A Nation Strains

Read the evidence behind the Constitutional Convention.

5.C.5.1 "Evaluate the major issues that led to the Constitutional Convention, including the public alarm raised from Shays' Rebellion and challenges faced by a national government too weak to conduct its affairs."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two limits on Congress, circle what Shays and other protesters did, and number two reasons leaders wanted to change the Articles. Use your marks to decide which problems pushed delegates to meet.

Why Leaders Met in Philadelphia

1. After the Revolutionary War, the United States needed to pay debts and work as one country. Under the Articles of Confederation, Congress could ask states for money but could not collect national taxes. States often sent less than Congress requested. Without steady funds, the national government struggled to pay what it owed and support its work. Leaders worried that a government unable to raise money could not handle future problems.

2. Trade brought another problem. Congress could not set rules for trade between states or with other countries. States made their own trade rules, which could lead to arguments and make it harder to act together. Changing the Articles was difficult because every state had to agree to an amendment. These limits left national leaders with few ways to settle problems that crossed state borders.

3. In Massachusetts, many farmers faced heavy debts and taxes. In 1786 and 1787, Daniel Shays and other protesters shut down courts to stop judges from taking debtors' land. Massachusetts forces ended the uprising, but the unrest alarmed people in other states. Some feared that the country could not keep order or solve serious problems together. In 1787, delegates met in Philadelphia to change the Articles, then wrote a new Constitution.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why did Congress's lack of tax power make it hard for the national government to do its work?

2. How did Congress's trade limits and the rule for changing the Articles make it hard for states to solve problems together?

3. Why did Shays' Rebellion alarm people outside Massachusetts even after the uprising ended?

4. Which problem in the passage gives the strongest reason for delegates to meet? Explain your choice with evidence from the text.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine you are a delegate in 1787. Write a three-sentence message proposing two powers for a new national government, explaining how each would help, and telling why the unrest in Massachusetts makes change urgent.

ANSWER KEY

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GRADE 5 · 5.C.5.1

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two limits on Congress, circle what Shays and other protesters did, and number two reasons leaders wanted to change the Articles. Use your marks to decide which problems pushed delegates to meet. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why did Congress's lack of tax power make it hard for the national government to do its work?	**Congress had to ask states for money, and states often sent too little. Without steady funds, the government struggled to pay its debts and support its work.**
2	How did Congress's trade limits and the rule for changing the Articles make it hard for states to solve problems together?	**Congress could not set shared trade rules, so states made their own and could argue. Changing the Articles to fix the problem required every state to agree.**
3	Why did Shays' Rebellion alarm people outside Massachusetts even after the uprising ended?	**The court shutdowns made people fear that the country might not be able to keep order or solve serious problems together.**
4	Which problem in the passage gives the strongest reason for delegates to meet? Explain your choice with evidence from the text.	**Answers may choose any major issue with evidence. For example, Congress's lack of tax power was a strong reason because states often sent too little money, leaving the government struggling to pay its debts.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I would give the national government the power to collect taxes so it can pay its debts and do its work. I would also let it set trade rules between states so they can work together instead of arguing over different rules. The unrest in Massachusetts shows why we cannot wait to fix a government that struggles to handle serious problems.

For question 4, accept any passage-supported choice that explains why the issue mattered. For Your Turn, look for two distinct powers tied to passage problems and a reasonable explanation of why the unrest added urgency.