

## **CONVENTION AND COMPROMISE**

**199-205**

- 1. Why did Americans call to have the Articles of Confederation revised?**
- 2. Define an economic depression. What events created this depression in the US following the American Revolution? Explain why the farmers were hurt economically the most.**
- 3. Describe Shays Rebellion. (Who led it? What Happened?)**
- 4. What did 11 out of 13 states do between 1776 and 1786 over the issue of slavery?**
- 5. Describe what slavery looked like in the 13 states following the American Revolution.**
- 6. Who were the two men that were the most active in the movement to change the Articles of Confederation?**
- 7. Describe the Constitutional Convention.**
  - A. In what city was it held?**
  - B. How many delegates attended?**
  - C. Who were some delegates that stood out at the Convention?**
- 8. Why do they call James Madison the "Father of the Constitution?"**
- 9. How was the Convention organized?**
- 10. Explain the Virginia Plan.**
- 11. Explain the New Jersey Plan.**
- 12. Explain the Great Compromise and how it resolved the disagreements between the Virginia Plan and New Jersey Plan.**
- 13. Describe how the Three-Fifths Compromise ended disagreements of slavery between the north and the south.**
- 14. When was the US Constitution signed by the delegates?**
- 15. How many states had to ratify the US Constitution before the new government came into existence?**

# SECTION 2

# Convention and Compromise

## Guide to Reading

### Main Idea

The new Constitution corrected the weaknesses of government under the Articles of Confederation.

### Key Terms

depression, manumission, proportional, compromise



### Reading Strategy

**Organizing Information** As you read the section, re-create the diagram below. In the boxes, describe the role each individual played in creating the new plan of government.

	Role
Edmund Randolph	
James Madison	
Roger Sherman	

### Read to Learn

- how the Constitutional Convention broke the deadlock over the form the new government would take.
- how the delegates answered the question of representation.

### Section Theme

**Groups and Institutions** National leaders worked to produce a new constitution for the United States.

### Preview of Events

1783	1785	1787	1789
1784 Rhode Island passes plan to end slavery	September 1786 Daniel Shays leads rebellion	May 1787 Delegates meet to revise Articles of Confederation	September 1787 Delegates sign draft of Constitution



George Washington

## AN American Story

By 1786 many Americans observed that the Confederation was not working. George Washington himself agreed that the United States was really "thirteen Sovereignities pulling against each other."

In the spring of 1787, Washington joined delegates from Virginia and 11 other states who gathered in Philadelphia to address this problem. Rhode Island decided not to participate. The delegates came "for the sole and express purpose of revising the Articles of Confederation."

### Economic Depression

The call to revise the Articles of Confederation came while the young nation faced difficult problems. Many Americans believed that the Confederation government was too weak to deal with these challenges.

After the Revolutionary War ended, the United States went through a depression, a period when economic activity slowed and unemployment





### Picturing History

Only through donations was Massachusetts able to raise a militia to defeat Shays. Why did Shays's Rebellion frighten many Americans?

increased. Southern plantations had been damaged during the war, and rice exports dropped sharply. Trade also fell off when the British closed the profitable West Indies (Caribbean) market to American merchants. What little money there was went to pay foreign debts, and a serious currency shortage resulted.

### Difficult Times for Farmers

American farmers suffered because they could not sell their goods. They had problems paying the requests for money that the states levied to meet Revolutionary War debts. As a result state officials seized farmers' lands to pay their debts and threw many farmers into jail. Grumblings of protest soon grew into revolt.

### Shays's Rebellion

Resentment grew especially strong in Massachusetts. Farmers viewed the new government as just another form of tyranny. They wanted the government to issue paper money and make new policies to relieve debtors. In a letter to state officials, some farmers proclaimed:

“Surely your honours are not strangers to the distresses [problems] of the people but . . . know that many of our good inhabitants are now confined in [jail] for debt and taxes.”

