

### **Who's Who on the Road to Revolution**

John Adams	Thomas Jefferson
Samuel Adams	Marquis de Lafayette
Charles Cornwallis	James Madison
John Dickinson	William Paterson
Benjamin Franklin	Edmund Randolph
King George III	Daniel Shays
Alexander Hamilton	Roger Sherman
John Jay	George Washington

## Introduction

After the French and Indian War, Britain won control over the French empire in North America but was deeply in debt. Britain's debts were shifted to the colonies through taxes passed by **Parliament**. The colonies protested in different ways, and colonial leaders began to meet to find solutions. These solutions eventually led to the Revolutionary War and the creation of the United States **Constitution** (see Appendix B).

## Stirrings of Rebellion

To pay its war debts, England began to pass laws which imposed new taxes on the colonists. While England focused attention on the war with France, control over the colonies had been relaxed. After the colonies had become used to making their own rules and decisions, accepting British authority again was very difficult. Colonists were forced to pay taxes to support the English government, but were given no voice in government decisions made by Parliament. Colonists began to protest.

### Sugar Act

The first new tax, or tariff, was the *Sugar Act*, passed in 1764. The purpose of this tariff was to make money and to stop the smuggling of goods to the colonies. The Sugar Act also allowed smuggling cases to be decided by a single judge, rather than by a jury of sympathetic colonists. These judges also received five percent of any cargo taken from convicted smugglers. England's Parliament required that the colonies pay the tariffs in gold or silver, rather than their own paper money. The strain on the colonies was great.

### Stamp Act

Adding to the problems between England and the American colonies was the passage of the *Stamp Act* in 1765. The Stamp Act required colonists to pay a new kind of tax. This tax was not assessed at the port when a product entered the country but was added



to a product at the time of purchase. Colonists were required to pay a tax for a stamp to be placed on all paper products—cards, diplomas, marriage licenses, and even college degrees. This tax was met with great anger. Soon colonists organized to demand that England **repeal** the tax. **Petitions** were sent to local royal officials. Protest groups like the **Sons of Liberty** took action. One of the leading Sons of Liberty was *Samuel Adams*. They tore down tax offices and tarred and feathered many tax collectors or hung their images. Eventually, colonists began to **boycott** British goods. English merchants, who were losing money because colonists would not buy their products, encouraged Parliament to repeal the Stamp Act in 1766.

### Declaratory and Townshend Acts

Although Parliament repealed the Stamp Act, it also issued the *Declaratory Act* that said England did have the right to tax the colonists. In 1767, Parliament issued a new set of taxes called the *Townshend Acts*. These were taxes placed on imports such as paper, lead, paint, and tea. The colonists once again were outraged. Encouraged by their success with the Stamp Act, they renewed their protests. Again the boycotts were effective and England repealed the Townshend taxes on all goods except on tea.

### Boston Massacre

With the increased tension and trouble between the colonists and England, troops were sent to guarantee that taxes would be collected, to search for **smuggled goods**, and to protect officials of the



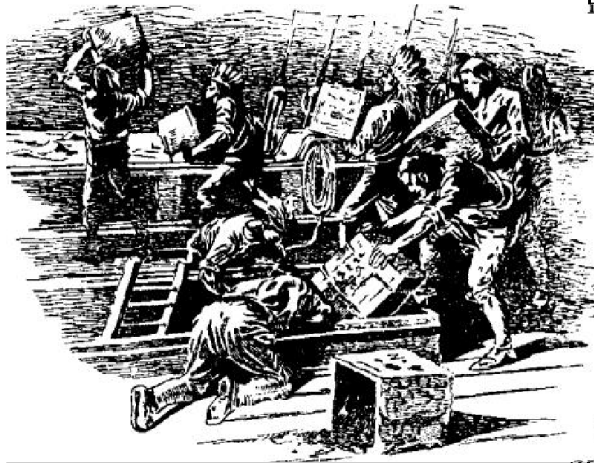
*troops search for smuggled goods*

king. Many were stationed in the port town of Boston. England sent 4,000 soldiers to Boston, a city of 16,000 residents. The soldiers looked for additional work when they were off duty. This made many Bostonians angry because they did not need the competition for jobs. In 1770 an irate mob threw rocks hidden in snowballs at the soldiers. Someone fired a gun, and when the smoke had lifted, five colonists were found dead. The Sons

of Liberty spread word of the incident, calling it the *Boston Massacre*. By exaggerating the event, the Sons of Liberty caused hatred to increase, but both the British and colonists were frightened by the incident, and relations were calm for several years.

