independent nation. European powers agree that the new nation will possess the land between the Spanish colony of Florida and the Canadian border, west to the Mississippi. Florida at this time extends west as far as the Mississippi River.

1786 January

The Virginia General Assembly calls for states to send delegates to Annapolis, Maryland, in September to discuss “a uniform system in their commercial regulations.”

August

Shays’ Rebellion begins in Massachusetts. Ends in February 1787.

September 11–14

At the Annapolis Convention, five states meet to discuss modifications to the Articles of Confederation but instead call for a meeting of all the states.
February 21  Amid calls for a stronger central government, due in part to Shays’ Rebellion, Congress approves a resolution calling for a constitutional convention to be held in Philadelphia in May.


May 29  Edmund Randolph presents the Virginia Plan, which calls for representation in a national bicameral legislature based on the population of each state. The plan suggests three branches of government: legislative, executive, and judicial.

May 30  Delegates vote on and pass the Virginia Plan while disagreeing on how the legislature would be constructed.

June 11  In a counterproposal to the Virginia Plan, Roger Sherman of Connecticut suggests that each state have a vote in the Senate and that seats in the House of Representatives be based on the number of free inhabitants in each state. In response to objections by the southern states, James Wilson of Pennsylvania proposes that three-fifths of each state’s slave population be counted for the purposes of determining representation in both houses.

June 15  William Paterson proposes the New Jersey Plan, which calls for equal state representation in a unicameral legislature regardless of population. The plan is defeated.

June 21  The delegates at the Constitutional Convention vote to create a legislature with two houses.

July 16  Delegates resolve the representation issue by voting in favor of the Great (or Connecticut) Compromise: each state would have an equal number of seats in the Senate, and state representation in the House of Representatives would be proportional by population, with three-fifths of the slave population included in a state’s total. The compromise was drafted by a committee chaired by Roger Sherman.

September 12  The Constitutional Convention debates the draft Constitution and a motion for a bill of rights.

September 17  The final draft of the U. S. Constitution is signed by members of the convention.

September 19  The text of the U. S. Constitution is published in the Pennsylvania Packet and Daily Advertiser.
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September 28</td>
<td>Congress approves the Constitution and sends it to the state legislatures for ratification.</td>
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<tr>
<td>October 5</td>
<td>Anti-Federalist essays opposing the ratification of the Constitution begin appearing in Philadelphia newspapers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>October 27</td>
<td>Essays promoting the ratification of the Constitution, later published as <em>The Federalist Papers</em>, begin appearing in New York papers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 7</td>
<td>Delaware becomes the first state to ratify the U. S. Constitution.</td>
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<td>December 12 and 18</td>
<td>Pennsylvania and New Jersey ratify the Constitution.</td>
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**1788**

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 2–May 23</td>
<td>Georgia (January 2), Connecticut (January 9), Massachusetts (February 6), Maryland (April 28), and South Carolina (May 23) ratify the Constitution.</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 21</td>
<td>New Hampshire becomes the ninth state to ratify. The U. S. Constitution is officially adopted.</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 25</td>
<td>Virginia ratifies the Constitution.</td>
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<tr>
<td>July 26</td>
<td>New York ratifies the Constitution.</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 13</td>
<td>Congress votes to begin a new government on the following March 4.</td>
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**1789**