In 1786 angry farmers lashed out. Led by Daniel Shays, a former Continental Army captain, they forced courts in western Massachusetts to close so judges could not confiscate farmers' lands.

In January 1787 Shays led more than 1,000 farmers toward the federal arsenal in Springfield, Massachusetts, for arms and ammunition. The state militia ordered the advancing farmers to halt, then fired over their heads. The farmers did not stop, and the militia fired again, killing four rebels. Shays and his followers scattered, and the uprising was over.

Shays's Rebellion frightened many Americans. They worried that the government could not control unrest and prevent violence. On hearing of the rebellion, George Washington wondered whether “mankind, when left to themselves, are unfit for their own government.” Thomas Jefferson, minister to France at the time, had a different view. “A little rebellion, now and then,” he wrote, “is a good thing.”

### The Issue of Slavery

The Revolutionary War brought attention to the contradiction between the American battle for liberty and the practice of slavery. Between 1776 and 1786, 11 states—all except South Carolina and Georgia—outlawed or heavily taxed the importation of enslaved people.

Although slavery was not a major source of labor in the North, it existed and was legal in all the Northern states. Many individuals and groups began to work to end the institution of slavery. In 1774 Quakers in Pennsylvania organized the first American antislavery society. Six



years later Pennsylvania passed a law that provided for the gradual freeing of enslaved people.

Between 1783 and 1804, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New York, and New Jersey passed laws that gradually ended slavery. Still, free African Americans faced discrimination. They were barred from many public places. Few states gave free African Americans the right to vote. The children of most free blacks had to attend separate schools. Free African Americans established their own institutions—churches, schools, and mutual-aid societies—to seek opportunity.

The states south of Pennsylvania clung to the institution of slavery. The plantation system of the South had been built on slavery, and many Southerners feared that their economy could not survive without it. Nonetheless, an increasing number of slaveholders began freeing the enslaved people that they held after the war. Virginia passed a law that encouraged manumission, the freeing of individual enslaved persons, and the state's population of free African Americans grew.

The abolition of slavery in the North divided the new country on the critical issue of whether people should be allowed to hold other human beings in bondage. This division came at the time when many American leaders had decided that the Articles of Confederation needed strengthening. In the summer of 1787, when state representatives assembled to plan a new government, they compromised on this issue. It would take years of debate, bloodshed, and ultimately a war to settle the slavery question.

**Reading Check Explaining** Why did Southern states support slavery?

## A Call for Change

The American Revolution had led to a union of 13 states, but it had not yet created a nation. Some leaders were satisfied with a system of independent state governments that resembled the old colonial governments. Others saw a

strong national government as the solution to America's problems. They demanded a reform of the Articles of Confederation.

Two Americans active in the movement for change were **James Madison**, a Virginia planter, and **Alexander Hamilton**, a New York lawyer. In September 1786, Hamilton proposed calling a convention in Philadelphia to discuss trade issues. He also suggested that this convention consider what possible changes were needed to make

“the Constitution of the Federal Government adequate to the exigencies [needs] of the Union.”

At first George Washington was not enthusiastic about the movement to revise the Articles of Confederation. When he heard the news of Shays's Rebellion, Washington changed his mind. After Washington agreed to attend the Philadelphia convention, the meeting took on greater significance.

**Reading Check Evaluating** Why did Madison and Hamilton call for a convention in 1787?

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### Picturing History

Philadelphia preachers Richard Allen (left) and Absalom Jones (right) founded the Free African Society and later set up the first African American churches. **What challenges did free African Americans face?**



## The Constitutional Convention

The Philadelphia meeting began in May 1787 and continued through one of the hottest summers on record. The 55 delegates included planters, merchants, lawyers, physicians, generals, governors, and a college president. Three of the delegates were under 30 years of age, and one, Benjamin Franklin, was over 80. Many were well educated. At a time when only one white man in 1,000 went to college, 26 of the delegates had college degrees. Native Americans, African Americans, and women were not considered part of the political process, so none attended.

