Chapter Seven
American History
Creating a Republic
During the Revolutionary War, state governments began to dissolve.

As a result, in May of 1776, the Second Continental Congress began to ask states to form their own governments.

In July of 1776, the Congress began to organize a national government.
Most states created **Constitutions** (documents that set laws and principles of a government), which served 2 purposes:

1. spell out rights of citizens
2. limit the power of government
Americans wanted to prevent an abuse of power so they divided government into two parts:

All colonies had a **Legislative Branch:**
- Lawmakers
- Elected by voters
- had an Upper (Senate) and Lower House

**Executive (governor):**
- Carried out laws
- All states but PA had a governor
Virginia was the first of several colonies to include a bill of rights which lists the freedoms the government promises to protect:

For example, freedom of:

- speech
- religion
- assembly
- press
- trial by jury
The right to vote also expanded under state constitutions.

To vote you had to be:

- male
- At least 21 years of age
- property owner or pay a tax
- In some states free blacks could vote
- In New Jersey, women could vote for a while
Members of the Continental Congress also agreed that a national plan of government had to be created.

Because most Americans were loyal to their states, few saw themselves as citizens of the “United States”.

They did not want to turn over powers of the state to a national government.
Because Americans feared tyranny, the Congress created a very weak national government. The first American constitution, completed in 1777, was the Articles of Confederation.
The authors of the Articles of Confederation did not create a nation, but a "firm league of friendship" between the 13 states. The Articles of Confederation created a Congress with 2-7 delegates from each state—BUT each state only had one vote. It did not create an executive or judicial branch.
Under the **Articles of Confederation**

Congress **could**
1. maintain the military
2. conduct foreign policy
3. declare war
4. make peace
5. coin money

The Congress could **NOT** regulate trade between the states or between states and foreign nations.

Congress had to **ask** states for money to keep the federal government going— they could not force them to contribute
In order to pass laws, 9 of the 13 states had to vote in favor.

Summary of the **Articles of Confederation**:

1. created a **loose alliance** between states
2. did not provide for a president (no executive branch) and laws had to be enforced by the states
3. did not create a court system (no judicial branch) and the government could not resolve differences between the states
Most states ratified the Articles of Confederation, but Maryland originally refused.

Maryland was concerned because states like Virginia were claiming land in the west. They feared that larger states would become extremely powerful.

They also feared that states that claimed land in the west could sell the land to make money and avoid taxes. If that happened, they feared, citizens of Maryland would move to places like Virginia to avoid taxes.
Maryland demanded that all of the land west of the Appalachian Mountains be turned over to the Congress. The larger states rejected the demand. Fortunately, Thomas Jefferson and other respected leaders stepped forward and convinced lawmakers to give up their claims to western lands. They were successful and Maryland ratified the Articles of Confederation and they went into effect in 1781.
Review 7-1

1. What is a constitution?
2. What are the two main purposes of a constitution?
3. Why did colonial constitutions divide their government into two branches of government?
4. What is a “bill of rights”?
5. In order to vote, what criteria did one have to meet in every colony?
6. Why did the Congress create a very weak national government?
7. The Articles of Confederation were completed (written) in what year?
8. Rather than a strong, centralized national government, the Articles of Confederation created what between the colonies?
9. How many votes in Congress did each state get?
10. What was the only branch of government created by the Articles of Confederation?
11. Under the Articles of Confederation, what were some of the things Congress was required to do?
12. Under the Articles of Confederation, what were some of the things Congress was forbidden to do?
13. In order to pass a law under the Articles of Confederation, what was required?
14. Why did Maryland refuse to sign the Articles of Confederation?
15. (a) How was the matter above resolved and (b) what year were the Articles of Confederation ratified?
After the Revolutionary War, the United States was in serious debt. Robert Morris, the U.S.’s chief financier, had used up all his resources, borrowing from wealthy Americans, and the country had about $27,000,000 of debt to repay.
During the Revolutionary War, the Congress solved its money problems by printing paper money, but it had no gold or silver to back it up. This caused massive inflation (prices rise, wages remain the same). Items that cost a single Continental dollar in 1776, cost $1,000 in 1780.
Because the Continental dollar became so worthless, individual colonies began to print their own money. This caused more confusion. Money from each of the colonies were valued differently. As a result, most colonies would not accept money printed outside of their colony. Trade between the states suffered as a result.
Other problems arose as a result of the weak national government

New York, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire claimed Vermont. The Articles of Confederation did not allow the government to solve the problem

It was finally resolved after Vermont paid New York $30,000 and officially became an independent state in 1790 (the 14th state)
Additionally, foreign nations took advantage of American weaknesses.