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>February 4</td>
<td>Ballots are cast in the first presidential election, to be counted on April 6.</td>
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<td>March 4</td>
<td>The U. S. Constitution goes into effect. The first Congress convenes in New York City but is unable to achieve a quorum because most of its members are still in transit. A quorum is reached on April 1.</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 6</td>
<td>The Electoral College unanimously elects George Washington as first president and John Adams as vice president of the United States.</td>
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<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>James Madison formally proposes the Bill of Rights.</td>
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<td>July 27–September 2</td>
<td>Congress begins organizing the departments of government by establishing the Department of Foreign Affairs (later renamed the Department of State), War Department, Treasury Department, and postmaster general under the Treasury Department.</td>
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<td>September 24</td>
<td>The Judiciary Act of 1789 organizes the federal court system, including a six-member Supreme Court, an attorney general, thirteen federal district courts, and three circuit courts.</td>
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<td>Date</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 25</td>
<td>Congress submits twelve proposed constitutional amendments to the states for ratification.</td>
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<td>November 21</td>
<td>North Carolina ratifies the Constitution.</td>
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<td>1790 February 2</td>
<td>The U. S. Supreme Court holds its first session.</td>
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<td>May 29</td>
<td>Rhode Island becomes the last state to ratify the U. S. Constitution.</td>
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<td>July 10</td>
<td>The House of Representatives votes to locate the future seat of U. S. government on a ten-square-mile site along the Potomac River, with President George Washington selecting the specific location.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1791</td>
<td>The Bill of Rights is ratified by three-fourths of the states and becomes the first ten amendments to the U. S. Constitution.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1792</td>
<td>The Bill of Rights goes into effect on March 1.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1800</td>
<td>The federal government moves from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, to Washington, D. C.</td>
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The Articles of Confederation

INTRODUCTION
With the signing of the Declaration of Independence, the Continental Congress recognized the need to establish guidelines for a new government. Congress’s overriding concern was to insure that the government was not a strong centralized body similar to British Parliament. With that in mind, the Articles of Confederation were drafted and adopted, providing the structure for governing the new nation. Unfortunately, the limitations of the Articles of Confederation became readily apparent soon after their implementation.

OBJECTIVES
As a result of this lesson, students will be able to:
1. Describe the historical events that led to drafting and adopting the Articles of Confederation.
2. Define and explain the meaning of the term confederation.
3. List the provisions of the Articles of Confederation.
4. Analyze the Articles of Confederation and identify their strengths and weaknesses.

STANDARDS OF LEARNING
This lesson meets the National Standards of Learning in the areas of chronological thinking, historical comprehension, historical analysis and interpretation, and historical issues analysis.

MATERIALS
Articles of Confederation Graphic Organizer
Student-Friendly Version of the Articles of Confederation
Articles of Confederation Graphic Organizer—Teacher Answer Key

STRATEGY
1. Remind students that in the 1770s the American colonies were attempting to break away from British rule. As a result, it was necessary for the new states to join together for their mutual survival and protection.

2. Review with students the events that led up to the drafting and adoption of the Articles of Confederation:
   • A series of actions taken by Great Britain in its North American colonies lead to colonists’ resentment, including the Proclamation Line (1763), the Sugar Act (1764), the Stamp Act (1765), the Townshend Acts (1767), the Tea Act (1773), and the Intolerable Acts (1774).
   • Events in the North American colonies further aggravate tensions between Great Britain and American colonists, including the Non-Importation Agreement (October 1767), the Boston Massacre (March 1770), the Boston Tea Party (December 1773), the Battles of Concord and Lexington (April 1775), and the Battle of Bunker Hill (June 1775).
• King George III declares the American colonies in rebellion (August 1775).
• The Second Continental Congress adopts the Declaration of Independence (July 4, 1776).
• Congress appoints a committee to draft the Articles of Confederation to create a new government for the united colonies (June 1776).
• The Second Continental Congress approves the Articles of Confederation and sends them to the states for ratification (November 1777).
• The Articles of Confederation are ratified (March 1781).

3. Give each student a copy of the Articles of Confederation Graphic Organizer. Ask students what the word *confederation* means to them. After a brief class discussion, share the formal definition:

   **confederation** — a group of states united under a weak central government.

Write the definition on the board, and have students write it in the appropriate location on their graphic organizers.

4. Give each student a copy of the Student-Friendly Version of the Articles of Confederation. Introduce students to the document by reading and discussing, as a class, the preamble and first three articles. Ensure that students understand the content and meaning of each article.

   Explain to students that the Articles of Confederation granted certain powers to the national government while giving others to the state governments. Divide students into small groups. Have half of the groups read all thirteen articles to determine the powers the document granted to the national government. Have the remainder of the groups read all thirteen articles to determine the powers that were given to the state governments.

