

# Ch 5 Ls 2 Shays's Rebellion and Change Constitution Convention

## ESSENTIAL QUESTION

- How do new ideas change the way people live?

# THE STORY BEGINS...

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When Massachusetts farmers rebelled against the government's handling of economic problems, the Massachusetts militia was called out to end the protest.

## LESSON 2

# Forging a New Constitution



Following the Revolutionary War, the United States's economy suffered, and farmers were hit especially hard. Sales of farm products decreased, and many farmers fell into debt. Farmlands were seized and their owners thrown into jail. Angry farmers threatened rebellion. A group of Massachusetts farmers made this plea to state officials:

“We are [sensible] also that A great Debt is Justly brought upon Us by the War and we are as Willing to pay our share towards [it] as We are to [enjoy] our [shares] in [Independency] and [Constitutional] [privileges] in the commonwealth. . . . 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.”

—from “Petition from the Town of Greenwich, Massachusetts”



Leader	Role
Edmund Randolph	
James Madison	
Roger Sherman	
Gouverneur Morris	

#### ANALYZING KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

Read closely to identify the roles of the individuals listed in creating a new government for the United States. Take notes about those individuals and their roles in a chart like this one. Then explain how these individuals helped bring about the final version of the Constitution.



#### UNDERSTANDING CRAFT AND STRUCTURE

- ANALYZING TEXT** In the discussion of Shays's Rebellion the writer states, "Resentment boiled in Massachusetts." What is meant by "Resentment boiled"? Why is that phrasing appropriate for the discussion?
- DETERMINING MEANING** Explain the difference between manumission and abolishing, or ending, slavery.

## THE NEED FOR CHANGE

**GUIDING QUESTION** *What problems did the government face under the Articles of Confederation?*

A growing number of Americans became convinced that the government under the Articles of Confederation was too weak to deal with the country's problems. Among these problems were serious economic difficulties.

After the Revolutionary War, the United States went through a **depression**, a period when economic activity slows and unemployment increases. Wartime damage to Southern plantations led to a sharp drop in rice exports. Trade also fell off when the British closed the West Indies market to American merchants. The little money the government did have went to pay debts to foreign countries. This resulted in a serious shortage of money in the United States.

### SHAYS'S REBELLION

Economic troubles hit farmers hard. Unable to sell their goods, they could not pay their taxes and debts. This led state officials to seize farmers' lands and throw them in jail. This treatment angered many farmers. Some began to view the new government as just another form of tyranny. They wanted the government to issue paper money and make new policies to help those in debt.

Resentment boiled in Massachusetts. In 1786 angry farmers led by former Continental Army captain Daniel Shays forced courts in the western part of the state to close. The goal was to stop judges from legally taking away farmers' lands.

The farmers' revolt grew. In January 1787, Shays led a force of about 1,200 supporters toward the federal arsenal, or weapons storehouse, in Springfield, Massachusetts. The farmers wanted to seize guns and ammunition. The state militia ordered the advancing farmers to halt and then fired over their heads. The farmers did not stop. The militia fired again, killing four farmers. Shays and his followers fled, and the uprising was over. Still, Shays's Rebellion frightened Americans. Concern

grew that the government could not handle unrest and prevent violence. On hearing of the rebellion, George Washington wondered whether “mankind, when left to themselves, are unfit for their own government.”

## SLAVERY IN THE NEW REPUBLIC

The Revolutionary War called attention to the clash between the American belief in liberty and the practice of slavery. Between 1776 and 1786, 11 states—all except South Carolina and Georgia—outlawed or taxed the importation of enslaved people.

Slavery existed and was legal in every state. In the North, however, it was not a major source of labor. People in that region began working to end slavery in America. In 1774 Quakers in Pennsylvania founded the first American antislavery society.

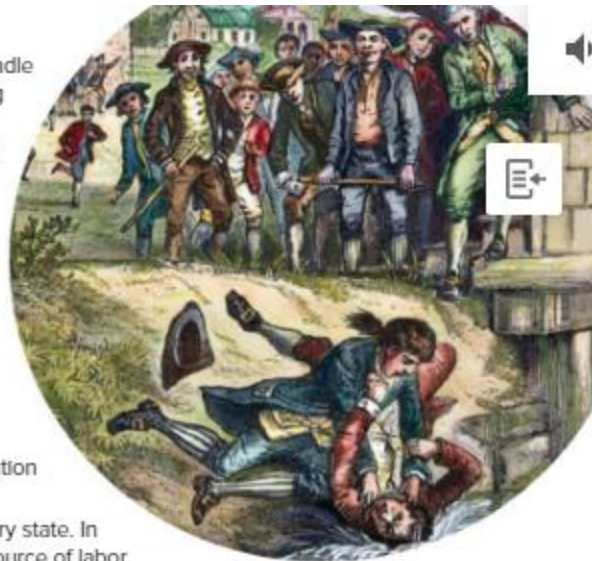
Six years later Pennsylvania passed a law that provided for the gradual freeing of enslaved people. The law read in part:

