

Lesson: A Closer Look at the Articles of Confederation

Teacher: Angela Bazan, Deerfield High School

Length of Lesson: 1-2 Class Periods

Grade Level: 11-12 Grade

WI State Standards:

B.12.1 Explain different points of view on the same historical event, using data gathered from various sources, such as letters, journals, diaries, newspapers, government documents, and speeches.

B.12.2 Analyze primary and secondary sources related to a historical question to evaluate their relevance, make comparisons, integrate new information with prior knowledge, and come to a reasoned conclusion.

B.12.6 Select and analyze various documents that have influenced the legal, political, and constitutional heritage of the United States.

C.12.4 Explain the multiple purposes of democratic government, analyze historical and contemporary examples of the tensions between those purposes, and illustrate how governmental powers can be acquired, used, abused, or legitimized.

Essential Unit Questions:

- a. What problems did the weaknesses in the Articles of Confederation lead to in the new republic?
- b. Should the Articles of Confederation be amended or abandoned?
- c. How did the events surrounding the amending of the Articles of Confederation foreshadow the events at the Constitutional Convention?
- d. Could we have survived as a nation under the Articles of Confederation?

Lesson:

Step 1

- review background information on previous knowledge with students on the creation of the Articles of Confederation and the time period surrounding it.

Hook

- Ask students to define the word “Confederation” and discuss the idea of working together.
-Did the AOC require states to work together/support one another in all aspects, or were there loopholes?

Step 2: Powers & Duties Under the Articles of Confederation

- Ask students to read the AOC, available at: http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/artconf.asp and complete the AOC worksheet. -Students can work individually or in pairs of two to read and analyze the actual document and go through the accompanying worksheet to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the AOC.
- Lead the class in a group reflection of the discussion questions once completed.

Step 3- Weaknesses lead to Amendments in the Articles of Confederation:

-Look at the weaknesses of the Articles- what were they? How did they try and fix them through amending the Articles?

-Students will work in pairs to look at the primary documents from the CSAC website that address the attempts within Congress to Amend the AOC. Documents include:

- *Grant of Power to Collect Import Duties, 3 February 1781*
- *Amendment to Give Congress Coercive Powers Over the States and Their Citizens, 16 March 1781*
- *Committee Report on Carrying the Confederation Into Effect and On Additional Powers Needed by Congress, 22 August, 1781*
- *Grant of Temporary Power to Collect Import Duties and Request for Supplementary Funds, 18 April, 1783*
- *Amendment to Share Federal Expenses According to Population, 18 April 1783*
- *Grant of Temporary Power to Regulate Commerce, 30 April 1784*
- *Amendment to Grant Commercial Powers to Congress, 28 March 1785*

-Each group will read and analyze one document, working through the assignment chart and then share aloud so that students can discuss as a class and complete their charts together in classroom discussion.

-Reflection question: What sort of problems were created in the new Republic under the Articles of Confederation?

Step 4-Closure/Assessment:

-Students will be assigned to read the document, *Amendments to the Articles of Confederation Proposed by a Grand Committee of Congress, 7 August 1786*, and write a response to the attached essay question based upon the knowledge they gained in reading the primary documents, class discussion and analysis in this unit. Essays will be graded according to the attached essay rubric and will be discussed and/or debated in class the next day.

Future Lesson:

-The following day, students will discuss and debate their essays; those that support amending the Articles and sticking with them vs. those that support abandoning them and writing a new Constitution.

-Students will be asked to reflect on the following question: How does this debate foreshadow the one that would occur later at the Constitutional Convention?

Resources:

All documents can be found on the Center for the Study of the American Constitution website located at:

http://history.wisc.edu/csac/confederation_period/attempts_to_revise.htm

Name of Document	What Weakness of the AOC is it addressing?	What does this amendment propose to do?	Why would people be in favor of it?	Why would people be against it?	Would you support this amendment? Why/why not?	Did this amendment pass? Why do you think that is?	What effect did this have on strengthening or weakening the AOC?
Grant of Power to Collect Import Duties							
Amendment to Give Congress Coercive Powers Over States & Citizens							
Cmte Report on Carrying the Confederation into Effect...							
Grant of Temporary Power to Collect Import Duties....							
Amendment to Share Fed Expenses According to Population							
Grant of Temporary Power to Regulate Commerce							
Amendment to Grant Commercial Powers to Congress							

The Articles of Confederation-25 points

After the Revolutionary War, the new nation looked for a way to effectively govern itself while avoiding what they saw as an unfair and harsh system like the one they had endured under King George III of Great Britain. They thought they had found a solution with the Articles of Confederation. Drafting of the Articles had begun even before the end of the American Revolution, and the view that a weak central government would be best for an independent nation became a common theme throughout the document.

