

Convention Choices

Read how delegates weighed problems, power, and compromise.

SS4H2.b "Evaluate the major issues debated at the Constitutional Convention: the weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation, the rights of states to govern themselves (federal system), the Great Compromise, and slavery (Three-Fifths Compromise)."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each weakness or debate, and circle the plan or compromise leaders used to respond. In the margin, label the four issues A for Articles, F for federal system, G for Great Compromise, and T for Three-Fifths Compromise.

Arguments at the Convention

- ① After the American Revolution, the states used the Articles of Confederation. This plan created a weak national government. Congress could ask states for money, but it could not collect taxes. It could not easily control trade between states or force states to follow national decisions. When problems crossed state borders, leaders saw that the Articles did not give the country enough shared power.
- ② At the Constitutional Convention in 1787, delegates wanted a stronger national government, but they also wanted states to keep important powers. They designed a federal system. In this system, the national government handles matters for the whole country, such as coining money, while state governments make many local decisions. Delegates debated how to balance national power with each state's right to govern itself.
- ③ Representation caused another debate. Large states wanted representation based on population, and small states wanted equal representation for every state. The Great Compromise created two houses of Congress: the House of Representatives uses population, and the Senate gives each state two senators. Delegates also argued about slavery. The Three-Fifths Compromise counted three fifths of enslaved people when figuring representation and direct taxes. This unfair compromise protected slavery instead of ending it.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 What was one weakness of the Articles of Confederation, and why did it make national problems harder to solve?

2 How did the federal system try to balance national power and the states' right to govern themselves?

3 What did large states want, what did small states want, and how did the Great Compromise respond to both sides?

4 Why does the passage call the Three-Fifths Compromise unfair?

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Choose the Great Compromise or the Three-Fifths Compromise. Write three sentences that name the groups involved, explain what each side wanted, and judge whether the result was fair using one detail from the passage.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline each weakness or debate, and circle the plan or compromise leaders used to respond. In the margin, label the four issues A for Articles, F for federal system, G for Great Compromise, and T for Three-Fifths Compromise. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What was one weakness of the Articles of Confederation, and why did it make national problems harder to solve?	Congress could not collect taxes, control trade between states, or force states to follow national decisions. This left the national government without enough shared power to solve problems across state borders.
2	How did the federal system try to balance national power and the states' right to govern themselves?	The national government handled matters for the whole country, such as coining money, while state governments made many local decisions.
3	What did large states want, what did small states want, and how did the Great Compromise respond to both sides?	Large states wanted representation based on population. Small states wanted equal representation. The compromise created a House based on population and a Senate with two senators from each state.
4	Why does the passage call the Three-Fifths Compromise unfair?	It counted three fifths of enslaved people for representation and direct taxes, while protecting slavery instead of ending it.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I would support the Great Compromise. Large states wanted representation based on population, while small states wanted equal representation. Two houses gave both groups a way to be heard, so the result was fairer than choosing only one plan.

Accept accurate paraphrases of the passage. For the open response, accept a supported judgment about either compromise, but students should recognize that the Three-Fifths Compromise was unfair and protected slavery.