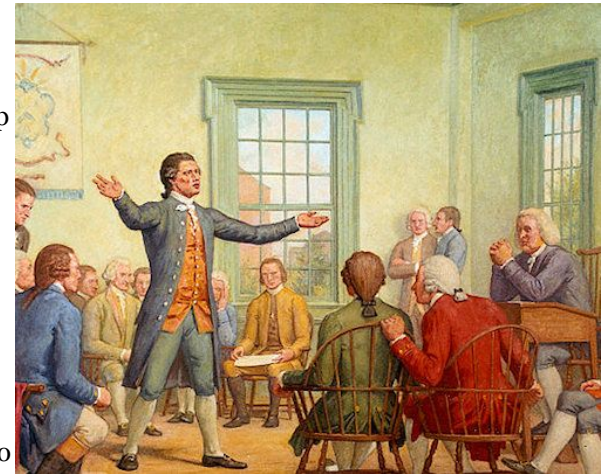


Prompt 4.2 - The Articles of Confederation

Warm-up: Jacques Turgot, a French politician, once said that Americans “...are the hope of the human race; they may well become its model.” What did Turgot mean? Do you agree?

During the American Revolutionary War, the American colonies created a temporary government to raise an army and print money to pay for that army. They called it **The Articles of Confederation**. This government was organized around a **Continental Congress**, a group of delegates from each colony who would meet to make important decisions.

To make sure that all the colonies would join the revolution, each of them were given equal say. Each of the 13 colonies would only have **one vote** regardless of their **population**, or how many people lived there. To make sure that the decisions being made would be good for all the colonies, they made it difficult to make any new rules. For any law to pass, nine of the thirteen (9/13) states had to agree. As a result, not many laws were passed. In fact, during the war, Congress often had trouble agreeing on how much money and how many supplies to send to Washington’s desperate army.



After the war, the colonies became The United States. However, the temporary Articles of Confederation government did not change. The 13 states were so afraid of creating a new King that they would rather have a weak federal government. At the time, the states acted almost like separate countries. The Articles government was more of a loose friendship between states than a united country. This loose friendship was barely enough to win the War for Independence but without a president, the power to tax, and the ability to control money, Congress could not function. In this activity you will find out how the Articles of Confederation government worked, why it worked that way, and what problems it had.

Activity: Each placard explains one **feature** of the A.O.C.. Record the feature, explain why it was included, and then explain problems with it.

Placard	Feature	Why did they do it?	What problems resulted?
A			

Placard	Feature	Why did they do it?	What problems resulted?
B			
C			
D			
E			
F			

Cooldown: In your opinion, which feature of the Articles government was the most problematic?

Analyzing the Features of the Articles of Confederation

Placard A



Weak president.

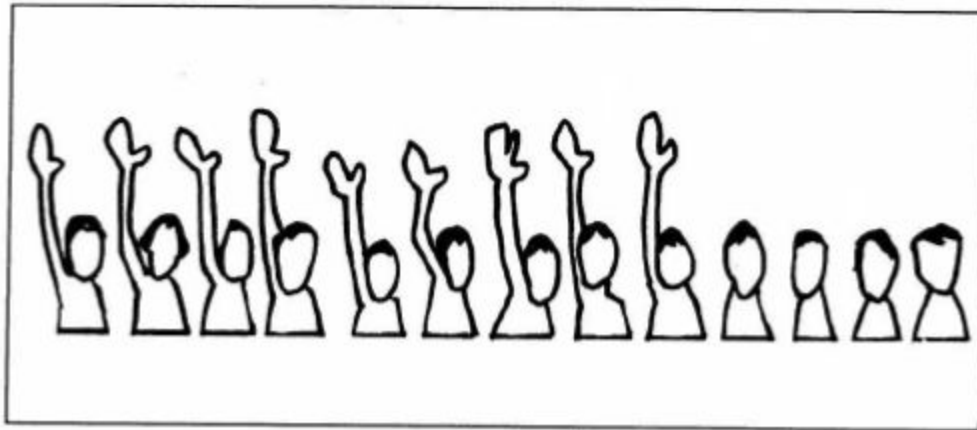
Everybody knows that the first president of The United States was George Washington, but is that really true? Many people do not realize that our Constitution was actually the second government of the United States. **The Articles of Confederation** was the first government of the United States and it had its own president by the name of **John Hanson**.

