



Name _____

Date: _____

Course: US History/Ms. Brown

Homeroom:



7th Grade US History
Standard # – Do Now – Day #69

Aims: SWBAT identify and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation

DO NOW

Directions: Answer the following questions in complete and historically accurate sentences. Use your notes and knowledge of history. You MUST annotate your answers, which means cross off the question stem, capitalize the first letter, and cross off the question mark.

1. What were the Articles of Confederation?

2. Following the American Revolution, what did Congress fear about a strong central government?

3. Why is Shay’s Rebellion an important event in US History?

4. What were the weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation? Use specific examples from yesterday’s case studies to support your answers.



Name _____

Date: _____

Homeroom: _____

I. The Purpose of the Convention

The Articles of Confederation have more power to the states than to the federal government (also known as the national government). This was done because many Americans were suspicious of a strong national government. However, after Shay's Rebellion, many Americans knew that the government needed to change. The Articles of Confederation were just not working.

The Constitutional Convention was called in Philadelphia. The purpose was to create a new government that would better serve Americans.

1. How did Shay's Rebellion lead to the Constitutional Convention?



Benjamin Franklin, the oldest delegate to the Constitutional Convention, had doubts about the drafting of the Constitution. However, he said, "The older I grow, the more apt I am to doubt my judgment and pay more respect to the judgment of others."

II. Opening the Constitutional Convention

Philadelphia was already hot and humid when delegates began drifting into the city. On May 25, 1787, the **Constitutional Convention**¹ met for the first time in the East room of the Pennsylvania State House (now known as Independence Hall). The Declaration of Independence had been debated in this very room 11 years earlier. The delegates would meet in the east room all summer. On some days temperatures rose well into the nineties.

The delegates first action was to elect George Washington president of the Convention. No man was more admired and respected than the former Commander and Chief of the Continental Army. When the war ended, Washington could have used his popularity and power to make himself a king. Instead, he went home to Virginia to resume his life as an ordinary citizen. But despite his reluctance to return to public life, Washington would play a key role by presiding over the convention and lending it his prestige.

Name _____

Date: _____

¹ **Constitutional Convention:** a meeting held in Philadelphia in 1787 at which delegates from the states wrote US History, Ms. Brown

Homeroom: _____

The Delegates Fifty-five delegates from 12 states attended the Constitutional Convention. Rhode Island, which prided itself as “the home of the otherwise minded” and feared a strong national government, boycotted the meeting.

Some leaders of the revolution were missing. John Adams and Thomas Jefferson were representing the United States in Great Britain and France, respectively. Others who did not attend included Samuel Adams, John Hancock and Patrick Henry. They feared that a strong national government would endanger the rights of the states.

As a group, the delegates were, in the words of a modern historian, “the well-bred, the well-fed, the well-read, and the well-wed.” Their average age was 42. At 81, Benjamin Franklin of Pennsylvania was the oldest. He arrived at the convention each day in a sedan chair carried by four good-natured prisoners from a nearby jail.

Most of the delegates brought extensive political experience to the meeting. More than two-thirds (2/3) were lawyers. Most had served in their state legislatures or held a state office. Thomas Jefferson was so impressed by the experience of these men that he called the convention “an assembly of demi-gods.”



The delegates to the Constitutional Convention met on May 25, 1787, in the same hall where the Declaration of Independence was signed. Today, the building is called Independence Hall.

The Father of the Constitution The best prepared of the delegates was James Madison of Virginia. One delegate wrote of Madison, “In management of every great question he evidently took the lead in the Convention.” Indeed, Madison’s influence was so great that later he would be called the “Father of the Constitution.”

Madison addressed the convention numerous times. When he was not speaking, he took notes. Sitting near the front of the room so that he could hear everything that was said. Madison wrote down nearly every word. All together, his notes covered more than 600 printed pages. From this remarkable record, we know what went on inside the convention day by day.

The Rule of Secrecy At the time, however, no one outside the convention knew what was happening. After choosing a president, the delegates voted on rules for the convention. The most important of these was the rule of secrecy. The delegates wanted to feel free to speak their minds without causing alarm or opposition among the general public. They agreed to keep secret whatever was said in the meeting room until their work was done.