5. Reconvene the class and have students share their findings. Have students record the findings in the appropriate sections of their graphic organizers. Take some time to ensure that students have placed information in the correct portions of their graphic organizers. Finally, answer any questions students may have, and then review the concepts and powers described in the Articles of Confederation, ensuring that students understand the natural tensions created by attempts to balance state and federal powers. [Note: For reference, see the Articles of Confederation Graphic Organizer—Teacher Answer Key.]

6. Facilitate a class discussion in which students analyze their findings, focusing on the issues and concerns regarding governing the nation under the Articles of Confederation. Answering the following questions will help students understand how weaknesses in the Articles prevented the national government from operating effectively:

   • Under the Articles of Confederation, how did the national government fund its programs?
   • What did the monetary system look like?
   • How were national laws enforced?
   • How were amendments to the Articles enacted?
   • What was necessary to pass new laws?
   • What was the role of the executive branch?

After identifying and discussing these issues, have students record the answers in the appropriate bottom section of their graphic organizers.
7. With the class, summarize what students have learned about the Articles of Confederation. What were the Articles of Confederation? When and why were the Articles written? What were the strengths and weaknesses of the Articles? What were the challenges of governing the country under the Articles?

**LESSON EXTENSION**

Have each student write an acrostic poem using the letters in the word *confederation*. Invite several students to share their completed poems with the class.
ARTICLES OF CONFEDERATION GRAPHIC ORGANIZER

State Government Powers | National Government Powers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>•</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
STUDENT-FRIENDLY VERSION OF
THE ARTICLES OF CONFEDERATION

Preamble
To everyone who reads this document, we the undersigned delegates send greeting.

Articles of Confederation and permanent union among the states of New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia.

Article I: The new nation will be called “The United States of America.”

Article II: All states are independent from one another. The state governments will retain all powers that are not specifically given to the national Congress.

Article III: The states agree to maintain friendly relationships. They will defend one another in times of trouble and protect their shared liberties and mutual welfare.

Article IV: To maintain friendly relations among the states, all free inhabitants can move among the states and conduct business therein without extra taxes. If fugitives from one state are living in another state, they should be sent back to face prosecution. All records and judicial rulings applying to individuals in one state shall be accepted by all other states.

Article V: Every year, state legislatures will send representatives to the national Congress. Each state shall send no less than two and no more than seven delegates, and each state will have only one vote in Congress.

Article VI: No state can enter into a formal alliance with any foreign power. Neither states nor Congress shall give any title of nobility to anyone in the United States. Two or more states cannot enter into their own treaty. States cannot maintain standing armies or navies without Congress’s approval. Unless invaded, no state shall wage war without permission from Congress.

Article VII: In times of war, state legislatures will appoint all officers under the rank of colonel and maintain their armies.

Article VIII: To pay for war, states will receive money from the national Treasury in proportion to the amount of land they own. The state legislatures will collect the taxes needed to fund the Treasury.

Article IX: The national Congress will have the power to:
  • declare war
  • negotiate foreign treaties
  • settle disputes between states
  • regulate currency
  • direct the operations of land and naval forces
  • borrow money from the states

Congress cannot carry out any resolution unless nine of the thirteen states agree.

Congress will have a president to organize debate for a one-year term.
Article X: A committee of the states will be given the power to run the United States during the times Congress is in recess.

Article XI: Canada will be allowed admission into the United States. Any other colony requesting admission will need nine votes in Congress.

Article XII: Congress pledges to repay any money borrowed from individual states during the Revolution.

Article XIII: All states agree to abide by the Articles of Confederation. To amend the Articles, Congress and all of the state legislatures must unanimously agree.

