

Study Guide



Chapter 7, Section 3

For use with textbook pages 207–213

A NEW PLAN OF GOVERNMENT

KEY TERMS

Enlightenment	Movement of the 1700s that promoted knowledge, reason, and science as means to improve society (page 208)
federalism	Sharing power between federal and state governments (page 208)
article	Part of the Constitution (page 209)
legislative branch	Lawmaking branch of the government (page 209)
executive branch	Branch of government headed by the president that carries out laws and policies (page 210)
Electoral College	Special group of presidential electors (page 210)
judicial branch	Court system that enforces the laws (page 210)
checks and balances	The roles the three branches of government have to ensure that no single branch can dominate the government (page 210)
ratify	To approve (page 211)
Federalist	Supporters of the new constitution (page 211)
Antifederalist	Those who opposed ratifying the new constitution (page 212)
amendment	Something added to a legal document (page 213)

DRAWING FROM EXPERIENCE

Does your school have a student council? How are members of the student council chosen? What powers does your student council have? Does anyone check or balance the powers of the student council?

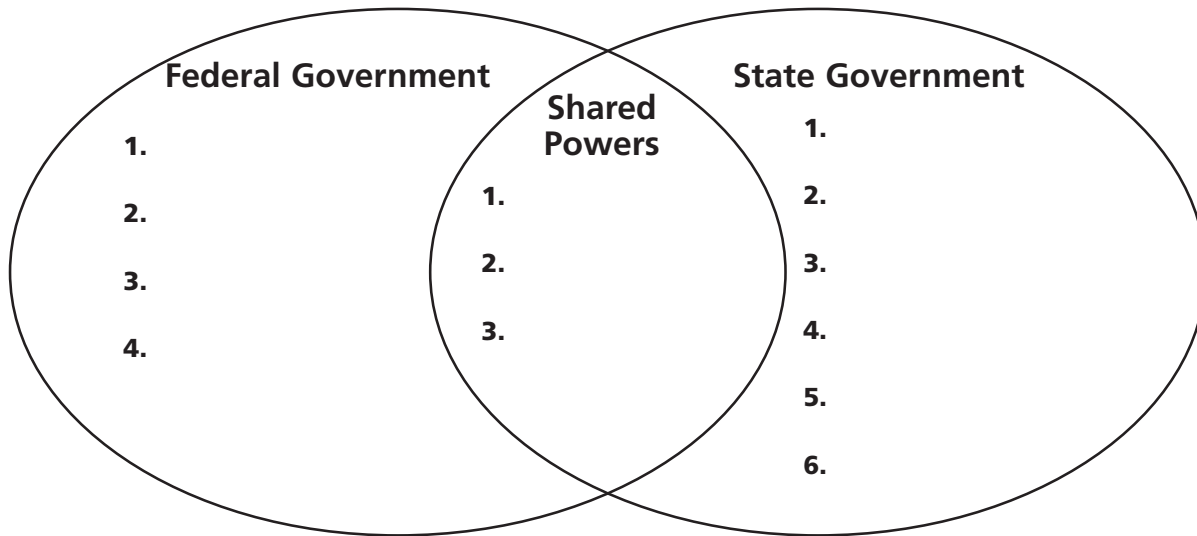
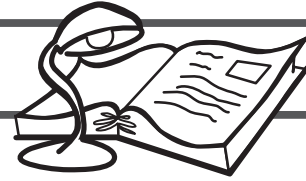
In the last section, you read about how political leaders worked to correct the weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation and the decision to create a new constitution. This section focuses on the system of government under the new constitution and how it was ratified or approved.

ORGANIZING YOUR THOUGHTS

Use the Venn diagram on the next page to help you take notes as you read the summaries that follow. Think about how the Constitution divides the powers of the federal and state governments.

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READ TO LEARN

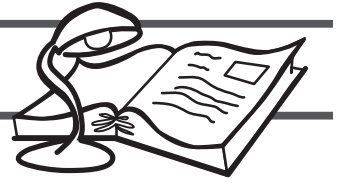
• Roots of the Constitution (pages 207–208)

It took the delegates four months to study, discuss, and write a constitution for the new national government of the United States. By studying different forms of government in Europe throughout history, the delegates hoped to avoid past mistakes. The delegates were influenced by other forms of government, including the way the British system protected individual rights and prevented the monarch from becoming too powerful. They were also influenced by the English Bill of Rights. Many Americans believed the Constitution of the United States should also have a bill of rights.

European writers of the *Enlightenment* movement, who wrote about how science, reason, and knowledge would improve society, also influenced the delegates. Some of the ideas of the English philosopher, John Locke, were incorporated into the Constitution. The Constitution was seen as a contract between the government and the people. It limited the power of the government in order to protect the people's rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

1. What were the sources of inspiration for the new constitution?

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- **The Federal System** (pages 208–209)

Sharing or dividing powers between the federal and state governments, called *federalism*, is the most noticeable feature of the government of the United States. Some of the state's powers were given to the federal government, while others were maintained by the states. Both had important powers. Under the Constitution, the federal government could tax, regulate trade, control the currency, raise an army, declare war, and pass laws. The states could pass and enforce laws and regulate trade within the state. They could tax and build roads and establish local governments and schools. The United States Constitution was the final authority in any disputes. Federal courts resolved any disagreements.

2. How does the Constitution make the federal government strong?

- **The Organization of Government** (pages 209–211)

The federal government was divided into three branches.

- A.** Congress was the *legislative branch* that made the laws. Congress had the power to collect taxes, coin money, regulate trade, declare war, and raise and support armies.
- B.** The *executive branch*, headed by the president, carried out the laws and policies of the country. The president was the commander in chief of armed forces. The president and vice president are chosen to serve a four-year term by *electors*, a special group selected by state legislatures.
- C.** The *judicial branch* enforced the laws made by Congress. The Supreme Court had the final authority over any disagreements about the constitution, laws passed by Congress, and between states.

A system of *checks and balances* was built in so that no one branch of government was more powerful than another. Both houses had to pass a bill before it became law. The president could veto a bill, but Congress had the right to override the veto by a two-thirds majority. Justices to the Supreme Court are appointed by the president, but approved by Congress. The people of the United States changed its government by choice, not by war.

3. What are the roles of the three branches of government?

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- **The Constitutional Debate** (pages 211–212)

All states except Rhode Island held ratifying conventions to discuss the new constitution. Nine states had to *ratify*, or approve, it before it would become the plan of government for the United States. *Federalists*, including George Washington and Benjamin Franklin, supported the new constitution. James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, and John Jay wrote essays and published them in a book called *The Federalist Papers*, which explained and supported the new constitution. *Antifederalists*, including Patrick Henry, opposed the new constitution. Essays were published in a book called *The Antifederalist Papers*. Antifederalists worried that they would lose the freedom they won from Britain. They wanted local control rather than national control. They wanted a bill of rights to guarantee their freedom.

4. Why were the Antifederalists opposed to the Constitution?

- **Adopting the Constitution** (page 213)

The first nine states to approve the constitution did not include New York and Virginia, which were the largest. Many people worried about the success of the new government without the two largest states. After it was agreed that an *amendment* to include a bill of rights would be added to the Constitution, Virginia approved the plan. By May 1790, every state had ratified or approved the Constitution. People all over the United States celebrated the beginning of the United States. The Constitution was amended to include a bill of rights in 1791.

5. What prevented the new United States government from going into effect as soon as the first nine states had ratified the plan?
