

Study Guide



Chapter 2, Section 3

For use with textbook pages 39–42

The Nation's First Governments



KEY TERMS

constitution a written plan for government (page 39)

bicameral having two legislative houses (page 39)

confederation a group of individuals or states that band together for a common purpose (page 40)

ratify to approve (page 41)

amend to change (page 41)

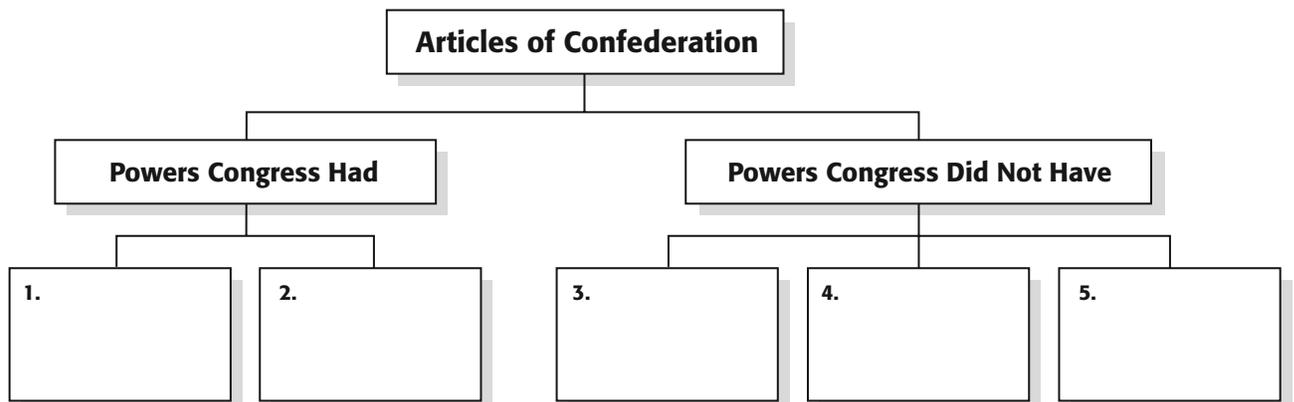
DRAWING FROM EXPERIENCE

What powers does the United States Congress have? Imagine that Congress did not have the power to tax. How do you think that would affect the nation?

The last section described the events that led to the Declaration of Independence. This section describes the kinds of governments the new nation of the United States set up.

ORGANIZING YOUR THOUGHTS

Use the diagram below to help you take notes. The Articles of Confederation was the nation's first constitution. In the chart, list the powers that Congress had and did not have under the Articles.



Study Guide



Chapter 2, Section 3 (continued)

READ TO LEARN

• **Early State Constitutions** (page 39)

Even before the colonies declared their independence, colonial leaders began setting up new state constitutions to replace the old colonial charters. A **constitution** is a written plan for government. New Hampshire became the first colony to write a constitution. By 1780, the other colonies did also.

Each state government included a legislature. Most legislatures were **bicameral**—divided into two parts, or houses. The members of the legislatures were chosen in several ways. Each state had a governor. His job was to carry out the laws. Each state also had judges and courts to decide what the laws meant. Many state constitutions included a bill of rights that guaranteed citizens certain basic freedoms.

Massachusetts was the last state to draw up its constitution. It was unusual in three ways. In most of the other states, the legislature was supreme. In Massachusetts, power was divided among the legislature, the governor, and the courts. The governor and the courts were given the power to check the legislature. The Massachusetts constitution was created through a special convention of delegates instead of by the legislature. The state's citizens then approved the constitution. The Massachusetts constitution would later become the model for the U.S. Constitution.

6. How was the constitution of Massachusetts different from the other states' constitutions?

Study Guide**Chapter 2, Section 3 (continued)****• The Articles of Confederation** *(page 40)*

Although each state wanted to govern itself, the states knew that there were some things an individual state could not do on its own. For example, the states knew that an individual state could not raise a large army by itself. The states knew that they needed a strong army to win the war with Great Britain.

The Second Continental Congress made plans for a union of the 13 states. In 1777 it developed a plan in a document called the Articles of Confederation. This was the first constitution of the United States of America. A **confederation** is a group of individual states that band together for a common purpose. The document set up a system of cooperation among the states.

The Articles set up a one-house legislature. Each state had one vote. The Congress controlled the army and had the authority to deal with foreign countries. Congress did not have the power to enforce laws or to tax. Congress could ask the states for money, but it could not demand it. Congress could not make the states to do anything.

By 1781 all 13 states had **ratified**, or approved, the Articles of Confederation. The Articles, however, had problems. For a law to pass, nine states had to vote for it. It required that all 13 states had to vote to **amend**, or change, the Articles. These requirements made it hard for Congress to get anything done. Even if Congress passed laws, it was difficult to enforce them. If a state wanted to ignore a law, the Congress could do nothing about it.

The Confederation Congress defeated Britain in the Revolutionary War. Britain and the United States signed the Treaty of Paris in 1783. After the war, the United States had serious financial problems. Because the Congress did not have the power to collect taxes, it had to borrow money to pay for the war. As a result, it ran up a huge debt. The state governments were also in debt. They taxed their citizens heavily. They also taxed goods from other states and foreign countries, which hurt trade.

The Confederation Congress could do nothing to solve these problems. In addition, Americans began to fear that the government did not have the power to protect them or their property. Riots broke out in several states in 1786 and 1787. Daniel Shays, a farmer who had fallen heavily into debt, led one of the rebellions. The state of Massachusetts threatened to take his farm away because he could not pay his debts.

Study Guide



Chapter 2, Section 3 (continued)

Shays believed that the state had no right to do so because it had created the problem. Other people agreed with Shays, and about 1,200 Massachusetts farmers joined Shays in an uprising. Shays's Rebellion was stopped, but it showed the need for a stronger national government. In 1787, 12 of the states sent delegates to Philadelphia to revise the Articles of Confederation.

7. What did Shays's Rebellion show?
