

Lesson 4: The Articles of Confederation: A First Try at Governing America

Teacher Version

Essential Question

Why did the weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation lead to the creation of the U.S. Constitution?

Lesson Bridge

Review Lesson 3:

- Governments must protect rights
- Government power comes from the people

Bridge Question:

- What happens when rules exist but there is no way to enforce them?

Key Vocabulary

Paragraph	Word	How it Will be Taught	Student-Friendly Definition
2	Confederation	Context – the text directly provides the definition: <i>A confederation is a group of states that join together but keep most of their own power, like a team where everyone wants to be the boss.</i>	A group working together but mostly independent.
2	Sovereignty	Context: The text provides the definition by setting it apart with dashes: <i>They wanted sovereignty—the power to control themselves—for each state.</i>	The power to rule yourself.
5	Regulate	Context: The text provides the definition by setting it apart with dashes: <i>Second, the Articles gave Congress no power to regulate—control—trade or taxes.</i>	To control or manage something.
6	Amend	Context: The text provides the definition by setting it apart with dashes: <i>To amend—change—the rules, all 13 states had to agree.</i>	To change a rule or law.

Linear Array Activity

Linear Array Activity (10 minutes)

Setup: Students work in groups of 3-4. Each group gets word cards.

Linear Array: **WEAK ENFORCEMENT → STRONG ENFORCEMENT**

"Place these words on a line between WEAK ENFORCEMENT (minimum punishments) and STRONG ENFORCEMENT (serious punishments):"

Word cards:

imprison | warning | fine | reprimand | confiscate | detain | arrest

Text Coding Guide

S = Strength of the Articles of Confederation

W = Weakness of the Articles of Confederation

C = Change made by the U.S. Constitution

- Students read and code the text
- Teacher models paragraphs 1–3
- Students complete remaining paragraphs

Directed Note-Taking Graphic Organizer:

How weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation led to the US Constitution

Students track:

- Features of the Articles
- Evidence (paragraph numbers)
- Why this was a problem
- How the Constitution addressed it

Feature of the Articles	Evidence (Paragraph #)	Why This Was a Problem	How the Constitution Addressed It
Power to Tax			
Power to Enforce Laws			
Power to Regulate Trade			
Ability to Amend the Government			

Partner Preparation

- **Prompt:** “Which weakness of the Articles of Confederation was most instrumental in leading to the drafting of the U.S. Constitution, and why?”

Partners select ONE weakness and identify TWO pieces of evidence from the text.

Group Discussion

Prompt: “Which weakness of the Articles of Confederation was most instrumental in leading to the drafting of the U.S. Constitution, and why?”

Students defend their position using text evidence in a whole class discussion

Teacher pushes reasoning and synthesis:

- Which weakness prevented the government from acting at all?
- Which weakness affected the most people across states?
- Which weakness made fixing other problems impossible?

Final Writing Prompt

Prompt: *How did the weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation lead to the drafting of the U.S. Constitution?*

Students must:

- Identify one major weakness
- Use at least TWO pieces of textual evidence
- Explain how the Constitution address this weakness
- Explain why a stronger national government was necessary

Closure

- **Connection to Today**—Turn-and-talk:
“Why is it important for a government to have enough power to enforce rules—but not so much power that it becomes unfair?”
- **Exit Ticket**—“Write one sentence explaining why the Articles of Confederation were an important first step, even though they did not work well.”