A Stronger Plan

Read how the Constitution answered problems with the first government.

SS24.4.7 "Summarize the key factors leading to the ratification of the Constitution, including the weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation, Shays' Rebellion, and the Constitutional Convention with its compromises..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two weaknesses of the Articles, circle the Convention's solution to the states' disagreement, and number the three branches of government. Use your marks to trace how the new plan took shape.

Why the Plan Changed

1. After independence, the states joined under the Articles of Confederation. Congress could ask states for money, but it could not collect taxes itself. It also had little power to settle arguments between states. In 1786, farmers in Massachusetts, upset about debts and taxes, took part in Shays' Rebellion. The unrest made many leaders worry that the national government was too weak to handle serious problems.

2. In 1787, delegates met at the Constitutional Convention to make a stronger plan. Large states wanted seats in Congress based on population. Small states wanted equal seats. The Great Compromise made two parts of Congress: one with seats based on population and one with equal seats for each state. Delegates also agreed that Congress could collect taxes. State conventions then decided whether to approve, or ratify, the Constitution.

3. Some people feared the new government would have too much power. Supporters promised to add a Bill of Rights to protect freedoms, helping win support for ratification. The Constitution split power among three branches: Congress makes laws, the president carries them out, and courts decide what laws mean. The Bill of Rights was added as amendments. Congress can propose more amendments, but three fourths of the states must ratify them.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why did Shays' Rebellion make leaders worry about the government under the Articles? Include one weakness of that government.

2. How did the Great Compromise settle the disagreement between large and small states?

3. How does the Constitution divide the work of making laws, carrying them out, and deciding what they mean?

4. Why did the promise of a Bill of Rights help win support for ratification? How can another amendment be added?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine a right you want the Constitution to protect that is not named in the passage. Write a short letter to state leaders proposing an amendment, explaining why the right matters and how Congress and the states could add it.

ANSWER KEY

A Stronger Plan

GRADE 4 · SS24.4.7

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two weaknesses of the Articles, circle the Convention's solution to the states' disagreement, and number the three branches of government. Use your marks to trace how the new plan took shape. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why did Shays' Rebellion make leaders worry about the government under the Articles? Include one weakness of that government.	**The unrest made leaders worry that the national government was too weak to handle serious problems. For example, Congress could not collect taxes itself.**
2	How did the Great Compromise settle the disagreement between large and small states?	**It created two parts of Congress: one with seats based on population and one with equal seats for each state.**
3	How does the Constitution divide the work of making laws, carrying them out, and deciding what they mean?	**Congress makes laws, the president carries them out, and courts decide what laws mean.**
4	Why did the promise of a Bill of Rights help win support for ratification? How can another amendment be added?	**People feared the new government would have too much power, so the promise to protect freedoms helped win support. Congress can propose an amendment, and three fourths of the states must ratify it.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Dear state leaders, I propose an amendment that protects everyone's right to safe drinking water. People need clean water to stay healthy, but not every community has it. Congress could propose this amendment, and three fourths of the states would need to ratify it. Please consider protecting this right for everyone.

Accept other reasonable rights and explanations in Part 3. Students should state that Congress proposes the amendment and three fourths of the states ratify it, not that Congress approves it by itself.