

Wanted: A Just Right Government

Time Needed: One class period

Materials Needed:

Student worksheets

Power Point and projector *-or-* overhead transparencies

Scissors and tape/glue (class set)

Copy Instructions:

Reading (2 pages; class set)

Cut & Paste Activity (2 pages; enough for pairs; do not copy back to back)

Crossword Review (1 page; class set)

Learning Objectives. Students will be able to:

- Describe how the weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation led to the writing of the Constitution
- Compare the Virginia plan with the New Jersey plan
- Compare the Articles of Confederation with the Constitution
- Identify cause/effect relationships in the development of America's government

STEP BY STEP

- ANTICIPATE** with a quick poll of the class. Ask students, "Imagine we were going to have a class ice cream party and we could only have one kind of ice cream. How many people would want chocolate? Strawberry? Rocky Road?" After the poll, ask students whether they think it would be possible to get everyone to agree. What about if the class could have two flavors? Three? Would it be possible to at least satisfy everyone, even if they don't get their very favorite flavor? Tell students they are going to learn how the U.S. government was created, and that a lot of the process had to do with getting people to agree on things.
- DISTRIBUTE** the reading page to the class.
- READ** the reading with the class, pausing to discuss as appropriate. If you are using the PowerPoint presentation, the first five slides reinforce the reading material.
- CHECK** for understanding using the Active Participation Mini-Quizzes, either by continuing the PowerPoint presentation or following the Active Participation Guide.
- PAIR** students together.
- DISTRIBUTE** scissors, tape or glue, and the 2-page cut & paste activity.
- DISCUSS** the instructions for the cut & paste activity.
- ALLOW** students time to complete the activity in pairs.
- REVIEW** the answers with the class if you wish.
- DISTRIBUTE** one crossword review to each student.
- ASSIGN** students to complete the crossword review
- REVIEW** the answers with the class if you wish.
- CLOSE** by asking students to use scratch paper to sketch a T-chart with Articles of Confederation on the left and Constitution on the right. Have students fill in as many characteristics of each as they can without looking.

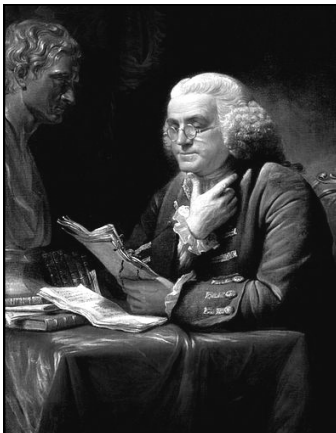
Wanted: A Just Right Government Name: _____

Independent Citizens Seek Awesome Government

When the American colonists gained their independence from the British after the Revolutionary War, the Americans were faced with a problem: What kind of government should they have? They'd lived for years under British rule, and they had lots of complaints. Now they would create a government from scratch, and they had a few requirements.

Independent citizens seek government that...

- Has enough power to do its job
- Doesn't give anyone too *much* power
- Considers the needs of all the states
- Lets citizens have a say
- Protects individual rights



Benjamin Franklin worked on the Articles of Confederation before he helped write the Constitution.

Independent Citizens Seek ^{Weak} ~~Awsome~~ Government

Their experience under heavy-handed British rule left the newly independent Americans a little bit skittish. Basically, they wanted a government that couldn't do much. They started by drafting a document called the Articles of Confederation. A **confederation** is a group of individuals united together for a purpose—in this case, the 13 states that had been British colonies before the war. The **Articles of Confederation** explained how the 13 states would be governed as one nation. Here are the basics:

- Each state was independent and had its own government.
- Each state would send representatives to the "Congress of the Confederation," a lawmaking body.
- Congress was the only branch of government. (No president or courts.)
- In Congress, each state got one vote.

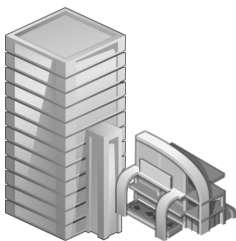
A Rocky Start

On one hand, the Articles of Confederation had qualities that citizens appreciated. Because the Articles did not set up a very strong government, states got to keep their power and independence. There was no powerful government telling them what to do. Citizens also wanted protection, and the Articles gave Congress the power to create a military to protect all the states.

