

# The Articles of Confederation

## Chapter 5 Section 1

# The Articles of Confederation

## **Main Idea**

In order to carry on the war and build a new nation, Americans had to create a framework of government, but their first attempt had many weaknesses.

## **Reading Focus**

- What were some key aspects of the new American republic?
- What was the structure of the new national government?
- What problems did the Confederation face?
- What did the government accomplish in the Northwest Territory?

# The American Republic

## State governments had similarities

- **Legislative branch** made the laws.
- **Judicial branch** interpreted the laws.
- **Executive branch** (the governor) carried out the laws.
- Remembering the powerful royal governors, the states chose to limit the governor's power.
- The elected legislatures held more power.



## Republicanism

- Americans wanted a **republic**, a political system without a monarch. It would rule "with the consent of the governed."
- Ideal of republicanism was that property-owning citizens would be active in government
- In reality, women, African Americans, Native Americans, and poor white laborers seldom owned property or took part in government.



# Similarities in State governments

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# Republicanism

- Americans wanted a **republic**
  - **No** monarch
  - Rule “with the consent of the governed.”
- Property-owning citizens would be active in government
- Little part in government
  - Women
  - African Americans
  - Native Americans
  - Poor white laborers seldom

# The American Republic

## Republican motherhood

- **The Revolutionary War brought a shift in women's roles.**

- Managed farms and businesses
- Fought in battle or defended their homes
- Organized boycotts
- Supported war effort



- **Republican motherhood** encouraged mothers to raise their sons to be patriotic future leaders and their daughters to be intelligent, patriotic, and competent so they could run households and educate their own children.



- Judith Sargent Murray, a contemporary author, maintained that young women should be educated in reasoning, not just household skills.



# A New National Government

## **The Articles of Confederation**

- Established a confederation—an association of independent sovereign states with certain common goals
- Formally adopted the Articles of Confederation in November 1777
- Powers of the new government
- The states retained most of their powers.
- Weak national government
  - Legislative branch, Continental Congress
  - Each state had only one vote, regardless of population.

# The Articles of Confederation

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## REPUBLICAN MOTHERHOOD



The Sedgwick home is pictured in the background.

The book suggests the importance of education to the Sedgwick family.

**Skills  
FOCUS**

### READING LIKE A HISTORIAN

The Sedgwicks, a prominent Federalist family in Massachusetts, valued education. In this painting, Pamela Dwight Sedgwick is pictured with her daughter, Catharine, who became a writer.

**Interpreting Visuals** Why did the family choose to include a book in this portrait?

See **Skills Handbook**, p. H30

# A New National Government

## **The Articles of Confederation allowed Congress to**

- Establish national policies and conduct foreign relations, including relations with Native American nations
  - Coin money and set up post offices
  - Establish an army
  - Declare war
- 
- Nine of the 13 states had to agree on any major law.
  - All 13 states had to agree to amend the Articles.
  - The new government's major problems involved money.
    - Large war debts
    - No power to impose or collect taxes
    - Could not afford an army or navy
    - Could not repay money it borrowed from foreign governments and from individual Americans during the war



# Articles of Confederation allowed Congress to

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- Conduct foreign relations
- Conduct relations w/ Native American nations
- Coin money
- Set up post offices
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# Weaknesses

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## WEAKNESSES OF THE ARTICLES OF CONFEDERATION

- Congress could not impose taxes
- Congress could not regulate trade
- 9 of 13 states needed to agree to pass laws
- All states had to agree to amend the Articles
- No executive branch to enforce laws passed by Congress
- No judicial branch to interpret laws passed by Congress

# A New National Government

## Problems with the states

- Congress had very little power over the individual states.
- It could not settle disputes between states because there was no national court system.

## Problems with foreign nations

- Because it was so weak, Congress had trouble taking advantage of the territory that the United States had won in the Treaty of Paris.
- The British did not leave their forts in the Great Lakes region.
- The British and their Native American allies kept American settlers out of the Northwest Territory.
- Negotiating with Spain about uses of the Mississippi and port of New Orleans was difficult.



# A New National Government

## Economic problems

- Private citizens and businesses in every state had money problems after the war. 
- New England's trade with Britain and the British West Indies was lost. Traders had to pay high customs duties.
- The southern economy was hurt without Great Britain's bonuses to support key colonial industries such as indigo and naval stores. 
- Paper money that was not backed by gold or silver was issued—led to **inflation**.
- States could levy taxes.
  - Some states required taxes be paid in gold or silver.
  - People who could not pay were jailed. 

## A New National Government

### **The Northwest Territory**

- Was a need to organize the settlement of the vast Northwest Territory—present-day Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, and Michigan



### **Western land claims**

- Articles of Confederation did not address the question of new states.
- States had to give up their western land claims to the central government.
- Most states gave up their lands by the early 1790s.



# A New National Government

## **Dividing western lands**

- The territory was divided into 10 districts.

## **Land Ordinance of 1785**

- Land would be surveyed and divided into a neat grid of townships, each 6 miles square.
- Each township had 36 sections, each 1 mile square.
- Government owned four of the sections.
- One section would be sold to support public schools.
- This same regular grid was used in other territories. It ended many boundary disputes.

# Land Ordinance of 1785

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## THE LAND ORDINANCES OF 1785 AND 1787

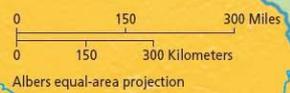


One section equals 1 square mile.

36	30	24	18	12	6
35	29	23	17	11	5
34	28	22	16	10	4
33	27	21	15	9	3
32	26	20	14	8	2
31	25	19	13	7	1

One township equals 36 square miles.

ATLANTIC OCEAN



### GEOGRAPHY SKILLS INTERPRETING MAPS

This map details the surveying plan of the land ordinances that governed the settlement of the Northwest Territory.

- 1. Region** How many sections made up a township? How large was each section?
- 2. Region** How many acres made up a quarter section?

See **Skills Handbook**, p. H20

# A New National Government

- **Northwest Ordinance** was passed in 1787.
  - Encouraged orderly settlement and the formation of new states, all controlled by law
  - Promised settlers religious freedom and other civil rights
  - Did not allow slavery in the Northwest Territory
  - A single governor was put in charge.
- A district could become territory with a population of 5,000 adult males. Then could send a nonvoting representative to Congress
- A territory could write a constitution and apply for statehood with a population of 60,000.

# 1787 Northwest Ordinance

- Established **Northwest Territory**
  - system for creating new states
    - Illinois
    - Indiana
    - Michigan
    - Ohio
    - Minnesota
    - Wisconsin
- Required public education
- Banned slavery

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  - A territory could write a constitution and apply for statehood with a population of 60,000.