

**The Constitution****Lesson 1: The Country's First Governments****ESSENTIAL QUESTION***Why do people create, structure, and change governments?***GUIDING QUESTIONS**

1. How did citizens set up governments as they transitioned from colonies to states?
2. How did the Articles of Confederation create problems for the United States?

**Terms to Know****constitution** a detailed, written plan for government**bicameral** divided into two parts, or houses**confederation** a group that comes together for a common purpose**Articles of Confederation** the first plan of government for the United States**ratify** to approve**ordinance** a law**area** a region**Ordinance of 1785** law that set rules for surveying and selling land in the Northwest Territory**Northwest Ordinance** law that set rules for governing the new territory**impact** an effect**Shays's Rebellion** armed uprising in which farmers attacked a federal building in Massachusetts**What Do You Know?**

In the first column, answer the questions based on what you know before you study. After this lesson, complete the last column.

Now...		Later...
	How were state governments different from colonies?	
	Why did the Articles of Confederation not work?	

**State Constitutions**

By 1776, American colonists were planning for independence. They knew that freedom from Great Britain would mean an end to colonial charters. The colonists would need to form new governments. New Hampshire led the way. In January 1776, its leaders wrote the first state constitution. A **constitution** is a detailed, written plan for government. Within a few years the other states had done the same.

The state governments were all very much alike. Each one had a legislature to make laws. Most of the state legislatures were **bicameral**. This means they were divided into two parts, called houses. Each state had a governor.

**Explaining**

1. Why did the colonies write state constitutions, beginning in 1776?

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# The Constitution

## Lesson 1: The Country's First Governments, *Continued*

 **Reading Check**

2. What is a constitution?

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 **Mark the Text**

3. Underline in the text why it was necessary for the states to form a government together.

 **Vocabulary**

4. What is a confederation?

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 **Visualizing**

5. The Northwest Territory is almost completely surrounded by major waterways. How would access to major waterways benefit the growth of new townships?

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The governor's job was to carry out the laws. Each state also had courts. Court judges decided how to apply the laws in cases of lawbreaking.

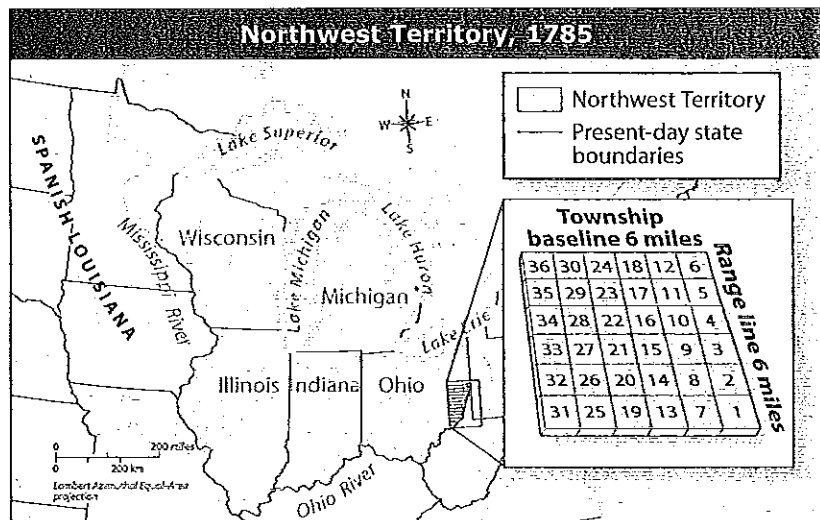
Most state constitutions also included a bill of rights. This is a list of the basic freedoms that belong to every citizen. A bill of rights guarantees that the government will protect the rights of its citizens. Some of these rights can be traced back to the Magna Carta and the English Bill of Rights.

### The Articles of Confederation

Each state was ready to govern itself when independence was declared. However, the states also needed to join together. They could not win a war against Britain with thirteen small armies. They needed one strong army under a single command.

In 1777, the Second Continental Congress wrote a plan to unite the states. It called for the states to form a confederation. A **confederation** is a group that comes together for a common purpose. The plan was called the **Articles of Confederation**. It set up a "league of friendship" among the independent states. By 1781, all 13 states had ratified the Articles. To **ratify** means to approve. The Articles of Confederation became the first constitution of the United States.