### **Boston Tea Party**

In 1773 England allowed the East India Tea Company to sail directly to the colonies. The idea was to save the tea company from going out of business and to get the colonists to pay the tax placed on the tea when it entered a colonial port. Colonists felt



*Boston Tea Party*

England was using them. All across the colonies, they refused the tea. In Boston, the governor of Massachusetts ordered the tea removed from the ship and the tax paid. Before the deadline for payment, the Sons of Liberty, disguised as Mohawks (members of the League of the Iroquois), threw 342 chests (15,000 pounds) of tea overboard. This event became known as the *Boston Tea Party*.

### **Coercive or Intolerable Acts**

England responded quickly to this act of defiance. A group of acts called the *Coercive Acts* were passed to punish Boston and guarantee an action like the Boston Tea Party would not happen again. One act closed Boston Harbor to all sea traffic except that carrying food and firewood until the colonist paid for the tea. Another act made provisions for England to take control of the legislature and courts in Massachusetts. A third act required citizens to house British troops in their homes if other rooms were not available. To the colonists, these acts were not acceptable, and they referred to them as the *Intolerable Acts*.



ACTS	PURPOSE
<b>Sugar Act</b>	trade law passed by Parliament in 1764 to reduce smuggling in the colonies and to make money to pay for war
<b>Stamp Act</b>	law passed by Parliament in 1765 that placed a direct tax on paper goods (cards, diplomas, deeds, marriage licenses) and services within the colonies
<b>Declaratory Act</b>	act passed by Parliament in 1766 that <i>declared</i> or stated that Parliament had the right and authority to make laws for the colonies in all cases and any acts of colonial assemblies were null and void
<b>Townshend Acts</b>	series of laws passed by Parliament in 1767, establishing indirect taxes on goods imported from Britain by the British colonies in North America
<b>Coercive Acts or Intolerable Acts</b>	series of acts by Parliament in 1774 to punish the colonists for the Boston Tea Party; these acts closed the port of Boston until colonists paid for the tea, made changes in Massachusetts government, lodged British troops with the colonists, and let British officials charged with murder go on trial in England; colonists called them the <i>Intolerable Acts</i>

## First Continental Congress

England's punishment of the colonies made many colonists fear for other freedoms. In 1774, 12 of the colonies met at the **First Continental Congress** in Philadelphia to discuss the situation. At this meeting, the colonists agreed to work together to protest the Intolerable Acts. The two most important steps the Continental Congress took were to list their complaints, including several laws they wanted repealed, and to agree to boycott British goods until the king dealt with their complaints. Before leaving, the delegates agreed to meet in the spring of 1775 to see what action they needed to take next.

Before the delegates could meet again, England sent troops into the country outside of Boston looking for guns and ammunition. On their way to Concord, the British troops, called *Redcoats* (or lobster-backs) because of their uniforms, were detained at Lexington (about five miles from Concord) by a small militia group called the **minutemen**, an informal group of civilian colonial soldiers. Eight colonists died and 10 were wounded at the *Battle of Lexington*, which lasted only 15 minutes. The



*Redcoat*



minuteman

Redcoats then marched on to Concord. At Concord they found no arms or supplies, but they did find a group of minutemen. After a small battle in which several British soldiers were killed, the British turned back to Boston. On a bridge outside of Concord, they met a large group of minutemen. Fighting broke out, and the British were forced to retreat, but not before losing a great number of men at the *Battle of Concord*. News of the battles traveled fast. The first shots of the American Revolution had been fired.

War seemed certain as hopes of reaching a peaceful agreement with Britain faded. These battles at Lexington and Concord launched a war which would decide the future of the 13 colonies.

