Chapter 5 – Forming a Government

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The Articles of Confederation

The Big Idea

The Articles of Confederation provided a framework for a national government.

Main Ideas

• The American people examined many ideas about government.

• The Articles of Confederation laid the base for the first national government of the United States.

• The Confederation Congress established the Northwest Territory.
Main Idea 1:
The American people examined many ideas about government.

- English laws that limited the power of the king were the **Magna Carta** and the **English Bill of Rights**. Magna Carta made the king subject to law (signed by King John); English Bill of Rights (declared the Supremacy of Parliament). It kept the monarchy from passing new taxes or changing laws without Parliament’s consent. Representatives had a strong voice.

- The Enlightenment was a philosophical movement that emphasized the use of reason to examine old ideas and traditions.

- John Locke believed a social contract existed between political rulers and the people they ruled. Baron de Montesqueieu believed the only way to achieve liberty was through the separation of government power.
American Models of Government

- Early models of self-government were town meetings, the Virginia House of Burgesses, and the Mayflower Compact.
- Declaration of Independence set forth the beliefs which Americans thought government should be based.
- Each **constitution** of the states limited government and protected rights of citizens. (Some banned slavery, protect the rights of those accused of a crime).
- Thomas Jefferson’s ideas on religious freedom (no person should be forced to attend a particular church or pay a church with tax money) were written in the **Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom**.
- Many state constitutions provided **suffrage**, or the right to vote, to most white men who paid taxes.
Main Idea 2:
The Articles of Confederation laid the base for the first national government of the United States.

- The **Articles of Confederation** created a national government with limited powers.
- Each state had one vote in Congress
  - Congress could settle conflicts among states, make coins, borrow money, ask states for money and soldiers, and make treaties with other nations.
  - States had the power to refuse requests (such as money or soldiers).
  - There was not a president or a national court system.
- The Second Continental Congress passed the Articles of Confederation on November 15, 1777, and sent them to each state for **ratification**.
- Claims over western lands slowed the process down. Maryland refused to ratify until the lands were given up.
- The first national government of the United States was established after the last state ratified the Articles in March 1781.
Main Idea 3:  
The Confederation Congress established the Northwest Territory.

- Congress passed **Land Ordinance of 1785** to raise money to pay debts.
- Ordinance provided for surveying and dividing western lands.
- Land was split into townships (36 square miles – 640 acres each). One lot was reserved for public school, and 4 lots were given to veterans.
- Each township was divided into lots for sale to the public.

- Congress passed **Northwest Ordinance of 1787**.
- Established **Northwest Territory** and a system for creating new states.
- Included what are now the states of Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Minnesota.
- These territories had a governor appointed by Congress. When the population reached 60,000, the settlers could write a Constitution and apply for statehood.
- Required the provision of public education and banned slavery.
The New Nation Faces Challenges

The Big Idea
Problems faced by the young nation made it clear that a new constitution was needed.

Main Ideas
• The United States had difficulties with other nations.
• Internal economic problems plagued the new nation.
• Shays’ s Rebellion pointed out weaknesses in the Articles of Confederation.
• Many Americans called for changes in the national government.
Main Idea 1: The United States had difficulties with other nations.

- Britain refused to turn over its forts in U.S. territory to American control.
- Britain closed off trade with the British West Indies and imposed high tariffs on American merchants.
- Spain closed the lower Mississippi to shipping.
Impact of Closed Markets

- Closing markets in the British West Indies caused American exports to drop.
- Cheap British goods flowed into the United States.
- The Confederation Congress had no authority to pass tariffs, or order states to pass tariffs, to help correct unequal trade with Britain.
  - States worked independently to increase their own trade instead of improving the situation for the whole country.
- American merchants were forced to look for new markets in China, France, and the Netherlands.
Main Idea 2: Internal economic problems plagued the new nation.

- The Confederation Congress had no power to regulate **interstate commerce**, making trade difficult across state lines.
- **Inflation** was a problem in many states, which struggled to pay off war debts by printing money.
  - Money was not backed by gold or silver, so it was worth less.
- Loss of trade with Britain combined with inflation caused an economic **depression**.
  - Depression is a period of low economic activity combined with a rise in unemployment.
Main Idea 3: Shays’s Rebellion pointed out weaknesses in the Articles of Confederation.