“ And whereas, the Condition of those Persons who have heretofore been denominated Negroe and Mulatto Slaves, has been attended with Circumstances which not only deprived them of the common Blessings that they were by Nature entitled to. . . . [I]t is hereby enacted by the Representatives of the Freemen of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in General Assembly . . . That all Persons, as well Negroes, and Mulattos, as others, who shall be born within this State, from and after the Passing of this Act, shall not be deemed and considered as Servants for Life or Slaves. ”

### MAKING CONNECTIONS: PERSPECTIVES

#### BENJAMIN FRANKLIN AND SLAVERY

Benjamin Franklin is well known for his important contributions in gaining American independence and creating a government for the new country. Later, however, he devoted his energies to a new cause—freeing enslaved people. Earlier in his life, Franklin had owned enslaved people and his newspaper had carried ads for the sale of slaves. In 1787 Franklin became president of the Pennsylvania Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery. With the ratification of the U.S. Constitution, Franklin continued to speak out against slavery.



*Shays's Rebellion divided the young country during the difficult 1780s.*

#### ANALYZING PRIMARY SOURCES

- 1. DETERMINING MEANING** To what is the writer referring with the phrase “deprived them of the common Blessings that they were by Nature entitled to”?
- 2. CITING TEXT EVIDENCE** According to this passage, who is being freed from slavery by the Pennsylvania law?



delegates worried that without a bill of rights, the new national government might abuse its power. George Mason proposed a bill of rights to be included. The delegates defeated this idea. Most believed the Constitution carefully defined government powers and provided enough protection of individual rights.

## APPROVING THE CONSTITUTION

On September 17, 1787, the delegates assembled to sign the Constitution they had created. Three delegates refused to sign—Elbridge Gerry of Massachusetts, and Edmund Randolph and George Mason of Virginia. Gerry and Mason would not sign because the Constitution did not have a bill of rights. Randolph, who had put forth the Virginia Plan, felt the final document strayed too far from his own beliefs.

The other delegates did sign the document. The approved draft of the Constitution went out to the states for their approval. Under the Articles of Confederation, all 13 states had to accept any change. The drafters of the new Constitution decided, however, that the document would go into effect with the approval of just 9 of the 13 states.

### CHECKING FOR UNDERSTANDING

- SUMMARIZING** What was the Great Compromise? Summarize what you have learned about this agreement.
- EXPLAINING** What compromises were reached concerning enslaved persons?

## LESSON 2 REVIEW AND ACTIVITIES

### Time and Place

- IDENTIFYING CAUSES** What were the major causes of the depression the United States experienced after the Revolutionary War?

### Building History-Social Science Analysis Skills

- ANALYZING POINTS OF VIEW** When told about Shays's Rebellion, George Washington wondered whether "mankind, when left to themselves, are unfit for their own government." Based on this statement, how did Washington feel about Shays's Rebellion?
- IDENTIFYING** On what key issues did delegates have to compromise in order to create a Constitution that most states would accept?
- EXPLAINING ISSUES** Why did some delegates to the Constitutional Convention refuse to sign the new Constitution?

### Writing About History

- INFORMATIVE WRITING** You have been asked to write a short announcement to inform your community about the Great Compromise. Your announcement should include a summary of the key points of the agreement as well as any details you think are important.

### Collaborating

- ADAPTING SPEECH** Working with two or three classmates, take the role of a group of delegates to the Constitutional Convention who support either the Virginia Plan or the New Jersey Plan. Write a short speech explaining your support for your chosen plan. Make sure to include details from the lesson to support your argument. When you have finished, give your speech to the class. Each group member should take a turn reading part of the speech. As you perform your speech, make sure to adapt the presentation to emphasize important points.



Include this lesson's information in your Foldable®.





*The fight for liberty and the nation's newfound freedom led to questions about slavery in the United States. Enslaved persons often faced severe working conditions and brutal treatment, far different from the peaceful scene shown in this image. A number of Northern states began to work to end the practice following the Revolution.*

**EXPLAINING ISSUES** Why do you think the white South was so committed to keeping a slave-based economy?

Between 1783 and 1804, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New York, and New Jersey passed laws that gradually ended slavery there.

Still, free African Americans faced discrimination. They were barred from many public places. Only a few states gave them the right to vote. Most of their children had to attend separate schools from white children. In response, free African Americans set up their own churches, schools, and aid groups.

