Working Together

Strengths of government under the Articles of Confederation

8.C.3.1.A "Identify strengths of the United States of America's government operating under the Articles of Confederation, including a solution to territorial disputes..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two ways Congress helped the states act together during the war. Circle two rules the Northwest Ordinance set for western territory, then number the strengths you found from 1 to 4.

What Could the Articles Government Do?

1. In 1781, while the Revolutionary War continued, the states put the Articles of Confederation into effect. A national Congress could ask states for soldiers and supplies, appoint military leaders, and direct the war effort across state borders. Congress had already helped organize the Continental Army before the Articles took effect, and it continued that work under the new government. It also handled diplomacy with France, whose troops and ships helped the Americans defeat Britain at Yorktown in 1781. No single state could have coordinated all these efforts alone.

2. Victory did not end the need for shared decisions. Land north of the Ohio River raised another problem: several states had claimed western lands, and settlers needed rules for governing new communities. After states gave up their claims, Congress passed the Northwest Ordinance in 1787. It set a path from federally governed territory to equal statehood when the population reached the required size. It also established a plan for territorial government and banned slavery in the territory. Instead of letting individual states compete for control, the national government set shared rules.

3. These decisions show what the Articles government could do, even though it was weak in other ways. Congress could not directly tax people, so it struggled to pay war debts and depended on states for money. Still, the states had a common meeting place for military plans, foreign relations, and decisions about western territory. The ordinance created an orderly route to statehood, but it did not end conflicts over land with Native nations, whose communities already lived in the region. A real strength need not mean a complete solution.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did Congress help the states organize their war effort under the Articles? Give two examples.

2. Why was Congress's work with France a strength for the states during the war?

3. How did the Northwest Ordinance offer a shared solution for governing western territory?

4. What was one limit of the Northwest Ordinance's solution, and why was the ordinance still a strength?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine you are a delegate in 1787 replying to someone who says the Articles government accomplished nothing. Write four sentences that argue against this claim using a war-related strength, a western-land strength, why shared action mattered, and one limit.

ANSWER KEY

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GRADE 8 · 8.C.3.1.A

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two ways Congress helped the states act together during the war. Circle two rules the Northwest Ordinance set for western territory, then number the strengths you found from 1 to 4. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did Congress help the states organize their war effort under the Articles? Give two examples.	**Congress could ask states for soldiers and supplies, appoint military leaders, and direct efforts across state borders. Accept any two.**
2	Why was Congress's work with France a strength for the states during the war?	**Congress handled diplomacy with France, whose troops and ships helped the Americans defeat Britain at Yorktown.**
3	How did the Northwest Ordinance offer a shared solution for governing western territory?	**It established territorial government and a path to equal statehood, giving the states common rules instead of leaving them to compete for control.**
4	What was one limit of the Northwest Ordinance's solution, and why was the ordinance still a strength?	**It did not end land conflicts with Native nations, but it gave the states an orderly, shared route for governing territory and admitting new states.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The government under the Articles helped the states act together during the final years of the Revolutionary War. Congress directed military efforts across state borders and managed relations with France, work that one state could not do alone. The Northwest Ordinance gave western territory shared rules for government and a route to equal statehood instead of leaving states to compete for control. Congress still could not directly tax people, but that weakness does not erase what it organized.

Accept other accurate war examples and ordinance rules from the passage. Responses should distinguish a strength from a complete solution, especially when discussing western land.