So why don't we hear about John Hanson? Under the Articles of Confederation, the President wasn't elected by the people but rather chosen by Congress. The Presidency was more of a symbolic position without any real power. At the time, Congress was worried about creating another King. Therefore, they made a president who was only there as a symbol for the country.

As a result, the United States had no executive branch. Since there was no branch to execute and enforce the law, laws were often enforced differently across the country. Additionally, President Hanson didn't really enjoy his job. He found the work tedious, ineffective, and he often threatened to **resign** (quit). By having an unmotivated leader without any real power, Hanson was unable to command the respect of foreign nations and unable to lead the country. States even tried to make their own deals with foreign governments.

Analyzing the Features of the Articles of Confederation

Placard B



Laws needed to be approved by nine of the thirteen (9/13) states.

When the 13 colonies declared independence during the American Revolution, they became the 13 states under the Articles of Confederation government. But how would they make decisions? Big states wanted to have more say than small states. However, to keep the small states from joining the British during the revolution, each state was given one vote in Congress regardless of its size. To make sure that laws were fair to all the colonies, a supermajority was needed to make any new laws. This meant that instead of 51% having to agree to pass anything, a **supermajority** (%) of states had to agree.

As a result, Congress could barely agree on anything. They were unable to agree on taxes, a military, borders, the economy, how to deal with other countries, and couldn't even agree on how to pay back **veterans** (soldiers) of the Revolution. Only two major laws were passed while all other issues were left up to the states.

So why did the Patriots make it so difficult to make laws? Well, they were used to an unfair Parliament. They were afraid that a strong Federal government would lead to tyranny in The United States as well. Therefore, they would rather have an ineffective government than one that was too powerful.

Analyzing the Features
of the Articles of Confederation

Placard
C



Congress did not have the power to tax its citizens.

What is a **tax**? A tax is money people pay to the government to keep it working. The states were fighting a war against unfair taxation from Parliament during the revolution. Parliament was a strong **federal** (central) power in Great Britain. Americans didn't like how the British Parliament could unfairly decide the taxes of each colony without asking them. They feared that once they created their own government the same unfair taxation might occur again.

Under the Articles of Confederation, Congress could not tax the states directly. Instead, Congress could only request money from each of the states in order to **fund** (pay for) their laws. That way, each state could decide whether or not it was able to pay taxes to the federal Articles of Confederation government.

As a result, states barely paid any taxes to the federal government because they didn't have to. In fact, **veterans** (soldiers) of the American Revolution were never paid back for their service because Congress couldn't raise taxes to pay them! In an attempt to try to pay them back, Congress printed money which greatly hurt the economy. As a result, states began using their own currency instead. Because Congress often did not have money, most politicians found it better to become leaders in their state governments. Those who became representatives in Congress were not always the best politicians.

Analyzing the Features of the Articles of Confederation

Placard D



Congress did not have the power to draft men into the Continental Army.

What is a **draft**? A draft is a way to increase the size of a military by forcing people to join it. Under the British, colonists were sometimes forced to fight in wars that they didn't want to fight in. Colonists had no say in which wars that they had to fight in and if colonists refused to fight, they were often punished.

One feature of the Articles of Confederation was that Congress did not have the power to draft men into the army. Instead, Congress could only request that states send men to join the Continental army.

As a result, states barely sent any soldiers to the army. During the revolution, Washington had to work hard to convince people to join the war. In fact, after the war, Washington's army was completely **disbanded** (removed). When British soldiers refused to leave their forts and poor American **veterans** (soldiers) started to rebel for not being paid for their service, Congress had no power to stop them. States would have to pay for their own militias for protection.



No national court system.

What are **courts**? Courts are groups of people who study the law of a country and decide who is guilty of a crime and who is innocent of a crime. They also decide how to solve problems fairly according to the law.

