**General US History Chapter 5**

**Section 1: The Articles of Confederation**

**constitution**- the laws and plan of a nation’s government

**territory**- land that belongs to a national government but is not a state

When the war for Independence ended, the 13 colonies won their freedom from Great Britain. However, there was still a great deal of work to do. The colonies had to create a new government.

The Second Continental Congress continued to meet throughout the War for Independence. In 1777, colonial leaders finished writing a plan of government called the Articles of Confederation. This was America’s first national **constitution**.

Under the articles, the states thought of themselves as separate countries. They did not want a strong national government controlling them. After all, they had just fought a war to get rid of a king.

Under this plan, the government was run by a congress. The Congress was controlled by representatives from individual states. Each of the 13 states had one vote in Congress. Before Congress could pass any law, nine of the 13 states had to approve it.

***Problems After the War***

The United States faced many problems after the war. Here are some of them.

1.) Great Britain closed its ports to America.

2.) Debts could not be paid because Congress could not collect taxes.

3.) Each state printed its own money. However, the money was worthless in other states.

4.) There were no courts to settle arguments between states.

The Articles of Confederation could not handle these problems. It soon became clear that a stronger national government was needed.

***Shay’s’s Rebellion***

One of the most violent revolts against the new government occurred in Massachusetts in 1786. That state borrowed money during the war. State leaders decided to raise taxes to pay off those debts.

If people could not pay the taxes, they would lose their land. Many farmers in western Massachusetts were unable to pay the higher taxes. They decided to protest the taxes. A farmer named Daniel Shays led the **revolt**, or uprising. He and his followers made plans to attack an **arsenal**, which is a place where weapons are stored.

The U.S. government learned about the plans. Finally a militia group hired by Massachusetts businessmen stopped the rebellion.

***The Northwest Ordinance***

Another problem that the new government had to solve was what to do about land north of the Ohio River and east of the Mississippi River. This area was called the Northwest **Territory**. The British had controlled this area before the war. Now American settlers were claiming the land.

The Northwest Ordinance was passed in 1787. An ordinance is a set of laws. It was a plan to create a government for this land. The Northwest Ordinance described the steps which new states would have to take to be formed. It stated that the territory would be divided into smaller territories. After 5,000 freemen of voting age settled in an area, they could elect a legislature. Territories could ask for statehood after reaching a population of 60,000. The Northwest Ordinance allowed settlers to buy one square mile of land for $640.00

No slavery was allowed anywhere in the territory.

**Section 2- The Constitution and the Bill of Rights**

**convention**- a large gathering of people for a particular reason

**compromise**- a settling of differences where both sides give up something

**legislative branch**- the part of government that makes laws

**executive branch**- the part of government that carries out laws

**judicial branch**- the part of government that settles differences about the meanings of laws

**ratify**- to approve

**amendment**- a change or addition to a document

In May 1787, 55 representatives, or delegates, from 12 states gathered in Philadelphia for a **convention**. The purpose of the convention was to come up with a better plan for the government of the United States

George Washington was chosen to run the Constitutional Convention. James Madison of Virginia was there. He became known as the Father of the Constitution. Years later, he would be elected the fourth President of the United States. Benjamin Franklin also attended. He was still serving the nation at age 81.

On the first day of the meeting, the delegates agreed on two ideas. First, they would keep the doors to the meeting hall locked and the windows nailed shut. Even though the summer heat would be terrible, the men did not want anyone to hear their discussions. Second, they all agreed that the talks would remain secret until the new Constitution was completed. After that day, though, the delegates hardly ever agreed again.

The first and most important question at the meeting was how the new Congress would be set up. Most delegates agreed that Congress should have two houses, or parts. However, the delegates could not agree on how representatives should be chosen.

Delegates from Virginia came up with a plan that gave more power to the large states. That plan was called the Virginia Plan. These delegates felt that states with more people should have more votes in Congress.

Small states came up with a different plan. Each state would have one vote in Congress. The number of people in a state should not matter. This plan was called the New Jersey Plan.

The argument went on for six weeks. Luckily, Roger Sherman, a delegate from Connecticut, came up with a plan called the Great **Compromise**. Sherman’s compromise called for two houses of Congress. In the Senate, each state had the same number of votes. In the House of Representatives, votes were determined by the number of people in the state. The delegates accepted Sherman’s compromise.

In 1776, Sherman served with Thomas Jefferson on a committee to write the Declaration of Independence.

Another problem soon arose. In coming up with the population of a state, how were enslaved people to be counted? Northerners said Southerners treated enslaved Africans as property, so they should not be counted. Southerners wanted to count enslaved Africans as part of the population. That way the South would have more votes in Congress.

The delegates agreed on another compromise. When counting the population of a state, five enslaved persons would count as three people. This became known as the Three-fifths Compromise.

***Checks and Balances***

As the summer passed, the delegates agreed that the government should have three branches, or parts. The **legislative branch** would make laws. The **executive branch** would carry out laws. The **judicial branch** would settle differences about the meanings of laws.

