Name:

Date:

School:

Facilitator:

5.01 Notes Guide

“Governing the New Nation”

Answer the 5.01 Notes Guide as you review the lesson.

Intro:

Imagine it is 1782, the war is over and you have seven “continental” dollars to celebrate. What would you buy?

How can money be worthless if the government printed it?

First Attempt at Governing

After America's separation from England, in 1776, the Continental Congress urged the colonies to write new state constitutions. The Congress also formed a committee, chaired by , to prepare a national constitution. The task was to create a central government that unified the thirteen individual states and provide for a common defense, while in no way establishing a government that resembled the tyrannical rule of Great Britain.

Articles of Confederation

In 1781, Maryland became the last of the 13 states to ratify the new constitution, the. Despite many problems, while under the Articles, the states fought and won independence from England, negotiated a peace treaty with European powers, and laid the framework for the present day government.

The Articles of Confederation was written to bind together thirteen "free and independent states" that wanted to maintain their sovereignty. Therefore, the national government was purposefully created to be a weak government under the Articles of Confederation.

The U.S. central government had only one branch with a , or one house, congress. Representatives to the Continental Congress were frequently absent.

There was no executive (president) or judicial branch (federal court) under the Articles.

B. Weaknesses under the Articles of Confederation

The central government would face many challenges due to its inability to regulate trade,  (tax its citizens), or enforce any of the powers that it had been given by the Articles.

Congress had extremely limited power:

1. No power to  its own laws (no federal courts meant no way to enforce the laws)

2. No power to  (left only the power to print Continental dollars that had no value)

3. No power to among states (trade disputes among the states was a major concern)

4. No power to

Imagine how limited our federal government would be today if there were no consequences to breaking laws. Without courts to prosecute, laws cannot be enforced.

Growing Pains

The new government had several flaws, but one of the toughest challenges that the Congress faced was finances. The United States accrued a large war debt to France and private individuals that it could not repay, nor could it pay for the veterans who fought in the war.

States continued to print currency, which led to further inflation.

Lacking the power to tax its citizens, the new government was hard pressed to find a financial solution. It found its answer in . The Old Northwest Territory had been awarded to the U.S. in the Peace of Paris negotiations.

In 1785 and 1787, Congress divided up the territory for sale and set provisions for statehood that would further expand our territory.

Land Ordinance of 1785

The was adopted by the Continental Congress to sale land to raise money to repay war debts. The ordinance laid the foundation of U.S. land policy until passage of the Homestead Act in 1862.

The Land Ordinance of 1785 surveyed and divided land north of the Ohio River, east of the Mississippi River, and south of the Great Lakes in to 36 square-mile  with lots divided into one square-mile, or 640 acre plots to be sold for not less than $1 per acre.

The  of each township would be sold for the maintenance of .

Northwest Ordinance of 1787

The created the first organized territory of the U.S., the Northwest Territory. It made the following provisions for the admission of new states:

* The territory could be divided into no less than three, but no more than five states. , Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, and Wisconsin were eventually created.
* After the adult male population reached 5,000 in a territory, a governor was appointed by Congress.
* At a population of territories could apply for statehood.
* was excluded permanently form the Northwest Territory.

It has been argued that the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 was the most important legislation passed by the Continental Congress under the Articles of Confederation with the exception of the Declaration of Independence.

International Challenges

The Articles of Confederation was written to bind together thirteen "free and independent states" in order to form a union that would provide a common defense against European foes. While an American victory in the Revolutionary War freed the U.S. from British policies, it left a fledgling nation to fend for itself in world affairs.

Britain dealt a crippling blow to American trade by prohibiting trade with the British West Indies. Relations with France were strained as well due to the large American war debts.

America's newly established government was struggling against the economic woes of the 1780s while also trying to find its place in world affairs. Trade restrictions put in place by England, France, and Spain were stifling the sale of American goods and Congress continued to struggle with .

Shays’ Rebellion

The postwar economy in America was depressed. States either chose to print currency or tax their citizens to pay off debt. Massachusetts levied taxes, and as a result the state's farmers, many of whom were veterans, were losing their farms because they could not pay the heavy taxes. In 1786, the overbearing taxes led to an uprising by Massachusetts farmers known as .

, a farmer and former captain in the Continental Army, led rebels to close the courts by force and free prisoners from jail who were imprisoned due to unpaid taxes and debts.

Shays’ Rebellion led many central figures to question the need for a stronger central government.