The British refused to remove troops from the Ohio Valley (despite the conditions of the Treaty of Paris).

The Spanish closed the port of New Orleans to American farmers.
Western settlers also caused problems for the Congress.

Settlers in the frontier began to feel neglected and tried to form their own states.

In Kentucky, settlers set up the state of Transylvania.

In eastern Tennessee, they set up the State of Franklin (after Benjamin Franklin) and applied for admittance to the Union.
Congress decided to pass 2 laws to deal with Northwestern land:

The first was the **Land Ordinance of 1785 (dealt with settling areas of land)**:

It divided the territory into 36 square mile townships

Each township was then divided into 36 one square mile sections which contained 640 acres

Congress planned to sell each section for $640 each

One section was always set aside for a **public school**
The 2nd law was the Northwest Ordinance passed in 1787 (dealt with setting up new governments)

1. The Northwest Ordinance allowed congress to appoint a governor, a secretary, and 3 judges to the territories

2. It allowed a nonvoting member of congress to be elected in the territories when the adult male population reached 5,000

3. It allowed territories to apply for statehood once the adult male population reached 60,000
4. The Northwest Ordinance required that all newly admitted states be on “equal footing” with the original states.

5. Additionally, the Northwest Ordinance prohibited slavery in the territories.

6. It also guaranteed the basic rights of freedom of religion, speech, trial by jury, etc. to settlers.
After the Revolution, the United States fell into an economic depression.

During an economic depression…

- business activity slows
- wages fall
- prices rise
- unemployment rises
• The depression hit farmers the hardest
• During the war, there was a high demand for the food produced by farmers
• As a result, farmers borrowed money to buy more land, livestock, seeds, and tools
• With the war over and a depression in its place, the farmers could not repay their loans
In Massachusetts, farmers were even more outraged when the state raised taxes on farmers. The courts began to seize land and put farmers in jail for inability to pay off loans. The state also refused to accept paper money for debt repayment.
Shays’ Rebellion

In 1786, Daniel Shays, a Massachusetts farmer who served as a Captain during the Revolution, organized 2,000 farmers to help farmers keep their land.

His men, many dressed in their old Army uniforms, attacked court houses that were in charge of hearing cases about land foreclosures and punishments for debtors.
During their final assault, Shays and his men decided to attack the Federal Arsenal in Springfield.

The Massachusetts militia was assembled by the Governor and it defended the arsenal, killing 4 of Shays’ men and wounding 24.

This was the first time the militia had been called in after nearly 5 months of attacks.
On February 3, 1787 the farmers were attacked in Petersham, MA by General William Lincoln.

The farmers scattered, and the rebellion was ended.

The Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts sentenced 14 of the rebellion's leaders, including Shays, to death for treason.

They were later pardoned by the newly elected Governor John Hancock.
Shays’ Rebellion proved one thing:

The federal government was much too weak and a stronger national government was needed!

Shays’ Rebellion is considered one of the leading causes of the formation of the United States Constitution.
Many Americans feared that Shays’ Rebellion was proof that the Articles of Confederation were not enough.

Many leaders called for a convention to improve the Articles of Confederation.

They decided to meet in May of 1787... but they ended up doing a lot more than just improving the Articles of Confederation!
Review 7-2
1. How did the Congress try to deal with its $27,000,000 debt?
2. What is inflation?
3. What was problematic about individual states printing their own money?
4. What did the Land Ordinance of 1785 do (be specific)?
5. What did the Northwest Ordinance do (be specific)?
6. What are the characteristics of an economic depression?
7. Why did farmers find themselves deeply in debt after the Revolutionary War?
8. What was Shays’ Rebellion (general summary)?
9. What did Shays’ Rebellion prove to many Americans?
10. As a result of Shays’ Rebellion, what did many leaders in the states call for?