- **Daniel Shays** led Massachusetts farmers in a revolt over high taxes and heavy debt in August 1786.
- **Shays’s Rebellion** was put down by state troops in January 1787.
  - Tried to force the shutdown of the Supreme Court in Massachusetts
  - No one’s property could be taken to pay off debts if the court was closed.
- Many citizens agreed with the rebels and their cause.
  - State officials freed most of the rebels.
Main Idea 4:
Many Americans called for changes in the national government.

- Shays’s Rebellion showed the weaknesses of the Confederation government, which could not respond to Massachusetts’s call for help.
  - People saw that the ideals of liberty were not protected.
  - People called for a stronger central government that could protect the nation in times of crisis.
- The Virginia legislature called for a national conference to change the Articles of Confederation.
- The Annapolis Convention held in September 1786 failed to act.
- The Constitutional Convention was called in May 1787 in Philadelphia to revise the Articles.
Creating the Constitution

The Big Idea

A new constitution provided a framework for a stronger national government.

Main Ideas

- The Constitutional Convention met to improve the government of the United States.
- The issue of representation led to the Great Compromise.
- Regional debate over slavery led to the Three-Fifths Compromise.
- The U.S. Constitution created federalism and a balance of power.
Main Idea 1: The Constitutional Convention met to improve the government of the United States.

- **Constitutional Convention** held in Philadelphia in 1787.
- Convention leaders included **James Madison**, Benjamin Franklin, and George Washington.
- Goal was to improve the Articles of Confederation.
  - Delegates decided to create a new U.S. Constitution.
Main Idea 2:
The issue of representation led to the Great Compromise.

- **Virginia Plan** gave large states more representation because it was based on population.
- **New Jersey Plan** gave small states equal representation with large states.
- **Great Compromise** resolved issue with a two-house legislature.
- An upper house—the Senate—provided for two representatives from each state.
- A lower house—the House of Representatives—provided for representation based on state population.
Main Idea 3:
Regional debate over slavery led to the Three-Fifths Compromise.

The South

Wanted slaves to be counted as part of their population

The North

Wanted slaves counted only to determine taxes but not for representation

Three-Fifths Compromise

Resolved differences by counting three-fifths of a state's slave population
Main Idea 4:
The U.S. Constitution created federalism and a balance of power.

- Ensured **popular sovereignty**: idea that political authority resided in the people.
- Provided for **federalism**: sharing of power between states and federal government.
- Required states to obey authority of the federal government.
- Gave states control over functions not assigned to the federal government.
**Checks and Balances**

Constitution designed to balance power between three branches of government

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legislative branch</th>
<th>Executive branch</th>
<th>Judicial branch</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>to make the laws</td>
<td>to carry out the laws</td>
<td>to interpret the laws</td>
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</table>

System of **checks and balances** keeps branches from becoming too powerful

- Congress has power to pass bills into law
- President can veto laws passed
- Supreme Court can strike down unconstitutional laws
Ratifying the Constitution

The Big Idea

Americans carried on a vigorous debate before ratifying the Constitution.

Main Ideas

- Federalists and Antifederalists engaged in debate over the new Constitution.
- The *Federalist Papers* played an important role in the fight for ratification of the Constitution.
- Ten amendments were added to the Constitution to provide a Bill of Rights to protect citizens.
Main Idea 1: Federalists and Antifederalists engaged in debate over the new Constitution.

Federalists
- Supported Constitution
- Desired strong central government
- Liked balance of powers in Constitution
- Made speeches and pamphlets advocating change in government

Antifederalists
- Opposed Constitution
- Feared central government would be too powerful
- Concerned about lack of guarantee of individual rights
- George Mason became Antifederalist over rights issue
Main Idea 2: The *Federalist Papers* played an important role in the fight for ratification of the Constitution.

