

# SHAPING America

## LESSON 10: "INVENTING A NATION"

### Lesson Assignments

You are encouraged to be very attentive while viewing the video program. Review the video objectives and be prepared to record possible answers, in abbreviated form as you view the video. The topics and time periods may differ somewhat from the chapters of the textbook your school system is using. Each video program chronicles a wide array of events and personalities during a specific time period of American history prior to 1877. Keep in mind that one of the overarching goals of each lesson is to help you understand how past historical events and actions by historical personalities did not occur in a vacuum, and that they are inextricably interwoven in your society today.

### Activities:

Your teacher may assign one or more activities for each lesson. Refer to your course syllabus for details.

### OVERVIEW

The American Revolution was not a revolution in the sense of a radical or complete change, but it did usher in some dramatic changes. Notable gains were made in the struggle to separate church and state. While the institution of slavery was not ended, the infamous slave trade was eventually abolished. Nor did equality, the watchword of the Revolution, extend to women. However, civic virtue was central to republican ideology and who better to cultivate the habits of a virtuous citizen than mothers?

Noteworthy was the progress made in economic democracy, which preceded political democracy in the United States. Most states reduced property-holding requirements for voting, and many of the large Loyalist estates were divided into small farms. Unfortunately, economic independence came at a price. American manufacturers faced "dumping" policies by their British competitors and Parliament limited or completely outlawed American trade with England and members of the British Empire. Yet the former British colonies were free to trade with other foreign nations.



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Unfortunately, regionalism resurfaced in the former British colonies, and state sovereignty threatened to undo the gains made by the revolution. The Second Continental Congress had finally secured unanimous approval from the thirteen colonies in 1781 for the new written constitution, the Articles of Confederation, but the central government had major enforcement problems. States maintained their sovereignty, and major problems developed with reference to conducting foreign affairs, creation of a sound money system, interstate commerce, and taxing residents of the individual states.

James Madison concluded that the state legislatures had too much power. Even though the Articles of Confederation had passed exceedingly farsighted legislation with the passage of the Land Ordinance Act and the Northwest Ordinance, problems with taxation, conducting foreign affairs, and commerce convinced Madison and other colonial leaders that steps had to be taken or the new ship of state was going to sink. A sense of urgency developed with Shay's Rebellion in 1786.

Consequently, Congress called a meeting in Philadelphia in 1787 to discuss what changes might be made in the Articles of Confederation, and most delegates quickly decided that the power of the central government had to be strengthened. The key question was how much power? Delegates included such prestigious personalities as George Washington, Alexander Hamilton, and Benjamin Franklin. The majority of the delegates were conservative and wealthy. Some of the more fiery leaders such as Jefferson, John Adams, Patrick Henry, and Thomas Paine were absent. The delegates concluded that the Articles of Confederation was beyond repair, and the fight was on to craft a new constitution that would embody the revolutionary idealism into a stable political structure.

Compromises became the order of the day. Two of the most significant were the "three-fifths compromise" and the "Great Compromise." Those two compromises were major steps forward in addressing the conflicts brewing between the north and south and the small and large states respectively. The new constitution greatly increased the power of the central government and a bill of rights was conspicuous by its absence.

Federalist and Anti-Federalists forces immediately clashed throughout the ratification process. The Anti-Federalists feared a strong central government and finally extracted a promise from the Federalists to eventually add a Bill of Rights. Supporters of the proposed constitution faced a critical battle in New York and eventually carried the day with the help of the *Federalist Papers* written by Hamilton, Madison, and Jay.

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The Second Constitution has endured for over two hundred years and, like the Declaration of Independence, has become the model for newly emerging nations throughout the world. It was an ingenious document that incorporated the principles of checks and balances, separation of powers, a division of powers between the states and central government, the sovereignty of the people, and representative government. It had a strong conservative flavor in that it emphasized the importance of property rights, yet added a Bill of Rights, which was designed to protect both the individual states and people from a powerful central government. It was a concise document that was not bogged down with specifics, which gave it the flexibility to address future issues. Unfortunately, that lack of specificity has led to conflicts over interpretation. Yet the fact that few amendments have been added to the Constitution seems to speak to the ingenuity of the “founding fathers.”



## **VIDEO OBJECTIVES**

The following objectives are designed to assist the viewer in identifying the most significant aspects of the video segment of this lesson. You should take succinct notes while viewing the video.

1. Analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation.
2. Identify the key issues faced by the delegates at the Constitutional Convention and evaluate the compromises reached to resolve their differences.
3. Evaluate the Constitution ratification process.
4. Analyze the Bill of Rights and indicate how it addressed the concerns of the Anti-Federalists.
5. Evaluate the significance of the Constitution.

## **WEB ACTIVITIES**

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These activities are assigned at the discretion of your teacher. They are offered as suggestions to help you learn more about the material presented in this lesson.

## Activity 1: Comparing Paintings of the Surrender of General Burgoyne at Saratoga and General Cornwallis at Yorktown.

- a. Access and review the following web sites:  
Images of the American Revolution:  
<http://www.nara.gov/education/cc/amrev.html>  
Constitution Day:  
<http://www.nara.gov/education/teaching/constitution/home.html>  
The Ratification of the Constitution:  
<http://www.nara.gov/education/teaching/constitution/ratify.html>  
National Archives and Records Administration Document Analysis Worksheets: <http://www.nara.gov/education/teaching/analysis/analysis.htm>
- b. Compare and contrast the two paintings of General Burgoyne and General Cornwallis surrendering during the American Revolution and use the National Archives Photograph Analysis Worksheet as a guide for your analysis.

## Activity 2:

- a. Access and review the following web sites:  
Images of the American Revolution:  
<http://www.nara.gov/education/cc/amrev.html>  
Constitution Day:  
<http://www.nara.gov/education/teaching/constitution/home.html>  
The Ratification of the Constitution:  
<http://www.nara.gov/education/teaching/constitution/ratify.html>  
National Archives and Records Administration Document Analysis Worksheets: <http://www.nara.gov/education/teaching/analysis/analysis.htm>  
The National Archives. The Ratification of the Constitution:  
<http://www.nara.gov/education/teaching/constitution/ratify.html>
- b. Access <http://www.nara.gov/education/teaching/constitution/ratify.html> and under the Teaching Suggestions complete assignment number 1: Compare and contrast the original copy of Delaware's ratification of the Constitution with the transcription of Delaware's ratification. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of working with a handwritten

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original source. Use the National Records Written Document Worksheet located at <http://www.nara.gov/education/teaching/analysis/analysis.htm> as a guide when writing your analysis.



## PRACTICE TEST

After watching the video and reviewing the objectives, you should be able to complete the following Practice Test. Access the Answer Key to score your answers after you have completed the Practice Test.

### Multiple Choice:

Select the single best answer. It will be indicated if more than one answer is required.

1. The debate between the supporters and critics of the Articles of Confederation centered on how to:
  - A. Reconcile states' rights with a strong national government.
  - B. Transfer territories to equal statehood.
  - C. Abolish slavery yet preserve national unity.
  - D. Balance the power of legislative and executive offices of government.
2. Shay's Rebellion convinced many Americans of the need for:
  - A. Lower taxes.
  - B. Granting long-delayed bonuses to Revolutionary War veterans.
  - C. A vigilante effort by Westerners to halt the Indian threat.
  - D. A stronger central government.
3. The Great Compromise at the Constitutional Convention worked out an acceptable scheme for:
  - A. Regulating commerce.
  - B. Levying taxes.
  - C. Apportioning congressional representation.
  - D. Electing the president.
4. The Constitutional Convention addressed the North-South controversy over

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slavery through the:

- A. “Large-state plan.”
  - B. “Small-state plan.”
  - C. “Three-fifths” compromise.
  - D. Closing of the slave trade until 1807.
5. Probably the most alarming characteristic of the new Constitution to those who opposed it was the:
- A. Creation of a federal district for the national capital.
  - B. Creation of a standing army.
  - C. Absence of a bill of rights.
  - D. Omission of any reference to God.
6. The chief reason the *Federalist Papers* were written was to:
- A. Justify the need for a Bill of Rights.
  - B. Convince the voters of New York to ratify the Constitution.
  - C. Offer an argument for eliminating slavery.
  - D. Convince the voters of Virginia to support the “three-fifths” compromise.

## Essay Questions:

1. Analyze how the Constitution attempted to address the weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation.
2. Compare and contrast the views of the Federalists and Anti-Federalists.
3. Evaluate how the Bill of Rights addressed the concerns of the Anti-Federalist.

## Answers to the Practice Test:

The correct answer is indicated first, followed by the objective (s) that correlate with the test question.

1. A: 1
2. D: 1
3. C: 2-3-4-5
4. C: 2-3-4-5
5. C: 2-3-4-5
6. B: 2-3-4-5