

Unit 5: First Governments & the Constitution

Inquiry Journal

Name: _____ Date: _____ Class: _____

Directions: Read each of the supporting questions. For each “K,” write what you already **KNOW** about the topic. For each “W,” write what you **WONDER** about the topic.

Topic 1: Building a New Government Supporting Questions	
LESSON 1	<i>What lessons does the experience of the Continental Congress reveal about the challenges of building a new government?</i>
	K:
	W:
LESSON 2	<i>What experiences and ideas shaped the creation of the first American government?</i>
	K:
	W:
LESSON 3	<i>How did the strengths and weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation expose the hardships of establishing the first American government?</i>
	K:
	W:



Topic 1: Building a New Government **Compelling Question**

How did Americans' revolutionary ideals both help and complicate the creation of a new government?

Directions: Read the compelling question. Explain what you **LEARNED** throughout the this topic with a Claim, Evidence, and Reasoning (CER) paragraph.



Directions: Read each of the supporting questions. For each “K,” write what you already **KNOW** about the topic. For each “W,” write what you **WONDER** about the topic.

Topic 2: The U.S. Constitution Supporting Questions	
LESSON 4	<i>In what ways was the issue of representation a defining issue in the creation of the U.S. Constitution?</i>
	K:
	W:
LESSON 5	<i>How did the framers of the Constitution balance the need for a stronger national government with the fear of tyranny?</i>
	K:
	W:
LESSON 6	<i>What do the words of the Constitution tell us about what mattered most to the people who wrote it?</i>
	K:
	W:



Topic 2: The U.S. Constitution

Compelling Question

In what ways did the framers balance competing interests when creating the Constitution?

Directions: Read the compelling question. Explain what you **LEARNED** throughout the unit with a Claim, Evidence, and Reasoning (CER) paragraph.



Directions: Read each of the supporting questions. For each “K,” write what you already **KNOW** about the topic. For each “W,” write what you **WONDER** about the topic.

Topic 3: Ratification of the Constitution Supporting Questions	
LESSON 7	<i>In what ways did the Federalists address fears about tyranny while arguing for a stronger central government?</i>
	K:
	W:
LESSON 8	<i>Why were some Americans concerned with the new Constitution?</i>
	K:
	W:
LESSON 9	<i>In what ways did compromise shape the creation and acceptance of the U.S. government after the Constitution was written?</i>
	K:
	W:



Topic 3: Ratification of the Constitution

Compelling Question

What does the conflict over the ratification of the Constitution reveal about how the U.S. government was built?

Directions: Read the compelling question. Explain what you **LEARNED** throughout the unit with a Claim, Evidence, and Reasoning (CER) paragraph.



Directions: Read each of the supporting questions. For each “K,” write what you already **KNOW** about the topic. For each “W,” write what you **WONDER** about the topic.

Topic 4: Early Government in Action Supporting Questions	
LESSON 10	<i>How should George Washington's legacy be remembered?</i>
	K:
	W:
LESSON 11	<i>How did early domestic conflicts shape the formation of early political parties?</i>
	K:
	W:
LESSON 12	<i>How did exclusion from full participation in the U.S. government shape systems of inequality in daily life?</i>
	K:
	W:



Topic 4: Early Government in Action

Compelling Question

How did the early years of U.S. government set the stage for both opportunity and inequality in American life?

Directions: Read the compelling question. Explain what you **LEARNED** throughout the unit with a Claim, Evidence, and Reasoning (CER) paragraph.



Essential Question

How did diverse views on government authority and individual rights from the Revolutionary era to ratification shape the foundations of the Constitution?

Directions: Read the essential question. Explain what you **LEARNED** throughout the unit with a Claim, Evidence, and Reasoning (CER) paragraph.



Paragraph Template

Claim, Evidence, Reasoning

CLAIM (Your argument)	
EVIDENCE #1 (Facts, examples, sources)	
REASONING #1 (Explanation of how the evidence supports the claim)	
EVIDENCE #2 (Facts, examples, sources)	
REASONING #2 (Explanation of how the evidence supports the claim)	



Unit 5: First Governments & the Constitution

Inquiry Journal (Exemplar)

Name: _____ Date: _____ Class: _____

Directions: Read each of the supporting questions. For each “K,” write what you already **KNOW** about the topic. For each “W,” write what you **WONDER** about the topic.