← PROS

However, there were problems. For one thing, the Articles did not give Congress the power to enforce its laws. Congress also had no power to collect taxes to pay for the military. And in order to change the Articles, every single state had to agree to the changes. These and other problems meant that, in general, citizens felt like the relationship... er, the *government*, wasn't working.

← CONS



Lots of Differences

With thirteen different states, there was no easy solution. Here's why:

- *States had different needs.* For example, some states depended on fishing, while others mostly grew crops.
- *States had different sizes.* Some states had many people; others had few.
- *People had different opinions.* Some people feared a central government, while others thought a central government was necessary.

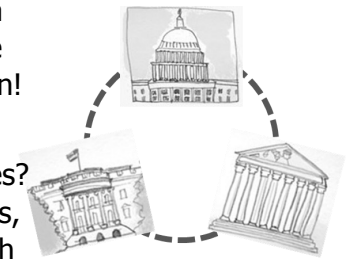


That last one was especially troublesome. Many people feared they would lose their freedom if a central government had too much power. Others were tired of the weak government created under the Articles of Confederation and felt like nothing would ever get done if nobody was in charge.

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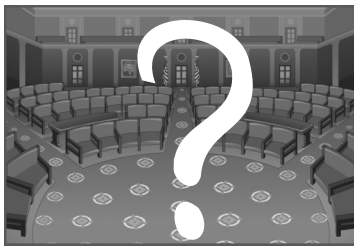
Let's Fix This Thing

In 1787, representatives from every state except Rhode Island met in Philadelphia to fix the Articles. We call this meeting the **Constitutional Convention** because they ended up doing more than just fixing the articles—they wrote the Constitution! But agreeing on a new way to structure the government wasn't easy.



Some states floated a new idea: Why not create a government with *three* branches? The new government could have a *legislative branch* with a congress to make laws, an *executive branch* led by a president to carry out laws, and a *judicial branch* with courts to interpret laws. It sounded good, but there was one major problem: How many votes would each state get in the Congress?

Voting in Congress: Yes, It's a Big Deal



Why? Because some states have a large population and some have a small population. Under the Articles of Confederation, each state got one vote no matter how many people it had. That meant people in large states had less influence in Congress. Naturally, large states thought this wasn't fair. They thought they should get more votes because they had more people. Small states, however, thought it was a pretty good deal. Even though they were small, they had the same amount of power and influence as large states. They wanted to keep a one-vote-per-state system.

Battle of the Plans

Two different plans emerged—one favoring small states and one favoring large states. Can you tell which is which?

<i>Virginia Plan</i>	<i>New Jersey Plan</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Legislative branch has 2 chambers• Number of votes for each state depends on the state's population	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Legislative branch has one chamber• Each state gets one vote



The Americans were a lot like Goldilocks in the story about the three bears: They had to try different governments until they found one that was "just right!"