ARTICLES OF CONFEDERATION GRAPHIC ORGANIZER
TEACHER ANSWER KEY

CONFEDERATION: a group of states united under a weak central government.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State Government Powers</th>
<th>National Government Powers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• taxation</td>
<td>• limited powers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• create a state court system</td>
<td>• declare war and wage war</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• enforce laws passed by Congress</td>
<td>• make treaties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• all powers not delegated to the national government</td>
<td>• settle disputes between states</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• petition, or request, money from the states (but no power to collect)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• direct the operations of land and naval forces</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation

• national government cannot impose or collect taxes
• no national currency
• no national court system
• no executive branch
• no power to regulate trade among the states
• one vote per state regardless of population
• two-thirds majority (nine of thirteen states) needed to pass laws
• unanimous consent (thirteen states) needed to amend the Articles of Confederation
Forming a More Perfect Union

INTRODUCTION
By 1786, it was apparent that the weaknesses inherent in the Articles of Confederation had to be addressed. A Constitutional Convention was convened in Philadelphia for the purpose of amending the Articles. The delegates quickly decided that any attempt to revise the Articles was futile and that drafting a new constitution was the best option for governing the nation.

OBJECTIVES
As a result of this lesson, students will be able to:
1. Summarize the main provisions of the Articles of Confederation.
2. Explain why a new plan of government was needed to replace the Articles of Confederation.
3. List the major provisions set forth in the U. S. Constitution.
4. Compare and contrast the structure of government under the Articles of Confederation and the U. S. Constitution.

STANDARDS OF LEARNING
This lesson meets the National Standards of Learning in the areas of chronological thinking, historical comprehension, historical analysis and interpretation, and historical issues analysis.

MATERIALS
completed Articles of Confederation Graphic Organizer (from “The Articles of Confederation” lesson)
Summary of the U. S. Constitution
Articles of Confederation vs. U. S. Constitution Venn Diagram
Articles of Confederation vs. U. S. Constitution Venn Diagram—Teacher Answer Key

STRATEGY
1. As a class, review the main provisions of the Articles of Confederation. Have students refer to their completed copies of the Articles of Confederation Graphic Organizer on which they identified the strengths and weaknesses of the document.

2. Using the Time Line of Events (pages 16–19) as a reference, summarize for students the events leading up to the Constitutional Convention. Reinforce the fact that weaknesses in the Articles of Confederation resulted in a national government that had difficulty fulfilling its responsibilities. The Constitutional Convention was convened to address and fix the Articles’ weakness but ended up writing a constitution to create a new central government.

3. Divide students into pairs. Give each team a copy of the Summary of the U. S. Constitution. Have students read the document and note any questions they may have about it. As a class, review the Constitution’s various provisions, discuss their meanings, and identify their implications for the operation of the national government.
4. Give each student a copy of the Articles of Confederation vs. U. S. Constitution Venn Diagram. Explain that they will complete the diagram noting the similarities and differences between the Articles of Confederation and the U. S. Constitution.

Working with partners, students should use their completed Articles of Confederation Graphic Organizers and the Summary of the U. S. Constitution to complete the Articles of Confederation vs. U. S. Constitution Venn Diagram.

5. Reconvene the class and review the assignment. Take this opportunity to answer questions, clarify misconceptions, and provide additional information. Have students add new information or correct any errors they may have made. [Note: For reference, see the Articles of Confederation vs. U. S. Constitution Venn Diagram—Teacher Answer Key.]

6. Facilitate a general discussion to summarize the material that students have studied up to this point. Ensure that students understand the importance of the U. S. Constitution to the overall organization and operation of the U. S. government and in what ways the U. S. Constitution corrected the failings of the Articles of Confederation.

LESSON EXTENSION

Have each student assume the role of a delegate to the Constitutional Convention. In a letter to the editor of a newspaper in that delegate’s home state, the student should write a persuasive argument supporting ratification of the U. S. Constitution and explaining how it corrects the weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation. How will the Constitution improve the national government of the United States?
**SUMMARY OF THE U. S. CONSTITUTION**

**Preamble**
We the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure peace in our nation, provide for our defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and all future generations, do authorize and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

**Article I**
Congress is divided into two bodies—the Senate and the House of Representatives. Each state has two senators. The number of representatives is determined by the population of each state, with each slave counting as three-fifths of a person. Congress will be given the power to:
- borrow money
- regulate trade among the states and with foreign nations and Native American nations
- coin money and regulate its value
- create a postal system
- declare war
- raise and support an army and provide a navy
- confirm appointments to the U. S. Supreme Court
- ratify treaties
- make all laws “necessary and proper” for Congress to use its powers