Several men stood out as leaders. The presence of George Washington and Benjamin Franklin ensured that many people would trust the Convention's work. Two Philadelphians also played key roles. James Wilson often read Franklin's speeches and did important work on the details of the Constitution. Gouverneur Morris, a powerful speaker and writer, wrote the final draft of the Constitution.

From Virginia came Edmund Randolph and James Madison. Both were keen supporters of a strong national government. Madison's careful notes are the major source of information about the Convention's work. Madison is often called

the **Father of the Constitution** because he was the author of the basic plan of government that the Convention adopted.

### Organization

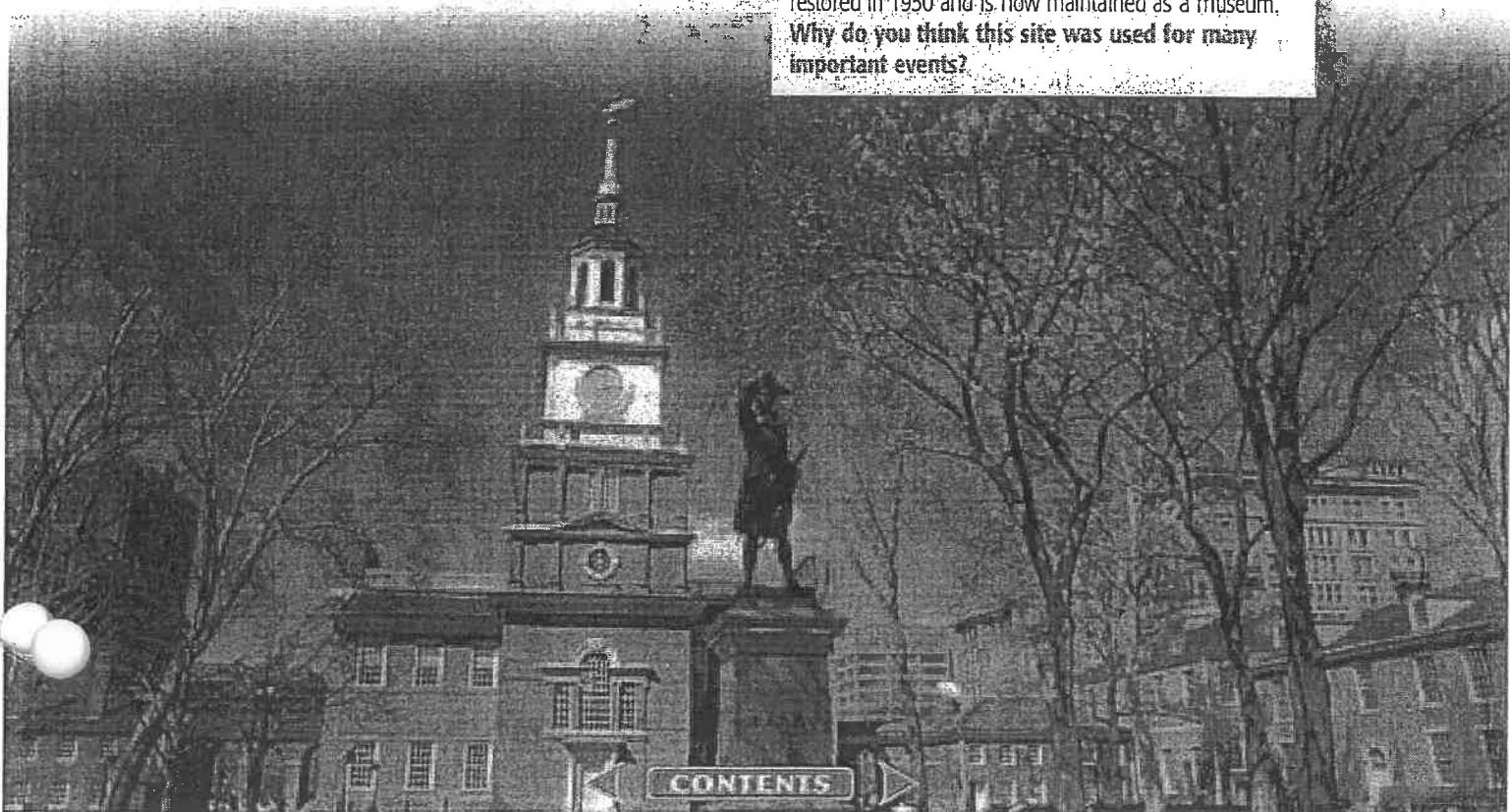
The Convention began by unanimously choosing George Washington to preside over the meetings. It also decided that each state would have one vote on all questions. A simple majority vote of those states present would make decisions. No meetings could be held unless delegates from at least seven of the 13 states were present. The delegates decided to close their doors to the public and keep the sessions secret. This was a key decision because it made it possible for the delegates to talk freely.