## Second Continental Congress

Following the battles at Lexington and Concord (1775), the Second Continental Congress met as earlier decided. The first thing the delegates did was send *King George III* the *Olive Branch Petition*. This petition urged the British king to repeal the Intolerable Acts and help find a peaceful solution to the problems between the colonies and Britain. King George III refused to read the petition.

## Continental Army

The second thing the Second Continental Congress did was to organize an army and a navy to fight the British. The Continental Army was different



from local militias because it included men from many different areas. It was allowed to fight in all 13 of the colonies. *George Washington*, a 43-year-old veteran of the French and Indian War, was appointed as commander-in-chief. The Second Continental Congress also authorized the printing of money to pay for the army.

While the Second Continental Congress was meeting in Philadelphia, the colonial militia around Boston became involved in another battle at *Breed's Hill* near Bunker Hill. There the British took both Breed's and Bunker hills. The

Americans readied for battle by digging trenches on Breed's Hill, leading to the confusion that resulted in the battle being misnamed. The misnamed *Battle of Bunker Hill* (1775) was the deadliest battle of the war. George Washington and the Continental Army were not part of this battle, but when General Washington reached Boston, he took command of the militia there. These soldiers became the core of the Continental Army and later forced the British to evacuate Boston.

The colonists suffered a series of losses starting at the Battle of Bunker Hill outside of Boston (1775). Always able to sting the British, the colonists fought a different type of war than the formally trained Redcoats.

Led by Washington, the colonists fought the better-trained, richer, and larger force presented by the British. Still, colonists had the advantage because they knew the land and were closer to their supplies. Early in the fighting, the colonists were lucky, as in the battle at Concord where British soldiers fell by the dozens against 3,000 to 4,000 minutemen.

## Declaration of Independence

When attempts to settle their differences with England failed, the Second Continental Congress decided it was time to separate from England. The Congress asked *Thomas Jefferson* and a small group of others to write the official document creating a state. Jefferson wrote the first draft which the Congress edited. Included in the **Declaration of Independence** (see Appendix C) were the complaints which England had ignored. It also spelled out what ideas would be used by the new state—"all men are created equal," and people have the right to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." With the signing of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776, the Revolutionary War became official.



*Thomas Jefferson*

## War for Independence

When the colonists defeated the British at the *Battle of Saratoga* (1777) in upstate New York, the war began to swing in the colonists' favor, and they knew they could defeat the British even though they were outnumbered. In part, the success of the colonists in the latter portion of the war resulted from help by the French who were impressed with the American victory at



*Marquis de Lafayette*

the Battle of Saratoga. Represented by the *Marquis de Lafayette*, a wealthy young French nobleman, the French provided loans, weapons, men, and ships to help fight the British.

The war was difficult for the colonists. They lacked proper equipment and clothing to survive the war and the weather. The winter of 1777-1778 was one of the worst, with more than 2,000 soldiers dying at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania. While some men left the army to go home, most stayed. However, when French money and troops arrived in the summer of 1778, the war began to turn back in favor of the colonists. The war moved to the southern colonies of the Carolinas and Georgia where the British had greater support. Still, with aid from the French, the colonists were able to defeat the British at the *Battle of Yorktown* in Virginia (1781). On October 17, 1781, the British General *Charles Cornwallis* surrendered to General George Washington.

Events and Battles during the Revolutionary War	
<b>Boston Massacre</b>	event in 1770 when colonists threw rocks and snowballs at British troops to harass them, which resulted in the death of five colonists when the British soldiers fired into the crowd
<b>Boston Tea Party</b>	act of vandalism in 1773 by the Sons of Liberty, who threw 342 chests (15,000 pounds) of tea owned by the East India Tea Company into Boston Harbor to protest the Tea Act
<b>Battle of Lexington *</b>	first battle in the American Revolutionary War in a town in northeast Massachusetts on April 19, 1775; 700 British troops were met by 70 minutemen, resulting in the killing of eight Americans and the wounding of 10
<b>Battle of Concord *</b>	second battle in the American Revolutionary War in a town in northeast Massachusetts on April 19, 1775
<b>Battle of Bunker Hill ** (Breed's Hill)</b>	fighting during the American Revolution outside of Boston in 1775; British won when colonists ran out of ammunition, but the British left Boston shortly afterward
<b>Battle of Saratoga</b>	fighting in upstate New York during the American Revolution in 1777; considered the turning point of the war because the French joined with the Americans as a result of their win here
<b>Battle of Yorktown</b>	last major battle of the war; led to the surrender of British troops in 1781

\* The Concord and Lexington battles are referred to as the “shots heard around the world.” These two battles were the start of the Revolutionary War.

