

# 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)

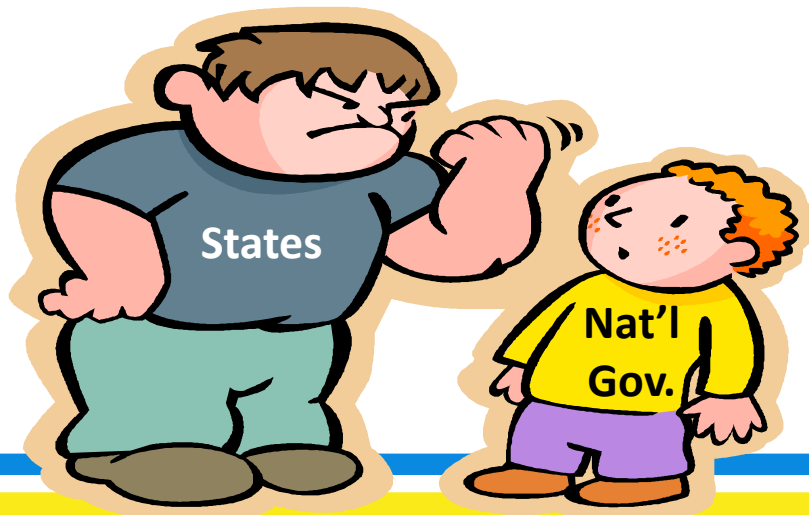
- After the Revolutionary War, the United States needed to develop some form of government system.
- The Articles of Confederation, written by the Founders in 1777, would serve as the first constitutional agreement among the 13 states.

# 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.

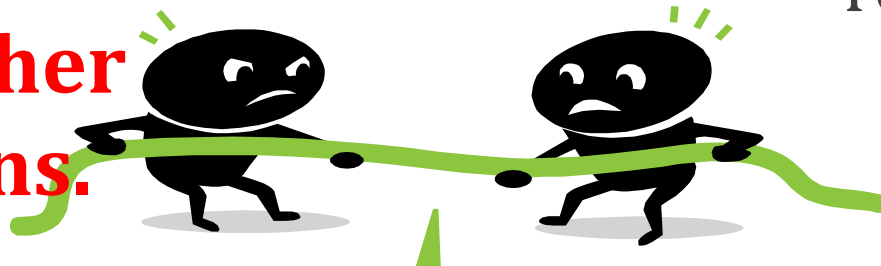
# No regulation of trade

## Problem

National government could not regulate trade between states- **Or** between the U.S. and other nations.

Implication

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



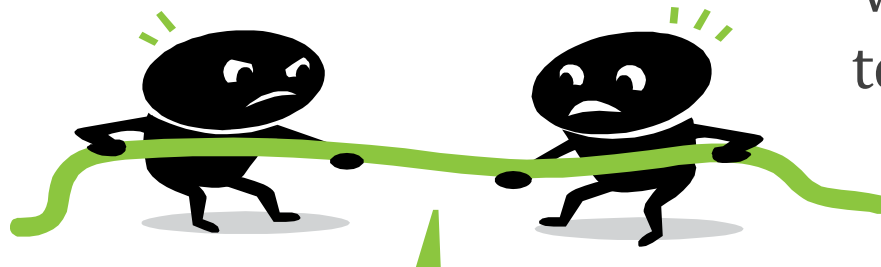
# No regulation of trade

## 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 of Confederation **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



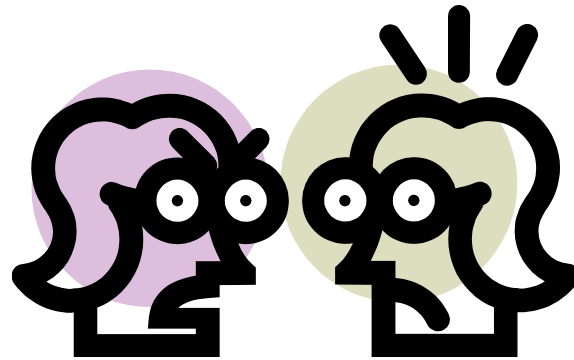
# Shays' Rebellion

- 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>



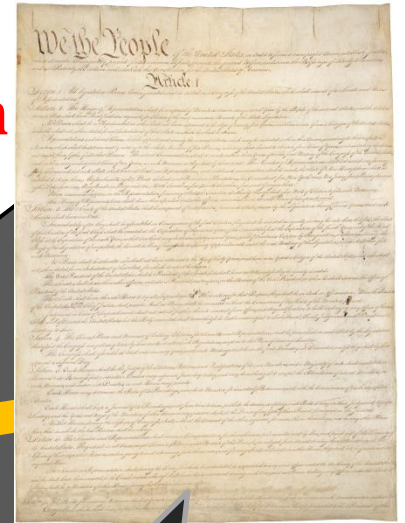
# Constitutional Convention



- 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:

No tax

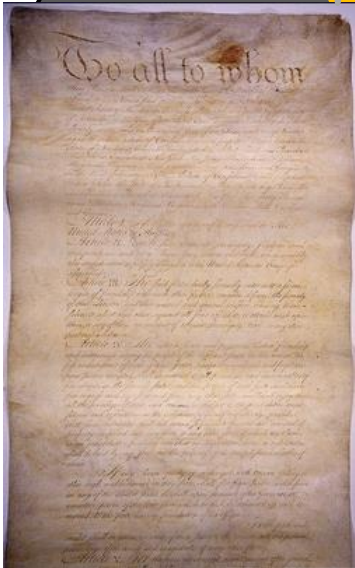
No enforcement of laws

No executive branch

Unanimous vote to make changes (All 13 states)

No judicial branch

No regulating trade



## 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.