The delegates took the rule of secrecy seriously. During that long summer, not a word of the convention debates appeared in any newspaper.

Name _____

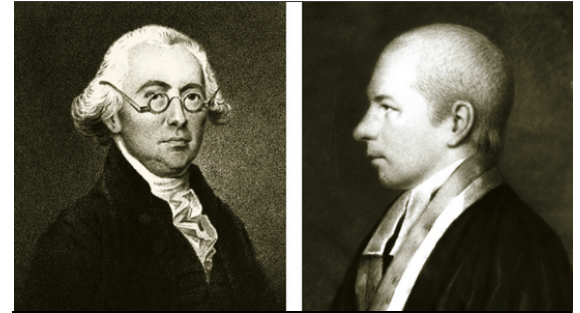
Date: _____

Homeroom: _____

Shared Beliefs and Clashing Views Once the convention was organized, the delegates got down to business. As a group the delegates had much in common. But they also had very different views on many issues facing the new nation.

To be sure, all the delegates were **committed**² to the ideals of the Declaration of Independence. The basic purpose of government, they believed, was to protect the rights to “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” And they agreed, in the words of the Declaration, that the “just powers” of government came from the “consent of the government.”

Human institutions these **liberal**³ thinkers had argued, should be based on “laws of nature.” Among these laws were the rights to liberty and equality. The best way to protect these rights, the delegates agreed was through some form of **republic**⁴.



Delegates with opposing views were Pennsylvania’s James Wilson (left) and New Jersey’s William Paterson (right). Wilson, one of the most vocal delegates at the constitution, argued for a strong national government. Paterson tried to protect state rights of the states. Many delegates of small states shared his fear of being “swallowed up” by the larger

From New England’s town meetings to lawmaking bodies like the Virginia House of Burgesses, Americans had a long tradition of participating in their own government. After the American Revolution, all the states had adopted **constitutions**⁵ that embraced republican ideals. Despite many differences in details, every state had a form of representative government. States had also expanded the rights to vote and hold office. The states’ constitutions helped to shape the delegates’ thinking.

Despite the delegates’ broad agreement on a government “of the people” many questions were left unanswered. For example, who exactly should have a say in a truly “representative” government? Even in liberal Pennsylvania, only free, white males could vote. Some states allowed only wealthier citizens to vote or hold office. Women could not vote in any state except New Jersey. (New Jersey women would lose the right to vote in 1807).

Perhaps the most troubling question of all was how powerful the national government should be. Many delegates wanted to keep government close to the people by preserving the rights of the states. They feared that a strong national government would threaten individual liberty. Others, including Madison, argued the opposite. Look at what has happened under the Articles of Confederation, they said, referring to events like Shay’s Rebellion. If the central government is too weak, it cannot do its job of protecting liberty and property.

As they met behind closed doors, the delegates wrestled with this and other issues. Tempers often flared and at times it seemed the convention might collapse in failure. But in the end delegates found ways to save the convention – and the nation.

² Committed: to agree or pledge to support someone or something

³ Liberal: supporting ideas of freedom, change and progress

⁴ Republic: a country governed by elected representatives

⁵ Constitutions: a written plan that provides the basic framework of a government



Name _____ Date: _____ Homeroom: _____

1. Describe the role of each of these men at the Constitutional Convention.

George Washington:

James Madison:

2. Why did the important leaders Sam Adams, John Hancock, and Patrick Henry not attend the convention?

3. Do you agree with the delegates' rule of secrecy? Why or why not?

4. The delegates had differing views on how powerful the national government should be.

- What did delegates for a strong national government believe?
- What did delegates for stronger state governments (weaker national government) believe?
- List one belief that these two types of delegates shared.





