A Government in Practice

How Congress united the colonies during the Revolution

8.C.1.4 "Analyze how the Second Continental Congress functioned as the de facto national government, uniting colonial response. Describe how the congress successfully formed the Continental Army, directed military strategy..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline four actions Congress took for the colonies as a whole. Circle the sentence that tells what happened to its final attempt to avoid war.

Decisions for Thirteen Colonies

1. In May 1775, delegates from the colonies gathered in Philadelphia while fighting had already begun in Massachusetts. No single national government directed the colonies' response, so the Second Continental Congress took on that role in practice. Delegates represented separate colonies, but their shared decisions could organize a united war effort. In June, Congress created the Continental Army from colonial forces and appointed George Washington its commander. It also directed military strategy by approving an invasion of Canada and choosing commanders. These actions gave scattered forces a common leader and a common plan.

2. Congress also needed money to pay soldiers and buy supplies. Because it had no power to tax the colonies directly, it issued paper bills called Continental dollars, creating a common currency for the war effort. Yet Congress did not immediately give up hope of peace. In July 1775, it sent the Olive Branch Petition to King George III. The petition affirmed loyalty to the king and asked him to help end the fighting by addressing colonial grievances. The king refused to receive the petition, and Britain continued to treat the colonies as rebels.

3. As the war continued, Congress moved toward independence. In June 1776, it appointed a five-member committee to draft a declaration explaining the colonies' separation from Britain. Thomas Jefferson wrote its first draft; Congress revised and adopted the Declaration of Independence on July 4. Congress also sought foreign support. Diplomats sent by Congress negotiated with France, and the two countries signed an alliance in 1778. French troops, ships, and money aided the American war effort. By coordinating independence and foreign relations, Congress acted as a national government without a formal national constitution.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did creating the Continental Army and directing military strategy help Congress unite the colonies' response?

2. Why did Congress issue Continental dollars, and how did this action serve the colonies together?

3. What did Congress ask the king to do in the Olive Branch Petition, and what happened to the petition?

4. How did appointing a drafting committee and later negotiating with France show Congress acting for the colonies as a whole?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine you are a delegate in 1778 explaining to a visitor why Congress serves as a national government. In five or six sentences, connect the petition's failure, the committee's work, and at least two ways Congress organized the war or gained support.

ANSWER KEY

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GRADE 8 · 8.C.1.4

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline four actions Congress took for the colonies as a whole. Circle the sentence that tells what happened to its final attempt to avoid war. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did creating the Continental Army and directing military strategy help Congress unite the colonies' response?	**Congress brought colonial forces under one army and commander, then made military decisions for the shared war effort.**
2	Why did Congress issue Continental dollars, and how did this action serve the colonies together?	**Congress needed to pay soldiers and buy supplies but could not tax the colonies directly. Its paper bills provided a common currency for the war effort.**
3	What did Congress ask the king to do in the Olive Branch Petition, and what happened to the petition?	**Congress affirmed loyalty and asked the king to address colonial grievances and help end the fighting. He refused to receive the petition.**
4	How did appointing a drafting committee and later negotiating with France show Congress acting for the colonies as a whole?	**Congress organized a declaration explaining the colonies' separation from Britain, then sent diplomats who negotiated an alliance that brought French support to their war effort.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

After King George III refused to receive the Olive Branch Petition, peace seemed less likely. Congress appointed a committee to draft a declaration explaining independence. It created the Continental Army and chose Washington to command it, uniting colonial forces. Congress also approved military plans and issued Continental dollars to help pay for the war. Its diplomats negotiated an alliance with France, bringing troops, ships, and money to the American effort. These actions show that Congress made shared decisions for the colonies, like a national government.

Accept different combinations of military, financial, and diplomatic actions when students explain how they served the colonies together. For Part 3, look for a clear connection between the petition's rejection and the move toward independence, not a claim that the rejection alone caused it.