A Government Tested

Read how problems under the Articles shaped plans for the United States.

SS24.6.10 "Explain how events and issues of the Critical Period (1783-1789) exposed limitations of the Articles of Confederation and contributed to calls for a stronger national government..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two limits on Congress, circle a problem those limits made harder to solve, and put a star beside one plan for the country's future.

What Could Congress Do?

1. Imagine thirteen neighbors who share a fence but cannot agree who pays to repair it. From 1783 to 1789, the United States faced a similar problem under the Articles of Confederation. This was a confederate system: states held most power, and the national Congress had little. Unlike this system, a unitary system puts most power in one central government. In a federal system, national and state governments share power. Under the Articles, Congress could request money from states but could not tax people directly or control trade between states.

2. These limits mattered when states charged one another trade fees and made different rules for selling goods. Congress could not set one rule for trade across state lines. In 1786 and 1787, Massachusetts farmers facing debts and state taxes joined Shays' Rebellion. State leaders stopped the uprising, but it showed how anger over money could turn into violence. Congress could not collect taxes to pay for a national response. Such troubles led people to call for a stronger national government that could raise money and settle disputes between states.

3. Congress still made plans for western land. The Land Ordinance of 1785 set a way to measure land into squares called townships, making plots easier to sell. The Northwest Ordinance of 1787 set steps for territories to become equal states and banned slavery in the Northwest Territory, limiting its spread there. States also tested ways to protect rights: constitutions listed freedoms and gave elected lawmakers power. Some states allowed more white men to vote by lowering property rules, though women and most Black people remained excluded. These ideas helped shape later debates about government.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How is power divided differently in unitary, federal, and confederate systems?

2. Why did trade fees between states lead some people to call for a stronger national government?

3. How did the two land ordinances prepare for future growth, and how did one limit slavery?

4. What changes in state constitutions gave some people more power or rights, and who remained excluded?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a four-sentence letter to a delegate in 1788. Name a problem under the Articles, propose a specific power for a stronger national government and explain how it would help, then choose one idea from a land ordinance or state constitution to protect and explain why.

ANSWER KEY

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GRADE 6 · SS24.6.10

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two limits on Congress, circle a problem those limits made harder to solve, and put a star beside one plan for the country's future. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How is power divided differently in unitary, federal, and confederate systems?	**A unitary system puts most power in one central government. A federal system shares power between national and state governments. A confederate system leaves most power with the states.**
2	Why did trade fees between states lead some people to call for a stronger national government?	**Congress could not control trade between states or set one rule for it. People wanted a national government that could settle disputes between states.**
3	How did the two land ordinances prepare for future growth, and how did one limit slavery?	**The 1785 ordinance provided a way to measure land for sale. The 1787 ordinance set steps for territories to become equal states and banned slavery in the Northwest Territory.**
4	What changes in state constitutions gave some people more power or rights, and who remained excluded?	**State constitutions listed freedoms, gave elected lawmakers power, and in some states let more white men vote by lowering property rules. Women and most Black people remained excluded.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Dear delegate, states charge each other trade fees, and Congress cannot set one rule for trade across state lines. Give the national government power to regulate trade between states so goods can move under shared rules. Keep the 1787 rule that gives territories a path to become equal states. That path would give people in new territories a voice as their communities grow.

Accept answers that accurately connect a limit of Congress to a problem and explain how a proposed power would help. For the letter, accept any correctly described land ordinance or state constitution idea with a reason to preserve it.