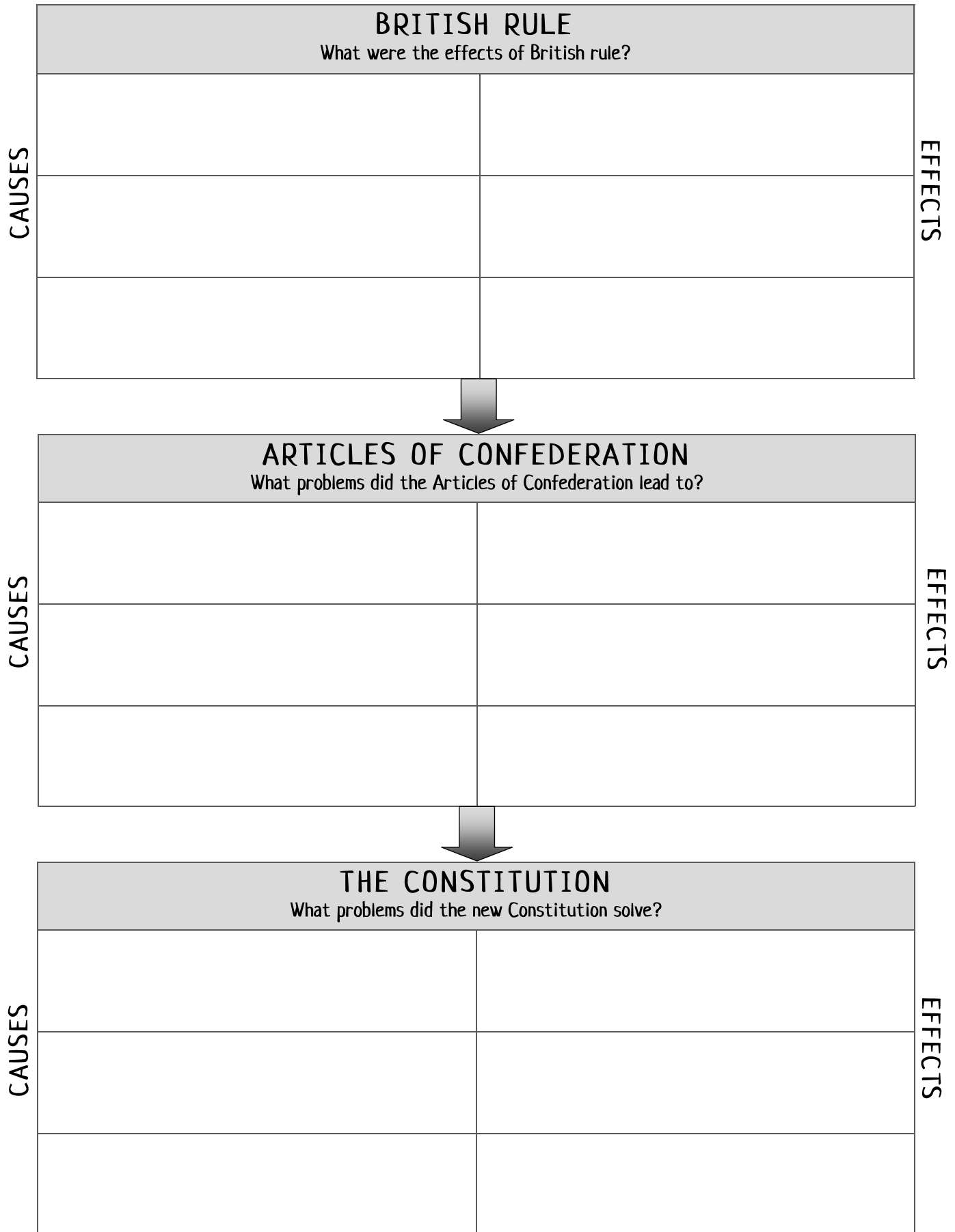
The Constitution Solution

The two sides—large states and small states—finally reached a compromise. The **Constitution** was the second and final attempt to write a document that would govern the United States, and we still follow it today. Under the Constitution, Congress is divided into two chambers: the Senate and the House of Representatives. In the Senate, each state gets two votes no matter what size it is. This favors small states. In the House of Representatives, the more people a state has, the more votes it gets. This favors large states. The Constitution also solved some other problems found in the Articles of Confederation.

- The Articles didn't require states to treat citizens from other states the same as their own citizens, but the Constitution does.
- The Articles couldn't be changed unless all states agreed, but the Constitution can be changed if 3/4 of the states agree.
- The Articles didn't require states to follow the laws Congress passed, but the Constitution says federal laws are superior to state laws.

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It's All About Cause and Effect! When you look at causes and effects, you can see the relationships between different things that take place. Use what you learned in the reading to match causes and effects for different stages of America's government.

