

Massachusetts Grade 8 Civics Local-Level Classroom Performance Task

Topic 2: Development of U.S. the Government

Name and Date _____

Handout 1: Development of the U.S. Constitution, Conflict and Resolution

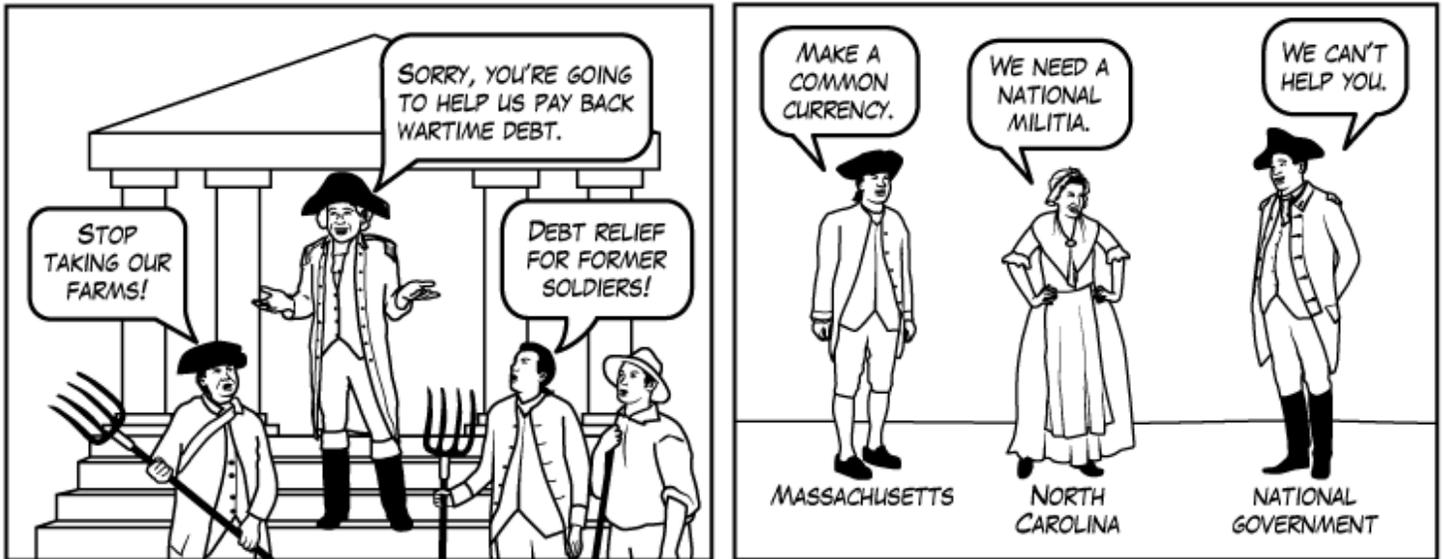
What led to the creation of the U.S. Constitution and how did the new constitution resolve conflicts about government?

After declaring independence from Great Britain, the Founders of the United States quickly realized they needed to create a government. First, they created the Articles of Confederation, but it soon became clear that the government formed under this constitution was ineffective. Because of this, the Founders worked to develop a new constitution at the Constitutional Convention in 1787. They had many disagreements about how to structure the new government. To resolve these conflicts, the Founders compromised on many issues which resulted in the ratification of the U.S. Constitution.

Directions: In your group, read, analyze, and discuss each source in the Handout. During your discussion, you should write a short response to each question that follows a source. Then move on to the next source.

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Part 1: An Event Leading Up to the Constitutional Convention: Shays' Rebellion



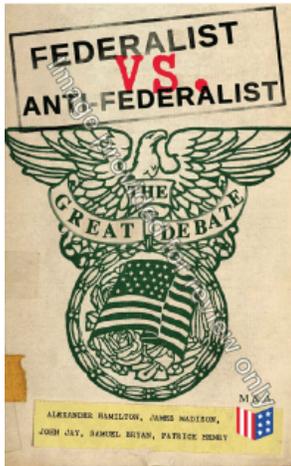
In August 1786, farmers protested actions taken by the Massachusetts government. Daniel Shays, a Revolutionary War veteran and farmer, was one of the leaders of this movement, and the uprisings came to be known as Shays' Rebellion. The first cartoon shows the farmers in Massachusetts protesting the actions of the Massachusetts government. The second cartoon shows some of the demands being made on the national government by two states.

1. Based on the cartoons and your knowledge of the Articles of Confederation, describe one weakness of the Articles of Confederation.

2. Describe one way the Founders resolved the issue that you described in question 1. Include information about how it was addressed in the U.S. Constitution.

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Part 2: The Constitutional Convention: Federalists and Anti-Federalists



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In 1787, delegates from the original thirteen states met at the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia to create a new constitution. The delegates disagreed about how to structure the government. These differences led to the formation of two groups, the Federalists and the Anti-Federalists. The table below shows the views of each group on several issues.

