

Teaching Guide

SEGMENT 4, WEBISODE 2

Please note: Each segment in this Webisode has its own Teaching Guide



Segment Overview

The First Continental Congress met from September 5 to October 26, 1774, making an unprecedented show of unity. In less than eight weeks, the fifty-six delegates from every colony but Georgia compiled a list demanding basic rights and expressing indignant complaints over the Intolerable Acts. They sent this petition to England where Benjamin Franklin presented it to Parliament. The delegates formed the Continental Association (a pact to stop all trade with Britain) and agreed to meet again on May 5, 1775, if the king did not repeal the Intolerable Acts. He did not.

The Second Continental Congress met as planned and stayed in session throughout the war and until 1789. They established a Continental army and made George Washington its commander. They issued paper money and created a postal system and a navy, and they struggled, without the right of taxation, to finance the war. When by 1776 all hope of a peaceful settlement with England evaporated, the delegates signed the Declaration of Independence. In 1777, the Second Continental Congress passed the Articles of Confederation, which the last colony did not ratify until March 1781. This document served as the infant nation's first constitution. Because it reflected the individual states' fears of a too powerful federal government, it made the congress too weak to govern effectively.

Teacher Directions

1. Ask the students the following questions.
 - Who governed the country during the Revolutionary War?
 - What set of rules were used to govern the states during this time?
2. Make sure students understand the following points in discussing the questions.

The Continental Congress governed the country. This body of representatives from each colony met first in Philadelphia in 1774. Congress continued to meet, moving to other cities and finally ending in New York when a new government was formed by the Constitution in 1789. In 1777, the Second Continental Congress drafted the Articles of Confederation and Perpetual Union, but only after five years of quarreling and debate did all the states ratify this document. The awful experience with the British king and Parliament left Americans terrified of a too powerful central government. Therefore the Articles of Confederation



Let's Discuss

reserved most powers for the individual states and gave so little power to the congress that it could barely conduct its business.

Teacher Directions

1. Ask the students the following question.
 - Who was our country's first president?
2. Share with the students the following information.

Everyone knows that George Washington was the first president of our nation. But was he? George Washington was elected president under the Constitution in 1789, which had become law in 1788. Twelve years had passed since July 4, 1776, when the Declaration of Independence transformed the colonists into Americans, citizens of a new country. Who was in charge all that time?

Activity One

1. Distribute the Student Sheet: *Who's in Charge Here?* Students work in small teams to complete the student sheet or work individually.
2. **Bonus Question:** What three states did not have a delegate serve as president of the Continental Congress?

Activity Two

1. Distribute the Student Sheets: *"Neither Fit for War nor Peace."* Read the excerpts from the articles on the first page with students, pausing after each article to ask what problems they might predict from that article.
2. After students have discussed the problems they think the articles might cause, call attention to the second page giving excerpts from a 1780 letter that Alexander Hamilton wrote to James Duane, a New York delegate to the Second Continental Congress. In this letter, Hamilton outlines why the articles as a governing document were "Neither fit for war nor peace." Did Hamilton cite the same problems as the students cited? If not, ask the students if they agree or disagree with Hamilton's points.
3. Students read the entire Articles of Confederation in *A History of US, Sourcebook and Index*, page 42, or on the web site The Avalon Project: The Articles of Confederation @ www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/artconf.htm. They may read the entire text of Alexander Hamilton's letter at the web site Lawbooks USA @ <http://lawbooksusa.com/documents/hamiltonletter1780.htm>.





What do you
Think?

Teacher Directions

1. Ask the students, based on what they know about the limited powers of the Continental Congress, why the army would chase the congress out of Philadelphia. (Hint – Alexander Hamilton touches on the reasons in the first and sixth excerpts from his letter.)
2. After the students have speculated why the army would be angry at the congress, confirm or correct their ideas by sharing the following information.

After the British surrender at Yorktown, the soldiers in the Continental army had good reason to feel proud of their service. However, they also felt resentful at the lack of supplies and support they had received from the Continental Congress, and especially about not receiving back pay and pensions due to them.

The problem was that the congress had no power to raise money to finance the war. It had to depend on loans from individuals and on the states to contribute their fair share. States located far from the fighting were less eager to contribute than states that had the war right on their doorsteps.

In what was known as the Newburgh Conspiracy, many officers and soldiers threatened a mutiny, which General Washington strongly opposed and managed to defuse. But a group of Pennsylvania soldiers returning home to Philadelphia surrounded the hall where congress met and demanded back pay. The Pennsylvania government refused pleas for protection, so the Continental Congress had to flee to Princeton, New Jersey. The congress next moved next to Annapolis, Maryland, and finally to New York City, where it continued to meet until 1789.

