

The Road to the U.S. Constitution

How the Articles of Confederation paved the way

Benchmarks

SS.7.C.1.5 Identify how the weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation led to the writing of the Constitution.



The First Constitution (The Articles of Confederation)

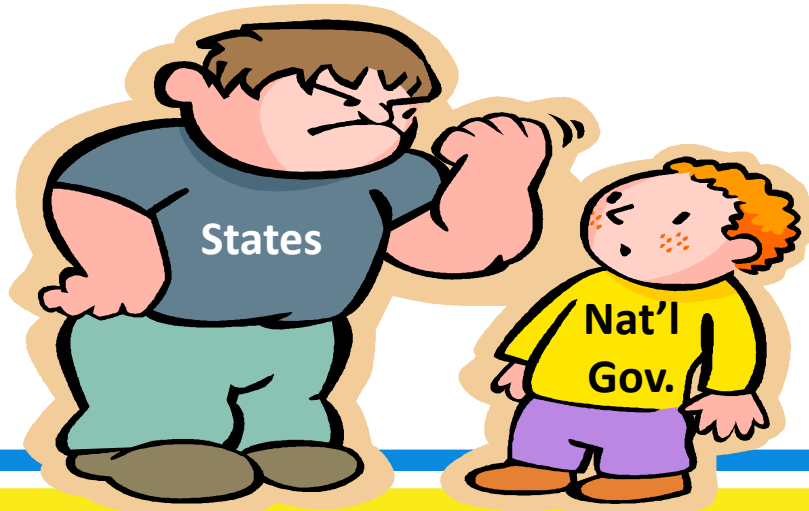
- After the Revolutionary War, the United States needed to develop some form of government system.
- The Articles of Confederation, written by the Founders in 1777, would serve as the first constitutional agreement among the 13 states.

Confederation

- The United States began as a **confederation**.
- A **confederation** is...
 - A group or league of independent states or nations united for a common purpose
- The Articles of Confederation created a **nation of pre-existing states** with a very weak central government.

Articles of Confederation

- Under the Articles of Confederation, the **state governments** retained most of the **power**.
- The **central or national government** commanded **little respect** and was not able to accomplish much because it had **little jurisdiction/power over states** or individuals.



On your handout, explain how each weakness of the Articles of Confederation would be problematic for the new government of the United States.

WEAKNESSES OF THE ARTICLES

National Government Could Not Tax

Problem

Congress could not
collect taxes.



Implication

No taxes=no
money to run
the country.
States would
not support the
national
government.

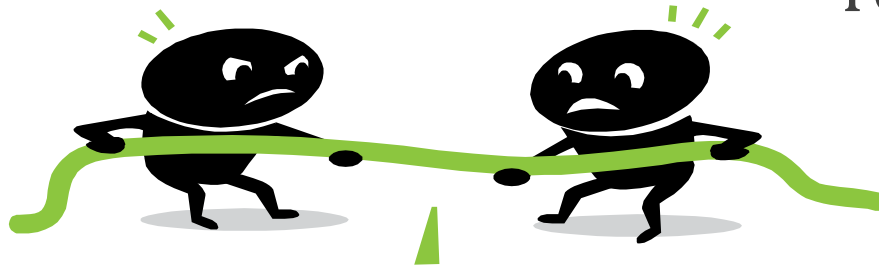
No regulation of trade

Problem

National government could not regulate trade **between states.**

Implication

States had their own trading practices and regulations with other states. This created slow and tense trade relationships.



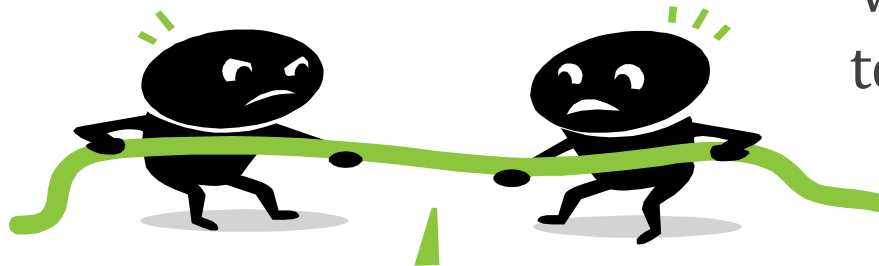
No regulation of trade

Problem

Congress could not regulate **foreign** trade/commerce.