### The Virginia Plan

After the rules were adopted, the Convention opened with a surprise. It came from the Virginia delegation. Edmund Randolph proposed

#### *America's Architecture*

Independence Hall: The Pennsylvania State House, later known as Independence Hall, was the site of the signing of the Declaration of Independence and of the Constitutional Convention. Independence Hall was restored in 1950 and is now maintained as a museum. **Why do you think this site was used for many important events?**





# People In History

**James Madison** 1751–1836



James Madison, only 36 at the time of the Constitutional Convention, was the best prepared of the delegates. In the months before the convention, he had made a detailed study of government. He read hundreds of books on history, politics, and economics. He also corresponded with Thomas Jefferson.

Madison looked for ways to build a strong but fair system of government. He knew that republics were considered weaker than monarchies because kings or queens could use their authority to act quickly and decisively. Who would provide the same leadership in a republic? At the same time, Madison was con-

cerned about protecting the people from misuse of power. As he searched for solutions, Madison worked out a new plan that included a system of balances among different functions of government. The delegates adopted many of Madison's ideas in what would become the United States Constitution.

that the delegates create a strong national government instead of revising the Articles of Confederation. He introduced the **Virginia Plan**, which was largely the work of James Madison. The plan called for a two-house legislature, a chief executive chosen by the legislature, and a court system. The members of the lower house of the legislature would be elected by the people. The members of the upper house would be chosen by the lower house. In both houses the number of representatives would be **proportional**, or corresponding in size, to the population of each state. This would give Virginia many more delegates than Delaware, the state with the smallest population.

Delegates from Delaware, New Jersey, and other small states immediately objected to the plan. They preferred the Confederation system in which all states were represented equally.

Delegates unhappy with the Virginia Plan rallied around **William Paterson** of New Jersey. On June 15 he presented an alternative plan that revised the Articles of Confederation, which was all the convention was empowered to do.