**Article II**
The executive branch, limited to four-year terms, is headed by the president and the vice president. The president has the power to:
- act as commander in chief of the American armed forces
- negotiate treaties and alliances with foreign governments
- nominate U. S. Supreme Court justices
- approve or veto bills passed by Congress
- pardon criminals convicted of federal crimes
- address Congress regarding the state of the union
- assemble a cabinet of advisors

**Article III**
The judicial system will be led by the U. S. Supreme Court of nine justices. Each justice will be appointed by the president and confirmed by the senate. The federal court has the power to:
- settle disagreements between people in different states or settle disputes between the states themselves
- hear cases involving government officials such as ambassadors and legislators
- create additional lower courts

**Article IV**
States must recognize the rights and responsibilities of other states. Specifically:
- citizens in one state are entitled to the same “privileges and immunities” as citizens in all other states
- criminals who flee a state must be returned to the original state to face trial
- slaves who escape to a non-slave state are not considered free and are returned to their original owners
New states are allowed to join the Union, and Congress will control all land not controlled by the states.

**Article V**
The Constitution was made to be amended by approval of:
- two-thirds of both the House of Representatives and the Senate or
- two-thirds of the states
Three-fourths of the states must agree on the changes in state conventions.

**Article VI**
All debts owed by the previous government will be assumed by the Republic. Also, other provisions had to be made to ensure the responsible operation of the governing bodies:
- any laws made at the national level are more important than all others, and all of the state governments must obey the U. S. Constitution
- all government officials must take an oath of office, but there will be no religious test to hold office

**Article VII**
For the Constitution to take effect, at least nine of the thirteen states must ratify. States must hold ratification conventions to determine whether or not they will accept the new federal government.
ARTICLES OF CONFEDERATION VS. U. S. CONSTITUTION
VENN DIAGRAM

DIRECTIONS: Consider the structure of our national government as you contrast the Articles of Confederation with the U. S. Constitution. Complete the Venn diagram using the following phrases:

- two-house legislature (Senate and House of Representatives)
- no judicial branch
- majority vote in both houses required to pass laws
- judicial branch with a Supreme Court
- one-house legislature (Congress)
- unanimous vote required to pass laws
- two votes for each state in Senate; proportional representation in the House
- each state has one vote, regardless of population
- no executive branch
- executive branch with a president and vice president

Articles of Confederation

1. both are constitutions
2. both united the separate states
3. both had legislatures
4. both passed laws

U. S. Constitution

1. both are constitutions
2. both united the separate states
3. both had legislatures
4. both passed laws
5.
ARTICLES OF CONFEDERATION VS. U. S. CONSTITUTION
VENN DIAGRAM—TEACHER ANSWER KEY

Articles of Confederation

1. one-house legislature (Congress)
2. no judicial branch
3. no executive branch
4. each state has one vote, regardless of population
5. unanimous vote required to pass laws

U. S. Constitution

1. both are constitutions
2. both united the separate states
3. both had legislatures
4. both passed laws
5. two-house legislature (Senate and House of Representatives)
6. judicial branch with a Supreme Court
7. executive branch with a president and vice president
8. two votes for each state in Senate; proportional representation in the House
9. majority vote in both houses required to pass laws
The Battle for Ratification

INTRODUCTION
In 1787 the Constitutional Convention meeting in Philadelphia reached closure on a new Constitution and agreed to submit it to the states for ratification. Ratification by two-thirds of the states was required for it to become the law of the land. (Since Rhode Island did not participate in the Convention, nine of the twelve states had to ratify.) The differences between the Articles of Confederation and the new Constitution, combined with the needs and wishes of the states in different regions of the country, set up a lively and important debate. The Federalists favored a strong central government; the Anti-Federalists supported the continuation of a weak central government, with the majority of power held by the states. The Anti-Federalists also argued that the Constitution did not truly protect individual rights. The intense debates over the opposing views of the Federalists and Anti-Federalists ultimately resulted in the Bill of Rights (1791) and a stronger Republic.