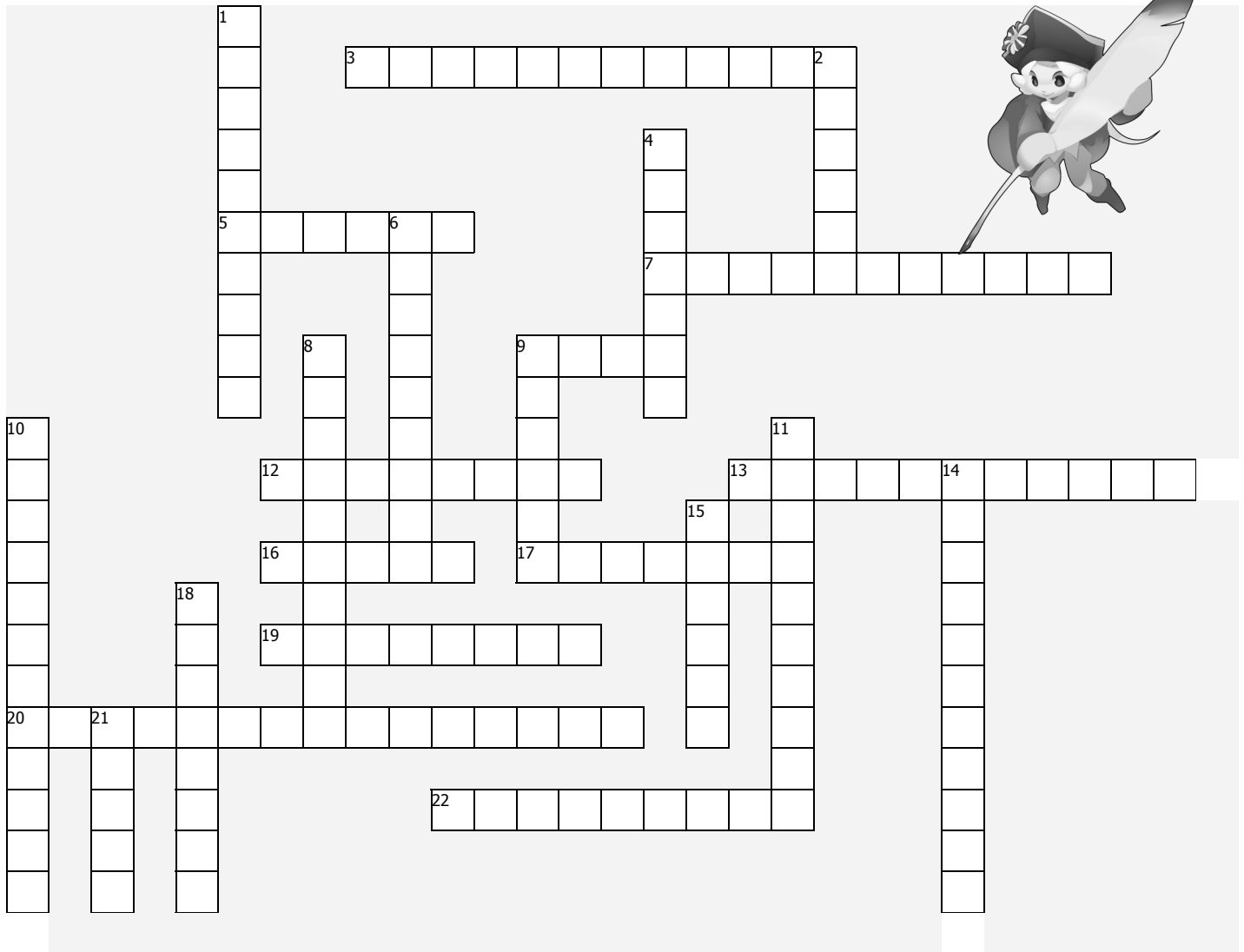
- 1) Cut out the causes and effects below.
- 2) Look at the three categories on the cause/effect flow chart.
- 3) Match three cause/effect statements for each category on the flow chart.
- 4) Paste the cause and effect statements onto the chart under the correct categories.
(Within each category, it doesn't matter what order you paste them in.)