Implication

States were entering individually into trade agreements with foreign nations. If states did not uphold their end of the trade, it would create a tense situation.



No Executive Branch- No Enforcement Power

Problem

Congress had no power to **enforce its own laws** in the states

Implication

People in various states doing what they want; no consistency throughout the states.



No Judicial Branch

Problem

There was **no judicial branch**; no separate, national court system



Implication

- No court system to handle national/federal level issues
- Interstate issues would have **no courts** to go to on the federal level
- Federal laws but no federal courts?
- No checks and balances

No Executive Branch

Problem

There was **no separate executive branch** for the central government

Implication

- National government was powerless to enforce any laws it passed;
- No President
- No checks and balances



Article Failures- required a unanimous vote to make changes

Problem

The Articles
required a
unanimous vote
(13 states) to
make changes to
the Articles

Implication

This made it nearly impossible to make changes to the Articles; it could not be changed to match the current needs of the people



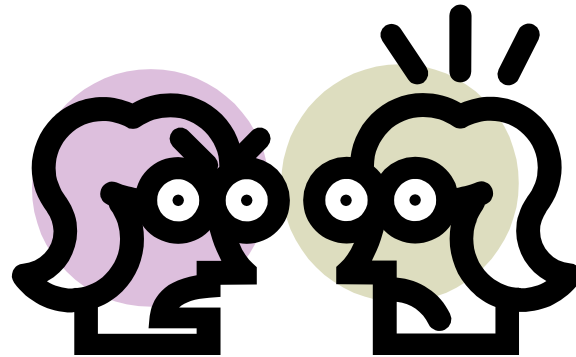
Shays' Rebellion

- A postwar depression had left many small farmers unable to pay their **debts** and threatened with mortgage foreclosures.
- In western Massachusetts, a small band of farmers led by Captain Daniel Shays undertook a series of armed attacks on courthouses to prevent judges from foreclosing on farms.



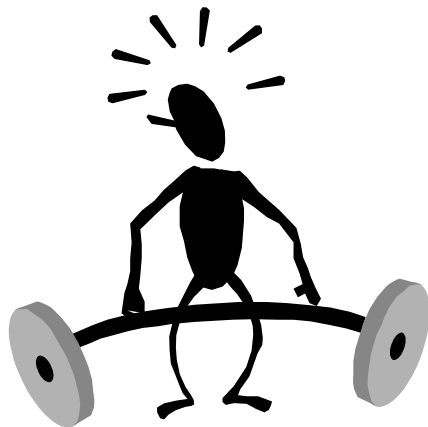
Shays' Rebellion

- Shays' Rebellion was the fiercest outbreak of public discontent in the new nation and **demonstrated the weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation.**
- The rebellion convinced many states of the need for a stronger central government.



Change is Needed

- As the economic and military weaknesses became apparent, people began asking for changes to the Articles of Confederation that would create a stronger national government.



Click the image to view History Channel's video on Shay's Rebellion

<https://www.history.com/topics/early-us/articles-of-confederation-video>



<http://www.history.com/topics/shays-rebellion/videos/america-gets-a-constitution?m=528e394da93ae&s=undefined&f=1&free=false>

