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## The Articles of Confederation Teacher Page

### Overview:

The Articles of Confederation was created with the intention that each state would retain sovereignty while adhering to a loose alliance of equal partners. However, it soon became obvious that this alliance could not effectively solve problems or protect the nation from harm. In this lesson, students will examine the Articles of Confederation and analyze its strengths and weaknesses.

### Objectives:

Students will:

- analyze the Articles of Confederation and examine its components
- make conclusions about the document's effectiveness in regard to governing the new nation
- speculate whether the Articles were too weak to be retained, or if they could have been altered to meet the concerns and issues facing the nation

### Web sites used in this Lesson:

The text of the Articles can be found at <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/artconf.htm>, which is part of Yale University's Avalon Project of major historical documents. (Teachers should note that students can navigate through the various parts of the Articles by clicking on the number of the desired article at the top of the page.)

The entire Avalon Project web site is located at <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/major.htm>

### Strategies:

Introduce the lesson with a brief discussion regarding the end of the Revolutionary War, and how the colonists wanted to avoid replacing a strong central government based in London with an equally strong government based at home. You may also wish to conduct a basic discussion of confederations, including the Confederate States of America during the Civil War, or the United Nations.

After the discussion, distribute the worksheets and ask the students to review the various parts of the Confederation.

Student responses to each question may vary, but should average three to five sentences.

Wrap-Up:

After students have completed the worksheets, have a discussion focused on the following issues:

1. What parts/planks of the Articles seemed best to reflect the colonists' desire to avoid a strong central government?
2. In the students' view, what points/parts of the Articles would be most important to retain in a rewritten Constitution?

Extension Activity:

Have students review the period of history in which the Articles served as the basis for United States government. Ask students to write a position paper about the effectiveness of the Articles. Suggest to students that they may want to look specifically at instances such as Shays's Rebellion as well as the Land Ordinance of 1785 and Northwest Ordinance of 1787 as examples of problems and legislation that occurred during the period that the Articles were in force.

## The Articles of Confederation Student Worksheet

### Introduction:

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, which the colonists wrote as the first constitution of the United States. 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.

### Directions:

#### **The Articles of Confederation**

Go to <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/artconf.htm> and answer the following questions.

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. 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?
  
6. 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 at 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.
  
7. 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? Explain your position.