

ARTICLES OF CONFEDERATION

The struggle with England had done much to change colonial attitudes. Local assemblies had rejected the Albany Plan of Union in 1754, refusing to surrender even the smallest part of their autonomy to any other body, even one they themselves had elected. However, in the course of the Revolution, mutual aid had proved effective and the fear of relinquishing individual authority had lessened to a large degree.

John Dickinson produced the "Articles of Confederation and Perpetual Union" in 1776. The Continental Congress adopted them in November 1777, and they went into effect in 1781, having been ratified by all the states. The governmental framework established by the Articles had many weaknesses. The national government lacked the authority to set up tariffs when necessary, to regulate commerce, and to levy taxes. It lacked sole control of international relations; a number of states had begun their own negotiations with foreign countries. Nine states had organized their own armies and several had their own navies. There was a curious hodgepodge of coins and a bewildering variety of state and national paper bills, all quickly depreciating in value.

Economic difficulties after the war prompted calls for change. The end of the war had a severe effect on merchants who supplied the armies of both sides and who had lost the advantages deriving from participation in the British mercantile system. The states gave preference to American goods in their tariff policies, but these tariffs were inconsistent, leading to the demand for a stronger central government to implement a uniform policy.

Farmers probably suffered the most from economic difficulties following the Revolution. The supply of farm produce exceeded demand, and unrest centered chiefly among farmer-debtors who wanted strong remedies to avoid foreclosure on their property and imprisonment for debt. Courts were clogged with suits for debt. All through the summer of 1786, popular conventions and informal gatherings in several states demanded reform in the state administrations.

In the autumn of 1786, mobs of farmers in Massachusetts under the leadership of a former army captain, Daniel Shays, began forcibly to prevent the county courts from sitting and passing further judgments for debt, pending the next state election. In January 1787, a ragtag army of one thousand two hundred farmers moved toward the federal arsenal at Springfield. The rebels, armed chiefly with staves and pitchforks, were repulsed by a small state militia force. General Benjamin Lincoln then arrived with reinforcements from Boston and routed the remaining Shays sites, whose leader escaped to Vermont. The government captured fourteen rebels and sentenced them to death, but ultimately pardoned some and let the others off with short prison terms. After the defeat of the rebellion, a newly-elected legislature, whose majority sympathized with the rebels, met some of their demands for debt relief.

Powers of the Federal Government		
	Articles of Confederation	United States Constitution
Declare war; make peace	✓	✓
Coin money	✓	✓
Manage foreign affairs	✓	✓
Establish a postal system	✓	✓
Impose taxes		✓
Regulate trade		✓
Organize a court system		✓
Call state militias for service		✓
Protect copyrights		✓
Take other necessary actions to run the federal government		✓

Read front answer / highlight correct response

1. The author of the Articles of Confederation was _____, who had also written *Letters of a Pennsylvania Farmer*, asserting American rights, and the Olive Branch Petition, seeking to avoid a complete break with England.
 - a. Samuel Adams
 - b. John Adams
 - c. John Dickinson
 - d. Benjamin Franklin

2. The Articles of Confederation went into effect in 1781,
 - a. during the French and Indian War.
 - b. before the American Revolution.
 - c. during the American Revolution.
 - d. after the Treaty of Paris ended the Revolution.

3. The Articles of Confederation provided for a national government that
 - a. had the power to set tariffs.
 - b. had the power to regulate commerce.
 - c. had the power to levy taxes.
 - d. lacked the power to levy taxes or tariffs.

4. Under the Articles of Confederation, the national government
 - a. had sole control of international relations.
 - b. did not have sole control of international relations.
 - c. had the sole authority to organize an army and navy.
 - d. had the sole authority to issue money.

5. By 1786, merchants and _____ facing economic difficulties and under heavy burdens of debt sought reform.
 - a. bankers
 - b. lawyers
 - c. farmers
 - d. legislators

6. In Massachusetts, the aim of Daniel Shays's rebellion of 1786–1787 was to
 - a. stop courts from enforcing debts.
 - b. disband state militias.
 - c. force federal troops out of Massachusetts.
 - d. allow farmers to escape to Vermont.

7. Massachusetts elected a new government that
 - a. executed fourteen rebels.
 - b. deported Daniel Shays to Vermont.
 - c. deported Benjamin Franklin to Vermont.
 - d. passed some reforms and debt relief.