

# Building a Nation

Trace how Americans replaced a weak plan of government.

**USI.7** "The student will apply history and social science skills to describe the challenges faced by the new nation by explaining the strengths, weaknesses, and outcomes of the government established by the Articles of Confederation..."

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

## 1 READ AND MARK \_\_\_\_\_ Read it twice

**YOUR JOB** Underline the limits of the Articles of Confederation, circle each response to a problem or concern, and number the three branches 1, 2, and 3.

### From Articles to Constitution

- ① After independence, the states used the Articles of Confederation, a plan with a weak national government. Congress could make laws, manage foreign affairs, and settle western land claims. Yet it could not collect taxes, regulate trade between states, or force states to obey laws. Each state had one vote. These limits made it hard to pay debts or respond to problems such as Shays' Rebellion.
- ② In 1787, delegates met at the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia to improve the government. James Madison came prepared with ideas for a stronger national government and helped shape the Virginia Plan. He took careful notes and later supported the Constitution. Delegates debated representation, national power, and slavery. The Three-Fifths Compromise counted three fifths of enslaved people when states counted population for representation and direct taxes.
- ③ To take effect, the Constitution needed approval, called ratification, from nine states. Federalists supported it. In the Federalist Papers, writers including Madison explained why the plan would work. Anti-Federalists feared a national government that was too powerful and wanted protections for individual rights. The Bill of Rights was added to answer this concern. The legislative branch, Congress, makes laws. The executive branch, led by the president, carries them out. The judicial branch, courts, interprets laws.

**2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE** \_\_\_\_\_ Use the passage

**1** Name one strength of the Articles of Confederation and two weaknesses that made the national government weak.

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**2** Why did delegates meet at the Constitutional Convention, and how did James Madison help?

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**3** What did the Three-Fifths Compromise count, and why was that count used?

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**4** How did the Federalist Papers and the Bill of Rights respond to the debate over ratification?

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**3 YOUR TURN** \_\_\_\_\_ Your own words

Write 4 or 5 sentences recommending whether a state should ratify the Constitution. Explain one problem under the Articles, how the Constitution handled national power, why protecting rights mattered, and the job of one branch.

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**PART 1 • READ AND MARK**

Underline the limits of the Articles of Confederation, circle each response to a problem or concern, and number the three branches 1, 2, and 3. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

**PART 2 • ANSWERS**

| # | QUESTION                                                                                                      | ANSWER                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|---|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | Name one strength of the Articles of Confederation and two weaknesses that made the national government weak. | <b>One strength was that Congress could make laws, manage foreign affairs, or settle western land claims. Weaknesses included that it could not collect taxes, regulate trade between states, or force states to obey laws.</b> |
| 2 | Why did delegates meet at the Constitutional Convention, and how did James Madison help?                      | <b>They met to improve the government. Madison brought ideas for a stronger national government, helped shape the Virginia Plan, took notes, and supported the Constitution.</b>                                                |
| 3 | What did the Three-Fifths Compromise count, and why was that count used?                                      | <b>It counted three fifths of enslaved people when states counted population for representation and direct taxes.</b>                                                                                                           |
| 4 | How did the Federalist Papers and the Bill of Rights respond to the debate over ratification?                 | <b>The Federalist Papers explained why the Constitution would work. The Bill of Rights answered Anti-Federalists' concern that individual rights needed protection from a powerful national government.</b>                     |

**PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)**

I would vote to ratify the Constitution. Under the Articles, Congress could not collect taxes, so the nation struggled to pay debts. The Constitution created a stronger national government but divided its power among branches. The Bill of Rights mattered because it protected individual rights, and the legislative branch, Congress, would make laws.

Accept equivalent wording from the passage. For the open response, look for a clear recommendation supported by an Articles problem, a statement about divided or stronger national power, rights protection, and an accurate branch job.