

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_

# Issues with the Articles of Confederation

By BirdBrain History  
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*The Articles of Confederation served as the first constitution for the original thirteen states of the United States. The Articles of Confederation was approved by the thirteen states at the end of 1777, establishing a unifying government among them. While successful during the time of the Revolutionary War, the Articles possessed several flaws and was replaced in 1788 with the current United States Constitution. As you read, take notes on how the narrator presents and supports his or her argument.*

[1] Psst, have you heard about the new thing Congress is cooking up? Everyone says it's bad! Terrible! The worst. Most Americans say we have to vote against it. They believe the government is trying to control us, just like old King George back in England. This agreement would not give the government very much power and if you ask most Americans, they will say the government should not have any power at all. But I am going to tell you something I have not told anyone else. I believe these new laws would be a good thing. I believe that if we don't vote on them, then our colonies in America will not last.



["Articles of Confederation 200th Anniversary commemorative stamp First issued in York, Pennsylvania., 1977"](#) by U.S. Government, Department of the Post Office is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

I can't believe you haven't heard about this! Everyone is talking about it. Let me break it down for you. There are thirteen states.<sup>1</sup> Fifty? No. This is 1776. There are only thirteen. Congress is busy trying to come up with laws that will govern these states so that we all can become stronger. Right now the states are fighting each other over who owns what land and who can trade with whom and where. It's kind of a mess, but all the states need to work together if we want to be free. **The Articles of Confederation** was an agreement between the first 13 states and was the first constitution for the U.S. Congress wants us to vote on the Articles so that we can go to war with Britain and become our own country. This would give our country a central authority so we could grow as a whole. That's a fine idea by me... and by most people. A lot of Americans do not like the way they are going about it though.

1. The "thirteen states", also known as the thirteen colonies, were a group of British colonies on the east coast of North America, including: Delaware, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Georgia, Connecticut, Massachusetts Bay, Maryland, South Carolina, New Hampshire, Virginia, New York, North Carolina, Rhode Island.

People are mad because the king wanted us to pay for everything, so the Articles do not let the government ask people for money. This reminds them too much of old King George. **Taxes** are money that citizens pay their government so that it can keep working. Whenever I meet someone who does not want any taxes, I want to ask them “How are we supposed to pay for the big war that’s going to make us free from the king? How will we pay for anything?” The government will be able to help states who cannot help themselves. This new version of the Articles says that each state will only have to pay based on how much private property is on that land. It seems fair to me, but the richest people do not want to help pay for anything. They want to make sure the government has as little power as possible, so they get to keep their own money!

People are also afraid of one person having too much power, so the Articles don’t give a lot of power to the government. But if you think about it, we are helpless against powers like Britain if we do not have a government. We need something that acts like a back bone for our country so we can all stand up together. A **central authority** is an organization set up to make laws, decide how the country will run, and how they will deal with other countries. Yes, this means that the government would come up with laws that run all the states. I think it’s a small price to pay to make sure we can pay for a war against a country who wants to see all of us die. It’s different than having a king, because the people who will make these laws will be from the states, not another country.

- [5] States also want to say what is theirs, without anyone else telling them what to do. The Articles do not say anything about where each state’s land ends. Some of these laws will not only keep us safe from other countries, they will also keep us safe from each other. Each state has a different idea of where their land stops. They all want more land for their state and many of them say that their land goes west until the ocean! The smaller states don’t like this. See how this could get ugly? **Land claims** are when people state their control over parts of land. It’s a legal way of saying “See that land? That’s mine. If you think it’s yours, I’ll fight you for it.” Right now, the Articles do not tell us what needs to happen with all this land to the West. With no rules from a higher power, everyone will be fighting everyone else, trying to get what they believe is theirs. By giving that power over to Congress, they will be able to organize who gets land and when with a lot less blood spilled. Too bad people are too scared to do this!

Many Americans do not want to vote for the Articles of Confederation. People say they are nothing more than a group of leaders acting like old King George, trying to control us. They want us to pay taxes, but people do not want to. They want to tell states what land is theirs, but states want to keep all their land and more! I think it’s a good idea and I think that we should give them even more power. Having a central authority will give our country a back bone that will let us stand up to other countries. It will also stop us from fighting each other over land. I do not tell many people my thoughts on this because they might get mad. You seem nice though. What do you think?

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## Text-Dependent Questions

**Directions:** For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: Which statement best identifies a central idea of this text? [RI.2]
  - A. The government is a self-serving establishment with the sole goal of making more money for itself.
  - B. Assigning a central authority figure to the United States would be no different than having a king.
  - C. Some structure in a government is necessary for its country to develop and operate.
  - D. An involved government prevents a nation and its citizens from achieving true freedom.
  
2. PART B: Which detail from the text best supports the answer to Part A? [RI.1]
  - A. "I believe these new laws would be a good thing. I believe that if we don't vote on them, then our colonies in America will not last." (Paragraph 1)
  - B. "It's kind of a mess, but all the states need to work together if we want to be free." (Paragraph 2)
  - C. "States also want to say what is theirs, without anyone else telling them what to do." (Paragraph 5)
  - D. "People say they are nothing more than a group of leaders acting like old King George, trying to control us." (Paragraph 6)
  
3. PART A: Which word best summarizes the relationship the thirteen colonies have with their government? [RI.1]
  - A. Trusting
  - B. Pleasant
  - C. Dysfunctional
  - D. Distrustful
  
4. PART B: Which quote from the text best supports the answer to Part A? [RI.1]
  - A. "I can't believe you haven't heard about this! Everyone is talking about it." (Paragraph 2)
  - B. "The government will be able to help states who cannot help themselves." (Paragraph 3)
  - C. "People are also afraid of one person having too much power," (Paragraph 4)
  - D. "States also want to say what is theirs, without anyone else telling them what to do." (Paragraph 5)

5. How does paragraph 3 contribute to the structure of the text?

[RI.5]

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## Discussion Questions

**Directions: Brainstorm your answers to the following questions in the space provided. Be prepared to share your original ideas in a class discussion.**

1. In your opinion, which detail from the Articles of Confederation is the most important? Cite evidence from this text, your own experience, and other literature, art, or history in your answer.
2. In the context of the text, what makes America unique? Cite evidence from this text, your own experience, and other literature, art, or history in your answer.
3. In the context of the text, which is more important: freedom or security? Cite evidence from this text, your own experience, and other literature, art, or history in your answer.