Name _____

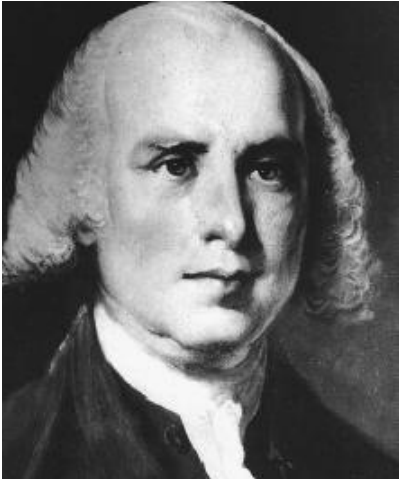
Date: _____

Homeroom: _____

HOMEWORK

_____/10 Mastered/Passing/Not Mastered

The Important People in the Convention



James Madison

Madison is known as the “Father of the Constitution.” His influence over the convention was great. This was partly because Madison brought with him a plan for a stronger national government. Madison’s ideas were the basis for discussing how to structure a new government. Much of what we know about the Constitutional Convention comes from Madison’s notes.

Question: What is Madison known as? Why did he earn this title?

George Washington

Washington was probably the most honored and respected man in American at this time. This was mainly due to the fact that he had been the Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army. He was convinced that a stronger national government was necessary, but did not want to speak about it publically. He did not want to become involved in politics. He preferred to return to Mount Vernon, Virginia, his home, to be a farmer. At first, Washington refused to come to the convention. He later changed his mind. Washington was afraid if he did not attend, people would think that he had lost faith in republican government. Washington served as presiding officer at the proceedings. This made the convention more respectable and prestigious in citizens’ minds.





Name _____

Date: _____

Homeroom: _____

Question: Why did Washington decide to join the Constitutional Convention? What was his role in the Convention?

Benjamin Franklin



Franklin was eighty-one years old and in poor health. He attended the convention as a delegate for Pennsylvania. Franklin was one of the most respected men in America. He had a long and distinguished career as a printer, writer, revolutionary, peacemaker and diplomat. He had organized the Albany Plan of Union, and helped to write the Treaty of Paris after the Revolutionary War. Franklin's primary role during the convention was to encourage the delegates to cooperate when they disagreed.

Question: What was Franklin's primary (main) role in the Constitutional Convention?

Governor Morris



Morris was a delegate from New York. He had served in the state militia and in the New York State legislature. Morris had also been a member of the Continental Congress. He was an exceptionally good speaker during the Convention he played an important role in writing the Constitution and prepared its final draft.



Name _____

Date: _____

Homeroom: _____

Question: What was Morris' role in the Constitutional Convention?

Who Am I?

1. I was a famous and well-respected man from Virginia. I had gained this respect as the Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army. While I was reluctant to join the convention, I later changed my mind.

Who Am I? _____

2. I was a famous man, known for my various careers, such as peacemaker, inventor, and negotiator. I gained my reputation from organizing the Albany Plan of Union and the peace treaty after the Revolution. I served as a negotiator and mediator during the Constitutional Convention.

Who Am I? _____

3. I was the delegate from New York. I played an important role in writing and preparing the final draft of the Constitution.

Who Am I? _____

4. I am known as the "Father of the Constitution." I wrote much of the Constitution and later wrote important papers supporting the Constitution, known as the Federalist Papers.

Who Am I? _____





Name _____

Date: _____

Homeroom: _____

**The Constitutional Convention
EXIT TICKET**

_____/5 Mastered/Passing/Not Mastered

1. What was the original purpose of the convention in May 1787?
 - a. to write the US Constitution
 - b. to end the conflict in Massachusetts
 - c. to revise the Articles of Confederation
 - d. to rewrite the Declaration of Independence

2. Why is James Madison known as the “Father of the Constitution”?
 - a. He wrote the first draft of the Constitution
 - b. He knew more about government than anyone else
 - c. He was the oldest delegate to the Constitutional Convention
 - d. He was well prepared to lead the discussion at the convention

3. The delegates to the Constitutional Convention agreed to establish a republic. Which of these best describes a republic?
 - a. a country led by a president
 - b. a government led by a powerful few
 - c. a parliamentary form of government
 - d. a country led by elected representatives

4. Which information on the Writing of the Constitution is considered a primary source?
 - a. a newspaper written in 1887
 - b. an encyclopedia article on the Constitution
 - c. the book, An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution
 - d. notes from the Constitutional Convention taken by James Madison