The Articles of Confederation set up a national legislature. It had one house, and each state had one vote. The legislature was known as the Confederation Congress. It controlled the army and had the power to deal with foreign countries for the United States.



**The Constitution**

**Lesson 1: The Country's First Governments, *Continued***

The Confederation Congress passed two important laws, called **ordinances**. These laws helped settle the Northwest Territory. This was an **area**, or region, that would later become Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, and part of Minnesota.

The first law was the **Ordinance of 1785**. It set up rules for measuring and selling the land. It divided land into townships six miles square. This is shown on the map found on the previous page. The second law was called the **Northwest Ordinance**, passed in 1787. This ordinance set up a plan for governing the new territory. It created a way for new states to join the Union. It also made slavery against the law in the Northwest Territory. These ordinances would have a major **impact**, or effect, on the future settlement of the West.

However, the Articles of Confederation also withheld some important powers from Congress. Congress could not enforce its own laws. It did not have the power to tax. Its voting rules made it hard to get anything done. As a result, Congress was weak and states could ignore its laws.

The powers in the Articles helped the United States become a nation. However, the new nation was in trouble. Congress was in debt and it could not collect taxes. The state governments were also in debt. They taxed the people heavily. They also taxed goods imported from other states and countries. These taxes hurt trade. As trade slowed, merchants, workers, and farmers all suffered.

<b>Weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation</b>	
<b>Weakness</b>	<b>Result</b>
The approval of nine states was needed to pass a law.	It was very hard to pass laws.
Changing the Articles required the approval of all thirteen states.	It was almost impossible to change the powers of Congress.
Congress had no power to collect taxes.	The government did not have enough money. It could ask the states for money, but not demand it.
Congress had no power to enforce laws.	Congress relied on the states to carry out its laws. It could not force the states to do so.

**? Making Inferences**

6. Why do you think Congress was given so little power under the Articles?

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**Describing**

7. What problems did the nation face after the war ended?

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**✓ Reading Check**

8. Why was it difficult to pass laws under the Articles of Confederation?

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**? Comparing**


9. Study the chart. Who had more power under the Articles, the national government or the states?

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**The Constitution****Lesson 1: The Country's First Governments, *Continued*** **Explaining**

10. Why was the Confederation Congress unable to solve the country's problems?

 **Determining Cause and Effect**

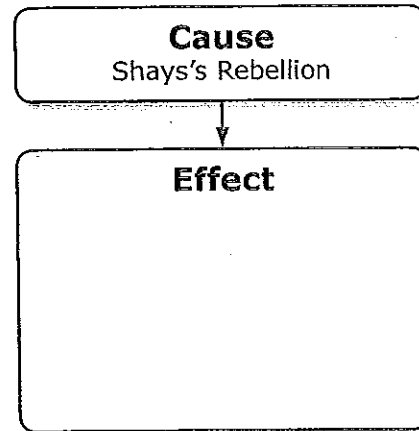
11. Fill in the effect of Shays's rebellion in the chart on the right.

**FOLDABLES**

12. Create a four-tab Foldable using a two-tab and cutting each tab in half up to the anchor tab. Place it along the dotted line. Write *State Governments* on the anchor tab. Then label the first tab *Constitution*, the second *Bicameral Legislature*, the third *Governor*, and the last *Court System*. Write the definition of each on the reverse tabs.

The Confederation Congress did not have the power to fix these problems. Americans became fearful that the government could not protect them. In Massachusetts, a farmer named Daniel Shays owed money because of heavy taxes. The state court threatened to take his farm away. In response, Shays led an army of farmers in an attack on a federal building that held weapons. The uprising became known as **Shays's Rebellion**.

Shays's Rebellion scared the whole country. People started to wonder if the government was too weak to keep law and order. Leaders began to call for a stronger national government. In 1787, twelve states sent delegates to a meeting in Philadelphia. A delegate is someone who represents others. The task of the delegates was to change the Articles of Confederation and make them stronger.



//////////////////// Glue Foldable here //////////////////////

**Check for Understanding**

Name two things that the colonies did so that they would be ready to create a new government.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

Name two weaknesses in the Articles of Confederation that made it hard for the new government to get anything done.

3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_