## The New Jersey Plan

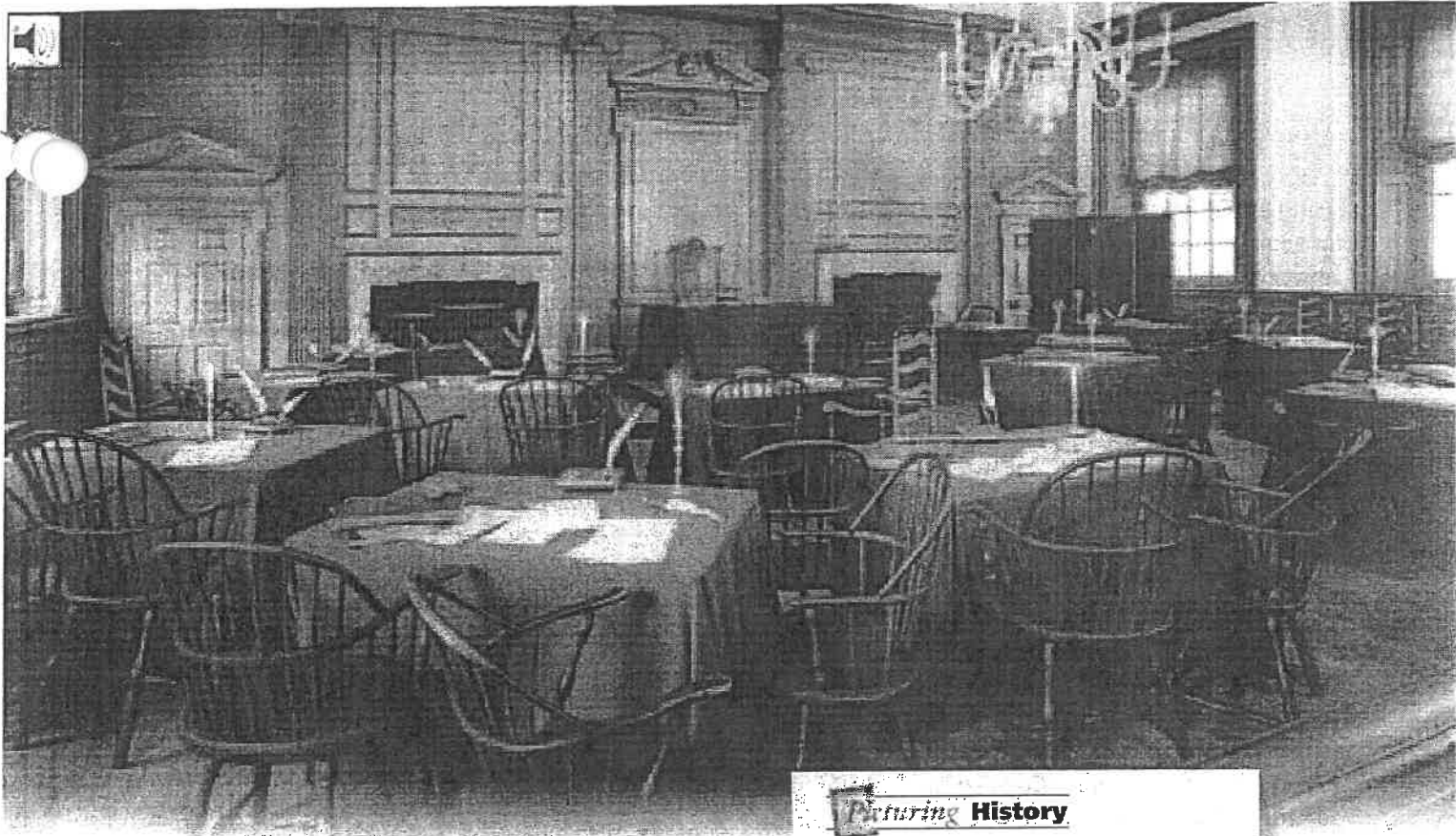
The **New Jersey Plan** kept the Confederation's one-house legislature, with one vote for each state. Congress, however, could set taxes and regulate trade—powers it did not have under the Articles. Congress would elect a weak executive branch consisting of more than one person.

Paterson argued that the Convention should not deprive the smaller states of the equality they had under the Articles. Thus, his plan was designed simply to amend the Articles.

**Reading Check** Explaining Why did some delegates criticize the Virginia Plan?

## Compromise Wins Out

The convention delegates had to decide whether they were simply revising the Articles of Confederation or writing a constitution for a new national government. On June 19 the states voted to work toward a national government based on the Virginia Plan, but they still had to resolve the thorny issue of representation that divided the large and small states.



### **Ensuring History**

Delegates to the Constitutional Convention met in this room at Independence Hall. How many states had to ratify the Constitution before it went into effect?

### **Discussion and Disagreement**

As the convention delegates struggled to deal with difficult questions, tempers and temperatures grew hotter. How were the members of Congress to be elected? How would state representation be determined in the upper and lower houses? Were enslaved people to be counted as part of the population on which representation was based?

