Building a Union

Read how Americans debated a new system of government.

5.C.5 "Examine the formation of the United States of America's system of government following the American Revolution. Evaluate the major issues that led to the Constitutional Convention..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Circle two weaknesses of the government under the Articles of Confederation, underline the solution to the dispute over state representation, and number the two opposing views about national power 1 and 2. Use your marks to trace why people wanted change and what they disagreed about.

A Government Under Debate

1 In 1776, the Declaration of Independence said people have rights and that governments get their power from the people. Its ideas still guide demands for equal rights. After the Revolution, the states joined under the Articles of Confederation. Congress could not collect taxes or control trade between states. When farmers in Massachusetts rose up in Shays' Rebellion, many people feared that the weak national government could not keep the country stable.

2 In 1787, delegates met to write a new Constitution. George Washington presided over their meetings, while James Madison, later called the "Father of the Constitution," helped shape the plan. Delegates wanted a stronger union that could manage trade and keep peace. Virginia's plan gave larger states more seats in Congress. New Jersey's plan gave each state equal votes. The Great Compromise created two houses: one based on population, the other giving each state equal seats.

3 Delegates also argued about slavery. The Three-Fifths Compromise counted three out of every five enslaved people when setting a state's number of House seats and direct taxes. The Constitution allowed Congress to ban the international slave trade starting in 1808. Later, Federalists James Madison and Alexander Hamilton supported ratifying the Constitution to strengthen the national government. Anti-Federalist George Mason feared too much central power and demanded a national Bill of Rights to protect freedoms.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did problems under the Articles and Shays' Rebellion make a new constitution seem necessary?

2. Why did the Virginia and New Jersey Plans clash, and how did the Great Compromise settle their dispute?

3. How did the Three-Fifths Compromise affect representation, and what did the Constitution say about a future ban on the international slave trade?

4. Why did Madison and Hamilton support ratification, while Mason demanded a Bill of Rights?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine you are a citizen writing to a neighbor in 1788. Write a short letter saying whether you support ratifying the Constitution. Use the Declaration's idea about government power, one problem under the Articles, and one debate about the Constitution to explain your choice.

ANSWER KEY

Building a Union

GRADE 5 · 5.C.5

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Circle two weaknesses of the government under the Articles of Confederation, underline the solution to the dispute over state representation, and number the two opposing views about national power 1 and 2. Use your marks to trace why people wanted change and what they disagreed about. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did problems under the Articles and Shays' Rebellion make a new constitution seem necessary?	**Congress could not collect taxes or control trade between states. Shays' Rebellion raised fears that the weak national government could not keep the country stable.**
2	Why did the Virginia and New Jersey Plans clash, and how did the Great Compromise settle their dispute?	**Virginia's plan favored more seats for larger states, while New Jersey's gave each state equal votes. The compromise created one house based on population and another with equal seats for each state.**
3	How did the Three-Fifths Compromise affect representation, and what did the Constitution say about a future ban on the international slave trade?	**Three out of every five enslaved people were counted when setting House seats. The Constitution allowed Congress to ban the international slave trade starting in 1808.**
4	Why did Madison and Hamilton support ratification, while Mason demanded a Bill of Rights?	**Madison and Hamilton wanted a stronger national government. Mason feared too much central power and wanted a national Bill of Rights to protect freedoms.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Dear neighbor, the Declaration says government gets its power from the people, so our leaders must answer to us. I support the Constitution because Congress needs a way to collect taxes when the country faces trouble. Still, George Mason's warning matters: a stronger government might threaten freedoms. I would ask our leaders to add a Bill of Rights.

Accept either position on ratification if the letter uses all three requested ideas accurately. For the marking job, accept either order for numbering the Federalist and Anti-Federalist views.