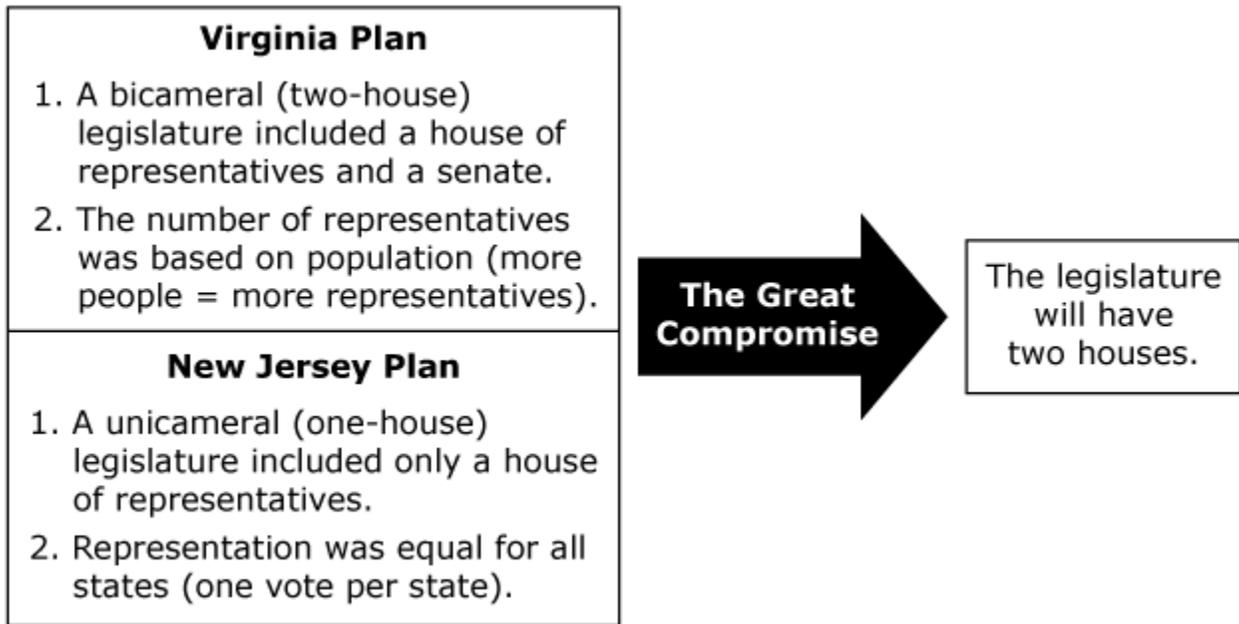
Federalists (included Alexander Hamilton, George Washington, and James Madison)	Anti-Federalists (included Thomas Jefferson, Patrick Henry, and George Mason)
Wanted a stronger national government	Wanted stronger state governments
Wanted a strong national government to safeguard individual rights but with no clearly written rights in the Constitution	Wanted individual rights clearly written into the Constitution
Wanted federal courts that could help to protect individual liberties	Did not want federal courts to have too much power

1. Describe how one idea from the Federalists appears in the U.S. Constitution today.

2. Describe how one idea from the Anti-Federalists appears in the U.S. Constitution today.

Part 3: The Constitutional Convention: The Great Compromise

A difficult issue to solve at the Constitutional Convention was the question of how states were to be represented in Congress. Should all states have the same number of votes, or should the number vary depending on the size of a state’s population? Delegates from small states believed that representation based on population would unfairly limit their states’ rights. Delegates from larger states argued that representation based on population was the only fair approach. Two plans were proposed, which led to the Great Compromise. The diagram shows the two plans and the result of the Great Compromise.



1. Explain why Congressional representation was an important issue at the Constitutional Convention.

2. Use your knowledge of the existing two-house legislature in Congress to describe how the Great Compromise resolved the conflict.

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Part 4: Ratifying the Constitution: The Bill of Rights

The following quotation is from Thomas Jefferson in 1787.

A bill of rights is what the people are **entitled** to against any government on earth. . . .

entitled: to have a legal right

Some of the Founders were concerned that the U.S. Constitution did not guarantee individual rights. They wanted to add a bill of rights to make sure the federal government could not take away rights such as the freedom of speech and fair treatment in the judicial system. Other Founders thought a bill of rights was unnecessary because they thought the federal government would not have the power to take away rights from states.

After much debate, it became clear that several states would not ratify the Constitution without a bill of rights. The first ten amendments, known now as the Bill of Rights, created a written guarantee of specific individual rights. The First and Fourth Amendments are shown in the table.

First Amendment	Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.
Fourth Amendment	The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no Warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by Oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized.

1. Choose one of the amendments shown and, in your own words, describe how it protects an individual's rights. To help explain how the amendment protects an individual's rights, use an example that you have learned about in class.