<u>Effect</u> : The new Americans made sure their new government did not have the power to collect taxes.	<u>Effect</u> : Large states were unhappy because, with bigger populations, they thought they should have more power.
<u>Cause</u> : Independent states made laws that penalized out-of-state businesses and citizens.	<u>Cause</u> : Small and large states could not agree on how power should be divided in the legislature.
<u>Cause</u> : The Articles of Confederation did not create any courts.	<u>Cause</u> : Many former colonists feared losing their freedom to a new government.
<u>Effect</u> : The new Americans made sure their new government could not take away states' freedom and independence.	<u>Effect</u> : The new Constitution said laws passed by Congress are superior to state laws.
<u>Effect</u> : When a problem arose between states, there was nowhere to settle the dispute.	<u>Cause</u> : The British government treated the American colonists harshly.
<u>Cause</u> : States could and did ignore laws passed by the Congress created by the Articles of Confederation.	<u>Effect</u> : The government could not pay its debts from the Revolutionary War, and America lost standing with other nations.
<u>Effect</u> : Many American colonists feared a powerful government.	<u>Effect</u> : The new Constitution required states to treat citizens of other states the same as they treat their own citizens.
<u>Effect</u> : The new Constitution split the legislature so states had equal power in one half and power based on population in the other	<u>Cause</u> : The legislature created by the Articles of Confederation gave equal power to large and small states.
<u>Cause</u> : The government under the Articles of Confederation could not collect taxes to raise money.	<u>Cause</u> : The British government taxed the American colonists unfairly.

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Across

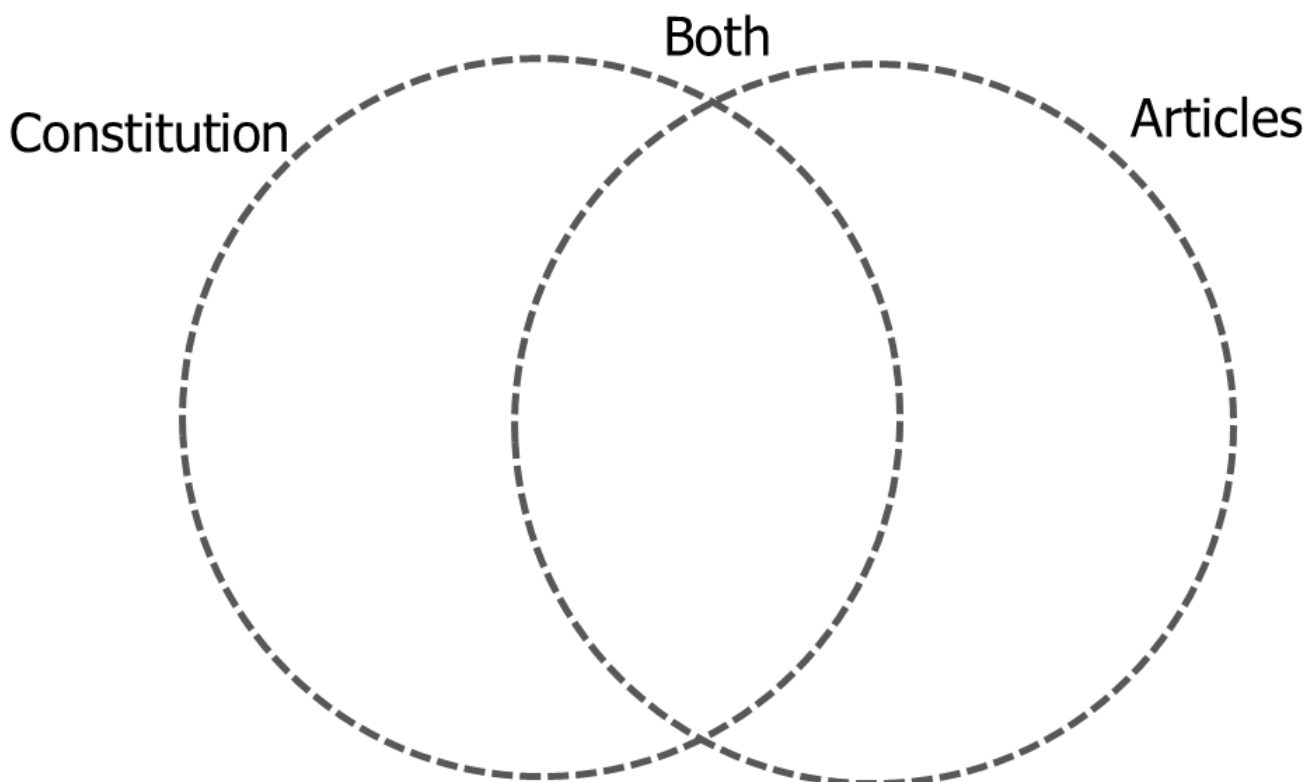
3. Fraction of states that must agree to change the Constitution
5. Under the Virginia Plan, these states would have more power
7. The branch that makes laws
9. States must treat their own citizens and other states' citizens this way
12. The branch that interprets laws
13. The document that replaced the Articles of Confederation
16. One problem was that states charged these on goods from other states
17. Under the Articles of Confederation, congress could not do this to its laws, so states could just ignore laws
19. The Articles let Congress create this but not pay for it
20. States send these to Congress
22. Under the Articles, America did not have one of these