\*\* Because the colonists had only a small amount of gunpowder, the American commander warned, “Don’t shoot until you see the whites of their eyes!”

## *“E pluribus unum”* – Out of Many, One

Ending the American Revolution in 1781 was not enough. A formal declaration of peace was necessary.

In 1782 peace talks began in Paris with representatives from four nations—the newly named United States of America, Great Britain, France, and Spain (an ally of France who helped when France joined the war). The United States sent representatives, including *Benjamin Franklin* and *John Jay*, to Paris to **negotiate** peace terms with the British.



*On October 17, 1781, the British General Charles Cornwallis surrendered to General George Washington.*



*Benjamin Franklin*



*John Jay*

After more than a year, the **Treaty of Paris of 1783** was signed by the four countries. The United States was guaranteed independence and granted the lands bounded by Florida (owned by Spain) and Canada (owned by England) and westward to the Mississippi River.



## Treaty of Paris

The Treaty of Paris included the following:

1. Great Britain recognized the colonies as a **sovereign** nation, able to make decisions on their own without interference from others
2. The western boundary of the newly recognized United States of America was the Mississippi River
3. Use of the Mississippi River was promised to all countries involved in the war (United States, Great Britain, France, and Spain)
4. Florida was returned to Spain
5. The United States was granted fishing rights off the coast of Newfoundland

Additionally, the United States was to encourage its citizens to pay back debts owed to British merchants. In January of 1784, the Second Continental Congress approved the Treaty of Paris, and the United States began its freedom as a sovereign nation.

## Articles of Confederation



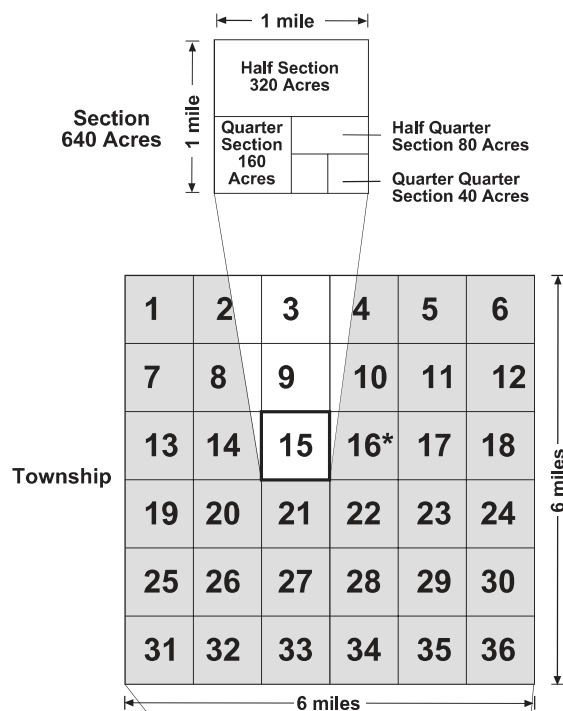
During the early days of the war, a committee was assigned the job of writing a constitution. Headed by *John Dickinson*, the committee created the **Articles of Confederation** in 1777 (see Appendix D). As the first constitution of the United States, the Articles reflected the wish of most Americans to avoid anything British. Where England was ruled by a monarchy, the Americans were governed by a **confederation**, or loose association of states. The Articles were ratified in 1781.

Under the Articles, each state remained sovereign, which meant each of the 13 states could make their own decisions. The Articles brought the states together in a national Congress with several representatives from each state, but only one vote for each state. In this way no one state was more powerful than another. All important legislation required a two-thirds vote of the states, but amendments and taxes required **unanimous** votes.

