

Tennessee Secretary of State *Civics Lesson Plans*

How the Articles of Confederation Led to the Constitution

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Grade Level: 8th

Date Created: May 2018

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Introduction:

After declaring to throw off British rule, the independent states faced the challenge of governing themselves. They needed a plan of government that would satisfy all their needs. Their first attempt at a written constitution was known as the Articles of Confederation. This lesson will explore the pros and cons of the Articles and provide students with essential background information for why they were discarded and paved the way for the Constitution that serves America to this day.

Guiding Questions:

- Would the states be able to work together and still maintain their independence?
- How would each individual state govern itself?
- What was the main reason the Articles of Confederation failed?
- What changes would need to be made to create a successful government & constitution?

Learning Objectives: In the course of the lesson, students will...

- Develop an understanding of the events, documents, and people that influenced the creation of our nation.
- Study the weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation and draw from that information to infer reasons why the country needed a stronger constitution.

- Explore those ideas and apply information to build and complete a Digital Notebook.
 - *Note: The Digital Notebook is set up in Google Slides and shared with students for them to complete.*
- Generate activities (Digital Notebook) that boost students involvement with the material covered and will produce an improved understanding to focus questions.

Curriculum Standards:

8.30 Analyze the weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation, including no power to tax, no common currency, no control of interstate commerce, no executive branch, failure of the Lost State of Franklin, and the impact of Shays' Rebellion. (C, E, H, P, TN)

8.33 Describe the principles embedded in the Constitution, including the purposes of government listed in the Preamble, separation of powers, checks and balances, the amendment process, federalism, and recognition of and protections of individual rights in the Bill of Rights. (*Note: Students need to understand that the Articles of Confederation served as the first constitution and the transformation that took place to create the Constitution*).

Materials Needed:

- Post-It Notes
- Chromebooks or Laptop/Desktop Computers (accessing Digital Interactive Notebooks... see link below)
- Link to Student Digital Notebook: <https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1dj-j1D6gNFEaRes9GBmF6wQayaU34C4Dbah9iG1KxrQ/edit?usp=sharing>

Links for Reference:

- Student Friendly Version of the Articles of Confederation: (see attached)
- Articles of Confederation (History Article): <https://www.history.com/topics/articles-of-confederation>
- Articles of Confederation for Kids: <http://government.mrdonn.org/articles.html>

Background:

Students will want to use their regular textbook for the chart completion part of this exercise. Most of the information asked for in the chart is provided in those resources. Other resources have also been provided if the textbook is not available. Basic google searches and other research can also be used if technology is available.

Lesson Activities:

1. Write “The Articles of Confederation” on the board.
2. Have students write one word or small phrase on a Post-It Note to recall what they have learned about the Articles of Confederation. Ask students to go find others that share their response and stand together. Once groups are assembled call on each group to share what they recall (Goal: to have multiple groups). Ask for one of their Post-It Notes to be placed on the board under the title. (Students return to seats).
3. Re-read the Post-It’s on the board and ask students if there is anything that needs to be added/removed. Ask & discuss the following questions:
 - *What was the main reason the Articles of Confederation failed?*
 - *What changes would need to be made to create a successful government & constitution?*
4. Explain to students that their task today will be to complete a Digital Notebook on the Articles of Confederation. Have students open their Digital Notebook and walk through each slide to explain the expectation.
5. Students will complete & then share/submit their Digital Notebook. *This can be assigned as individual, partner, or small group work. (Have students turn in paper copy if unable to access Digital Notebook)*
6. After the task is complete, have students create a list of the weaknesses of the Articles. Discuss the following questions:
 - Would the states be able to work together and still maintain their independence?
 - *What was the main reason the Articles of Confederation failed?*
 - *What changes would need to be made to create a successful government & constitution?*

Options for Extension:

- Create a Venn Diagram of the Articles of Confederation and the Constitution.
- Have students lobby for what needs to be changed in order to make the new government stronger and more successful.

Modifications for Other Grades:

6th Grade - Students can compare ancient forms of government to how the system of government was established in America. Analyze what made these early democracies successful and what caused them to fail. What cues can America take from the past to avoid making mistakes that caused their extinction?

Standards Covered:

6.48 Trace the transition from tyranny and oligarchy to early democratic forms of government and back to dictatorship in ancient Greece, including the significance of the development of the idea of citizenship. (C, H, P)

6.49 Explain how the development of democratic political concepts in ancient Greece lead to the origins of direct Democracy and representative Democracy, including: (C, H, P) the “polis” or city-state; civic participation and voting rights; legislative bodies; constitution writing; rule of law

6.63 Describe the government of the Roman Republic and its contribution to the development of democratic principles, including the rule of law (a written constitution), separation of powers, checks and balances, representative government, and civic duty. (C, H, P)

7th Grade - Students can make connections to the Enlightenment and how those thinkers impacted our Founding Fathers in the way they worded the declaration of our independence to the establishment of our government.

Standards Covered:

7.36 Conduct a short research project explaining the significance of developments in medieval English legal and constitutional practices and their importance in the rise of modern democratic thought and representative institutions including trial by jury, the common law, Magna Carta, parliament, habeas corpus, and an independent judiciary in England. (H, P)

7.56 Engage effectively in collaborative discussions explaining Protestants’ new practices of church self-government and the influence of those practices on the development of democratic practices and ideas of federalism. (C, H, P)

7.61 Trace how the main ideas of the Enlightenment can be traced back to such movements and epochs as the Renaissance, the Reformation, the Scientific Revolution, the Greeks, the Romans, and Christianity. (C, H, P) 7.62 Describe the accomplishments of major Enlightenment thinkers, including Locke and Montesquieu. (C, H)

STUDENT-FRIENDLY VERSION OF THE ARTICLES OF CONFEDERATION

Preamble

To everyone who reads this document, we the undersigned delegates send greeting.

Articles of Confederation and permanent union among the states of New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia.

Article I: The new nation will be called “The United States of America.”

Article II: All states are independent from one another. The state governments will retain all powers that are not specifically given to the national Congress.

Article III: The states agree to maintain friendly relationships. They will defend one another in times of trouble and protect their shared liberties and mutual welfare.

Article IV: To maintain friendly relations among the states, all free inhabitants can move among the states and conduct business therein without extra taxes. If fugitives from one state are living in another state, they should be sent back to face prosecution. All records and judicial rulings applying to individuals in one state shall be accepted by all other states.

Article V: Every year, state legislatures will send representatives to the national Congress. Each state shall send no less than two and no more than seven delegates, and each state will have only one vote in Congress.

Article VI: No state can enter into a formal alliance with any foreign power. Neither states nor Congress shall give any title of nobility to anyone in the United States. Two or more states cannot enter into their own treaty. States cannot maintain standing armies or navies without Congress’s approval. Unless invaded, no state shall wage war without permission from Congress.

Article VII: In times of war, state legislatures will appoint all officers under the rank of colonel and maintain their armies.

Article VIII: To pay for war, states will receive money from the national Treasury in proportion to the amount of land they own. The state legislatures will collect the taxes needed to fund the Treasury.

Article IX: The national Congress will have the power to:

- declare war
- negotiate foreign treaties
- settle disputes between states
- regulate currency
- direct the operations of land and naval forces
- borrow money from the states

Congress cannot carry out any resolution unless nine of the thirteen states agree.

