

From Articles to Rights

Trace how government weaknesses led to constitutional change.

11.2c "Weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation led to a convention whose purpose was to revise the Articles of Confederation but instead resulted in the writing of a new Constitution..."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Label evidence in the passage: W for an Articles weakness, C for a constitutional response, and R for a concern about rights. Draw an arrow connecting one weakness to a response.

A New Framework

- ① Under the Articles of Confederation, Congress conducted diplomacy and managed western lands, but could not levy national taxes or regulate interstate trade. It depended on state payments to meet expenses. Each state had one vote; amending the Articles required unanimous state approval. There was no separate national executive or general federal court system. Economic difficulties and Shays' Rebellion heightened calls for change, although the Confederation also achieved successes such as the Northwest Ordinance.
- ② Delegates met in Philadelphia in 1787 to revise the Articles but instead wrote a new Constitution. It gave Congress taxation and commerce powers, divided national authority among three branches, and shared power between federal and state governments. Checks and balances limited each branch. Compromises shaped representation and protected slavery. Nine states had to ratify, or approve, the Constitution for it to take effect among ratifying states.
- ③ Federalists argued that the stronger government could solve common problems while its structure restrained power. Antifederalists feared excessive national authority and inadequate protection of liberties. To gain ratification support, Federalists promised consideration of amendments protecting rights. Congress proposed twelve amendments in 1789; ten were ratified in 1791 as the Bill of Rights. These protections originally restricted federal power, rather than state governments. The ratification debate therefore helped reshape the new framework by adding explicit protections for individual rights.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 What were two powers Congress lacked under the Articles of Confederation?

2 What was the Philadelphia convention originally called to do, and what did it do instead?

3 How did Federalists and Antifederalists differ in their views of the proposed Constitution?

4 How did the ratification debate help lead to the Bill of Rights?

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Write a three-sentence cause-and-effect explanation of how the Articles of Confederation led to the Bill of Rights. Use at least three of these terms: Articles, revise, ratify, Federalists, Antifederalists, Bill of Rights.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Label evidence in the passage: W for an Articles weakness, C for a constitutional response, and R for a concern about rights. Draw an arrow connecting one weakness to a response. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What were two powers Congress lacked under the Articles of Confederation?	Congress could not levy national taxes or regulate trade among states.
2	What was the Philadelphia convention originally called to do, and what did it do instead?	It was called to revise the Articles of Confederation, but delegates wrote a new Constitution.
3	How did Federalists and Antifederalists differ in their views of the proposed Constitution?	Federalists supported the Constitution as a way to create an effective national government with controls on power. Antifederalists feared the national government would be too powerful and would not clearly protect individual liberties.
4	How did the ratification debate help lead to the Bill of Rights?	To gain support for ratification, Federalists promised amendments protecting rights. Ten amendments were approved in 1791 as the Bill of Rights.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Because Congress under the Articles could not tax or regulate interstate trade, delegates concluded that revising the old system was not enough. Although the Philadelphia convention was called to revise the Articles, it produced a Constitution with a stronger federal government. During ratification, Federalists answered Antifederalist concerns by supporting amendments that became the Bill of Rights.

Accept equivalent descriptions of the Articles' weaknesses and the convention's shift from revision to replacement. In the open response, look for an accurate three-step causal chain that includes both the ratification debate and the Bill of Rights promise.