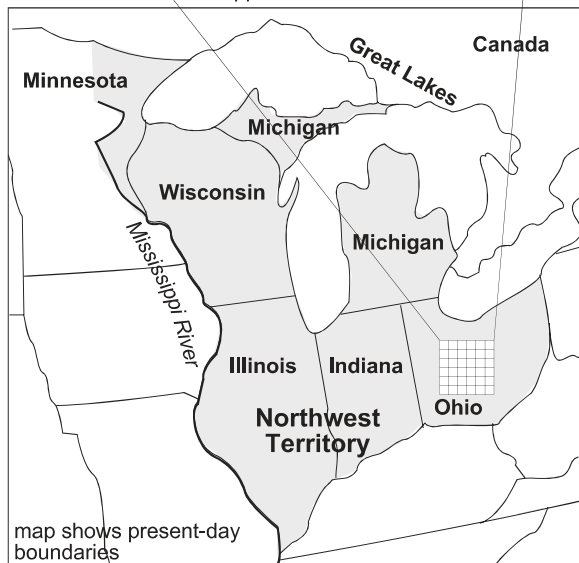
## Land Ordinance of 1785 and Northwest Ordinance of 1787

While the Articles of Confederation were not very effective, they did establish some customs that continue today. Most important were the *Land Ordinance of 1785* and the *Northwest Ordinance of 1787*.

These two *ordinances*, laws or legal orders, helped to divide the newly acquired public land in the Northwest Territory, the land east of the Mississippi River and north of the Ohio River. After it was divided, the government could then sell it to farmers or investors and help pay the national debt. The Northwest Ordinance then established a process for territories to become states. This process was unique since it was the first time ever any country admitted new lands into the country with equal status to the original states. Slavery was also prohibited.



\* income reserved to support schools



*How land of the Northwest Territory was divided.*

The Land Ordinance of 1785 required that the land of the Northwest Territory be surveyed and then divided into townships of 36 square miles. Each township was then divided into 36 sections that were of one square mile, or 640 acres. Families could buy an entire section for a minimum of one dollar an acre, but most often only purchased a quarter section, or 160 acres. Money collected from the sale of a designated section was to

support public schools. Then in 1787, the Confederation Congress passed the Northwest Ordinance, which created the steps for new states to be added to the nation. It established three basic steps for statehood.

- Congress appoints a territorial governor and judges.
- When the population of a territory reaches 5,000 residents, the residents will write a temporary constitution and elect their own governor and legislature.
- When the total population reaches 60,000, residents will submit a state constitution to Congress for approval. If approved, the territory becomes a state.

While the two ordinances created a clear and precise process for selling new land and adding new states, they completely ignored the Native American population living on the lands.

The Land Ordinance of 1785 and the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 set a very important example by having Congress draw up the rules and initially govern the territories. Unfortunately, under the Articles, Congress was limited in its power and ineffective. Problems with other countries, growing money problems, and unhappy veterans who still were waiting for back pay caused state leaders to look for ways to correct the Articles. Even though the Articles of Confederation were eventually replaced by the Constitution of the United States, these two ordinances created a process still used today.

### **Shays' Rebellion**

There were other signs that the Articles of Confederation were not working. In 1786 a group of farmers in western Massachusetts *petitioned*, or made a formal request, for relief from heavy taxes. When their requests were ignored, 2,000 farmers—led by *Daniel Shays*, a former soldier in the Revolutionary War—attempted to shut down the courts in three western counties. Shays and his men then moved eastward to take over the local **arsenal** (a place that stores weapons and ammunition) at Springfield, Massachusetts. Although *Shays' Rebellion* was put down by the state's well-armed militia, fear across the country grew because so many farmers

everywhere were facing the same problem. Prices for farm products had fallen after the Revolutionary War, and courts threatened to **seize** the farms if loans and taxes were not paid.

Articles of Confederation	
Strengths	Limitations
Land Ordinance of 1785 Northwest Ordinance	<p>No executive branch existed to enforce the laws of Congress.</p> <p>No national courts existed to resolve conflicts.</p> <p>Unanimous approval was needed for amendments.</p> <p>Congress could not collect taxes.</p> <p>Congress could not regulate interstate trade.</p> <p>Each state only had one vote in congress, regardless of population size.</p> <p>Nine of 13 states needed to agree to pass any law.</p>

By 1785 the limitations of the Articles of Confederation made some people look for another way to govern the nation. When only a few states sent representatives to a meeting to discuss the problems in 1786, another meeting was requested. The Confederation Congress suggested all states attend the *Philadelphia Convention*.

