

# Unit 3

## The Problems Of The New Nation

### Chapter 15

#### The New Government Begins Work

Congress plans  
Articles of Confederation  
1777

Articles of Confederation  
ratified  
1781

Constitutional  
Convention  
Constitution  
ratified  
1787 1788

1. America's problems did not end with victory in the Revolutionary War. The people of America were now free from England, but they were not sure what kind of government they wanted.

2. While the war was going on, the Second Continental Congress acted as the government. They made laws, appointed officers in the army, made loans, and did all the things a government can do.

3. The Congress had to look ahead to the end of the war. They had to make decisions about the government of America when it became an independent nation.

4. Many of the colonies did not want a strong national government. They wanted to make many of their own laws.

5. In 1777 the Congress made a plan for governing the nation after the war. The plan, called the **Articles of Confederation**, would become law as soon as all thirteen colonies approved it.

6. The Articles of Confederation called for the states to be loosely joined together, with each state making many of its own laws. The Articles called this a **League of Friendship**.

7. A Congress was formed to govern the new states, with each state having one vote.

8. The colonists did not allow Congress to have many powers. Congress could declare war in the name of the Confederation, but it could not raise or pay an army or navy. There was no department or person set to carry out the laws made by Congress. There were no national courts. Congress had no control over trade with other nations or even trade among the states themselves. Congress had no power to tax anyone. It had to ask the states for any money it needed.

9. Some of the colonies approved the plan right away, others took longer. It was not until 1781 that all thirteen colonies **ratified** (approved of) the Articles of Confederation. By that time, the war was over and the colonies had become states.

10. Each of the thirteen states wanted to protect its own rights and freedoms. They didn't want a strong central government to take any of these rights away from them. This idea of states' rights would cause many problems later in American history.

11. Congress was very weak under the Articles of Confederation. Many members of Congress did not even bother to go to meetings. There were hardly enough members present to vote on the Treaty of Paris to end the Revolutionary War.



Sometimes men used their fists and not their heads at the Congress.

12. Other nations, such as Spain and England, saw the weakness of the American government. They quickly moved to take advantage of that weakness.
13. The Spanish stopped American farmers and fur traders from working on and around the Mississippi River.
14. England would not take its troops out of the Northwest Territory, though they had agreed to close their forts and send their men home.
15. Pirates in the Mediterranean Sea off the northern coast of Africa stopped and searched American ships. They took what they wanted from the cargoes.
16. The new government was not able to do anything about these problems. Its hands were tied by the states and the rules of the Articles of Confederation.
17. By 1787 one thing seemed clear to most Americans and to people in Europe as well. A stronger government than the one set up under the Articles of Confederation was

needed. The new nation needed a stronger government or it could not last.

### Constitutional Convention

18. In 1787, Congress called for a convention of representatives from each of the 13 states. It was to be held in Philadelphia. The people at the convention were to change the Articles of Confederation.
19. The convention was to open on May 14, but poor roads and spring storms kept the representatives from coming. It took almost two more weeks before the convention could start. Of the 73 men chosen to attend, only 55 came. Rhode Island sent no one to the convention.
20. The men worked for four months to write a new Constitution to present to the states. The work was not easy. Many of the people at the convention still believed that a strong central government was bad. They thought that a loose union of the states was necessary. They wanted the states to have the final say on most issues.
21. Others believed that a strong central government was necessary to keep the United States free and independent. They believed that the nation as a whole was more important than any of the separate states.
22. One of the biggest arguments at the convention was between the larger and the smaller states. The larger states wanted representation by **population** (the number of people in a state). That would mean that the states with more people would have more representatives in Congress.
23. The smaller states were afraid that under that system they would be ruled by the bigger states. They wanted the representation in Congress to be equal. That is, they wanted the

same number of representatives from the smaller states as from the larger.

24. The arguments grew heated. Fights broke out. Then a **compromise** was reached. Each side got part of what they wanted. There would be two houses of Congress. One would have representation based on population (the House of Representatives). The other would have an equal number of representatives from each state (the Senate).

25. The members of the Philadelphia convention held their last meeting and signed the new Constitution on September 17, 1787.

26. The people at the convention had written the Constitution. They had argued over what was in it and then approved it, but it could not become law yet.

27. Now conventions in each state would meet to **ratify** (approve) the new Constitution. Nine of the thirteen states had to ratify the Constitution before it could become law.

### **Ratification Of The Constitution**

28. The men at the Philadelphia convention had decided that only two-thirds of the states would have to ratify the Constitution. They knew that some of the states would never agree to it.

29. Rhode Island was so strongly against a central government that it did not even send a delegate to Philadelphia. The people who wrote the Constitution were afraid that Rhode Island and a few other states might never vote to ratify.

30. Delaware was the first to ratify the Constitution. Their state convention voted 30-0 to ratify on December 7, 1787.

31. In other state conventions, the votes for and against ratification were very close.

32. In Massachusetts the vote was 187-168 for ratification. In Virginia the vote was 89-79. In New York the vote was 30-27.

33. The ninth state to ratify the Constitution was New Hampshire. By a vote of 57-47 that state ratified the Constitution on June 21, 1788. It then became the law of the land.

34. In the end, all thirteen colonies did ratify the Constitution. The last to do so was Rhode Island, which passed it by a 34-32 vote on May 29, 1790. That was almost two years after it had already become the law.

35. The new Constitution called for three branches of government. They were: a **legislative** branch to make the laws, an **executive** branch to carry out the laws, and a **judicial** (courts) branch to decide if the laws were fair and legal.

36. The new central government had many powers that it had not had under the Articles of Confederation. It had the power to set and collect taxes. It could control trade between the United States and other nations, and between the states themselves. The government could print money.

37. At the same time, many rights were still left for the states.

38. The Constitution that was ratified on June 21, 1788 is the same one which governs America today, almost 200 years later.

### **Spotlight on The Authors of the Constitution**

39. Some of the same people who had approved the Declaration of Independence in 1776 worked on the Constitution in 1787.

40. Benjamin Franklin was there, as were James Madison and Roger Sherman of Connecticut.

. Alexander Hamilton of New York and Charles Pinckney of South Carolina were also here. They had not helped with the declaration of Independence, but helped a great deal with the Constitution.

. The chairman of the convention was George Washington.

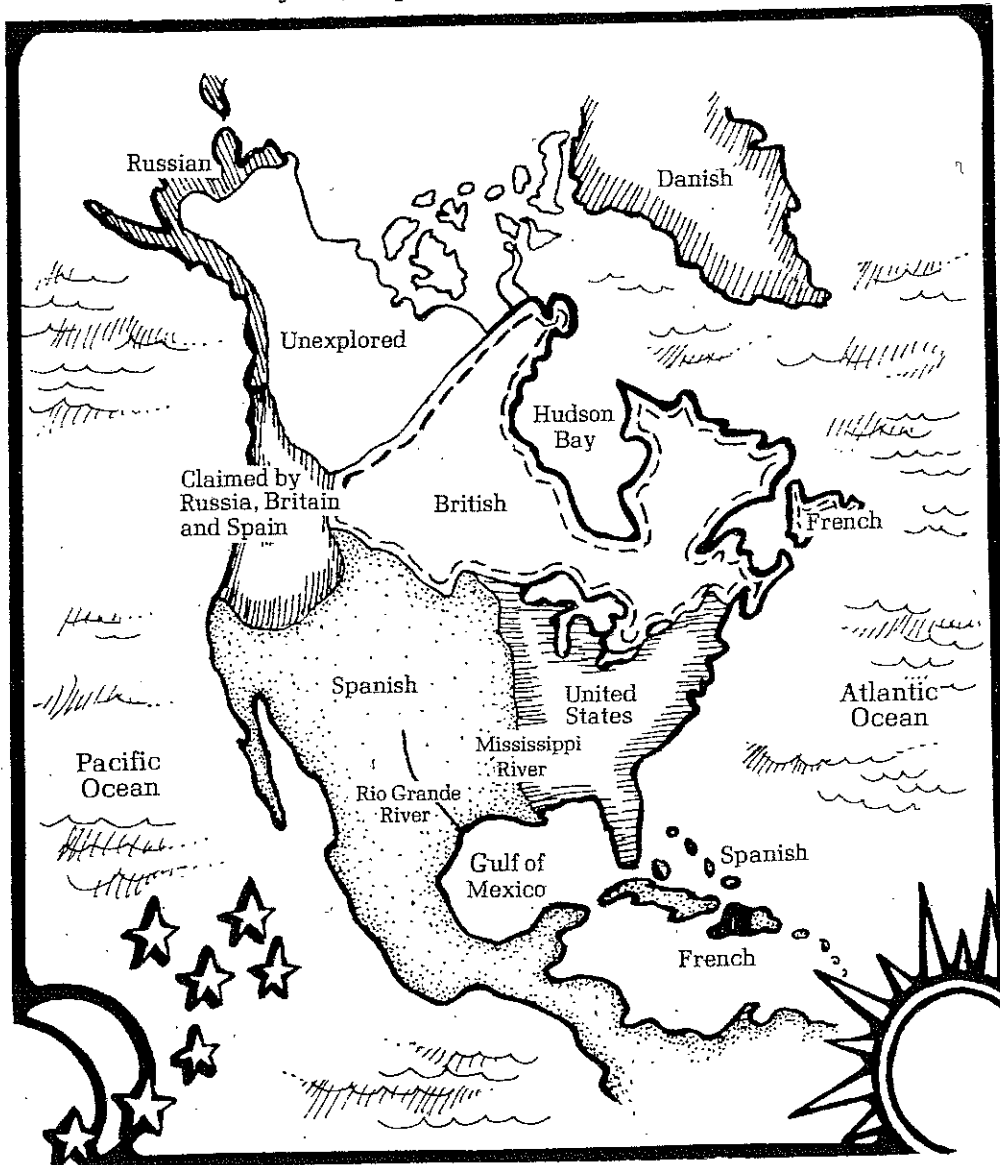
. Washington and Madison were both from Virginia. Most historians today believe that the Virginians were the most important members at the convention.

