

# Grading the Articles of Confederation

**DIRECTIONS:** Read the information below about the Articles of Confederation. Then, use this information along with information from your *America* textbook and PowerPoint notes to complete the *Articles of Confederation Report Card*. Be thorough in your explanation for each grade you assign. Use/attach a sheet of notebook paper if you need more room to write.

**Historical Context:** While in the midst of the American Revolution, the Continental Congress decided to create a government to lead the new nation. In 1777, after much debate, the Articles of Confederation was completed, becoming America's first constitution. The Articles of Confederation did not create a strong national government like we have today. Instead, the Articles of Confederation created a national government with limited powers because many Americans feared a strong government would lead to an oppressive government like the British government.

The Articles of Confederation created a loose alliance between the thirteen states. The states maintained most of the power and the new national Confederation Congress was granted few powers. The Confederation Congress had the power to wage war, declare peace, make treaties, coin money, and conduct foreign affairs. It did not, however, have the power to raise taxes or regulate trade. When the national government needed money, the Confederation Congress had to ask the states to contribute funds, as the states had the right to tax its citizens; a state could refuse to contribute. During the Revolution, America borrowed millions of dollars from foreign nations and individuals. Without the power to tax, the Confederation Congress could not pay off its frustrated lenders.

The Confederation Congress had other weaknesses. There was no president to lead the country and enforce laws passed by the Congress. There was no court system to settle disputes between the states. Laws were difficult to pass because nine out of the thirteen states (almost 70%) had to approve a law before it could go into effect. Amending the Articles of Confederation was considerably more difficult; all thirteen states had to agree.

The Confederation Congress did pass two laws that were beneficial to the country. The Land Ordinance of 1785 decided how to divide the territory gained in the Treaty of Paris, the Northwest Territory. The second law, the Northwest Ordinance described how the territory would be governed and how a territory could be admitted into the country as a state. The Northwest Ordinance also outlawed slavery in the Northwest Territory.

The weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation led to foreign countries taking advantage of the new nation. Great Britain refused to remove its troops from the Ohio River Valley. Spain closed the Port of New Orleans to American farmers who depended on the Mississippi River and the Port of New Orleans to ship their goods east. The Confederation Congress was too weak to handle the nations that were bullying America. The Confederation Congress was even too weak to handle the problems within the United States. States argued over territory and boundaries. Each state printed its own money causing the states to bicker over how much each state's dollar was worth. In June 1783, veterans of the Revolution surrounded the Congress in Philadelphia demanding to be paid for their service during the war; the Congressional delegates fled the city after having the veterans' bayonets pointed at them.

In 1787, the weakness of the Articles of Confederation became obvious. Due to an economic depression that occurred in the country after the Revolution, many farmers had difficulty paying their taxes and debts. In Massachusetts, the state instead of helping the farmers, decided to increase taxes. As a result, farmers began having their farms foreclosed. A Revolutionary War veteran, Daniel Shay, decided to lead a rebellion. Shay and 1,500 men began attacking court houses to prevent foreclosure proceedings from occurring. Shay and his men also led an attack on the state arsenal. The state militia stationed at the arsenal defeated Shays' men but the rebellion known as Shays' Rebellion led the nation's leaders to believe that the Articles of Confederation were too weak and if the country was to survive, a stronger national government was needed. In the summer of 1787, 55 state delegates met in Philadelphia in what became the Constitutional Convention; the Articles of Confederation was abolished and a new plan of government was created to replace it: The United States Constitution.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Core: \_\_\_\_\_

## The Articles of Confederation Report Card

<u>Topic</u>	<u>Grade</u>	<u>Grade Justification</u>
<b>Raising Taxes</b> <b>Course Goal:</b> Raise enough taxes to maintain the government, fund an army, and pay for debts.		
<b>Passing Laws:</b> <b>Course Goal:</b> Create a system for passing laws that is fair and not too difficult.		
<b>Amending Constitutions</b> <b>Course Goal:</b> Create a process for amending the constitution. The process should not make amending impossible.		

<u>Topic</u>	<u>Grade</u>	<u>Grade Justification</u>
<b>Handling National Affairs</b> <b>Course Goals:</b> Maintain order in the country; earn respect of states and citizens so they follow laws. Pay off debts to citizens.		
<b>Handling Foreign Affairs</b> <b>Course Goals:</b> Gain respect in the world. Create fair trade agreements. Create treaties that favor your country. Pay off foreign debts.		
<b>Organizing A Government</b> <b>Course Goals:</b> Create a strong central government; Have a strong leader; Create a court system to handle disputes between the states.		
<b>Handling of the Northwest Territory</b> <b>Course Goals:</b> Create a system for governing and maintaining the land gained from the Treaty of Paris. Create a system to make the territories states.		