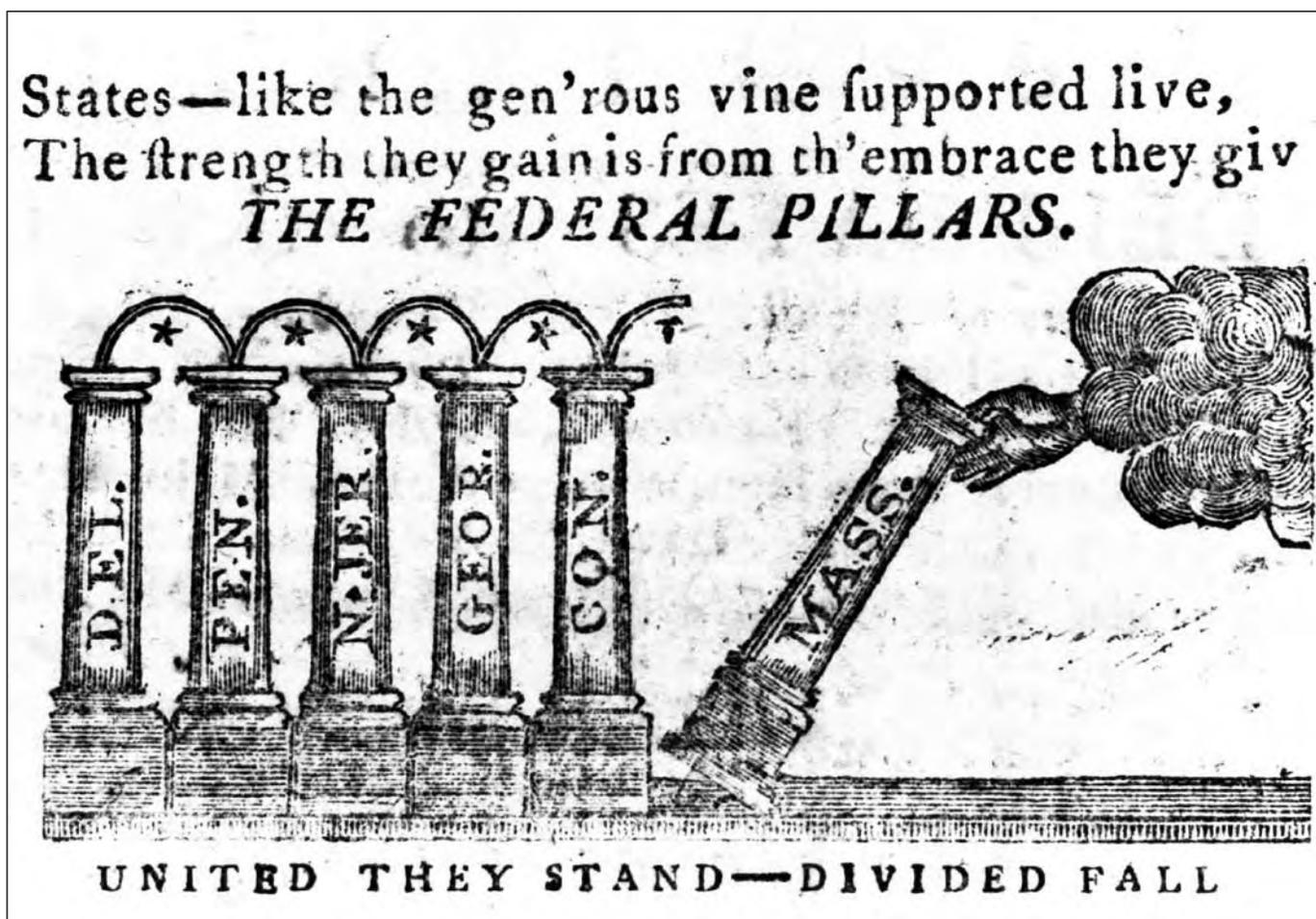
Congress will have a president to organize debate for a one-year term.

Article X: A committee of the states will be given the power to run the United States during the times Congress is in recess.

Article XI: Canada will be allowed admission into the United States. Any other colony requesting admission will need nine votes in Congress.

Article XII: Congress pledges to repay any money borrowed from individual states during the Revolution.

Article XIII: All states agree to abide by the Articles of Confederation. To amend the Articles, Congress and all of the state legislatures must unanimously agree.



"The Federal Pillars," *Massachusetts Centinel* (Boston, MA), January 16, 1788. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Serial and Government Publications Division.