

# Apush – the articles of confederation essay sample



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## 1. How did Shay's Rebellion highlight the ineffectiveness of the Articles of Confederation?

In the late 1786 and early 1787, while facing seizure of their land, debt-ridden farmers led by Daniel Shays, a veteran of the War of Independence closed the courts in Massachusetts. These farmers were in desperate need of assistance to pay off their debts; however, Governor James Bowdoin had no compassion and dispatched an army. Events such as, the Shay's Rebellion convinced Americans that the national government must be strengthened. The Rebellion demonstrated the need for a more central government to ensure private liberty. The Nation had to develop undeviating economic policies and protect property owners from violations on their rights by state officials. James Madison eloquently stated that " Liberty may be endangered by the abuses of liberty as well as the abuses of power." This lovely quote basically emphasized the power and need of checks and balances.

2. The Constitution is a document of many compromises. Identify which compromises you believe to be most significant to the success of the new nation and explain why. The most significant compromise was finding a middle ground in terms of liberty and power. The delegates greatly feared the thought of becoming a monarchy; however, they also feared the thought of becoming too democratic. There was a great power struggle between the federal and state governments, as well as, large states and small states. Madison's Virginia Plan to create a two-house state legislature on the basis of population was greatly favored in large states, such as Massachusetts, Virginia, and Pennsylvania. Smaller states, however, favored the New Jersey Plan, which called for a single-house Congress in which each state cast one

vote, as it was under the Articles of Confederation. Finally a compromise was reached that pacified all states.

The nation would have a two-house Congress consisting of a Senate in which each state had two members and the House of Representatives would be appointed on the basis of population. In addition, Hamilton proposed the idea of Presidents and Senators serving life terms, on the basis of the idea that the rich (educated) had to control the nation; however, many delegates rejected that idea. Fortunately, a middle ground was reached and Senators served six-year terms and were chosen by state legislatures and representative served two years terms and were directly appointed by the people. These compromises have had lasting impact of this exceptional nation. They embody ideas and principals that are still widely accepted and availed.

3. How accurate was Hector St. John Crèvecoeur in his description of America in 1782 as a melting pot?

Hector St. Crèvecoeur's Letters from an American Farmer described America as a melting pot of Europeans. Like Crèvecoeur, many white Americans excluded blacks from their conception of the American people. Crèvecoeur's idea that the United States was a nation of individuals that are melted into one is accurate to a certain extent. The United States, at the time, was truly diverse and filled with inhabitants of all parts of Europe. Those same individuals practiced a variety of beliefs and cultural practices that has aided in the efforts of shaped the nation into what it is today. However, when Crèvecoeur's goes on to comment on how the Americans left behind "ancient prejudices" to receive new ones, I truly believe that his remarks are <https://assignbuster.com/apush-the-articles-of-confederation-essay-sample/>

exaggerated. If the inhabitants of the United States had truly abandoned their old beliefs slavery would have been abolished as soon as the Declaration of Independence was written.

4. Why was a new constitution needed, according to nationalists such as James Madison and Alexander Hamilton?

Nation builders like James Madison and Alexander Hamilton called for increased national authority. The concerns voiced by critics of the Articles found a sympathetic hearing among men who had developed a national consciousness during the Revolution. Hamilton wanted the nation to be a powerful commercial and diplomatic presence in the world. Hamilton insisted that true liberty required “ a proper degree of authority, to make and exercise laws.” Both Madison and Hamilton believed that the nation future relied on a strong national authority. Madison believed that a stronger national government would better regulate interstate and international commerce. Madison also cited the Shays Rebellion as a need for a new Constitution. Hamilton and Madison believed that the Constitution protected the personal liberties of the people. Hamilton insisted that the Constitution would make political tyranny almost impossible. Alexander Hamilton argued that government was an expression of freedom, not its enemy. Thus it was decided that a new Constitution was needed to avoid either anarchy or monarchy.

5. What were the major arguments put forth by the Anti-Federalists?

Anti-Federalists opposed the ratification of the Constitution. They argued that the republic had to be small and warned that the Constitution would result in a government of oppression. Some Anti-Federalists denounced the <https://assignbuster.com/apush-the-articles-of-confederation-essay-sample/>

documents protection for slavery; other's warned that the power of Congress could one day lead to the abolishment of slavery. Some opponents of the Constitution believed that the government would fall under the control of the elite (businessmen) and would simply forget about the ordinary people. These same individuals believed that leaders must interact with those they govern on a daily basis. Anti-Federalist also pointed out the Constitution's lack of Bill of Rights, such as the freedom of speech and press. They also believed that the constitution restricted people's freedom because they believed that liberty was the power to govern oneself.