

DBQ: The Articles of Confederation

Directions: The following question is based on the documents provided. As you analyze the documents, take into account both the source of the document and the author's point of view.

Be sure to:

1. Carefully read the document-based question. Consider what you already know about this topic. How would you answer the question if you had no documents to examine?
2. Now, read each document carefully, underlining key phrases and words that address the document-based question. You may also wish to use the margin to make brief notes. Answer the questions that follow each document.
3. Based on your own knowledge and on the information found in the documents, develop a thesis that directly answers the question.
4. Organize supportive and relevant information into a brief outline.
5. Write a well-organized essay proving your thesis. The essay should be logically presented and should include information both from the documents and from your own outside knowledge of the topic.

Historical Context: Following the American Revolution, the newly created United States was in need of a government. The first attempt at a national government was known as the Articles of Confederation. Although it was only short-lived, the Articles represented an important step in the development of America's government.

Document 1

The ARTICLES of CONFEDERATION and PERPETUAL UNION

Between The States Of

New Hampshire, Massachusetts-bay Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia.

ARTICLE I The Stile of this Confederacy shall be "The United States of America".

II Each state retains its sovereignty, freedom, and independence, and every power, jurisdiction, and right, which is not by this Confederation expressly delegated to the United States, in Congress assembled.

sovereignty=governmental power

delegated=given

- According to document 1, who had most of the power under the Articles of Confederation?

Document 2

From a letter by George Washington to a friend:

“The consequences of a . . . [an] inefficient government are too obvious to be dwelt upon. Thirteen sovereignties pulling against each other, and all tugging at the federal head, will soon bring ruin upon the whole. . . . Let us have [government] by which our lives, liberty, and property will be secured or let us know the worst at once.”

- According to Washington, what would happen to the nation if it stayed a confederation?
- What solution does he suggest?

Document 3



- Based on the map in document 3, what problems did the US face during its early days?

Document 4

[General Shepard to Governor Bowdoin]

Springfield, Massachusetts

January 26, 1787

The unhappy time is come in which we have been obliged to shed blood. Shays, who was at the head of about twelve hundred men, marched yesterday afternoon about four o'clock, towards the public buildings in battle array. He marched his men in an open column by platoons. I sent several times by one of my aides, and two other gentlemen, Captains Buffington and Woodbridge, to him to know what he was after, or what he wanted. His reply was, he wanted [guns]. The answer returned was he must purchase them dear, if he had them.

- ✓ What circumstances led to the event described in document 4?

Document 5

| The Articles of Confederation | |
|--|--------------------------------|
| No chief executive or national courts | |
| Laws need approval of 9 of the 13 states | |
| Congress could: | Congress could NOT |
| Declare war and make peace | Levy taxes |
| Raise a defense force | Regulate trade |
| Make foreign treaties and alliances | Settle disputes among states |
| Coin and borrow money | Collect state debts owed to it |
| Establish a post office | Enforce any of its powers |
| Regulate Indian affairs | |

- Why did some Americans feel that the Articles of Confederation was not sufficient for the new nation?

Essay Question:

What problems confronted the United States during its early years?