

The Road to the Constitution

How the Articles of Confederation Paved the Way

Benchmark: SS.7.C.1.5 Identify how the weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation led to the writing of the Constitution.

Clarifications/Objectives:

- Students will identify the weaknesses of the government under the Articles of Confederation (i.e., Congress had no power to tax, to regulate trade, or to enforce its laws; the national government lacked a national court system [judicial branch] and central leadership [executive branch]; and changes to the Articles required unanimous consent of the 13 states).

Time: One class period

Materials:

- The Road to the Constitution PowerPoint
- Computer
- Projector
- Handout A: Potholes in the Articles

Lesson Preparation

- Review all handouts and PowerPoints
- Print and review the PowerPoint in “notes view”. The PowerPoint includes notes to guide the lesson.
- Print Handout A: Potholes in the Articles

Lesson Overview

Using the PowerPoint, give a brief overview of the writing of the Articles of Confederation and how it would serve as the United States’ first constitution. The PowerPoint will go on to explain a confederation and a very brief overview of the main problem with the Articles, in its lack of central or national government structure.

Distribute Handout A. Students will read the main weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation and make inferences to determine the impact those weaknesses would have on the new nation. Using the PowerPoint, debrief the activity and discuss the issues with the weaknesses of the Articles.

Continue with the PowerPoint. After debriefing the activity, the PowerPoint will go on to introduce Shay’s Rebellion and the steps towards fixing the problems with the Articles. A brief video from The History Channel (3:09) will provide a summary of Shay’s Rebellion and how it paved the way for the Constitutional Convention, which will be addressed in the PowerPoint as well.

Check for Understanding The final slide will include a question from the End of Course Exam Item Specifications book. Have the students independently write down their answer and ask student to explain how they made their decision.

Potholes in the Articles

Directions: Below are problems within the Articles of Confederation. In the space provided below each problem, explain the impact of this problem on a new nation.

National government could not tax

No regulation of trade between states or between states and other countries

No power to enforce laws

No judicial branch (branch that interprets and applies the law)

No executive branch (branch that enforces the law)

Required a unanimous vote from all states to change the Articles