Under the British, the American colonists were used to a **corrupt** (unfair) court system. The King could **appoint** (choose) or fire any judge that he wanted to. Therefore, the courts did not always determine whether someone was guilty or innocent. Instead, they often sentenced people to jail who the King simply didn't like. Congress feared that if there was a national court, then only the judges who agreed with the federal government would get appointed instead of judges who were fair. Congress also feared that a strong national court would be biased towards the federal government and against the states.

The Articles of Confederation had no national court system. Instead, each state had its own courts. As a result, states often interpreted the law differently. Additionally, **disputes** (arguments) between states had to be settled by themselves and were often never solved. States disagreed on their borders which led to conflicts between themselves.

Analyzing the Features of the Articles of Confederation

Placard F

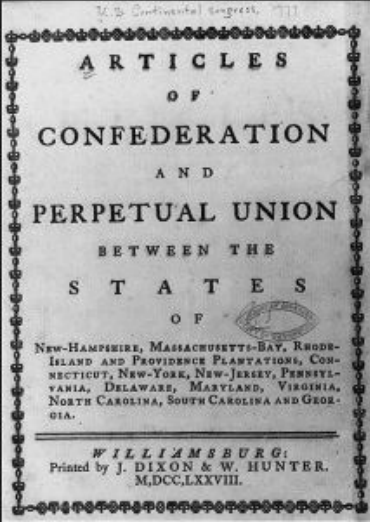


Amendments, or changes, to the Articles required the approval of all 13 states.

To understand amendments we need to know the difference between a constitution and regular laws. A **Constitution** is the highest law of the land. The first constitution of The United States was the Articles of Confederation government. Regular laws, on the other hand, can be added to the country but cannot go against a constitution. Since a constitution is so important, it is often difficult to change. However, it is not impossible to change a constitution. **Amendments** are changes to a constitution.

The Delegates to the Continental Congress were afraid of a strong **Federal** government running out of control and turning into another monarchy. Therefore, they decided that if any changes were to be made to The Articles of Confederation, it would require all of the 13 states to do so.

As a result, The Articles of Confederation government was never changed to solve the problems that the new country faced. Only a rebellion would cause Congress to rewrite the constitution into what we have today.

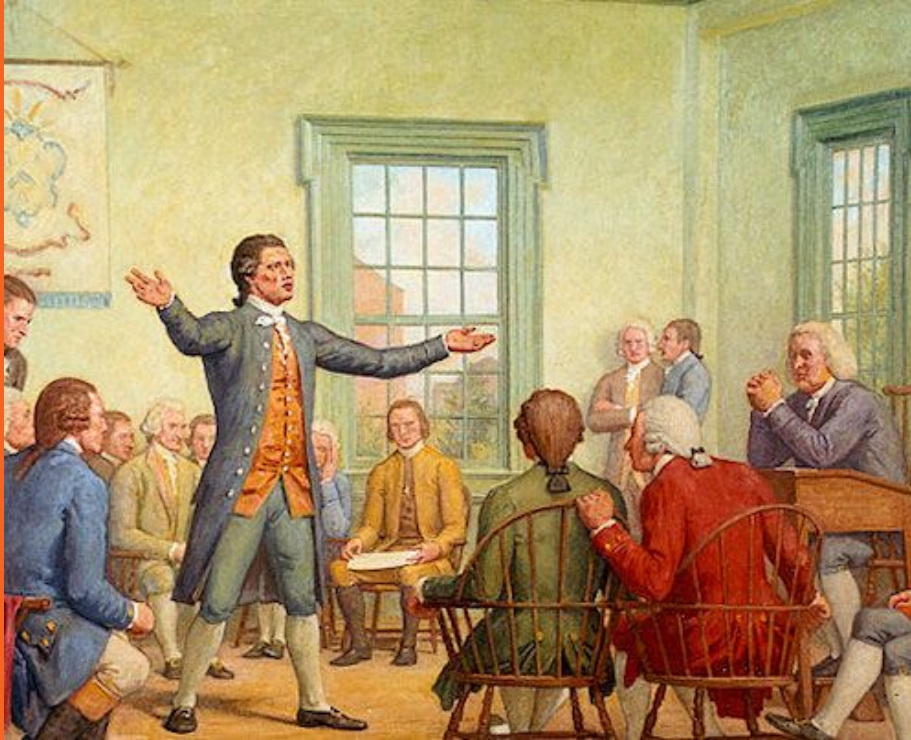


4.2 The Articles of Confederation (AOC)

Warm-up: What do you think Turgot meant? Do you agree?