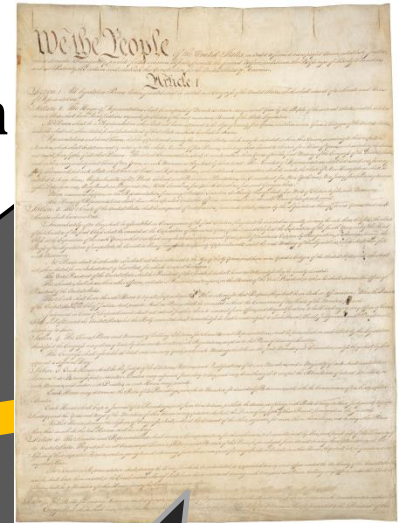
Constitutional Convention



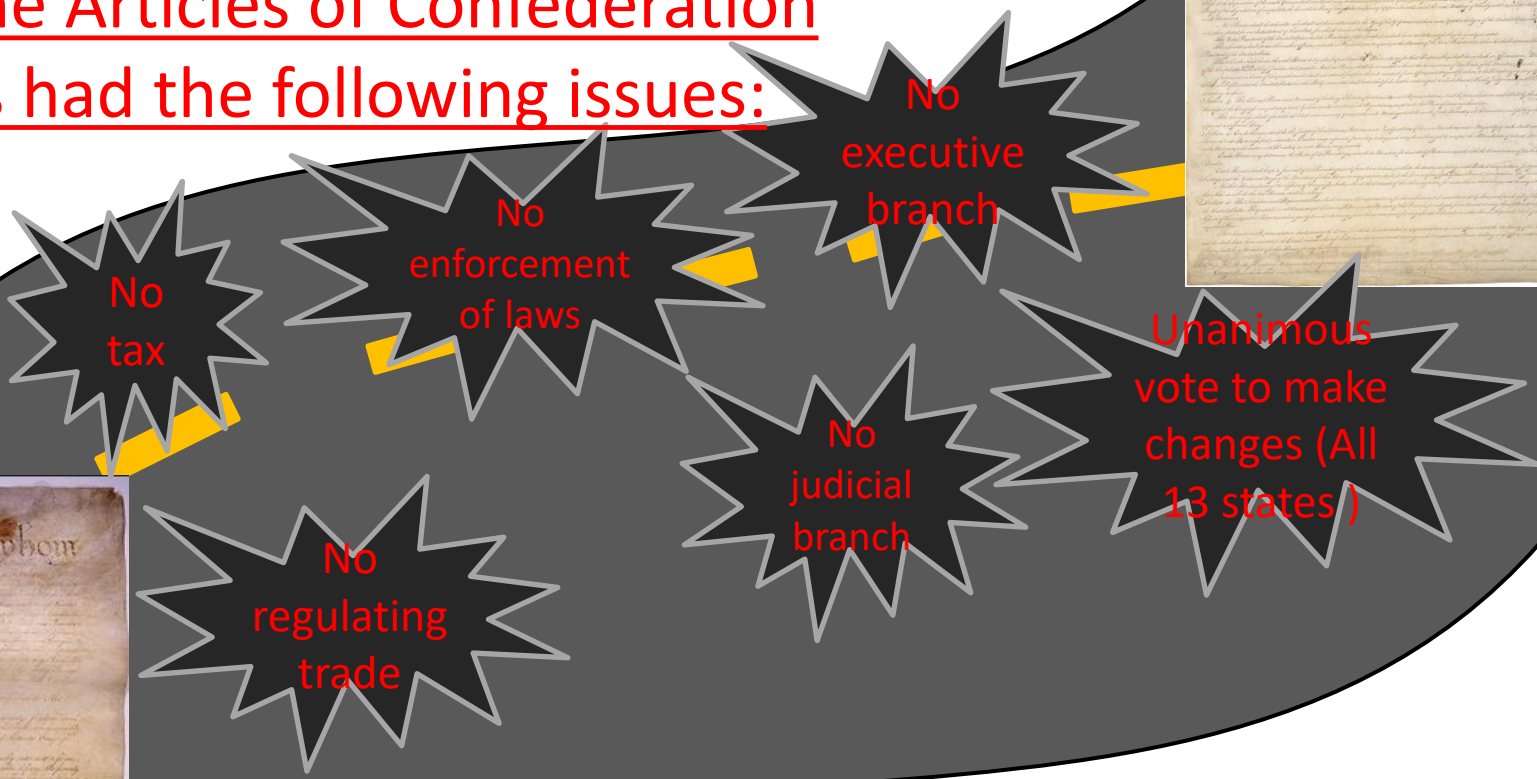
- The intended purpose of the Constitutional Convention was to revise the Articles of Confederation
- In 1787, the 55 delegates to the meeting debated abandoning the Articles and would ultimately discard them in favor of writing what would be the Constitution of the United States.

The Road to the Constitution

U.S. Constitution



Under the Articles of Confederation congress had the following issues:



Articles of Confederation

Constitutional Convention

- By abandoning the Articles of Confederation, the delegation would write The U.S. Constitution:
 - Created the 3 branches of government
 - Addressed the issue of states rights
 - Implemented a system for changing, or amending, the Constitution that did not require a unanimous vote
 - Protected the rights of the people
 - Gave power to the federal government to tax, regulate trade, enforce national laws, and more

Checking for Understanding

How did the U.S. Constitution solve a problem created by the Articles of Confederation?

- ~~A. It avoided the issue of states' rights.~~
- ~~B. It allowed the states to elect representatives.~~
- ~~C. It prevented the amendment of federal laws.~~
- D. It enabled the federal government to collect taxes.