### **Citizenship**

#### **The Great Compromise**

Under Franklin's leadership, the convention appointed a "grand committee" to try to resolve their disagreements. Roger Sherman of Connecticut suggested what came to be known as the **Great Compromise**. A compromise is an agreement between two or more sides in which each side gives up some of what it wants.

Sherman proposed a two-house legislature. In the lower house—the House of Representatives—the number of seats for each state would vary according to the state's population. In the upper house—the Senate—each state would have two members.

#### **The Three-Fifths Compromise**

Another major compromise by the delegates dealt with counting enslaved people. Southern states wanted to include the enslaved in their population counts to gain delegates in the House of Representatives. Northern states objected to this idea because enslaved people were legally considered property. Some delegates from Northern states argued that the enslaved, as property, should be counted for the purpose of taxation but not representation. However, neither side considered giving enslaved people the right to vote.

The committee's solution, known as the **Three-Fifths Compromise**, was to count each enslaved person as three-fifths of a free person for both taxation and representation. In other words, every five enslaved persons would equal three free persons. On July 12 the convention delegates voted to approve the Three-Fifths Compromise. Four days later, they agreed that each state should elect two senators.

## Slave Trade

The convention needed to resolve another difficult issue that divided the Northern and Southern states. Having banned the slave trade within their borders, Northern states wanted to prohibit it throughout the nation. Southern states considered slavery and the slave trade essential to their economies. To keep the Southern states in the nation, Northerners agreed that the Congress could not interfere with the slave trade until 1808. Beginning that year Congress could limit the slave trade if it chose to.

## Bill of Rights

George Mason of Virginia proposed a bill of rights to be included in the Constitution. Some delegates worried that without the protection of a bill of rights the new national government might abuse its power. However, most of the delegates believed that the Constitution, with its carefully defined listing of government powers, provided adequate protection of individual rights. Mason's proposal was defeated.

## Approving the Constitution

The committees finished their work on the Constitution in late summer. On September 17, 1787, the delegates assembled in the Philadelphia

State House to sign the document. Franklin called for approval:

“I consent to this Constitution because I expect no better, and because I am not sure, that it is not the best.”

Three delegates refused to sign—Elbridge Gerry of Massachusetts, and Edmund Randolph and George Mason of Virginia. Gerry and Mason would not sign without a bill of rights. Randolph called for a second constitutional convention.

The Confederation Congress then sent the approved draft of the Constitution to the states for consideration. To amend the Articles of Confederation had required unanimous approval of the states. Getting a unanimous vote had proved slow and frustrating. Therefore, the delegates agreed to change the approval process for the Constitution. When 9 of the 13 states had approved, the new government of the United States would come into existence. (See pages 232–253 for the entire text of the Constitution.)

**Reading Check Analyzing** Who refused to sign the Constitution? Explain why.

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## SECTION 2 ASSESSMENT



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### Checking for Understanding

- Key Terms** Use the terms that follow to write a newspaper article about the main events of the Constitutional Convention: **depression, manumission, proportional, compromise.**
- Reviewing Facts** Explain what caused Shays's Rebellion. What was one effect?

### Reviewing Themes

- Groups and Institutions** How did the Great Compromise satisfy both the small and the large states on the question of representation?

### Critical Thinking

- Summarizing Information** You are asked to write a 30-second news broadcast to announce the agreement made in the Great Compromise. What would you include in the broadcast?
- Analyzing Information** Re-create the diagram below and identify arguments for and against ratifying the Constitution.

Ratification	
Arguments for	Arguments against

### Analyzing Visuals

- Picturing History** Examine the images that appear on pages 202 and 204. What do they show? Where are they located? Why are these places important in the nation's history?

**Government** Create a political cartoon that illustrates the view of either the Northern states or the Southern states on how enslaved people should be counted for representation.