

Too Weak to Lead

Trace how problems under the Articles shaped the Constitution.

SS8H3.d "Analyze the weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation and explain how those weaknesses led to the writing of a new federal Constitution."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each weakness of the Articles of Confederation. Circle the Constitution power or change that responds to it, then number each matching pair 1 through 6 in passage order, writing the same number beside both parts.

Why a New Plan Was Needed

- ① After declaring independence, the states feared a powerful central government. Congress adopted the Articles of Confederation in 1777, and all thirteen states completed ratification in 1781. The Articles created a "firm league" of states, but Congress could not levy taxes. It had to ask states for money, and states often paid too little or too late. Under the new Constitution, Congress received the power to tax. This change gave the national government a steadier way to pay debts and carry out its work.
- ② Congress also lacked the power to regulate trade among states or with foreign nations. A state could place taxes on goods from a neighbor, while another state set different rules for merchants. These competing policies slowed trade and weakened the nation's bargaining position overseas. The Constitution gave Congress authority to regulate interstate and foreign commerce. The Articles also provided no executive leader to enforce congressional decisions. The Constitution created a president to carry out federal laws, making national decisions more likely to be enforced.
- ③ Other limits made the government hard to improve and hard to administer. Each state had one vote in Congress, even though populations differed greatly. Changing the Articles required every state to agree, so one state could block an amendment. The Articles also had no national court system to settle disputes involving federal law. Delegates wrote a Constitution. Its House was based on population, while its Senate gave every state equal representation. It added federal courts and an amendment process requiring approval by three-fourths of states. These changes balanced state interests with an effective federal government.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 Why could Congress not reliably pay national debts under the Articles, and what Constitution power addressed this problem?

2 How could different state trade rules weaken the country, and what power did the Constitution give Congress to address this weakness?

3 Why was changing the Articles difficult? How did the Constitution make amendments possible with less than unanimous approval?

4 Name two weaknesses that made national laws difficult to carry out or settle. What new parts of the Constitution addressed them?

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Write a four-sentence recommendation from a delegate in 1787 explaining why the Articles should be replaced. Use two weakness-and-solution pairs from the passage, and explain how the new powers would help the nation act together.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline each weakness of the Articles of Confederation. Circle the Constitution power or change that responds to it, then number each matching pair 1 through 6 in passage order, writing the same number beside both parts. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why could Congress not reliably pay national debts under the Articles, and what Constitution power addressed this problem?	Congress could not levy taxes and had to request money from the states. The Constitution gave Congress the power to tax.
2	How could different state trade rules weaken the country, and what power did the Constitution give Congress to address this weakness?	Different rules and taxes could slow trade and weaken the nation's position with foreign countries. The Constitution gave Congress power to regulate interstate and foreign commerce.
3	Why was changing the Articles difficult? How did the Constitution make amendments possible with less than unanimous approval?	Every state had to agree to change the Articles, so one state could block an amendment. The Constitution requires approval by three-fourths of the states.
4	Name two weaknesses that made national laws difficult to carry out or settle. What new parts of the Constitution addressed them?	The Articles had no executive leader to enforce decisions and no national court system for federal-law disputes. The Constitution created a president and federal courts.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The Articles needed to be replaced because Congress could not regulate trade or enforce its decisions. Different state trade rules slowed business and made the country weaker when dealing with other nations. Congressional control of commerce could create consistent trade rules, and a president could carry out federal laws. These powers would help the states work together while keeping an important role in government.

Accept equivalent wording that correctly connects each Articles weakness to its related constitutional solution. For the open response, look for two accurate cause-and-effect pairs and an explanation of how the Constitution made national action more effective.