OBJECTIVES
As a result of this lesson, students will be able to:
1. Identify the differing positions of the Federalists and Anti-Federalists on specific issues related to the U. S. Constitution.
2. Explain the conflict surrounding the ratification of the U. S. Constitution.
3. Describe the ratification process for the U. S. Constitution.

STANDARDS OF LEARNING
This lesson meets the National Standards of Learning in the areas of historical comprehension, historical analysis and interpretation, and historical issues analysis and decision making.

MATERIALS
Articles of Confederation vs. U. S. Constitution Comparison Chart — Teacher Reference
Federalist and Anti-Federalist Positions Chart
Federalist and Anti-Federalist Position Cards
The States Ratify the U. S. Constitution
Political Print—“The Federal Edifice” (for use in the Lesson Extension)

STRATEGY
1. Refresh students’ memories regarding the reasons for creating the U. S. Constitution. Using information learned in Lesson One and Lesson Two, facilitate a class discussion in which students summarize the portions of the new Constitution that were meant to correct deficiencies in the Articles of Confederation. [Note: To help guide the class discussion, see the Articles of Confederation vs. U. S. Constitution Comparison Chart — Teacher Reference.]

2. Explain to students that during the Constitutional Convention there were intense debates and many disagreements over aspects of the proposed Constitution and the powers to be given to a new federal government. There were two opposing sides: the Federalists who supported ratification of the Constitution and Anti-Federalists who opposed its ratification.
Display an overhead transparency of the Federalist and Anti-Federalist Positions Chart. Using a piece of paper to cover the body of the chart, reveal one pair of entries at a time and discuss the basic differences between the Federalists and Anti-Federalists. Take whatever time is needed to ensure that students understand the differences between the Federalists and Anti-Federalists relative to the structure, duties, and responsibilities of the new federal government as laid out in the Constitution.

3. Divide students into eight groups. Give each group a set of Federalist and Anti-Federalist Position Cards. Have each group examine the position cards and decide whether each statement is a Federalist or an Anti-Federalist point of view. In the space to the right of each card, have them write a letter “F” for Federalist or a letter “A” for Anti-Federalist.

On the board, flip chart, or sheet of butcher paper, create a T-chart. Label one column “Federalist” and the other column “Anti-Federalist.” Have one group at a time place a position card in a column and explain why they think it belongs there. Once all eight groups have placed a position card on the chart, hold a class discussion asking students if they agree or disagree with the placement of the cards. If necessary, move position cards accordingly. When placed correctly, there should be four cards in each column as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Federalists</th>
<th>Anti-Federalists</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>James Madison</td>
<td>Patrick Henry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexander Hamilton</td>
<td>Thomas Jefferson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Washington</td>
<td>Elbridge Gerry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Jay</td>
<td>George Clinton</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Debrief the class by answering any remaining questions, clarifying misconceptions, and ensuring that students understand how the positions taken by both Federalists and Anti-Federalists align with their basic philosophies on government and government power. Explain to students that the disagreements, controversies, and extended debates at the Constitutional Convention carried over to the individual state ratifying conventions.

5. Display an overhead transparency of The States Ratify the U. S. Constitution. Facilitate a class discussion in which students respond to the following questions:
   • How long did it take for the first nine states to ratify the U. S. Constitution?
   • Which state was the ninth to ratify, making the Constitution official?
   • How long did it take for the remaining four states to ratify?
   • Why do you think it took so long to complete the ratification process?

LESSON EXTENSION

Display the Political Print—“The Federal Edifice” for students. Explain that this political print appeared in a Boston, Massachusetts, newspaper on August 2, 1788. As a class, examine the image and its accompanying text, and then discuss their meaning. What is the issue to which the image and poem refer? What are the two sides of the issue? What do the pillars represent? Why are two pillars not yet standing? Which side of the issue does this image and poem support and why?