- **Federalist Papers**: series of essays supporting the Constitution.
- Written anonymously by Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, and James Madison.
- *Federalist Papers* argued that new federal government would not overpower states.
- Widely reprinted in newspapers around the country; influenced the Constitution debate.
Battle for Ratification

- Each state needed to ratify the Constitution.
- All states except Rhode Island held ratification conventions for citizens to discuss and vote on the Constitution.
- Delaware was the first state to ratify, in 1787, and Rhode Island was the last, in 1790.
  - New York and Virginia debated over ratification, but finally ratified.
  - Political leaders knew these states were important, since Virginia had the largest population in the nation and New York was an important center for business and trade.
Main Idea 3:
Ten amendments were added to the Constitution to provide a Bill of Rights to protect citizens.

- Several states ratified the Constitution only after the promise of a bill protecting individual rights.
- Congress responded by passing a Bill of Rights to be added to the Constitution as amendments.
- The Bill of Rights became the first ten amendments to the Constitution upon ratification by the states in December 1791.
  - Gave a clear example of how to amend the Constitution to fit the needs of a changing nation.
  - Flexibility of the Constitution has allowed it to survive for over 200 years.
The Land Ordinances of 1785 and 1787

Surveying the West
In 1785 the Northwest Territory was organized into lots that could be sold, and in 1787 a government was organized.

Each township contained 36 sections. Each section was one square mile.

INTERPRETING MAPS
1. Location Which states were formed out of the Northwest Territory?
2. Region Into how many sections was a township divided?
The United States Faces Trade Barriers

AMERICAN TRADE ROUTE
Spain closed the lower Mississippi River to U.S. shipping, hurting western trade with eastern markets.

EXPORTS TO BRITAIN
High British tariffs discouraged American exports to Britain.

WEST INDIES TRADE
Britain closed many ports to American ships.

INTERPRETING MAPS
1. Movement Along what river did trade goods reach the port of New Orleans?
2. Location Along what three routes did U.S. trade face foreign barriers?
Women's Suffrage

New Jersey allowed women to vote when it first joined the United States. This right was taken away by 1807.

Why do you think women were not allowed to vote in the early United States?
A Farmer Leads a Revolt

Daniel Shays, at the top of the steps, stands firm in the face of demands that he leave the courthouse in Springfield, Massachusetts. By shutting down the courts, farmers hoped to stop the government from selling their land.

What was the outcome of Shays’s Rebellion?
This painting shows the signing of the Constitution on September 17, 1787. James Madison, number 4 on the diagram, became known as the “Father of the Constitution” for his ideas about government and his ability to lead the delegates to agreement. Which person did the artist choose to make the focus of this painting? Why do you think that is?
**Weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation**

- Most power held by states
- One branch of government
- Legislative branch has few powers
- No executive branch
- No judicial system
- No system of checks and balances
**Virginia Plan**
- Gave more power to national government
- Bicameral legislature
- Number in both houses based on population

**Great Compromise**
- Bicameral legislature
- Number of representatives based on state populations in lower house
- Number of representatives equal from each state in upper house

**New Jersey Plan**
- Gave more power to state governments
- Unicameral legislature
- Number of representatives equal from each state
The Constitution Strengthens the National Government

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths of the Constitution</th>
<th>Weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✓ most power held by national government</td>
<td>• most power held by states</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ three branches of government</td>
<td>• one branch of government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ legislative branch has many powers</td>
<td>• legislative branch has few powers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ executive branch led by president</td>
<td>• no executive branch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ judicial branch to review the laws</td>
<td>• no judicial system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ firm system of checks and balances</td>
<td>• no system of checks and balances</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Federalists vs. Antifederalists

**Alexander Hamilton**
- Federalist
- Supported the Constitution as an excellent plan for government
- Defended his views in the *Federalist Papers*

**George Mason**
- Antifederalist
- Opposed the Constitution
- Believed the Constitution needed a section guaranteeing individual rights
Visual Summary

Use the visual summary below to help you review the main ideas of the chapter.

The Articles of Confederation
- first government of United States
- weak union of states
- weaknesses led to Shays's Rebellion

The Constitution
- framework of today's government
- strengthened national government
- three branches
- checks and balances

Bill of Rights
- first 10 amendments
- ensures basic rights