Topic 1: Building a New Government Supporting Questions	
LESSON 1	<i>What lessons does the experience of the Continental Congress reveal about the challenges of building a new government?</i>
	K: The colonies met in something called the Continental Congress; there was no president yet; that Congress helped lead the war.
	W: How did Congress make rules with colonies so far apart? Did every colony always agree?
LESSON 2	<i>What experiences and ideas shaped the creation of the first American government?</i>
	K: When a country declares independence, they need to create a new government.
	W: Did they copy anything from Britain’s government or start completely fresh?
LESSON 3	<i>How did the strengths and weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation expose the hardships of establishing the first American government?</i>
	K: Starting a new government would be hard especially if there are a lot of different opinions.
	W: What specific problems did the government face under the Articles?



Topic 1: Building a New Government

Compelling Question

How did Americans' revolutionary ideals both help and complicate the creation of a new government?

Directions: Read the compelling question. Explain what you **LEARNED** throughout the this topic with a Claim, Evidence, and Reasoning (CER) paragraph.

Americans' revolutionary ideals both helped and complicated the creation of a new government after independence. The belief in liberty and self-government, central to the Revolution, helped unite the colonies against Britain and inspired the creation of the Articles of Confederation, which emphasized state power and limited national authority. For example, during the Revolutionary War, the Continental Congress coordinated military efforts and diplomacy but struggled because it lacked the power to tax, raise troops directly, or create a national supply system. After the war, these same fears of centralized power led to the Articles giving Congress almost no ability to collect taxes or regulate trade. This caused serious problems, like the government's inability to stop Shays' Rebellion, when Massachusetts farmers protested unfair debt and taxation. The emphasis on local control also slowed decision-making, since major changes required unanimous agreement from all thirteen states. Revolutionary ideals about freedom and local rule gave Americans a strong foundation for democracy, but they also made forming a strong, stable national government difficult during both wartime and peace.



Directions: Read each of the supporting questions. For each “K,” write what you already **KNOW** about the topic. For each “W,” write what you **WONDER** about the topic.

Topic 2: The U.S. Constitution Supporting Questions	
LESSON 4	<i>In what ways was the issue of representation a defining issue in the creation of the U.S. Constitution?</i>
	K: Representation is where someone speaks for or on behalf of someone else or a larger group of people.
	W: Who were the “representatives” of the people at the Constitutional Convention?
LESSON 5	<i>How did the framers of the Constitution balance the need for a stronger national government with the fear of tyranny?</i>
	K: The federal government was too weak under the Articles of Confederation.
	W: Did people eventually agree on how much power the federal government should have?
LESSON 6	<i>What do the words of the Constitution tell us about what mattered most to the people who wrote it?</i>
	K: The Constitution is a set of rules for the U.S. government?
	W: How have some of the words or meanings changed over time?



Topic 2: The U.S. Constitution

Compelling Question

In what ways did the framers balance competing interests when creating the Constitution?

Directions: Read the compelling question. Explain what you **LEARNED** throughout the unit with a Claim, Evidence, and Reasoning (CER) paragraph.

The framers balanced competing interests when creating the Constitution by using compromise to unite people with different goals and concerns. One major example was the Great Compromise, which created a Congress with two houses—one based on population to satisfy large states, and one with equal votes for each state to satisfy smaller states. They also had to balance the interests of northern and southern states, which led to compromises on slavery, including counting enslaved people as three-fifths of a person for representation and delaying any ban on the slave trade. To prevent any one part of the government from becoming too powerful, they divided authority among three branches—legislative, executive, and judicial—so each could check the others. Even in the Preamble, the framers used unifying language like “We the People” and set goals such as justice, liberty, and the general welfare to show their vision for a balanced and fair government. These choices reveal how the Constitution was shaped by the need to bring together diverse views while limiting the risk of tyranny.



Directions: Read each of the supporting questions. For each “K,” write what you already **KNOW** about the topic. For each “W,” write what you **WONDER** about the topic.

Topic 3: Ratification of the Constitution Supporting Questions	
LESSON 7	<i>In what ways did the Federalists address fears about tyranny while arguing for a stronger central government?</i>
	K: Americans were fearful of tyranny because that’s how they saw the British government.
	W: Did they have to use propaganda or other methods to influence American opinions?
LESSON 8	<i>Why were some Americans concerned with the new Constitution?</i>
	K: Many Americans were very fearful of having a strong government where a leader could act like a king and take away their rights.
	W: How did these Americans oppose the Constitution?
LESSON 9	<i>In what ways did compromise shape the creation and acceptance of the U.S. government after the Constitution was written?</i>
	K: Compromise is when neither side gets its way completely but is willing to agree with a third option or solution.
	W: What compromises were part of the Constitution?