3. Ask the students what they would think and do if they were in the Continental army. What would they think and do if they were members of the Continental Congress?

Teacher Directions

1. Share the following information with the students.

When each state wrote its individual constitution, New Jersey wrote one in 1776 that was far ahead of its time. The New Jersey Constitution said:

That all inhabitants of this Colony, of full age, who are worth fifty pounds, proclamation money, clear estate in the same, and have resided within the County in which they claim a vote for twelve months immediately preceding the election, shall be entitled to vote for Representatives in Council and Assembly; and also for all other public officers, that shall be elected by the people of the County at large.



Moving Toward
Freedom

1. Ask the students the following question.
 - How was the New Jersey constitution ahead of its time?
2. Make sure students understand the following points in discussing the question.

Not only white men, but also women and free Africans who met the property requirement could and did vote in New Jersey elections. Here is one instance where states' rights prevailed. Citizens of New Jersey enjoyed the right to vote granted by their state constitution, even though federal law granted no such right to women and Africans.

Unfortunately, this step toward freedom went into reverse in 1807, when New Jersey election law took the right to vote away from women. They could not cast their ballots again until 1920 with the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution, giving women the right to vote.

Teacher Directions

Use the following activities with your students.

Library/Research — Students use the library and the Internet to research and write brief biographies of the presidents of the Continental Congress.

Language Arts — Students read *The Great Little Madison* by Jean Fritz, or *Dolly Madison: Famous First Lady* by Mary R. Davidson.

Media — Students learn about James Madison's home at the web site Montpelier @ <http://www.montpelier.org>

Current Events — States' rights became an issue in the 2000 presidential election. In an election so close that Florida's electoral votes determined the outcome, the courts had to decide whether Florida law or Federal law should prevail. Students research the issues of the Florida election and what the courts decided.

Science — James Madison was so small in stature that a colleague described him as “no bigger than a half piece of soap.” Students research to find a recipe for soap and make a batch.



Connections

Who's in Charge Here?

The Continental Congress had thirteen presidents in twelve years. Some served less than one year. The Articles of Confederation, ratified in 1781, set the term limit for president at one year.

Using your knowledge of the American Revolutionary period, clue in the important facts for each president of the Continental Congress and their terms of office to arrange them in their proper order. Place the presidents' numbers in the space next to their important facts.

PRESIDENTS OF THE CONTINENTAL CONGRESS		
NAME	STATE	TERM OF OFFICE
1. Nathaniel Gorham	Massachusetts	June 1786 - February 1787
2. John Jay	New York	December 1778 - September 1779
3. Thomas McKean	Delaware	July 1781 - November 1781
4. Peyton Randolph	Virginia	September 1774 - April 1775
5. John Hanson	Maryland	November 1781 - November 1782
6. Thomas Mifflin	Pennsylvania	November 1783 - November 1784
7. Henry Laurens	South Carolina	November 1777- December 1778
8. Cyrus Griffin	Virginia	January 1788 - April 1789
9. John Hancock	Massachusetts	May 1775 - October 1776 November 1785 - June 1786
10. Arthur St. Clair	Northwest Territory	February 1787 - January 1788
11. Elias Boudinot	New Jersey	November 1782 - November 1783
12. Samuel Huntington	Connecticut	September 1779 - July 1781
13. Richard Henry Lee	Virginia	November 1784 - November 1785

_____ As president of the First and Second Continental Congresses, he was a member of one of Virginia's oldest, richest, and most influential families. No wonder when the Virginia House of Burgesses convened, he left Philadelphia to serve his state.

_____ Paul Revere's warning that the British regulars were marching out of Boston helped this Patriot leader narrowly escape arrest. As president of the Second Continental Congress, he signed the Declaration of Independence first, on July 4, 1776, and he signed in big letters so that King George would not need his glasses to read it. He served two terms as president of congress.

_____ A wealthy Charleston merchant, he owned eight plantations and three hundred slaves. He spoke out against slavery, but he freed only a few of the people he held in bondage.

_____ Although he at first did not favor independence from Britain, when the war began, he became an ardent Patriot. He wrote New York's constitution and helped to draft the Treaty of Paris that ended the war. He became the first Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.