If desired, extend the activity further by having students create their own political prints either supporting or opposing the ratification of the U. S. Constitution.
## ARTICLES OF CONFEDERATION VS. U. S. CONSTITUTION
### COMPARISON CHART—TEACHER REFERENCE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall Structure</th>
<th>Articles of Confederation</th>
<th>U. S. Constitution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a loose confederation of states; “a firm league of friendship with each other”</td>
<td>a firm union of the people in which the national government is supreme; “We the People”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Executive</th>
<th>none</th>
<th>president; separation of powers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National Judiciary</th>
<th>no court system</th>
<th>federal court system, including a Supreme Court</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legislature</th>
<th>unicameral</th>
<th>bicameral (House of Representatives and Senate)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Powers of Congress</th>
<th>declare war, make treaties, establish a postal system, regulate currency, borrow money from the states, and settle disputes between states</th>
<th>declare war, ratify treaties, establish a postal system, borrow money, coin money and control its value, regulate trade between the states and with foreign nations and Native American nations, raise and support an army and provide a navy, confirm appointments to the Supreme Court, and make all laws “necessary and proper” for Congress to use its powers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Representation in Congress</th>
<th>between two and seven members per state</th>
<th>two senators per state; representatives in the House of Representatives determined by population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legislators’ Terms of Office</th>
<th>one year</th>
<th>two years for representatives; six years for senators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Voting in Congress</th>
<th>one vote per state</th>
<th>one vote per representative or senator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process for Ratification or Amendment</th>
<th>unanimous approval of the states</th>
<th>approval by three-fourths (nine) of the states</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

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## FEDERALIST AND ANTI-FEDERALIST POSITIONS CHART

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Federalist Positions</th>
<th>Anti-Federalist Positions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>view the Articles of Confederation as weak and ineffective</td>
<td>view the Articles of Confederation as a good plan; believe they need to be amended, not abandoned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>support ratification of the Constitution</td>
<td>oppose ratification of the Constitution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>favor a strong central government; believe the national government needs to be strong to work properly</td>
<td>favor a limited federal government; believe a strong national government threatens state power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>believe a strong executive branch is necessary</td>
<td>believe a strong executive branch will soon become a monarchy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>believe the Constitution protects the rights of the people</td>
<td>believe the Constitution favors wealthy men and preserves their power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>view a bill of rights as unnecessary</td>
<td>view a bill of rights as necessary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>support the two-thirds ratification plan</td>
<td>oppose the two-thirds ratification plan; favor unanimous consent of the states</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
JAMES MADISON
A strong national government is necessary to protect the minority from the majority. Within states, it is easy for those in power to oppress those who are not. If we spread power across states to the national level, we can ensure that the interests of all the people are addressed.


ALEXANDER HAMILTON
The Constitution will not allow a tyrannical government to long survive. If a tyranny develops, the people have several ways within the law to remove an oppressive leader from power. In Great Britain, the king is inviolable. In America, the president is not.


GEORGE WASHINGTON
The Constitution is not perfect. No one expects it to be. The amendment process will give future generations the ability to correct the problems we cannot foresee. The people will have the power to change their own government for the better. Amending the Constitution is a powerful tool, and we must take great care to ensure that the proper procedure is followed. Otherwise, our free and open government will crumble to the ground.


JOHN JAY
The Confederation cannot effectively deal with our foreign relations. The problems with Britain and the Barbary pirates reflect the Articles’ inability to cope with foreign problems. But our problems are not limited to foreign affairs. At home, we must address currency regulation, fill our national treasury, and prevent conflicts between the states. Only a strong national government can achieve our aims.

THOMAS JEFFERSON
Today we may be protected from government abuse and encroachment on our rights. But what will happen to future generations? It is inevitable that some government leaders will become corrupt and deny the people their natural rights. Without a bill protecting the rights of the people, the Constitution will set a course for ruin.


PATRICK HENRY
The Constitution will inevitably give the president the power of a king. His office is untested, and we cannot safely say that he will not abuse his power. The federal government has far too much power, and the states will not be strong enough to check an abusive national government. If we are not fully certain that the Constitution will succeed, we cannot think of threatening our Republic with tyranny.