Americans are “...the hope of the human race; they may well become its model.”

-French Politician, Turgot, after the American Revolution.



Types of laws

Constitutional law



Federal law



State law



City law

32:00

Activity Directions

Around the room are 6 placards describing different features of The Articles of Confederation (AOC).

- 1) **Find** the placard with the feature
 - 2) **Write** down the feature and why it was included
 - 3) **Brainstorm** how each can be a problem.
-

Feature A

There was a weak
President

Analyzing the Features
of the Articles of Confederation

Placard
A



They were afraid of creating
another King

How was this a problem?

Laws were enforced
differently in each state.

Hanson was not motivated
and even tried to quit!

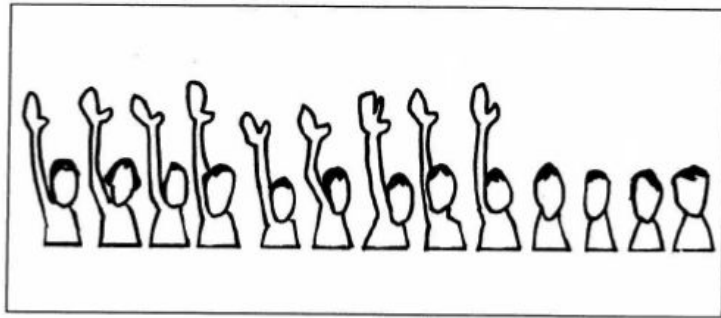
States made their own
treaties with foreign
governments.

Feature B

Difficult to Pass laws

Analyzing the Features
of the Articles of Confederation

Placard
B



They were afraid of an unfair
Parliament

How was this a problem?

Congress could barely
agree on anything.

Only 2 major laws were
passed.

Feature C

Unable to tax

Analyzing the Features
of the Articles of Confederation

Placard
C



They were afraid of unfair
taxation

How was this a problem?

During the war, difficult to
supply soldiers.

Could not pay for projects,
so politicians would rather
serve at state level.

Could not pay back
veterans.

Printed money which hurt
the economy.

Feature D

Unable to draft

Analyzing the Features
of the Articles of Confederation

Placard
D



They were afraid of being forced
to fight in unfair wars

How was this a problem?

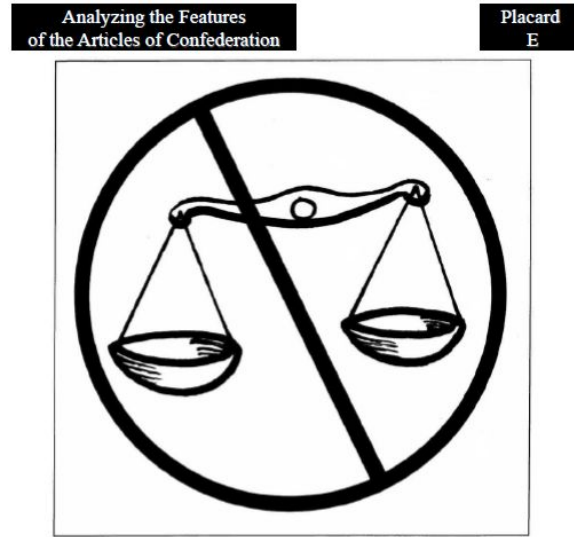
During the war, hard to get
soldiers.

After the war, no military.

Unable to stop rebellions.

Feature E

No National Court System



Afraid of unfair courts.

How was this a problem?

States interpreted the law differently.

Disputes between states were often unresolved.

States disagreed on borders.

—

Feature F

Amendments nearly impossible

Analyzing the Features
of the Articles of Confederation

Placard
F



Afraid of democracy changing
into a monarchy

How was this a problem?

The Articles was never
changed and had to be
completely scrapped to
create a new constitution.



Cooldown

Which feature was most problematic? Why?