### Constitutional Convention of 1787

In 1787, 55 delegates to the **Constitutional Convention**, representing 12 states, met in Philadelphia to make corrections to the limited Articles of Confederation. The delegates included many leaders from the Revolutionary War including Benjamin Franklin, *Alexander Hamilton*, *James Madison*, and George Washington whom the convention chose as their presiding officer. A few

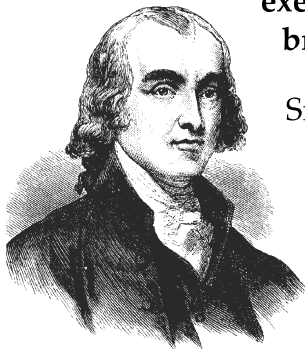


*Alexander Hamilton*

leaders were missing, most obviously Thomas Jefferson and *John Adams*. Both were serving as ambassadors overseas, Jefferson in Paris, France and Adams in London, England.

### Virginia Plan

Soon after the convention began, a proposal was made to abolish the Articles of Confederation and create a brand new government. To prevent problems, delegates were sworn to secrecy so they could do their best without pressures from outside forces. Quickly a proposal was made, and the convention began debating the *Virginia Plan*, created by Madison and presented by *Edmund Randolph*. The plan recommended a **bicameral** (having two legislative chambers or houses) congress with representatives assigned based on state populations. This *large state* plan gave an advantage to the more densely populated states of Massachusetts, Virginia, New York, and Pennsylvania. Besides a Congress, or **legislative branch**, the Virginia Plan called for an **executive branch** and a **judicial branch**.

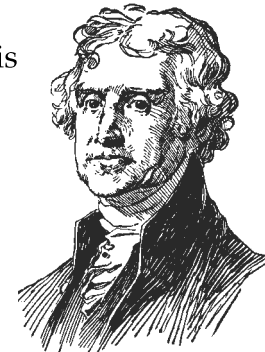


*James Madison*

Small states protested the Virginia Plan, afraid that large states would outvote them. Under the Articles of Confederation, each state had one vote in Congress, no matter what its population was. Supporters of the Virginia Plan thought it was only fair for a state with more people to have more representatives.



*John Adams*



*Thomas Jefferson*

### New Jersey Plan

The Convention almost fell apart over the Virginia Plan. In June 1787, *William Paterson* of New Jersey presented the *New Jersey Plan*. This plan had the support of the small states. The *New Jersey Plan* recommended three branches of government and a unicameral (one-chamber or house) congress with equal representation as under the Articles of Confederation. Understandably both sides would not give in.



## The Great Compromise

Convention delegates argued over the Virginia Plan and New Jersey Plan. The standoff was broken by the *Connecticut Compromise*, also known as the *Great Compromise*. Roger Sherman proposed the **compromise**, which made it possible for both the large and small states to work together. Sherman's compromise called for a bicameral congress with representation in a lower house, the *House of Representatives*, and an upper house, the *Senate*.

Members of the House of Representatives would be chosen by all men who could vote. The seats would be divided according to the population of each state. This part was like the Virginia Plan, and the large states liked and supported it.

Members of the Senate would be chosen by state legislatures. Each state would have two senators. The small states liked and supported this part. Together, the two houses would comprise the Congress of the United States. On July 16, the delegates narrowly accepted the plan.

