

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF THE ARTICLES OF CONFEDERATION

Time Allocated: One 50-55 minute period

Correlation to the Alabama High School Graduation Exam:

Standard II, Objective 1, 2

Correlation to the Alabama Course of Study:

May be adapted for Fifth Grade

United States Studies: Beginnings to 1877 – Fifth Grade Standards: 9

United States History to 1877 – Tenth Grade Standards: 4 & 8

United States Government – Twelfth Grade Standards: 2

Lesson Objectives:

The student will be able to:

1. Explain to what degree the Articles of Confederation provided an effective form of government.
2. Describe the problems under the Confederation government that led to the Constitutional Convention.

Materials Needed:

1. Handout: Excerpts from the Articles of Confederation

Introduction:

Brief lecture: The Northwest Ordinance of 1787, was probably the greatest lasting achievement of the confederation government. It provided for:

1. A plan for government
2. Transition from territory to statehood
3. Setting aside land for education
4. No slavery in the territory

Shays' Rebellion was probably the most significant example of the ineffectiveness of the Articles of Confederation. Daniel Shays led a group of 1,200 angry farmers in a rebellion against the government of Massachusetts. The farmers prevented the courts from foreclosing on the farms of farmers who could not pay their mortgages and/or taxes. The farmers needed more guns to keep their rebellion alive, so they tried to capture the arsenal at Springfield in January 1787, but were defeated. Shays' Rebellion frightened many property owners in all states and convinced many people that the Confederation government was not working.

George Washington wrote to James Madison saying, "We are either a united people or we are not. If it is the former, let us act as a nation. If we are not, let us no longer act as a farce by pretending to it."

One month after Shays' Rebellion, The Confederation Congress endorsed a resolution calling for a convention 'for the sole and express purpose of revising the Articles of Confederation.' This convention was to become the *Philadelphia Convention* and it would create the Constitution of the United States.

Major Instructional Sequence:

1. Give each student a copy of the handout.
2. Place students in groups of four to five students.
3. Have each group list as many strengths and weaknesses as possible.
4. Have each group report their findings to the class.

Closure or Evaluation:

Discuss how each weakness of the Articles would be dealt with by the Constitutional Convention.

EXCERPTS FROM THE ARTICLES OF CONFEDERATION

Article II. Each State retains its sovereignty, freedom and independence, and every power...which is not by the confederation expressly delegated to the United States, in Congress assembled.

Article V. No States shall be represented in Congress by less than two, nor more than seven members... In determining questions in the United States, in Congress assembled, each State shall have one vote.

Article VIII. All charges of war, and all other expenses that shall be incurred for the common defense or general welfare...shall be defrayed out of a common treasury, which shall be supplied by the several States, in proportion to the value of land within each State... The taxes for paying that proportion shall be laid and levied by the authority and direction of the Legislatures of the several States...

Article IX. The United States in Congress assembled shall also be the last resort on appeal in all disputes and differences...between two or more States...

Article IX. The United States in Congress shall have the sole and exclusive right and power of regulating the alloy and the value of coin struck by their own authority, or by that of the respective States.

Article XIII. ...nor shall any alteration at any time hereafter be made in any of (these articles); unless such alteration be agreed to in a Congress of the United States, and be afterwards confirmed by the Legislatures of every state.