ELBRIDGE GERRY
Under the Constitution, the legislature has too much ambiguous power. There is no security for the right of the people to participate in free and fair elections, and it is inevitable that the president will have undue influence over the powers of Congress. The courts, too, will tend to oppress the people. The government is not federal, but national. Before we adopt it, we must amend the Constitution to prevent an abuse of power and infringement on our liberties.


GEORGE CLINTON
Our current form of government cannot long survive. We must act to preserve the union of states. But, as written, the federal Constitution will give our national leaders unchecked power. What is to stop them from usurping the rights and needs of their very supporters? The Constitution will provide for an effective government only if we can expect a bill of rights to be added upon ratification.

# THE STATES RATIFY THE U. S. CONSTITUTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ratification Date</th>
<th>State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>December 7, 1787</td>
<td>Delaware</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 12, 1787</td>
<td>Pennsylvania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 18, 1787</td>
<td>New Jersey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 2, 1788</td>
<td>Georgia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 9, 1788</td>
<td>Connecticut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 6, 1788</td>
<td>Massachusetts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 28, 1788</td>
<td>Maryland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 23, 1788</td>
<td>South Carolina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 21, 1788</td>
<td>New Hampshire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 25, 1788</td>
<td>Virginia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 26, 1788</td>
<td>New York</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 21, 1789</td>
<td>North Carolina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 29, 1790</td>
<td>Rhode Island</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The U. S. Constitution is officially ratified!
On the erection of the Eleventh Pillar of the great national Dome, we beg leave most sincerely to felicitate "our dear count:"

Rise it will.

The foundation good—it may yet be saved.

The Federal Edifice.

Eleven Stars, in quick succession rise—
Eleven Columns strike our wond'ring eyes,
Soon o'er the whole, shall swell the beauteous Dome,
Columbia's boast—and Freedom's hallow'd home.
Here shall the arts in glorious splendour shine!
And Agriculture give her stores divine!
Commerce repl'd, dilute us more than gold,
And this new world, teach Wisdom to the old—
Religion here shall fix her blest abode,
Array'd in mildness, like its parent God!
Justice and Law shall still PEACE maintain,
And the "Saturnian Age," return again.

Evaluation Activity

INTRODUCTION
During the ratification process, both supporters and opponents of the new U. S. Constitution took every available opportunity to promote their positions. The Federalists supported the Constitution by touting that it corrected the many weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation. The Anti-Federalists expressed concern that the Constitution vested too much power in the national government at the expense of the states. This intense debate between Federalists and Anti-Federalists took place throughout the country as state legislatures discussed whether or not to ratify the Constitution and the government structure it created.

OBJECTIVES
As a result of this activity, students will be able to:
1. Summarize the Federalist and Anti-Federalist positions relative to the ratification of the U. S. Constitution.
2. Identify the specific arguments that were used to support and oppose ratification of the Constitution.
3. Create posters illustrating the arguments both for and against ratification of the Constitution.

STANDARDS OF LEARNING
This activity meets the National Standards of Learning in the areas of historical comprehension, historical analysis and interpretation, and historical issues analysis and decision making.

MATERIALS
Federalist and Anti-Federalist Positions Chart (from Lesson Three)
poster board or sheets of white paper (provided by the teacher)
art supplies (provided by the teacher)

STRATEGY
1. Using the Federalist and Anti-Federalist Positions Chart (from Lesson Three) as a reference, briefly review the arguments supporting and opposing ratification of the U. S. Constitution.

2. Divide the class into pairs. Give each student a piece of poster board or a sheet of white paper.

3. Have each team create two posters, one promoting ratification of the U. S. Constitution (Federalist viewpoint) and one against ratification (Anti-Federalist viewpoint). Each poster must include:
   • a title
   • an illustration
   • a clear position statement either supporting or opposing ratification of the Constitution
   • three or more arguments supporting the position being stated

4. Provide time for student teams to present their work to the class, or display the poster sets around the classroom.
We would enjoy copies of some of your students’ work from any of the lesson plans in this teacher’s guide. If you care to share examples, please send them to:

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