

First Government Test

Read closely to summarize what worked and what did not under the Articles.

8.15.B "summarize the strengths and weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation;"

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline every statement that describes a strength of the Articles of Confederation, and circle every statement that describes a weakness. Use your marks to prepare a balanced summary.

A Nation Under the Articles

- ① In 1781, the new United States began operating under the Articles of Confederation, its first national government. The Articles created a Congress that could conduct diplomacy, make treaties, declare war, and manage western lands. Congress used this authority to help negotiate the Treaty of Paris, which ended the Revolutionary War, and to organize settlement north of the Ohio River. Each state had one vote in Congress, which protected smaller states from being outvoted. The plan joined the states while limiting the power of a distant national government.
- ② However, the Articles left Congress too weak to solve several national problems. Congress could ask states for money but could not levy taxes, so it struggled to pay war debts or fund national needs. It also could not regulate trade among states or with other countries. States sometimes placed tariffs on one another's goods, hurting trade. Changing the Articles required approval from all thirteen states, making reforms difficult. The government had no executive branch to enforce laws and no national court system to settle disputes between states.
- ③ The weaknesses became especially clear after the war. In 1786 and 1787, farmers in Massachusetts, including Daniel Shays, protested debt and taxes in Shays' Rebellion. Congress lacked money and a dependable national force to respond, so Massachusetts relied on its own militia. This event convinced many leaders that the nation needed a stronger federal government. The Articles had helped the states cooperate and win recognition of independence, but their limits made it hard to handle money, trade, laws, and emergencies. In 1787, delegates wrote the Constitution to replace them.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 Identify two powers Congress had under the Articles. How did these powers help the new nation?

2 Summarize two weaknesses of the Articles and explain one problem each weakness caused.

3 Why could Congress not respond effectively to Shays' Rebellion? Use two details from the passage.

4 Write one sentence that summarizes both a strength and a weakness of the Articles of Confederation.

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Write a three-sentence recommendation from the point of view of a delegate in 1787. Include one strength worth keeping, two weaknesses that need fixing, and a reason the nation needs a stronger federal government.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline every statement that describes a strength of the Articles of Confederation, and circle every statement that describes a weakness. Use your marks to prepare a balanced summary. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Identify two powers Congress had under the Articles. How did these powers help the new nation?	Congress could conduct diplomacy, make treaties, declare war, and manage western lands. These powers helped the states deal with other nations, end the Revolutionary War, and organize western settlement.
2	Summarize two weaknesses of the Articles and explain one problem each weakness caused.	Congress could not levy taxes, so it struggled to pay war debts and fund national needs. It could not regulate trade, so states placed tariffs on one another's goods and hurt trade.
3	Why could Congress not respond effectively to Shays' Rebellion? Use two details from the passage.	Congress lacked money and a dependable national force. Massachusetts had to rely on its own militia to respond.
4	Write one sentence that summarizes both a strength and a weakness of the Articles of Confederation.	The Articles united the states and gave Congress important foreign-policy powers, but they left Congress too weak to tax, regulate trade, or enforce laws.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The Articles gave the states a way to cooperate through Congress and helped the nation gain recognition of independence. However, Congress could not levy taxes or regulate trade, so it could not reliably pay debts or prevent trade conflicts. Delegates should replace the Articles with a stronger federal government that can address national problems.

Accept equivalent strengths, including diplomacy, treaties, war powers, western land management, equal state voting, cooperation, and recognition of independence. Accept any passage-based weakness and its effect, as long as the student clearly distinguishes strengths from weaknesses.