

Chapter Summary

A More Perfect Union

Lesson 1 *The Articles of Confederation*

- In 1776, the Second Continental Congress asked the 13 original states to organize their governments. Each state adopted a constitution, and most states set up two-house, or bicameral, legislatures.
- Americans agreed that the country should be a republic, a government in which citizens rule through elected representatives. The Second Continental Congress adopted the Articles of Confederation in November 1777. The Articles provided for a new central government under which the states kept most of their power.
- Congress had the power to conduct foreign affairs, maintain armed forces, borrow money, and issue currency. Congress did not have the power to regulate trade, force citizens to join the army, or impose taxes. It could not pass a law without the votes of at least nine states.
- The weaknesses of the government under the Articles of Confederation became more evident as the United States encountered problems with Britain and Spain.

Lesson 2 *Forging a New Constitution*

- After the American Revolution, the United States went through a depression, a period when economic activity slows and unemployment increases. Farmers had trouble paying money requested by the states to meet the war debts. As a result, a man named Shays led a rebellion by more than 1,000 farmers in which the militia killed a small number of farmers.
- In 1787, the Constitutional Convention was called to revise the Articles of Confederation. One proposed plan, the Virginia Plan, called for a two-house legislature, a chief executive chosen by the legislature, and a court system. In both houses of the legislature, the number of representatives would be proportional to the population of each state. The New Jersey Plan called for a one-house legislature, with one vote for each state.

Chapter Summary *Cont.*

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- The states voted to base their plan on the Virginia Plan, but they had to compromise on the issue of representation. In the Great Compromise, Roger Sherman proposed a two-house legislature. In the lower house, the number of seats would be proportional to the state's population; in the upper house, each state would have two members.
- The Three-Fifths Compromise settled the issue of how to count enslaved people. Each enslaved person was to be counted as three-fifths of a free person for both taxation and representation.

Lesson 3 *A New Plan of Government*

- The Framers of the Constitution took many ideas from European political writers, especially John Locke and the French writer Baron de Montesquieu. The Constitution created a federal system of government. Under Federalism, the federal, or national, government shares power with state governments.
- The Framers divided the government into three branches. The legislative branch is made up of the House of Representatives and the Senate. The executive branch is headed by the president. The Supreme Court is the highest court in the nation and is part of the judicial branch. The Framers built in a system of checks and balances. Each branch has a way to check, or limit, the power of the others.
- Supporters of the Constitution were called Federalists; people who opposed it were called Anti-Federalists. Federalists wanted a strong central government to protect the rights and freedoms of the people. Anti-Federalists feared that a strong national government would take away the freedoms of the common people.
- By June of 1788, most states had ratified the Constitution. Virginia finally ratified it after being promised that it would include a bill of rights amendment.