

Name _____

Cracks in the Foundation: Major Weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation

Open-Ended Response Answer Key

1. Answer: The central government under the Articles of Confederation had several weaknesses, including limited powers, a lack of taxing authority, the absence of an executive branch, an inflexible amendment process, and no regulation of interstate commerce. These weaknesses contributed to the overall instability of the nation by making it difficult to govern effectively, raise necessary funds, enforce laws, adapt to changing circumstances, and maintain economic stability. The inability to address these issues led to disputes, financial hardships, and a lack of cohesion among the states.
2. Answer: The lack of taxing authority in the Articles of Confederation had a significant impact on the government's ability to function effectively. Without the power to levy taxes, the central government depended on voluntary contributions from the states, which often fell short of the funds needed to operate. This financial instability hindered the government's ability to fulfill its responsibilities, such as maintaining a strong national defense and conducting foreign affairs. It also contributed to economic difficulties and hindered the nation's overall stability.
3. Answer: The absence of an executive branch in the government structure under the Articles of Confederation was a deliberate choice by the Founding Fathers to avoid creating a strong central authority. However, this absence presented challenges for governance. Without an executive branch, there was no single leader to enforce laws, make important decisions, or provide direction for the nation. This lack of leadership and executive authority made it challenging to ensure the effective implementation of policies and the enforcement of laws.
4. Answer: The inflexible process for amending the Articles of Confederation, which required unanimous approval from all thirteen states, had significant consequences. It made it nearly impossible to adapt the government to changing needs and address emerging issues effectively. This inflexibility highlighted the limitations of the Articles and contributed to the dissatisfaction with the existing system of government. As a result, it played a crucial role in the eventual adoption of the United States Constitution, which introduced a more flexible amendment process, among other improvements, to create a stronger and more effective federal government.

