

UNIT 3 UNITED STATES HISTORY LESSON 1

Summary

- In this lesson, students will read pages 40–47 of Chapter 2, "A Revolutionary Age: Birth of a Nation," in their Readers. They will learn about the ideas, events, and compromises that led to the creation of the U.S. Constitution.

Social Studies Background

Throughout the Revolutionary War, Americans had struggled with the type of government to create for the new nation.

In 1777, the Continental Congress drafted the Articles of Confederation, which called for strong state governments and a relatively weak national government. By the mid-1780s, the economy was in shambles, and the federal government had no power to help.

In 1787, Daniel Shays, a Revolutionary War captain who was having trouble paying his debts, led 1,200 men in an attempt to seize the federal arsenal in Springfield, Massachusetts. The movement failed, but it was a central concern when delegates met for the second Constitutional Convention several months later.

From May to September, delegates known as Federalists debated over the need for a strong, central government. Three Federalists—James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, and John Jay—wrote a series of essays known as *The Federalist Papers* outlining their vision. Anti-Federalists still believed in local control.

The outcome of all this debate was the U.S. Constitution. It created a strong federal government led by a president and two legislative bodies, collectively known as the Congress. Its first 10 amendments, the Bill of Rights, addressed Anti-Federalists' concerns for basic individual rights and freedoms.

ENGAGE

Encourage students to flip through the assigned pages and turn and talk with a partner to discuss what they see. Invite students to ask questions or share what they already know about the U.S. Constitution.

EXPLORE

Instruct students to examine the map on page 40 of their Readers. Point out that the 13 colonies fought together to win their independence from Great Britain. But ideologically, the colonies were far from united. As a class, discuss how people's beliefs varied from one colony to another.

EXPLAIN

Point out to students that during the Revolutionary War, Americans had struggled over the type of government to create. **Ask:** *What was their first solution?* (Articles of Confederation) Have students turn and talk to discuss what this document called for and the impact it had on the new nation. (It called for strong state governments and a relatively weak national government. As a result, the economy was in shambles and the government had no power to raise taxes to help citizens in financial trouble.) Encourage students to discuss how this led to Shays's Rebellion and shaped the course of the second Constitutional Convention. Challenge them to distinguish between the ideas of Federalists and Anti-Federalists at the Convention. Then have them discuss the impact of *The Federalist Papers* and how the Bill of Rights came to be part of the U.S. Constitution.

ELABORATE

Invite students to search National Geographic and other sites to learn more about the ideas, events, and compromises that led to the creation of and, over time, amendments to the U.S. Constitution.

EVALUATE

Have students complete the **Content Assessment** for this lesson. Encourage them to share and compare their results in small groups.

Name _____

Date _____

CONTENT ASSESSMENT: Creating the Constitution

Describe each item and explain its relationship to the United States Constitution.

	Describe	Explain
Articles of Confederation		
Shays's Rebellion		
<i>The Federalist Papers</i>		
Bill of Rights		