

Study Guide



Chapter 7, Section 1

For use with textbook pages 192–198

THE ARTICLES OF CONFEDERATION

KEY TERMS

<i>constitution</i>	A plan of government (page 193)
<i>bicameral</i>	A two-house legislature (page 193)
<i>republic</i>	A government in which citizens rule through elected representatives (page 193)
<i>petition</i>	To make a formal written request (page 196)
<i>ordinance</i>	A law (page 196)
<i>depreciate</i>	To fall in value (page 197)

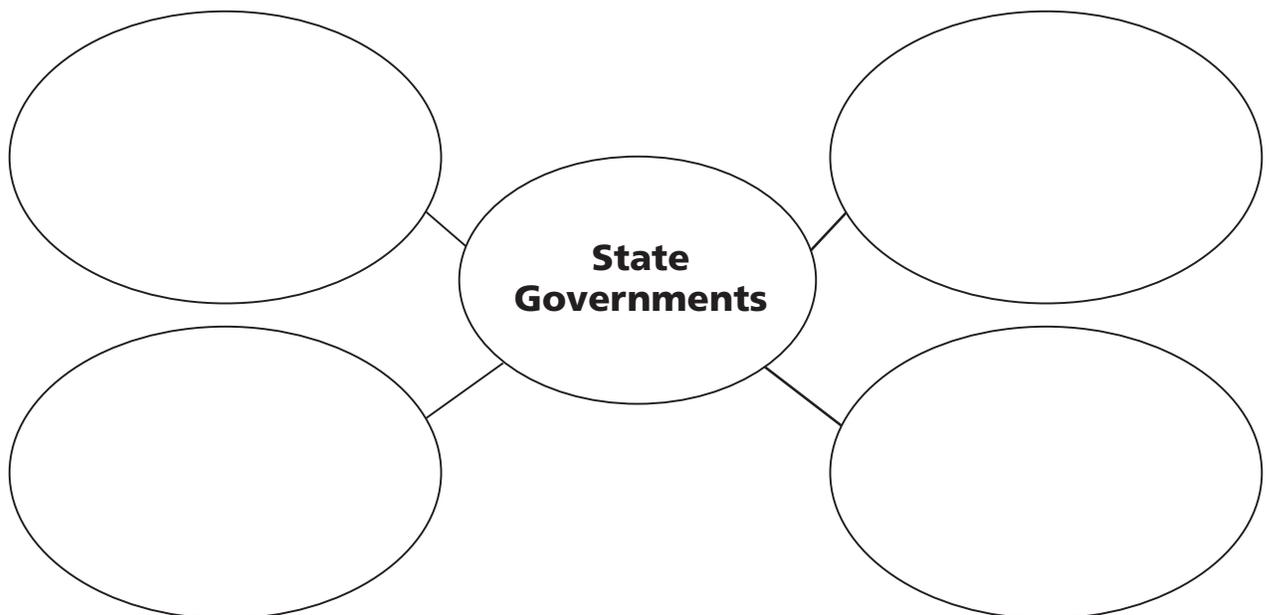
DRAWING FROM EXPERIENCE

Have you ever helped make the rules for a game or club? Was it difficult for the members to agree on the rules? How did you feel about the rules?

This section focuses on how the states and the country tried to define the powers each would have.

ORGANIZING YOUR THOUGHTS

Use the chart below to help you take notes as you read the summaries that follow. Think about the powers of government under the Articles of Confederation.



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READ TO LEARN

- **Thirteen Independent States** (pages 192–193)

Britain did not believe the American government was very strong or effective. It ignored the Treaty of Paris and kept soldiers at posts on the American frontier. In May 1776, the Americans were busy forming their own governments. Each state organized their government and adopted a *constitution*, or plan that explains how the government will operate. By 1780 Connecticut and Rhode Island were the only states that followed their colonial charters instead of creating new constitutions. Most states included provisions to prevent abuses of power. Most constitutions included provisions for two-house, or *bicameral*, legislatures. The legislatures, made up of elected representatives of the people, were the most powerful branch of government. Pennsylvania replaced the office of governor with an elected 12-member council. In order to vote, one had to be at least a 21 year old male and own property or pay taxes. Most states limited voting to white males, but a few permitted free black males to vote. There were disagreements as each state became self-governing.

1. Why did most states divide power between two branches of government?

- **Forming a Republic** (pages 193–195)

The states agreed the government should be a *republic*, a form of government ruled by the people through their elected representatives. A committee drafted a constitution that was approved by the Second Continental Congress in November 1777. The plan was called the Articles of Confederation. The plan gave each state its freedom and independence. The central government, or Confederation of Congress, was given the power to handle relations with other countries, establish an army, borrow money, and issue currency or forms of money. The Confederation of Congress did not have the power to tax the states, force people to join the army, or regulate trade. Congress had to ask the state legislatures for money or troops. The states could choose whether or not they would contribute. Congressional committees took the place of a chief executive or president.

The Confederation of Congress officially became the United States after all 13 states approved the Articles of Confederation on March 1, 1781. Each state had one vote. All states agreed to give up land claims west of the Appalachian Mountains.

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The Confederation won the war for independence and provided for new states in the West. However, the government, under the Articles of Confederation, was not strong enough to handle all of the problems it faced. Its authority was limited. Nine states had to vote in favor of any new laws. Any change to the Articles required the agreement of all 13 states.

2. What authority did the Confederation of Congress have?

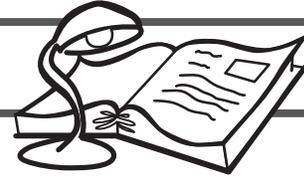
- **New Land Policies** (pages 195–196)

As the population west of the Appalachian Mountains grew, settlers wanted to form states and join the union. The Articles had no provisions for adding new states. In 1784, the Western territory was divided into smaller, self-governing districts with the approval of Congress. The districts could *petition*, or apply for statehood when their population equaled that of the smallest state.

A law, or *ordinance*, passed by Congress in 1785, resulted in the division of Western lands north of the Ohio River into townships. Land was sold for a minimum of a dollar an acre. Speculators, or people who hoped to make a profit from their investment, bought large areas of inexpensive land. The lands north of the Ohio River and east of the Mississippi River became the Northwest Territory under the Northwest Ordinance of 1787. This territory was then divided into three to five smaller territories. These territories were permitted to petition, or apply, for statehood when the population reached 60,000. The ordinance protected settlers’ rights, including freedom of religion and trial by jury. The law was the first in the United States to ban slavery and involuntary servitude.

3. How could a territory become a state under the Northwest Ordinance?

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- **Trouble on Two Fronts** (pages 197–198)

The Confederation government did not have the power to deal with the country’s financial problems. Problems continued with Britain and Spain over land and trade issues. By 1781 money printed during the Revolutionary War had fallen in value, or *depreciated*, and was almost worthless. Congress and the states printed paper money without the gold and silver to back it up. Neither had the power to tax the citizens. The Continental Congress owed other countries and many citizens a lot of money after the war.

The government failed to enforce the Treaty of Paris of 1783 and make British troops leave the lands east of the Mississippi River. British troops still held forts in the Great Lakes Region. British merchants succeeded in preventing Americans from trading in the West Indies and other markets.

Americans slowly began to realize that the United States government needed to be given more power. In order to prevent westward expansion, Spain blocked the lower Mississippi River to American shipping in 1784. This cut off the Americans’ trade. In 1786 Spain agreed with America on the border between Georgia and Spanish Florida. In return, Americans agreed to limit shipping on the Mississippi River. Leaders, including George Washington, were worried about the future of America.

4. Why did the American economy fail after the American Revolution?