Slavery continued to spread south of Pennsylvania. The plantation system depended on slave labor, and many white Southerners feared their economy could not survive without it.

That fear did not stop a number of slaveholders from freeing enslaved people. The number of free African Americans increased in Virginia after that state passed a law that encouraged **manumission** (man-yuh-MIH-shuhn), the freeing of individual enslaved persons.

Around this time, American leaders were deciding that the Articles of Confederation needed to be strengthened. The question of slavery would make those discussions more difficult.

#### **✓ CHECKING FOR UNDERSTANDING**

- 1. EXPLAINING CAUSES** Why did farmers in Massachusetts rebel in 1787?
- 2. IDENTIFYING** In what parts of the new United States was the institution of slavery first abolished?

# THE CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION

**GUIDING QUESTION** *How did leaders reshape the government?*

Although the American Revolution led to a union of 13 states, it had not yet created a nation. Some leaders were satisfied with independent state governments that were similar to the old colonial governments. Others wanted a strong national government. They demanded a change in the Articles of Confederation. Among the leading Americans supporting reform were James Madison, a Virginia planter, and Alexander Hamilton, a New York lawyer.

## THE CONVENTION BEGINS

In September 1786, Hamilton called for a **convention**, or meeting, 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.”

George Washington at first was not enthusiastic about the meeting. Then, news of Shays’s Rebellion made Washington change his mind. He agreed to attend the Philadelphia convention, and the meeting took on greater importance.

The Convention 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 of the delegates were well educated. At a time when few people went to college, 26 of the delegates had college degrees. Native Americans, African Americans, and



### INTEGRATING KNOWLEDGE AND IDEAS

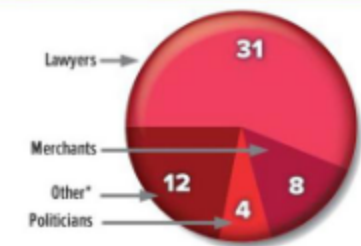
#### 1. EVALUATING ARGUMENTS

According to the text, James Madison was called the “Father of the Constitution.” What does this mean, and what evidence does the text provide to support this claim?

#### 2. INTEGRATING VISUAL INFORMATION

How does the circle graph titled The 55 Framers help you understand the backgrounds and beliefs of the people involved in the creation of the new government?

### THE 55 FRAMERS



\*Judges, Physicians, Planters, Philosophers, Professor, Surveyor

Source: Fifty-Five Fathers: The Story of the Constitutional Convention

Of the 55 people attending the Constitutional Convention, nearly half were college educated.

1. **INTEGRATING VISUAL INFORMATION** What was the most common occupation among the men who attended the Convention?

2. **EXPLAINING IDEAS** Why do you think it is important for government leaders to have knowledge of the law?

## BIOGRAPHY

### JAMES MADISON (1751–1836)

James Madison played a major role at the Constitutional Convention. He kept detailed notes and tried to impress upon the other delegates the need for an effective central government. Madison became the chief architect of the Constitution, and his notes became the best record of what happened at the Convention.

After the Constitution went into effect, Madison became a leader of the new national government. In developing the Bill of Rights, he again sought to achieve the difficult balance between the rights of the people and the power of government. In 1808 Madison became the fourth president of the United States.

women were not represented at the Convention. These groups were not considered part of the political process at that time.

Having George Washington and Benjamin Franklin at the Convention guaranteed public trust. Trust was important, because the Convention did not just **amend**, or revise, the Articles of Confederation. Instead, it produced an entirely new constitution. Many people, including some of the delegates, questioned whether the Convention had such authority to scrap the Articles of Confederation and start anew.

Yet the work went on. Besides Washington and Franklin, two men from Philadelphia also had key roles. James Wilson did important work on the details of the Constitution, and Gouverneur Morris polished the final draft. Virginian James Madison, who was a keen supporter of a strong national government, kept a record of 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.

## THE CONVENTION ORGANIZES

The delegates unanimously chose George Washington to lead the meetings. Delegates also decided that each state would have one vote on all questions. Decisions would be based on a majority vote of the states present. Sessions were not open to the public. In fact, the windows were closed in the sweltering heat to keep anyone from listening in. This made it possible for the delegates to talk freely.

## THE VIRGINIA PLAN

Edmund Randolph of Virginia opened the Convention with a surprise. He proposed the Virginia Plan that called for a strong national government. The plan, which was largely the work of James Madison, created a government with three branches: a two-house legislature, a chief executive chosen by the legislature, and a court system. The legislature would have powers to tax, regulate trade, and veto state laws. Voters would elect members of the lower house of the legislature. The members of the lower house would then choose members of the upper house. In both houses the number of representatives would be **proportional**, or corresponding in size, to the population of each state. This would give a state such as Virginia many more delegates than Delaware, the state with the fewest number of people.

