

Walk Around Passport

Introduction

By 1786, many Americans recognized that the Articles of Confederation needed major changes if the United States was going to survive as a united country. The Articles gave Congress virtually no power in domestic affairs -- including no power to tax, no power to regulate trade, and no power to force states to follow national laws.

Without the power to tax or force states to contribute money to the national government, Congress had lacked the money to pay soldiers for their service in the American Revolution or to repay debts owed to foreign governments who had supported the United States during the war. Without the power to regulate trade, states raised taxes on goods from other states and printed their own currency, leading to an economic depression. Without the power to raise an army, foreign governments took advantage of the weakness of the United States and refused to follow previous agreements.

In 1787, delegates from the 12 states (Rhode Island did not participate) met in Philadelphia to discuss plans for creating a new constitution. During this week, you will travel to four stations that represent different aspects of the Constitutional Convention. You will carry with you a Passport that will have questions and an activity for each station. After you have visited each station and completed the work for your Passport, you will write a letter to your parents describing what you have seen and learned.

Articles of Confederation

Questions

1. Article II
 - a. What happens to powers not specifically given to Congress?
2. Article V
 - a. How many delegates to Congress could each state have?
 - b. How many votes did each state have?
3. Article VIII
 - a. Where would Congress get money to run the country?
4. Article IX
 - a. What is one power that is specifically given to Congress?
 - b. What are the limits of this power?

Extension Activity: Create a political cartoon that illustrates one or more of the weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation. Use labels wherever necessary. Write a brief caption below your cartoon explaining its message.

Meeting the Founding Fathers

Questions

1. Who was the President of the Convention?
2. Who was known as the "Father of the Constitution"?
3. Who was the oldest member of the Convention?
4. Who wrote the Virginia Plan?
5. Who criticized the Virginia Plan and New Jersey Plan?
6. Who was responsible for working out the Great Compromise?
7. Who were two of the three authors of the Federalist Papers?
8. Who died shortly after the Constitution was put into effect?
9. Who are two people later elected a U.S. President?

Extension Activity: Write a dialogue between 3 or more delegates about their roles in the Constitutional Convention. Make sure to include at least one area where delegates had disagreements.

Independence Hall

Questions

1. What city and state did the Constitutional Convention take place in?
2. What is one power that was not given to Congress under the Constitution?
3. What are two issues where the Constitution addressed the issue of slavery?
4. What plan did Roger Sherman make to create a compromise between larger and smaller states?
5. How many delegates at the Constitutional Convention voted in favor of the Constitution? How many delegates voted against the Constitution?
6. After delegates at the Constitutional Convention agreed to the Constitution, what needed to happen before the Constitution was put into effect?

Extension Activity: Imagine that you are a witness to the events at the Constitutional Convention. Write a diary entry where you describe what you saw take place at the Convention.

The U.S. Constitution

Questions

1. Preamble
 - a. List 5 reasons for creating the Constitution.
2. Article I
 - a. Who has the power to legislate (create laws) for the national government?
 - b. List 4 powers specifically given to Congress under the Constitution.
 - c. List 2 powers that Congress has under the Constitution that it did not have under the Articles of Confederation.
3. Article II
 - a. How long is the President's term in office?
 - b. List 3 powers specifically given to the President under the Constitution.
4. Article III
 - a. Who has the judicial power in the national government?
 - b. Who has the power to create courts underneath the Supreme Court?
 - c. What kinds of cases does the Supreme Court have the power to judge?

Extension Activity: Create a chart that shows the three branches of government and their role in the national government. Include illustrations in your chart that represent each of the three branches.

Culminating Activity

Imagine that you have taken a field trip back in time to Philadelphia, 1787. Write a letter to your parents describing what you have seen and learned. Use the following organization in your letter...

- 1st paragraph: Describe your field trip, the places that you visited, and the things you saw
- 2nd paragraph: Describe the Articles of Confederation and explain why the Constitutional Convention is taking place
- 3rd paragraph: Describe some of the delegates and their roles in the Constitutional Convention
- 4th paragraph: Describe the U.S. Constitution (what it says and what it is going to do)
- 5th paragraph: Summarize your field trip and what you learned