_____ As a delegate to the Continental Congress, he signed the Declaration of Independence. When poor health made him retire as president of the congress, the citizens of Connecticut elected him head of the superior court, then lieutenant governor, then governor of the state.

_____ Only two congressional members joined the army during the war; he was one of them. He became sick and served only six months as president despite the recent ratification of the Articles of Confederation that set the term for president at one year.

_____ With the adoption of the Articles of Confederation in March 1781, he is sometimes called the first president of the new nation. He and many of his relatives served in the Maryland legislature and the new federal government.

_____ As president of congress at the end of the American Revolution, he signed the Treaty of Paris on behalf of the new nation in September 1783.

_____ The Quakers put him out of their society for taking up arms in the Revolutionary War. He was the first governor of Pennsylvania under its new state constitution.

_____ A member of a prominent Virginia family, he made the motion: "That these united colonies are, and of right ought to be , free and independent states; that they are absolved from all allegiance to the British crown..."

_____ The second delegate from Massachusetts to serve as president, he represented his state at the Constitutional Convention. He lost his fortune speculating in western lands.

_____ The only president not from a state, he enforced treaties with the Native Americans in the Northwest Territory where he also served as governor.

_____ His term as president of the congress ended with the election of fellow Virginian George Washington as the nation's first president under the new Constitution.

Bonus Question: What three states did not have a delegate serve as president of the Continental Congress?

“Neither Fit for War nor Peace”

Articles of Confederation



Article 2 - 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.

Article 8 - All charges of war and all other expenses, that shall be incurred for the common defense or general welfare...shall be defrayed out of a common treasury, which shall be supplied by the several states...

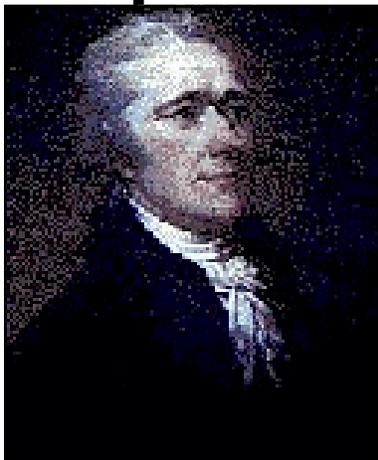
The taxes...shall be laid and levied by the authority and direction of the legislatures of the several states...

Article 9 - The United States, in Congress assembled, shall have the sole and exclusive right and power of determining on peace and war.

The United States in Congress assembled, shall also have the sole and exclusive right and power of regulating the alloy and value of coin struck by their own authority, or by that of respective states; fixing the standard of weight and measures throughout the United States; regulating trade and managing all affairs with Indians...provided that the legislative right of any State...be not infringed or violated; establishing and regulating post offices...

The United States, in Congress assembled, shall never engage in a war...nor enter into any treaties or alliances, nor coin money, nor regulate the value thereof, nor ascertain the sums and expenses necessary for the defense and welfare of the United States, or any of them: nor emit bills, nor borrow money on the credit of the United States, nor appropriate money, nor agree upon the file number of vessels of war to be built or purchased, or the number of land or sea forces to be raised, nor appoint a commander and chief of the army or navy, unless nine states assent to the same; nor shall a question on any other point, except adjourning for day to day, be determined, unless by the votes of the majority of the United States, in Congress assembled.

Alexander Hamilton's Letter to James Duane, a New York Delegate to the Second Continental Congress, 1780



The fundamental defect is a want of power in Congress...that has originated from three causes: an excess of the spirit of liberty, which has made the particular States show a jealousy of all power not in their own hands...a diffidence in Congress of their own powers, by which they have been timid and indecisive in their resolutions...a want of sufficient means at their disposal to answer the public exigencies (emergencies), and of vigor to draw forth those

means; which have occasioned them to depend on the States individually, to fulfill their engagements with the army.

Congress have even descended from the authority which the spirit of that act gives them; while the particular States have no further attended to it, than has suited their pretensions and convenience.

But the Confederation itself is defective, and requires to be altered. It is neither fit for war nor peace. The idea of an uncontrollable sovereignty, in each State...will defeat the other powers given to Congress, and make our union feeble and precarious.

The entire formation and disposal of our military forces, ought to belong to the Congress. It is the essential cement of the union....

The forms of our State constitutions, must always give them great weight in our affairs, and will make it too difficult to bend them to the pursuit of a common interest; too easy to oppose whatever they do not like....

The Confederation, too, gives the power of the purse too entirely to State Legislatures...without certain revenues, a Government can have no power. The power which holds the purse-strings absolutely, must rule.