Delegates from the small states objected. They preferred a system in which all states had equal representation. Opponents of the Virginia Plan rallied around William Paterson of New Jersey. On June 15, he presented another plan. This plan amended the

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## VIRGINIA AND NEW JERSEY PLANS

Virginia Plan	New Jersey Plan
 <p><i>Edmund Randolph proposed the Virginia Plan.</i></p>	 <p><i>William Paterson proposed the New Jersey Plan.</i></p>
<b>Legislative Branch</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Powerful legislature</li> <li>• Two houses, with membership proportional to state's population</li> <li>• Lower house elected by the people</li> <li>• Upper house elected by lower house</li> </ul>	<b>Legislative Branch</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One house with equal representation from all states</li> <li>• Legislature could collect taxes from states</li> </ul>
<b>Executive Branch</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chosen by legislature</li> <li>• Limited power</li> <li>• Could veto legislation, subject to override</li> </ul>	<b>Executive Branch</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chosen by Congress</li> <li>• Would serve a single term</li> <li>• Subject to recall on request of state governors</li> </ul>
<b>Judicial Branch</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Would serve for life</li> <li>• Could veto legislation, subject to override</li> </ul>	<b>Judicial Branch</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appointed by executive branch</li> <li>• Would serve for life</li> </ul>
<b>Both Plans</b>	
Were federal systems with three branches—legislative, executive, and judicial	
Gave the federal government more powers than it had under the Articles of Confederation	

Articles of Confederation, which was all the Convention had the power to do.

### THE NEW JERSEY PLAN

Under this plan, the legislature would have a single house, with each state having one vote. Paterson argued that the Convention should not deprive smaller states of the equality they had under the Articles. The New Jersey Plan gave Congress the power to set taxes, regulate trade, and elect an executive branch made up of more than one person. In sum, the New Jersey Plan favored a more powerful government than existed under the Articles—but a less powerful government than the Virginia Plan proposed.

#### CHECKING FOR UNDERSTANDING

- EXPLAINING** Why did New Jersey's delegates object to the Virginia Plan?
- SUMMARIZING** Summarize the New Jersey Plan in one sentence.

Delegates at the Constitutional Convention considered different plans.

- COMPARING** In what ways were the two plans similar?
- EXPLAINING ISSUES** Explain how proportional representation favored larger states.



## UNDERSTANDING CRAFT AND STRUCTURE

### 1. ANALYZING TEXT

**PRESENTATION** How does the main heading for this section relate to the subheadings?

### 2. ANALYZING POINTS OF VIEW

**VIEW** Why do you think the compromise suggested by Roger Sherman is referred to as the “Great Compromise”?

## DETERMINING MEANING

To better understand the word **compromise**, note that the prefix *com-* means “with, together, or jointly.” The root word is *promise*, which means “a declaration that one will do or not do a specific thing.” What do these two word parts mean when they are combined? Does this meaning agree with the text definition of *compromise*?

## AGREEING TO COMPROMISE

**GUIDING QUESTION** *What compromises were reached in the new Constitution?*

The delegates had to decide whether to revise the Articles of Confederation or write a new constitution. On June 19, the states voted to work toward a new constitution based on the Virginia Plan. They still had to deal with the difficult issue of representation that divided the large and small states.

### IMPORTANT COMPROMISES

The Convention appointed a committee to settle the issue. Roger Sherman of Connecticut suggested what would later be called the Great Compromise. **compromise** is a settlement of a dispute by each party giving up some demands. Sherman’s compromise proposed different representation in the two-house legislature. In the upper house—the Senate—each state would have two members. That is, the states would be equal in representation. In the lower house—the House of Representatives—the number of seats for each state would vary based on the state’s population. Larger states would have more representation.

Delegates from the South and North disagreed on whether—and how—to count each state’s enslaved population. Including enslaved people as part of a state’s population would give Southern states more seats in Congress. The Southern states liked this, and the Northern states did not. At the same time, counting each enslaved person would increase each Southern state’s taxes, because states were to be taxed based on their populations. The South was not happy about this.

As a solution, delegates agreed to what was called the Three-Fifths Compromise. Every five enslaved persons would count as three people in a state’s population total. This total would be the basis for setting taxes and representation in Congress.

### THE QUESTION OF THE SLAVE TRADE

The Northern states had already banned the slave trade. They wanted to prohibit it nationwide. Southern states considered slavery central to their economy. Northerners agreed to keep the new Congress from interfering with the slave trade until 1808.

### DEBATING A BILL OF RIGHTS

State constitutions such as those of Virginia and Massachusetts had a listing of key rights and freedoms. These are known as a declaration of rights, or a bill of rights. At the Convention, some