Topic 3: Ratification of the Constitution

Compelling Question

What does the conflict over the ratification of the Constitution reveal about how the U.S. government was built?

Directions: Read the compelling question. Explain what you **LEARNED** throughout the unit with a Claim, Evidence, and Reasoning (CER) paragraph.

The conflict over the Constitution reveals that the U.S. government was built through debate, compromise, and a deep concern for protecting both liberty and stability. Federalists argued in the *Federalist Papers* that a strong central government was necessary to prevent chaos and ensure national unity. But they made sure to still include checks and balances to avoid tyranny. In contrast, Anti-Federalist thinkers like Mercy Otis Warren warned that the Constitution gave too much power to the national government and failed to protect individual freedoms. To address these fears, Federalists promised to add the Bill of Rights, which was adopted in 1791 and guaranteed essential liberties like freedom of speech and the right to a fair trial. Another key compromise was the decision to move the national capital to a new location along the Potomac River, which helped win support from southern states. These examples show that the government we have today was shaped not by agreement, but by resolving tensions between competing ideas about power, rights, and representation.



Directions: Read each of the supporting questions. For each “K,” write what you already **KNOW** about the topic. For each “W,” write what you **WONDER** about the topic.

Topic 4: Early Government in Action Supporting Questions	
LESSON 10	How should George Washington's legacy be remembered?
	K: George Washington was the first president of the United States.
	W: Why was he chosen as the first president?
LESSON 11	How did early domestic conflicts shape the formation of early political parties?
	K: Political parties usually differ on how the government should be run.
	W: Who were the first political parties?
LESSON 12	How did exclusion from full participation in the U.S. government shape systems of inequality in daily life?
	K: Only white men who owned property could vote or participate in early government.
	W: How did excluded people fight back in this era?



Topic 4: Early Government in Action

Compelling Question

How did the early years of U.S. government set the stage for both opportunity and inequality in American life?

Directions: Read the compelling question. Explain what you **LEARNED** throughout the unit with a Claim, Evidence, and Reasoning (CER) paragraph.

The early years of the U.S. government set the stage for both opportunity and inequality in American life. One example is George Washington's presidency, where he established important democratic traditions like creating a Cabinet and stepping down after two terms, showing a commitment to peaceful transfers of power. However, Washington also enslaved people throughout his life, revealing a contradiction between American ideals of liberty and the reality of who was included in those freedoms. Similarly, early domestic conflicts, such as the debates between Hamilton and Jefferson, led to the rise of political parties, which created space for differing visions of government—but these debates mostly reflected the views of wealthy white men. Finally, entire groups, including women, Indigenous peoples, and Black Americans, were excluded from voting and representation, reinforcing long-term systems of inequality. These early decisions created the framework for American democracy while also embedding structural exclusions that would continue for generations.



Essential Question

How did diverse views on government authority and individual rights from the Revolutionary era to ratification shape the foundations of the Constitution?

Directions: Read the essential question. Explain what you **LEARNED** throughout the unit with a Claim, Evidence, and Reasoning (CER) paragraph.

Many people had different ideas about how the U.S. government should work after the Revolution. Some wanted a strong national government, while others worried it would take away people's rights. These different views shaped the way the Constitution was written and how the early government was built. The Articles of Confederation were the first plan for the U.S. government, and they gave most power to the states. But this caused problems. For example, the government couldn't collect taxes or stop things like Shays' Rebellion, where farmers protested unfair debts. This showed that the country needed a stronger government to protect people and keep order.

When the Constitution was written, there were still big disagreements. Some people, called Federalists, wanted a strong central government to unite the states. They said it would protect people's rights by using checks and balances. Others, like Mercy Otis Warren, didn't trust the new government and wanted more protections for individual freedom. Because of these arguments, the Bill of Rights was added in 1791 to guarantee basic rights like free speech and fair trials. This compromise helped more people support the Constitution. Even after the Constitution was approved, leaders had to keep working to make sure everyone felt included. One example was the decision to move the capital to Washington, D.C. This was a compromise to make southern states feel more represented in the new government.

These early choices showed that the new government tried to balance different opinions and work together to build a fairer country. But even after the Constitution was ratified, arguments about how much power the national government should have didn't go away—they grew into the first political parties. People like Alexander Hamilton believed in a strong federal government and helped form the Federalist Party. Others, like Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, wanted more power for the states and formed the Democratic-Republican Party. These differences in how leaders interpreted the Constitution and what they believed was best for the country showed that debates about power and rights didn't end with ratification—they continued to shape American government for years to come.

