

Study Guide



Chapter 5, Section 2

For use with textbook pages 164–169

A NEW CONSTITUTION

KEY TERMS AND NAMES

Virginia Plan plan of government developed by the Virginia delegates to the Constitutional Convention (page 166)

New Jersey Plan plan of government developed by the New Jersey delegates to the Constitutional Convention (page 166)

Great Compromise a compromise that solved the problem of representation in Congress (page 167)

Three-Fifths Compromise a compromise that solved the problem of how enslaved people were to be counted in determining representation in Congress (page 167)

popular sovereignty rule by the people (page 168)

federalism a system of government in which government power is divided between the federal government and the state governments (page 168)

separation of powers a government in which powers of government are divided among three branches (page 168)

legislative branch the branch of government that makes the laws (page 168)

executive branch the branch of government that enforces the laws (page 168)

judicial branch the branch of government that interprets the laws (page 168)

checks and balances a system designed to prevent any one of the three branches from becoming too powerful (page 169)

veto to reject (page 169)

impeach to formally accuse of misconduct (page 169)

amendment a change to the Constitution (page 169)

DRAWING FROM EXPERIENCE

The United States Constitution has lasted for more than 200 years. Why do you think the Constitution has lasted this long?

The last section described the United States government under the Articles of Confederation. This section discusses the creation of the United States Constitution.

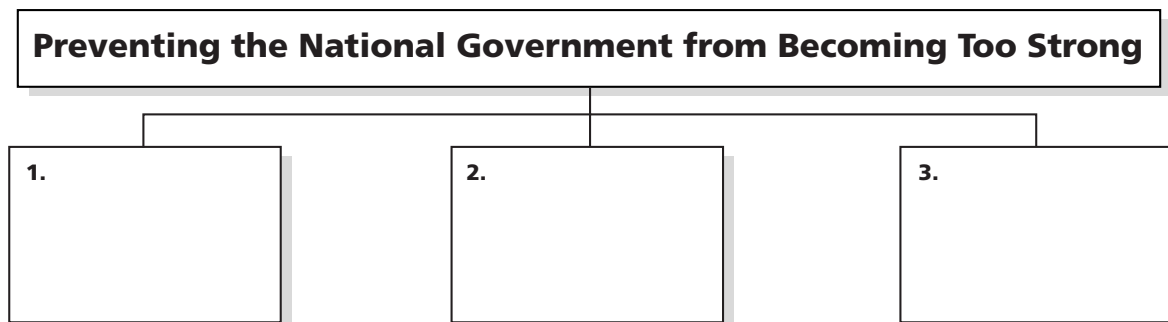
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ORGANIZING YOUR THOUGHTS

Use the diagram below to help you take notes. The Constitution set up several systems to prevent the national government from becoming too powerful. List and explain these systems in the diagram.



READ TO LEARN

- **The Constitutional Convention** (page 164)

Many American leaders believed that in order to survive, the United States needed a strong central government. These people became known as “nationalists.” They included George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, and James Madison.

In 1786 Madison convinced Virginia’s assembly to call a convention of all the states. He wanted the states to discuss the problem they had with trade and taxation. Too few states came to the convention to be able to solve any problems. In 1787 Alexander Hamilton called for the Confederation Congress to call a convention in Philadelphia to discuss revising the Articles of Confederation. Every state except Rhode Island came to the Constitutional Convention in May 1787.

Fifty-five delegates attended the convention. They included some of the most prominent leaders of the United States. Most of the delegates had experience in colonial, state, or national government. George Washington was chosen as the presiding officer. James Madison kept a record of the debates. His record is the best source of information of what went on at the convention. The meetings were closed to the public to make sure that the delegates were free to discuss issues without political pressure.

The Virginia delegation arrived with a plan for a new national government. It was called the **Virginia Plan**. The plan called for scrapping the Articles of Confederation and creating a new national government. It proposed a national government made up of a legislative, executive, and judicial branch. The Virginia Plan called for a two-house legislature. Voters would elect members of the first house. Members of the second house would be nominated by state

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governments and elected by the first house. In both houses, the number of representatives for each state would depend on the number of people in the state. In this way, it would benefit the larger states. Smaller states opposed a plan based on population.

The **New Jersey Plan** called for modifying the Articles of Confederation to make the central government stronger. The plan called for a single-house Congress in which each state was equally represented. Congress would also have the power to raise taxes and regulate trade.

After much debate, the Constitutional Convention decided to use the Virginia Plan. It decided not to revise the Articles of Confederation but to work on a new constitution for the nation.

4. Why were small states opposed to the Virginia Plan?

• **A Union Built on Compromise** (page 167)

As they worked on the constitution, the delegates had differences that they could only solve through compromise. One difference had to do with the Virginia Plan. The small states wanted each state to have an equal vote in Congress. Delegates from the larger states wanted representation to be based on population. The convention appointed a committee to resolve the issue. Roger Sherman of Connecticut proposed a compromise known as the Connecticut Compromise. It is also referred to as the **Great Compromise**. The compromise proposed two houses of Congress: the House of Representatives and the Senate. Representation in the House of Representative would be based on the states' population. Each state in the Senate would have equal representation.

Another difference among the delegates had to do with slavery. The committee proposed that each state would elect one member to the House of Representatives for every 40,000 people in the state. A conflict developed between the Northern and Southern states. Southern delegates wanted to count enslaved people as part of the population. Northern delegates opposed this because enslaved people could not vote. Northern delegates also said that if slaves were to be counted for representation, they should also be counted for taxation as well. The committee proposed the **Three-Fifths Compromise**. Under this compromise, every five enslaved people in a state would count as three free persons.

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The Southern delegates demanded that the new constitution not interfere with the slave trade. They also wanted a limit on Congress’s power to regulate trade. Northern delegates wanted a government that could control foreign imports into the United States. A new compromise was worked out. It said that Congress could not tax exports. It also said that Congress would not ban the slave trade until 1808.

The Confederation Congress approved the new constitution in September 1787. The Constitution now had to be ratified by nine of the thirteen states.

5. How did the delegates to the Constitutional Convention solve the problem of how states would be represented in Congress?

• **A Framework for Limited Government** (page 168)

The new constitution was based on the principle of **popular sovereignty**, which is rule by the people. It set up a representative system of government in which elected officials represented the people. The Constitution created a system of government known as **federalism**. The power of the government is divided between the federal, or national, government and the state governments. The Constitution provided for a **separation of powers** among the three branches of the federal government. Congress made up the **legislative branch**. It made the laws. The **executive branch** enforced the laws. It was headed by the president. The **judicial branch** interpreted the laws. It was made up of the federal courts. In addition to separating the powers, the Constitution also set up a system of **checks and balances** to stop any one branch of government from becoming too powerful.

The president was given several powers. Among them was the power to **veto**, or reject, acts of Congress. However, Congress had the power to override the veto with a two-thirds vote in both houses. Congress also had the power to **impeach**, or formally accuse of misconduct, and then remove the president or other official in the executive or judicial branch.

The judicial branch was balanced by the legislative and executive branch. The president could nominate members to the judiciary, but Congress had to approve the appointments.

To provide for a way of making changes to the Constitution, the delegates set up a system of making **amendments**, or changes to the Constitution. The

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system made it difficult to make changes, however. An amendment could be proposed by two-thirds of the members of both houses of Congress. Also, two-thirds of the states could call a constitutional convention to propose an amendment. The proposed amendment then had to be ratified by three-fourths of the state legislatures or by conventions in three-fourths of the states.

6. Why did the Constitution provide for a system of checks and balances?
