

## Problems Under the Articles of Confederation

**Objective:** Evaluate the problems created by the Articles of Confederation.

**Focus Questions** - By the end of the lesson you should be able to:

1. Explain the problems created because of the weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation.
2. Explain how the states made the problems worse for the Massachusetts farmers.
3. Determine the importance of Shays Rebellion.

**Prior Knowledge** - You already know that the Articles of Confederation was the first constitution for the United States.

What were some of the Articles weaknesses?

Some weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation were.....

### **Definition:**

**Problem** - a matter or situation regarded as unwelcome or harmful and needing to be dealt with and overcome.

Example \_\_\_\_\_ (is/is not) an example of a problem because

**Step 1: Read the passage;**

**Step 2: Highlight or underline the key phrases that can be used as evidence of a problem created under the Articles of Confederation;**

**Step 3: Write your answer.**

**Do:** During the American Revolution, the states and the Continental Congress had borrowed large sums of money from wealthy merchants. After the war, the merchants demanded that they be repaid, but the national government under the Articles of Confederation had no power to raise money. The states had to repay their own debts, and the only way for them to raise the money was to tax their citizens heavily.

1. What are some of the problems created under the Articles of Confederation?

*Some problems created under the Articles of Confederation were large amounts of money owed to wealthy merchants from the American Revolution "the states and the Continental Congress had borrowed large amounts of money". The demand for repayment from the merchants led the states to raise taxes on their citizens "the states...tax their citizens heavily".*

**We Do:** Many farmers in the western part of Massachusetts had an especially hard time paying their bills at this time. The Massachusetts farmers, many of whom were war veterans who had never been paid, owed about one-third of their income for state taxes. The Massachusetts legislature refused to issue paper money as other states had done, instead they demanded payment in gold and silver.

Those Massachusetts farmers who could not pay their taxes had their farms taken away by state courts. Court officials then auctioned off the farms and used the money from the sale to pay the taxes. Farmers who could not pay their personal debts were often put into prison.

2. What problems did Massachusetts farmers face under the Articles of Confederation?

**You Do:** To be able to vote during this time, you had to own land, and for many, the loss of their land and their loss of status, from not being able to vote, was too much for them to take. This made many decide that the form of government they had was not working for them, and that something had to be done.

The farmers asked the Massachusetts legislature to lower taxes and let them pay taxes and other debts with farm produce. They begged the legislature to stop jailing people who could not pay their debts. Instead the legislature listened to merchants and bankers to whom the farmers owed money. It refused to pass laws to help the farmers.

3. What was another problem the Massachusetts farmers faced?

**Independent Practice:** Because they could not get help through legal means, a group of farmers decided they had no choice but to rebel. Their leader was Daniel Shays, a former Revolutionary War captain. In the fall of 1786, Shays led armed farmers in marches outside county courthouses in Springfield, Northampton and other towns in western Massachusetts. The purpose was to keep the courts from meeting. If the courts did not meet, bankers and others to whom farmers owed money could not take away their farms.

In January 1787, Shays' men attacked a Springfield building where the government stored guns. Wealthy merchants from as far away as Baltimore, Maryland paid to raise a militia and the governor of Massachusetts sent the soldiers to fight the rebels. The soldiers shot and killed four men, and soon the rest of Shays' followers fled. Several rebel leaders were caught. The men were brought to trial, found guilty, and sentenced to death. Later the court set them all free, including Shays.

4. What actions did the farmers take to try to solve their problems under the Articles of Confederation?

**Relevance:** It is important for us to understand that the way we set-up our government can have unexpected results. A weak government can lead to a country filled with problems where a strong government can prevent these problems.

5. Did the Articles of Confederation create a strong or a weak government? Why?

**Closure:** Summarize the problems created by the Articles of Confederation. Be sure to respond to the focus questions.