The delegates agreed that dividing the government into three branches would balance the powers of all three branches. In this government, no one branch would have more power than another. This idea came to be known as the system of checks and balances.

Finally, the plan for the new United States government was written down. The delegates took the new Constitution back to the leaders of their states. Under the rules, nine of the 13 colonies had to **ratify** the Constitution for it to go into effect.

*Complete the “Checks and Balances” chart on page 91.*

***Federalists and Anti-Federalists***

Over the next few months, the Constitution was discussed in all 13 states. Those in favor of the Constitution and a strong national government were called Federalists. The Federalists were wealthy landowners, merchants, and lawyers who supported the Constitution. They wanted a strong central government that would keep the country united.

Those who were against a strong national government were called Anti-Federalists. The Anti-Federalists were mostly farmers who did not support the Constitution. They wanted more power for states.

The vote to ratify the Constitution was very close. However, by 1790 all the states finally agreed to become a united country.

***The Bill of Rights***

Even though the Constitution was ratified, some Americans wanted to add a bill of rights to the Constitution. The Bill of Rights lists actions that the government is not allowed to take. It guarantees freedom of speech and religion and the right to a fair trial to every American. The Bill of Rights are the first ten **amendments** of the Constitution. The amendments were added to the Constitution in 1791. Many amendments have been added since then.

**Section 3- The New Government Begins**

**Cabinet**- a group of people chosen by the President to give advice

**alliance-** a partnership

The new government of the United States had much to do to repair the damage done by the Articles of Confederation. Building a powerful, united country was most important. A large part of that job meant creating a strong political system and a strong economy.

***The First President***

On April 6, 1789, George Washington was selected the first President of the United States, John Adams, who finished second in votes, became Vice President.

Washington took on a difficult job He had no examples to follow. Washington had to find money to pay war debts. He had to work out trade agreements with foreign countries. He had to make decisions that were best for all the states. Washington knew he could not do his job alone. He chose a **Cabinet**.

Washington chose his advisers wisely. His Cabinet was made up of

1.) Thomas Jefferson

2.) Alexander Hamilton

3.) Henry Knox

4.) Edmund Randolph

Washington also chose John Jay as Chief Justice, or head, of the Supreme Court. Every President since Washington depends on a Cabinet.

***The New Government***

Each Cabinet member had a different job. Thomas Jefferson became Secretary of State. He advised Washington on how to deal with foreign countries. Alexander Hamilton became Secretary of the Treasury. He advised Washington on the economy. Henry Knox became Secretary of War. He advised Washington about keeping a strong army and navy. Edmund Randolph became Attorney General. He advised Washington on the laws that were passed.

Washington served two four-year terms as President. During that time the country became stronger. George Washington accomplished the following during his terms in office.

1.) He kept the United States out of war.

2.) He raised enough money to pay off the country’s war debt.

3.) He established a national bank.

4.) He set up a money system.

After two terms, Washington decided not to run again for President. This decision set an example for other Presidents. For more than 140 years, Presidents left office after two terms. Later, the Constitution would be changed so that no President could serve more than two terms in office.

New York was the first capital of the United States. Then, between 1790 and 1800, Philadelphia served as the nation’s capital.

In 1800, the capital was moved to the banks of the Potomac River, where Virginia and Maryland had each given land for a new city to be built. Washington, D.C., or District of Columbia, was not part of any state. It was its own district, so no state could claim it. At first, the capital was to be called Federal City, but it was changed to Washington, D.C., in 1800 to honor the first President.

***Political Parties***

Two of Washington’s most important advisors were Thomas Jefferson, the Secretary of State, and Alexander Hamilton, the Secretary of Treasury. Even though they advised the President, they did not agree with each other. They had different ideas about how the nation should be governed.

Hamilton believed in a strong national government. He also felt that only well-educated landowners knew enough to take part in governing. He did not think the average person was smart enough to serve in the government.

Jefferson wanted everyone to have a voice in government, not just the rich. He worried that the national government would become too powerful. He did not want the government to spend more money than it could raise in taxes.

The people who supported Hamilton and his views formed the Federalist party. Those who supported Jefferson’s ideas formed the Democratic-Republican party. These different beliefs were the beginning of political parties in the United States. Every President since Washington has belonged to a political party.

In 1796, George Washington decided to step down as President of the United States. Before leaving office, he prepared a written report called his Farewell Address. In his Farewell Address, Washington advised the leaders of the United States to stay away from permanent **alliances** with foreign countries.

John Adams was elected the second President in 1796. Adams belonged to the Federalist party. During his presidency, the Alien and Sedition Acts were passed. The Alien Act was passed in 1798. The act said that a person arriving in the United States had to wait 14 years to become a citizen. The old waiting period had been 5 years. Newcomers to the United States felt unwanted because of this law.

The Sedition Act made it a crime for anyone to write or print articles criticizing the government. Angry citizens said that this violated the right of free speech in the Constitution.

The Alien and Sedition Acts made Adams unpopular. In 1800, he lost the election when he tried to win a second term. As a new century began, Thomas Jefferson took office as the third President of the United States.