

Document-Based Question – John Brown

8th Grade United States History

January 29, 2007

Articles of Confederation Document Based Question John Brown, Mulberry Middle School

Directions: Use the documents provided and your own prior knowledge to write a five to seven paragraph essay detailing the successes and failures of the Articles of Confederation from 1781 to 1787. In your opinion, was the new country functioning like united states or thirteen independent nations under the Articles?

Use the scaffolding questions provided to assist you in crafting this essay. You are by no means limited to simply answering the questions to complete the assignment, but they will help you begin the cognitive process.

As always, a complete answer will show evidence of brainstorming and/or a brief outline.

Document A: Articles of Confederation

To all to whom these Presents shall come, we the undersigned Delegates of the States affixed to our Names send greeting.

Articles of Confederation and perpetual Union between the [original thirteen] states...

II. Each state retains its sovereignty, freedom, and independence, and every power, jurisdiction, and right, which is not by this Confederation expressly delegated to the United States, in Congress assembled.

III. The said States hereby severally enter into a firm league of friendship with each other, for their common defense, the security of their liberties, and their mutual and general welfare, binding themselves to assist each other...

IX. The United States ... shall...regulat[e] the alloy and value of coin struck by their own authority, or by that of the respective States -- fixing the standards of weights and measures throughout the United States -- regulating the trade and managing all affairs with the Indians...

The United States in Congress assembled shall never engage in a war, ... nor enter into any treaties or alliances, nor coin money, nor regulate the value...nor borrow money on the credit of the United States...nor appoint a commander in chief of the army or navy, unless nine States assent to the same:

XIII. Every State shall abide by the determination of the United States in Congress assembled, on all questions which by this confederation are submitted to them. And the Articles of this Confederation shall be inviolably observed by every State, and the Union shall be perpetual; nor shall any alteration at any time hereafter be made in any of them; unless such alteration be agreed to in a Congress of the United States, and be afterwards confirmed by the legislatures of every State.

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In Witness whereof we have hereunto set our hands in Congress. Done at Philadelphia in the State of Pennsylvania the ninth day of July in the Year of our Lord One Thousand Seven Hundred and Seventy-Eight...

1. Why do you think the authors of the Articles of Confederation would be reluctant to create a strong central government with control over individual states?
2. Who do you think had more power under the Articles of Confederation: the central government, or individual states? Why?
3. What essentials to a strong central government were missing from the Articles?

Document B: Northwest Ordinance, 1787

Sec. 13. And... to provide also for the establishment of States, and permanent government therein, and for their admission to a share in the federal councils on an equal footing with the original States, at as early periods as may be consistent with the general interest:

[Section 14] **Art. 5.** There shall be formed in the said territory, not less than three nor more than five States; and the boundaries of the States, as soon as Virginia shall alter her act of cession, and consent to the same, shall become fixed and established...And, whenever any of the said States shall have sixty thousand free inhabitants therein, such State shall be admitted, by its delegates, into the Congress of the United States, on an equal footing with the original States in all respects whatever, and shall be at liberty to form a permanent constitution and State government: *Provided*, the constitution and government so to be formed, shall be republican, and in conformity to the principles contained in these articles; and, so far as it can be consistent with the general interest of the confederacy, such admission shall be allowed at an earlier period, and when there may be a less number of free inhabitants in the State than sixty thousand.

Art. 6. There shall be neither slavery nor involuntary servitude in the said territory...

Done by the United States, in Congress assembled, the 13th day of July, in the year of our Lord 1787, and of their sovereignty and independence the twelfth.

¹ From <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/nworder.htm>, "The Avalon Project: Northwest Ordinance; July 13, 1787." Last visited January 28, 2007.

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Document C: Map of the Northwest Ordinance



4. Which states were formed from the Northwest Ordinance?
5. Under the Northwest Ordinance how did territories become full-fledged states? Why was it significant that these new states were equal partners in the Union rather than colonies?
6. Why do you think the authors of the Articles of Confederation felt the need to outlaw slavery in the new territory?

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KEEP READING...

Document D: British Editorial Cartoon, “The Belligerent [sic] Plenipo’s”



7. Which countries are shown to be American allies?
8. How did both Spain and Great Britain exploit the United States' weakness during the period of the Articles of Confederation?
9. Give two or three reasons why the central government under the Articles of Confederation was unable to prevent foreign exploitation.

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Document E: Letter from Thomas Jefferson to James Madison – January 30, 1787
Excerpt of a letter from Thomas Jefferson to James Madison¹
January 30, 1787

Paris, January 30th, 1787

Dear Sir,

My last to you was of the 16th of December; since which, I have received yours of November 25 and December 4, which afforded me, as your letters always do, a treat on matters public, individual, and economical. I am impatient to learn your sentiments on the late troubles in the Eastern states. So far as I have yet seen, they do not appear to threaten serious consequences. Those states have suffered by the stoppage of the channels of their commerce, which have not yet found other issues. This must render money scarce and make the people uneasy. This uneasiness has produced acts absolutely unjustifiable; but I hope they will provoke no severities from their governments...