Down

1. Early Americans had something in common with this fictional character!
2. These were the "individuals" in the "confederation" created by the Articles
4. Under the New Jersey plan, these states would have more power
6. the branch that carries out laws
8. In the House of Representatives, the number of votes a state gets depends on this
9. The chamber of Congress where each state gets two votes
10. A group of individuals united together for a purpose
11. The Articles of Confederation was America's first plan for _____.
14. One of two things people were afraid states might lose
15. The Articles of Confederation created a government that had only one of these
18. The Constitution says laws passed by Congress are ___ to state laws.
21. One of two things people were afraid states might lose

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UNDER THE CONSTITUTION...	A	B
1. Laws are made by the _____ branch.	executive	legislative
2. States must treat people from other states _____.	the same	differently
3. Laws passed by Congress are _____ to state laws.	inferior	superior
4. Congress has _____.	one chamber	two chambers
5. Each state gets two votes in the _____.	Senate	House
6. In the _____, the number of votes each state gets is based on its population.	Senate	House
7. A change to the Constitution must be approved by _____.	All states	3/4 of states



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ACTIVE PARTICIPATION GUIDE (PowerPoint Alternative for Print-only Users)

True/False Mini-Quiz. Read each statement aloud to the class. Have the class answer "True" or "False" as a chorus or show you thumbs-up for true and thumbs-down for false. Listen or visually check for inconsistent answers (indicating confusion). Use each statement as an opportunity for quick review.

1. The Articles of Confederation created a President to lead the country. (F)
2. States were still independent under the Articles. (T)
3. The Articles were easy to change. (F)
4. Under the Articles of Confederation, the more people a state had, the more votes it got in Congress. (F)
5. The Congress created by the Articles did not have the power to collect taxes. (T)
6. Under the Articles, states had to obey the laws Congress passed. (F)
7. The Articles of Confederation created the first American government. (T)
8. When planning for the Constitution, everybody agreed the central government should have more power. (F)
9. Some people were afraid states might lose their independence if the government was stronger. (T)
10. Different states had different needs for government to meet. (T)
11. The states all got along with each other. (F)
12. The government created by the Articles of Confederation had everything under control among the states. (F)

A/B Mini Quiz. Display the projection master, showing the A/B chart. Uncover one question at a time. Have the class answer A or B as a chorus. Here's the key:

	A	B
1.	executive	legislative
2.	the same	differently
3.	inferior	superior
4.	one chamber	two chambers
5.	Senate	House
6.	Senate	House
7.	All states	3/4 of states

Venn Mini Quiz. Display the projection master, showing the Venn diagram. Read each characteristic below aloud and have the class tell you where it goes. Write the answers on the diagram as you go. (Just put the letter of the statement on the Venn.)

- A) Created a president (*Constitution*)
- B) Created a government (*Both*)
- C) Had one branch of government (*Articles*)
- D) Had enough power to do its job (*Constitution*)
- E) Created a court system (*Constitution*)
- F) Gave large and small states the same power (*Articles*)
- G) Created a Congress (*Both*)
- H) Compromised between large and small states (*Const.*)
- I) Created a military (*Both*)
- J) Didn't let Congress enforce its laws (*Articles*)

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