

articles of confederation vs constitution worksheet answer key

Articles of Confederation vs Constitution Worksheet Answer Key

The Articles of Confederation and the United States Constitution represent two significant phases in the evolution of American government. Understanding the differences between these foundational documents is crucial for grasping how the United States developed its current political system. This article serves as a comprehensive guide to the Articles of Confederation and the Constitution, including a worksheet answer key that helps students and enthusiasts alike navigate these pivotal documents.

Overview of the Articles of Confederation

The Articles of Confederation was the first constitution of the United States, adopted in 1781. This document aimed to unify the thirteen original states under a central government while preserving the autonomy of individual states. Here are some key features and limitations of the Articles:

Key Features

1. **Unicameral Legislature:** The Articles established a single legislative body, known as the Congress of the Confederation.
2. **State Sovereignty:** Each state retained its sovereignty and independence, which made the central government relatively weak.
3. **Limited Powers:** The Congress had the authority to conduct foreign affairs, manage Indian relations, and oversee the postal service, but it could not levy taxes or regulate commerce.
4. **Equal Representation:** Each state, regardless of size or population, had one vote in Congress.

Limitations of the Articles

- **Lack of Taxation Power:** Congress could request funds from states but had no authority to impose taxes, leading to financial difficulties.
- **No Executive Branch:** There was no president or executive authority to enforce laws or treaties.
- **Ineffective Judicial System:** There was no national court system to resolve disputes between states or enforce federal laws.
- **Difficulty in Amending:** Amendments to the Articles required unanimous consent from all thirteen states, making it nearly impossible to adapt to changing circumstances.

The Transition to the Constitution

By the late 1780s, the weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation became increasingly apparent. Issues such as Shays' Rebellion in 1786 highlighted the inability of the federal government to maintain order or provide for the common defense. This prompted the call for a Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia in 1787, where a new framework for government was drafted.

Overview of the United States Constitution

The United States Constitution was signed on September 17, 1787, and ratified in 1788. It established a stronger federal government with a system of checks and balances among three branches: legislative, executive, and judicial. Here are some of its fundamental features:

Key Features

1. **Bicameral Legislature:** The Constitution created a two-house legislature (Congress) composed of the Senate and the House of Representatives, allowing for more balanced representation.
2. **Separation of Powers:** The Constitution delineated powers among the legislative, executive, and judicial branches to prevent any one branch from becoming too powerful.
3. **Supremacy Clause:** The Constitution established itself as the supreme law of the land, taking precedence over state laws.
4. **Power to Tax and Regulate Commerce:** Congress was granted the authority to levy taxes and regulate interstate and foreign commerce.

Amendment Process

The Constitution also provided a more accessible amendment process. Amendments could be proposed by a two-thirds majority in both houses of Congress or by a constitutional convention called by two-thirds of state legislatures, and ratified by three-fourths of the states.

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When teaching the differences between the Articles of Confederation and the Constitution, worksheets can be a useful educational tool. Below is a sample answer key that educators can use to guide students through various questions

related to these documents.

Sample Questions and Answers

1. What was the main purpose of the Articles of Confederation?

- Answer: To unify the thirteen states and create a central government while preserving state sovereignty.

2. How many branches of government did the Articles of Confederation establish?

- Answer: One branch (the legislative branch).

3. What was a significant limitation of the Articles of Confederation?

- Answer: Congress could not levy taxes or regulate commerce.

4. What system did the Constitution introduce to prevent any one branch of government from becoming too powerful?

- Answer: Separation of powers.

5. How does representation in Congress differ between the Articles of Confederation and the Constitution?

- Answer: Under the Articles, each state had one vote (equal representation), while the Constitution established a bicameral legislature with representation based on population in the House and equal representation in the Senate.

6. Describe the amendment process under the Constitution.

- Answer: Amendments can be proposed by a two-thirds majority in both houses of Congress or by a convention called by two-thirds of state legislatures and must be ratified by three-fourths of the states.

Conclusion

The transition from the Articles of Confederation to the United States Constitution marks a critical turning point in American history. The Articles, while a noble first attempt at governance, revealed significant weaknesses that necessitated the creation of a more robust framework. The Constitution addressed these shortcomings by establishing a balanced government with defined powers and an effective system for amendments. Understanding the differences between these two documents is essential for students, educators, and anyone interested in the evolution of American democracy.

As you explore the Articles of Confederation and the Constitution further, utilizing worksheets and answer keys can enhance comprehension and facilitate discussions about the foundational principles of American government.

Frequently Asked Questions

What was the main purpose of the Articles of Confederation?

The main purpose of the Articles of Confederation was to establish a framework for a national government and to unite the thirteen states during and after the American Revolutionary War.

How did the Articles of Confederation limit the power of the federal government?

The Articles of Confederation limited the power of the federal government by prohibiting it from imposing taxes, regulating interstate commerce, or enforcing laws, which led to a weak central authority.

What was a significant weakness of the Articles of Confederation?

A significant weakness of the Articles of Confederation was its inability to enforce laws or collect taxes, which resulted in financial instability and inability to address national issues.

What document replaced the Articles of Confederation?

The Constitution of the United States replaced the Articles of Confederation, providing a stronger federal government with the ability to tax, regulate commerce, and enforce laws.

What was the purpose of the Constitutional Convention of 1787?

The purpose of the Constitutional Convention of 1787 was to address the weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation and to draft a new constitution that would create a more effective national government.

What is one key difference between the Articles of Confederation and the U.S. Constitution?

One key difference is that the Constitution established a system of checks and balances among the three branches of government, while the Articles of Confederation did not provide for a strong executive or judicial branch.

How did the Constitution address the issue of representation compared to the Articles of Confederation?

The Constitution addressed representation through a bicameral legislature with the House of Representatives based on population and the Senate providing equal representation for each state, unlike the Articles which gave each state one vote regardless of size.

What role did Shays' Rebellion play in the transition from the Articles of Confederation to the Constitution?

Shays' Rebellion highlighted the weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation, particularly the federal government's inability to maintain order, which helped spur the call for a stronger national government and the Constitutional Convention.

What are some powers that the Constitution granted to the federal government that the Articles lacked?

The Constitution granted the federal government powers such as the ability to levy taxes, regulate interstate and foreign commerce, and maintain a standing army, which the Articles of Confederation did not allow.

What is the significance of the Bill of Rights in relation to the Constitution?

The Bill of Rights, the first ten amendments to the Constitution, was significant because it addressed concerns about individual liberties and limited government power, which were not adequately protected under the Articles of Confederation.

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