I hold it that a little rebellion now and then is a good thing, and as necessary in the political world as storms in the physical. Unsuccessful rebellions, indeed, generally establish the encroachments on the rights of the people which have produced them. An observation of this truth should render honest republican governors so mild in their punishment of rebellions as not to discourage them too much. It is a medicine necessary for the sound health of government.

If these transactions give me no uneasiness, I feel very differently at another piece of intelligence, to wit, the possibility that the navigation of the Mississippi may be abandoned to Spain...the act which abandons the navigation of the Mississippi is an act of separation between the Eastern and Western country.

...I should predict that the inhabitants of the United States would force their rulers to take the affirmative of that question. I wish I may be mistaken in all these opinions.

Yours affectionately,

Th. Jefferson

¹ From <http://www.earlyamerica.com/review/summer/letter.html>, “A Little Rebellion Now and Then is a Good Thing” – The Early America Review, Summer 1996. Page last visited January 28, 2007.

10. What “rebellion,” occurring in western Massachusetts towards the end of 1786, is Jefferson referring to in this letter?

11. What economic issues were plaguing the country in the late 1780s? How did most colonies attempt to address their fiscal troubles?

12. How did Massachusetts’ prospective solution to the problem lend itself to violent protest, particularly by farmers?

13. What “good thing” resulted from the chaos caused by Shays’ Rebellion?

¹ From <http://www.earlyamerica.com/review/summer/letter.html>, “A Little Rebellion Now and Then is a Good Thing” – The Early America Review, Summer 1996. Page last visited January 28, 2007.

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Essay: Using information from the documents and your own prior knowledge, write a five to seven paragraph essay detailing the successes and failures of the Articles of Confederation as our nation's government from 1781 to 1787. (Hint: Consider whether the United States functioned as one country or 13 independent states.

Grading Rubric

5 = Outstanding 4 = Above Average 3 = Average 2 = Below Average 1 = Unsatisfactory

1. Historical Accuracy

- 5 = Essay is completely historically accurate. No factual errors.
- 4 = Essay is mostly historically accurate, with minor, easily overlooked factual errors (for instance, saying the Articles of Confederation were written in 1783 instead of 1781).
- 3 = Essay is basically historically accurate, with noticeable factual errors.
- 2 = Essay is only marginally historically accurate, with several glaring factual errors.
- 1 = Essay shows little or no evidence of historical accuracy.

2. Flow of Ideas

- 5 = Essay shows evidence of brainstorming and/or an outline. Student uses a clearly-defined introduction and conclusion with several well-developed paragraphs to support his/her thesis statement. Student uses effective transitions between paragraphs.
- 4 = Essay shows some evidence of brainstorming and/or an outline. Student attempts to write an introduction and/or a conclusion. Paragraphs are fairly well developed with some choppiness. Some transitions between paragraphs.
- 3 = Essay shows little evidence of brainstorming and/or an outline. Introduction and/or conclusion are poorly developed or nonexistent. Little or no cohesion between paragraphs. Paragraphs are only loosely connected, with very little evidence of transition.
- 2 = Essay lacks brainstorm and/or outline. Student fails to include introduction or conclusion. Writing is disjointed and train of thought is hard to follow.
- 1 = Essay shows no flow of ideas whatsoever. Fails to address question properly.

3. Spelling/Punctuation

- 5 = Essay is essentially accurate with one or two minor spelling/punctuation errors.
- 4 = Essay contains a few minor spelling/punctuation errors.

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- 3 = Essay contains spelling/punctuation errors that affect the overall effectiveness of the work.
- 2 = Essay contains glaring spelling/punctuation errors that make it extremely difficult to read successfully.
- 1 = Essay is completely overloaded with spelling/punctuation errors, and is essentially unreadable.
4. Overall Score
- 5 = Outstanding – student shows a flair for historical writing. Essay was cohesive and effectively answered the question.
- 4 = Above average – student answers the questions adequately, with some stylistic embellishments. Quality of writing is at or above grade level.
- 3 = Average – student answers the question with adequately.
- 2 = Below average – student fails to answer question adequately, with major improvements needed to bring the essay to a standard of acceptability.
- 1 = Unsatisfactory – student gives little or no effort towards addressing the question, much less answering it adequately.

DBQ Evaluation

1. Is the intended audience level stated?
2. Is the subject or era in American History stated?
3. Are all documents primary sources?
4. Is there an appropriate number of sources? (4-6 for middle school, 6-8 for high school)
5. Are some documents visual (picture, map or chart)?
6. Are the documents an appropriate length and reading level?
7. Are scaffolding questions included to help students “get” the key points in each document?
8. Do the scaffolding questions help students analyze the document and find key information to include in their essay?
9. Is the essay question clearly stated and relevant to information found in the scaffolding?
10. Is there a grading rubric included?

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