Assignment:

Read and closely analyze the Articles of Confederation, available at:
http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/artconf.asp

Answer the following questions completely based upon your classroom discussion and reading of the Articles. Be prepared to share and defend your answers in class discussion.

1. Which states supported the Articles of Confederation? Why do you think each state's name is listed in the introduction to the Articles?
2. Article II of the document notes that each state "retains its sovereignty, freedom, and independence." What do you think this implies regarding the stability of the union?
3. Article V deals with the legislative branch of the government. How many delegates would each state be entitled to according to this article? How many votes would each state be entitled to according to Article V? What sort of problems or situations might this cause?
4. Article X notes that nine of the thirteen states would need to vote for any legislative bill before it became law. Form a conclusion as to why the Articles included this provision. How might this provision have handicapped the central government?

5. What kinds of powers do the Articles give to State and the Federal Government?

State Powers	Federal Government Powers

6. Which branch had more powers? Why do you think this is?

7. According to Article XIII, describe how the Articles of Confederation could be amended. In your view, would this be a workable way to change the Articles? Why/why not?

8. Near the bottom of Article XIII, the date of the writing of the Articles of Confederation is noted as July 9, 1778, with the date the Congress commissioned the writing of them set as November 15, 1777. Both dates occur before the end of the Revolutionary War in 1783. Speculate why it was important that the Articles be written and in place before the British granted independence to the United States.

9. The framers of the Articles decided not to include an executive branch or a federal court system. Why do you think the framers did this? Do you think this was a good idea or a bad idea? Defend your answer.

10. What would you consider to be the strengths & weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation?

Strengths	Weaknesses

11. What sort of problems did the weaknesses in the Articles of Confederation lead to in the new republic?

12. What do you think the US would be like today if we were still ruled by the Articles of Confederation? Explain.

Amending the Articles of Confederation- Essay Response

The Articles of Confederation were a good start to the new Republic, but were they written well enough to sustain our country in the long-term?

Assignment:

- Read and analyze the document: *Amendments to the Articles of Confederation Proposed by a Grand Committee of Congress, 7 August, 1786*
- Using your understanding of the document as well as previous documents and class discussions, write a well argued essay that answers the following prompt.
- Your essay should be typed, double spaced, 12 pt font, Times New Roman and a minimum of 2 pages. Be SURE to cite examples of evidence from the documents you have read.
- Your essay will be graded according to the attached rubric.
- Be prepared to discuss and debate your essay in class tomorrow!

Essay Prompt:

You are a member of Congress and are summoned to a Committee Meeting regarding the Articles of Confederation. Do you support the amendments to the Articles or abandoning them and writing a new Constitution? How will you explain your decision to the people you represent back home?

ESSAY SCORING RUBRIC

4	3	2	1	0
Answers all of the questions by referring to the documents & bringing in new information.	Answers most of the questions and refers to the documents.	Answers some of the questions and refers to some of the documents.	Answers few if any of the questions and does not use information from the documents or uses information that is irrelevant.	Answers none of the questions and does not use the documents to support ideas.
Consistently uses accurate data.	Generally uses accurate data.	Uses some accurate data.	Shows limited understanding of using the data.	Fails to use data that is any way relevant to the topic.
Fully develops ideas by using examples, reasons, evidence, details and explanations that support the topic.	Somewhat develops ideas with supporting evidence.	Demonstrates weakness in development of ideas with little supporting evidence.	Uses little supporting evidence to develop ideas.	Fails to use documents or only vaguely refers to them.
Demonstrates a logical plan of organization and development of ideas.	Develops an answer with a general plan of organization.	Attempts to organize an answer but is weak and goes off topic.	Lacks a plan of organization.	No plan of organization; illegible or hard to make sense of.
Consistently expresses ideas clearly.	Generally expresses ideas clearly.	Attempts to express ideas clearly.	Does not express ideas clearly.	Is incoherent; no sense can be made of response.
Mechanics of paper are excellent with no errors.	Mechanics of paper are good with few errors.	Mechanics of paper are lacking, with several errors evident.	Mechanics of paper are missing and make the paper hard to understand.	No attention paid to mechanics; paper is unintelligible.
Comments:	Comments:	Comments:	Comments:	Comments: