

# Teaching American History For All

A series of lessons incorporating literacy strategies for  
Mt Diablo Unified School District  
5<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 11<sup>th</sup> grade teachers,  
in partnership with  
University Of California- Berkeley  
History-Social Science Project

## **8<sup>th</sup> Grade Lesson: Articles of Confederation**

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**Teaching American History for All**  
**MDUSD/UCB H-SSP**  
**8<sup>th</sup> Grade Lesson: Articles of Confederation**

**Developed by:** Brendan Hurd, Angela La Torre, Candace Chen, and Lauren Weaver

**Teaching American History Grant Focus Question:**

How did definitions of citizenship change from the 17<sup>th</sup> century to the 20<sup>th</sup> century?

**8<sup>th</sup> Grade Yearlong Focus Question:**

How did federalism shape the roles of the national and state governments?

How did the rights of citizens expand and contract during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries?

**Unit Focus Question:**

How did the problems with the Articles of Confederation force the early American leaders to write the US Constitution, and what issues between the states ensured the protection of individual rights?

**Unit Working Thesis:**

The challenges in the development of the US government forced the founding fathers to develop a stronger national government with a system of checks and balances between the branches, to establish guidelines for citizen participation, and to create the Bill of Rights to protect individual rights.

**Unit focus:** Early Republic/Founding Documents

**Lesson Focus Question/Writing Prompt:**

Did the Articles of Confederation succeed or fail to create a good national government?

**Lesson Working Thesis:**

The Articles of Confederation were weak because:

- Equal, but not fair voting. State power over people power.
- 9 out of 13 states to approve a law- hard to agree
- No taxes collected by the National government
- Weak national currency and competing state currencies
- Only one branch, no President or national court system

**Reading Strategy:**

Sentence Deconstruction

Graphic Organizer

**Writing Activity:**

Structured summary paragraph with a thesis statement, evidence, specific evidence and analysis

**Suggested Amount of Time:**

90+ minutes, 1 block class or 2 class periods

**Textbook:**

*HOLT, Independence to 1914.* pages 115-116

**Lesson Plan Procedure:****90+ minute Period**

- 1 min - pass out books and materials
  
- 5 min lesson Intro: Review the point of the Revolution: to create a republic-where the people are the authority over the government instead of a King or a ruler. How do we exert that authority? Stress the importance of voting and the structure of our democracy.
  
- 30-45 min Reading exercise: Page 115-116
  - Front load vocabulary.
  - Review hard to pronounce words in paragraph.
  - Class reading by close style.
  - Read through each paragraph once.
  - Choose more advanced readers to re-read each sentence and then mark up the sentence by subject and verbs.
  - After the whole paragraph has been reread and marked up, the class fills out the structural grammar chart as a class one sentence at a time.
  
- 30-45 minutes: Articles of Confederation Simulation. TCI activity
  - Students formed into 13 groups that are named after states.
  - Students debate what is the most important aspects of life to young people today following Roberts Rules of Order and the voting scheme laid out in the Articles of Confederation.
  - Each group vies to get the other groups to approve of their views in order to get points.
  - Once four aspects of life have been nominated and approved, the class votes on the whole slate.
  - To pass this final approval requires 9 groups to vote for the slate.
  - The group with the most points from the slate wins. However, the game is rigged. Each group has different point values attached to the different aspects and thus will never achieve the 9 out of 13 state majority required by the Articles.
  - **Discussion afterward.** Why was this frustrating? Why didn't it work? Who was powerful in this system? Use a map of the U.S. to see that small states with small populations had great power to defeat laws. Also point out how sections of states could work together to defeat proposed laws.
  
- 15 min Group paragraph writing

- Groups use the paragraph outline with sentence starters to write a response to the question: **Did the Articles of Confederation succeed or fail to create a good national government?**
  - Each student writes their own sheet. Each student gets a colored marker and has to write one sentence of a group version of the paragraph on an overhead to be presented by one member of the group.
- 10 minutes: groups report out to the class. The teacher criticizes and praises paragraphs.

### **History-Social Science Content Standards:**

#### **8.1 Students understand the major events preceding the founding of the nation and relate their significance to the development of American constitutional democracy.**

4. Describe the nation's blend of civic republicanism, classical liberal principles, and English parliamentary traditions.

#### **8.2 Students analyze the political principles underlying the U.S. Constitution and compare the enumerated and implied powers of the federal government.**

1. Discuss the significance of the Magna Carta, the English Bill of Rights, and the May-flower Compact.
2. Analyze the Articles of Confederation and the Constitution and the success of each in implementing the ideals of the Declaration of Independence.

### **Historical and Social Sciences Analysis Skills:**

#### **Chronological and Spatial Thinking**

1. Students explain how major events are related to one another in time.

#### **Historical Interpretation**

1. Students explain the central issues and problems from the past, placing people and events in a matrix of time and place.
2. Students understand and distinguish cause, effect, sequence, and correlation in historical events, including the long-and short-term causal relations.
3. Students explain the sources of historical continuity and how the combination of ideas and events explains the emergence of new patterns.

### **Reading/Language Arts Content Standards:**

- 2.0 Reading Comprehension (Focus on Informational Materials)
  - 2.1 Compare and contrast...

## 1.0 Written and Oral English Language Conventions

1.1 Use correct and varied sentence types and sentence openings to present a lively and effective personal style.

1.2 Identify and use parallelism, including similar grammatical forms, in all written discourse to present items in a series and items juxtaposed for emphasis.

1.3 Use subordination, coordination, apposition, and other devices to indicate clearly the relationship between ideas.

## 1.0 Listening and Speaking Strategies

1.1 Analyze oral interpretations of literature, including language choice and delivery, and the effect of the interpretations on the listener.

1.3 Organize information to achieve particular purposes by matching the message, vocabulary, voice modulation, expression, and tone to the audience and purpose.

1.8 Evaluate the credibility of a speaker (e.g., hidden agendas, slanted or biased material).

## **Vocabulary:**

**constitution**~ a plan for a government

**public office**~ a position of responsibility in government

**restored**~ to have brought back or to have given back

**appointed**~ chosen for a job, task or duty

**draft**~ to create and write out

**liberties of the people**~ rights and freedoms that people deserve.

These might include: \_\_\_\_\_

**treaties**~ agreements or written promises

## **Right to Vote**

## **Page 115**

Under British rule, only free, white men that owned land could vote. Many states constitutions expanded **suffrage**, or the right to vote, by allowing any white man who paid taxes to vote. In every state, however, only land-owners could hold public office. Some states originally allowed women and free African Americans to vote, but these rights were soon taken away. Suffrage would not be restored to these groups for decades to come.

## **Articles of Confederation**

## **Page 116**

The Second Continental Congress was organized to create a national government. The Continental Congress appointed a Committee of Thirteen, with one member from each colony. This group was assigned to discuss and draft the Articles of Confederation, the new national constitution.

Under the **Articles of Confederation**, Congress would become the single branch of the national government, but it would have limited powers in order to protect the liberties of the people. Each state had one vote in the Congress. Congress could settle conflicts among the states, make coins, borrow money, and make treaties with other countries and with Native Americans. Congress could also ask the states for money and soldiers. However, states had the power to refuse these requests. In addition, the government did not have a president or a national court system.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Per \_\_\_\_\_

## Articles of Confederation

Page 116

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<b>Time marker or connector</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Verb phrase</b>	<b>Message: who, what, where</b>	<b>Questions or conclusions</b>
	The Second Continental Congress	was organized to create	a national government	What does Continental mean? Root word?
		appointed	a Committee of Thirteen, with one member from each colony	Why 13? Is this fair?
		was assigned to discuss and draft	the Articles of Confederation, the new national constitution	What does "this group" refer to?

1. Were all of the states equal in size? \_\_\_\_\_ Did all of the states have the same amount of people? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Each state had one vote in the committee of 13 and in the Continental Congress. Is this fair for each state? Why or why not?

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Under the <b>Articles of Confederation</b>		would become	the single branch of the national government	
but		would have	limited powers in order to protect the liberties of the people	
		had	one vote in the Congress	Equal, but is this fair?
		could settle	conflicts among the states	
		make	coins	
		borrow	money	
and		make	treaties with other countries and with Native Americans	
		could also ask	the states for money and soldiers	Why are these two things important?
However,		had the power to refuse	these requests	
In addition,		did not have	a president or a national court system	Why no president?

3. Did the Articles of Confederation create a strong or weak government?

<b>Powers of government</b>	<b>Who had the power?</b>	<b>Strength or weakness? Explain why</b>	
Settle conflicts among states	U.S. Congress    State Governments	Strength	Weakness
Make coins and print paper money	U.S. Congress    State Governments	Strength	Weakness
Borrow money from banks and other countries	U.S. Congress    State Governments	Strength	Weakness
Make treaties with other countries	U.S. Congress    State Governments	Strength	Weakness
Make treaties with Native Americans or settle disputes with tribes	U.S. Congress    State Governments	Strength	Weakness
Collect taxes and money to pay for government projects	U.S. Congress    State Governments	Strength	Weakness
Create an army and navy	U.S. Congress    State Governments	Strength	Weakness
Create a system of courts	U.S. Congress    State Governments	Strength	Weakness
Had a leader who ran the government day to day	U.S. Congress    State Governments	Strength	Weakness
Create new states	U.S. Congress    State Governments	Strength	Weakness



Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Per \_\_\_\_\_

**Right to Vote** Page 115

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<b>Time marker or connector</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Verb phrase</b>	<b>Message: who, what, where</b>	<b>Questions or conclusions</b>
Under British rule	only free, white men (that owned land)	could vote		Poor people, women, or non-whites couldn't vote. Why?
	Many states constitutions	expanded	<b>suffrage</b> , or the right to vote, by allowing any white man who paid taxes to vote	Not all tax payers own land. Now some of the poorer folks could vote. City people too.
In every state, however,	only land-owners	could hold	public office	Look at definition
	Some states	originally allowed	women and free African Americans to vote	Originally- the door was open.
but	these rights	were soon taken away		Why couldn't some let them vote and other's not?
	Suffrage	would not be restored	to these groups for decades to come	1865 for Blacks 1920 for women

Why is suffrage an important part of being a citizen in a democracy, a country run by the people?

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Under the **Articles of Confederation**, Congress would become the single branch of the national government, but it would have limited powers in order to protect the liberties of the people. Each state had one vote in the Congress. Congress could settle conflicts among the states, make coins, borrow money, and make treaties with other countries and with Native Americans. Congress could also ask the states for money and soldiers. However, states had the power to refuse these requests. In addition, the government did not have a president or a national court system.

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