## Three-Fifths Compromise

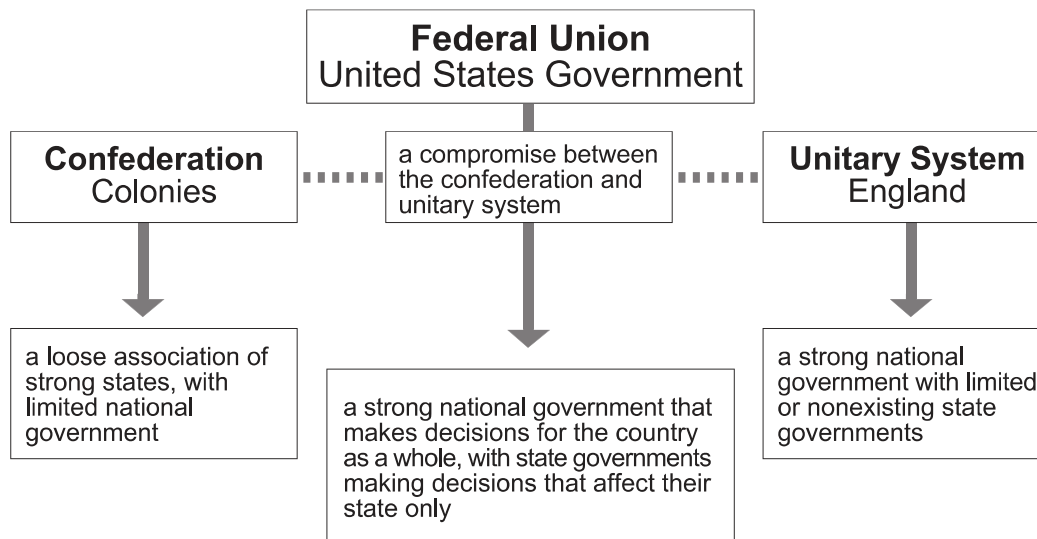
Although the Great Compromise settled the issue of representation in Congress, it opened the door to another new question. When counting population to determine the number of members for the House of Representatives, should slaves be counted? The Southern states, with many slaves, wanted slaves counted, even though slaves could not vote and were not citizens. The Northern states, where few or no slaves lived, were opposed. (See chart on following page of how the right to vote has expanded since the Constitution first went into effect.) This issue was complicated when Southern states reversed their position on counting population to determine how much a state would pay in taxes. Concerning taxes, Southern states said the slaves were not citizens and therefore should not be counted when determining rates of taxation. The delegates resolved this delicate issue with the *Three-Fifths Compromise*. This compromise allowed five slaves to be counted as three residents for the purpose of deciding representation and **assessing** taxes, the setting of taxes or fees.

As the Three-Fifths Compromise was being discussed, some delegates suggested an end to slavery. To prevent a complete breakdown of the convention, the delegates agreed to leave the decision of slavery in the hands of the future government. The Congress created by the Constitution was prevented from interfering with the importation of slaves for at least 20 years.

The Right to Vote					
1789	Early 1800s	1870	1920	1961	1971
White men over age 21 who met property requirements	All white men over the age 21	African-American men over age 21	Women	People in the District of Columbia in presidential elections	Men and women over age 18
state laws	state laws	Amendment 15	Amendment 19	Amendment 23	Amendment 26

## Creating a Federal Union

With the issues of slavery and Congress settled, the convention began to create the rest of the new government. The first step was to create a **federal union**. This was different from the confederation created by the Articles of Confederation and the **unitary system** of England before that. England's government was a unitary system, with a strong national government and the next level of government being the county. No states or provinces existed. When the colonists wrote their first government, they wanted the opposite of the English system, so they created a confederation with strong state governments and a limited national government that must obey the states. When the delegates at the Philadelphia Convention began to change the government, they created a new form of government that was a compromise between a confederation and an unitary system. They created a federal union with a strong national government to make decisions that impact the country as a whole and strong states to address issues only within their state.



### Framework for the Constitution

The delegates made many decisions about the new constitution. By September, 1787, they had set up the framework for a lasting government. Now they needed to win approval in their home states for the Constitution. Nine states were needed to ratify the Constitution. By June 21, 1788, the required states had approved the new Constitution.

### Summary

Colonists protested the new taxes created by the British Parliament, and in July 1776, a year after the fighting in the American Revolution began, the colonists declared their independence from Britain. The Americans suffered many setbacks at first, but with the help of the French, they defeated the British. After the Treaty of Paris in 1783, Britain recognized the American nation.

The Articles of Confederation set up the first American government, but in 1787, Americans decided to replace the Articles with a new constitution. Under the new constitution, the new government would share powers between the states and the national government and each of three branches of the national government would be able to check the powers of the other.