. Washington, who was trusted by all, kept

the fights to a few, even in the hottest of times.

45. Madison, only thirty-six at the time of the convention, was the man behind the **Virginia Plan**. This plan was for a new government, not just a rewriting of the Articles of Confederation. It was a blueprint that was to be accepted by most of the delegates.

46. Benjamin Franklin was over 80 years old at the time of the convention. He had to be carried to and from all the meetings. He could not take part in the discussions, but he kept the convention from breaking up many times.



North America in 1783

When tempers grew hot and fists flew, his good will and good stories calmed things down.

47. There were three main arguments at the convention. They were: 1) the representation of each state in the Congress; 2) the control of trade and other business interests; and 3) slavery.

48. The argument over representation (see pg. 88.) was finally settled by having two houses of Congress. An upper house would have the same number of representation from each state. The lower house would have representatives based on the population of each state.

49. Alexander Hamilton was one of the people who helped work out this compromise.

50. The second problem was the control of trade. Many people in the New England states and some of the middle states were in the shipping business. They wanted the central government to be able to pass laws to protect their business against foreign shippers.

51. The southern states, on the other hand, did not want to have to pay more for shipping their goods to foreign markets. A compromise was worked out in this area, as well.

52. The question of slavery came before the convention. The members did not debate whether slavery should be allowed, but how the slaves should be counted as part of the population.

53. Slaves were not thought of as people in the population, but as the property of their masters. Most of them were living in the south.

54. Taxes were paid according to how many people lived in each state. The northern states wanted to count slaves when deciding how much to tax a state. They did not want to count the slaves when deciding how many representatives could be sent to Congress.

55. The south, on the other hand, wanted the slaves counted in deciding how many representatives they would have. They didn't want the slaves counted for taxes.

56. Another compromise was worked out. A **three-fifths rule** was decided on. That is, five slaves would count as three people for deciding how many representatives and how much tax would be collected in each state.

57. The south also got a promise. The central government could not keep them from bringing in slaves for twenty years. The government would also charge a tax of no more than \$10 a head on slaves.

58. The south had wanted the Constitution to state that slavery was all right. Instead, they accepted the twenty-year promise.

59. In the end, our **Founding Fathers** wrote a Constitution that made a strong **federal** (national) government with some rights left to the states.



## Understanding What You Read



1. What is the main idea of this chapter?
  - a. America was ruled very well under the Articles of Confederation.
  - b. The Articles of Confederation called for a strong central government.
  - c. The Articles of Confederation did not work well in governing the new nation and a new form of government was needed.
  - d. Most people did not want to see the Articles of Confederation work.

My answer is \_\_\_\_\_. (17)

2. Why were some colonists not sure they wanted a strong government? \_\_\_\_\_. (4)
3. Some of the weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation were \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ . (8)

4. The Spanish took advantage of the weakness of the American government by \_\_\_\_\_ . (13).

5. The English took advantage of the new American government by \_\_\_\_\_ . (14).

6. At the convention the larger states wanted representation based on \_\_\_\_\_ . (22).

The smaller states wanted each state to have an \_\_\_\_\_ (23) number of representatives. A compromise was found. It called for \_\_\_\_\_ houses of Congress, one to have representation based on \_\_\_\_\_ and the other to have an \_\_\_\_\_ number from each state. (24)

7. Why were the delegates afraid Rhode Island would not ratify the Constitution? (29) \_\_\_\_\_

In order to ratify the new Constitution, \_\_\_\_\_ (27) of the thirteen states had to vote in favor of it. The first state to ratify the Constitution was \_\_\_\_\_ (30).

