

Articles of Confederation Cause and Effect

Directions: Highlight the important information as you read. This will help you when answering the questions.

Some things cause other things. You know that; you have already studied cause and effect. Well, the Articles of Confederation caused a lot of problems. Let's see what happened.

The United States was a brand-new baby of a nation in 1777 when the Articles of Confederation were completed. The Articles of Confederation was our first constitution. The Articles created a weak national government. Why? Well, first of all, we were fighting a country with a strong national government, Great Britain. We didn't want another powerful government to boss us around. Also, in 1777, most Americans thought of themselves as citizens of their states before they thought themselves citizens of a country. Their attitude was only natural; our country was only one year old at that time. On the other hand, many states had existed as colonies for over one hundred years.

As a result of the Articles of Confederation, states had much more power than Congress and the national government. For the Articles to take effect, all states had to ratify (accept) it. Nine of the thirteen states had to approve any law passed by Congress. Congress couldn't control trade between states or countries, and it could not pass any laws regarding taxes. If Congress needed money or soldiers for supporting the Continental Army, it had to ASK the states. The states didn't have to pay or send men if they didn't want too. The few laws Congress was able to make could not be effectively enforced because there was no president. No national judicial system existed to settle disputes between states.

Many problems arose because of the way the Articles of Confederation were set up. Maryland refused to ratify the Articles because it was afraid that big states would have too much power. Disputes arose among states because of the conflicting claims over western lands. Spain and Great Britain took advantage of our weakness. Spain closed the port of New Orleans to American farmers, and Britain refused to remove troops from the Ohio River Valley after the Revolutionary War. Money, too, became a problem. Congress printed money, but it quickly became worthless because Congress had little power. States then printed their own money but wouldn't accept money from other states. Also, no one could agree how much the money from each state was worth. When Daniel Shays led a rebellion in Massachusetts in 1786, people realized that the Articles of Confederation just weren't working. In May, 1787, the states met in Philadelphia to discuss solutions. They decided to write a new constitution.

1. When were the Articles of Confederation completed?
2. Which country was the United States fighting in 1777?
3. According to the Articles of Confederation who had more power, the states or national government?
4. Did our country have a president under the Articles of Confederation?
5. How did states settle disputes among themselves under the Articles of Confederation?

Directions: Each of you is now an expert on the Articles of Confederation. Let's see whether you can show exactly HOW the Articles created problems. You can do this by linking the causes and effects.

On the back of your loose-leaf paper you are to make two columns. One is labeled Cause, the other is labeled Effect. You are to write the Cause in the Cause column and write the Effect directly across from it in the Effect column.

Causes:

1. The Articles of Confederation did not set up a national judicial system.
2. The United States had no president under the Articles of Confederation.
3. Congress had to ask states for money. States could refuse to give money to Congress.
4. The colonists resented Britain's strong national government.
5. The Articles made it hard to maintain a strong army.
6. Congressional money was worthless.

Effects:

1. The Articles of Confederation created a weak national government.
2. States printed their own money.
3. Congress was always short of money.
4. States could not settle disputes among themselves.
5. It was hard to enforce national laws.
6. Britain refused to leave the Ohio Valley. Spain closed the port of New Orleans.