

What You Will Learn . . .

Main Ideas

1. The American people examined many ideas about government.
2. The Articles of Confederation laid the base for the first national government of the United States.
3. The Confederation Congress established the Northwest Territory.

The Big Idea

The Articles of Confederation provided a framework for a national government.

Key Terms and People

Magna Carta, p. 152

constitution, p. 153

Virginia Statute for Religious

Freedom, p. 153

suffrage, p. 153

Articles of Confederation, p. 154

ratification, p. 154

Land Ordinance of 1785, p. 155

Northwest Ordinance of 1787, p. 155

Northwest Territory, p. 155



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TAKING NOTES

Use the graphic organizer online to take notes on the new American government.

The Articles of Confederation

If YOU were there...

You live in a town in New England during the 1770s. In the town meeting, people are hotly debating about who will have the right to vote. Most think that only men who own property should be able to vote. Some think that all property owners—men and women—should have that right. A few others want all free men to have the vote. Now it is time for the meeting to decide.

How would you have voted on this issue?

BUILDING BACKGROUND At the time of the Revolution, each of the 13 states had its own government. The rights of citizens varied from state to state. In their town meetings, people often argued about exactly what those rights ought to be. Solving such issues was one step in moving toward a national government.

Ideas about Government

The American colonies had taken a bold step in declaring their independence from Great Britain in July 1776. Their next political goal was to form a new government. To do so, the American people drew from a wide range of political ideas.

English Laws and the Enlightenment

One source of inspiration was the rule of law. This rule makes even government officials subject to law. England had limited the power of its kings and queens in two documents. These were Magna Carta and the English Bill of Rights. **Magna Carta, a document signed by King John in 1215, made the king subject to law.** The English Bill of rights, passed in 1689, declared the supremacy of Parliament. It kept the king or queen from changing laws without Parliament's consent. As a result, the people's representatives had a strong voice in England's government.

Many Americans were also influenced by the Enlightenment—a philosophical movement that emphasized the use of reason to

examine old ideas and traditions. Philosopher John Locke believed that a social contract existed between political rulers and the people they ruled. Baron de Montesquieu argued that the only way to achieve liberty was through the separation of governmental powers.

American Models of Government

Americans had their own models of self-government to follow, like town meetings, the Virginia House of Burgesses, and the Mayflower Compact. In 1639 the people of Connecticut drew up the English colonies' first written **constitution**. A constitution is a set of basic principles and laws that states the powers and duties of the government. In addition, the Declaration of Independence clearly set forth the beliefs on which Americans thought government should be based.

To keep individual leaders from gaining too much power, the new state constitutions created limited governments, or governments in which all leaders have to obey the laws. Most state constitutions had rules to protect the rights of citizens or those accused of

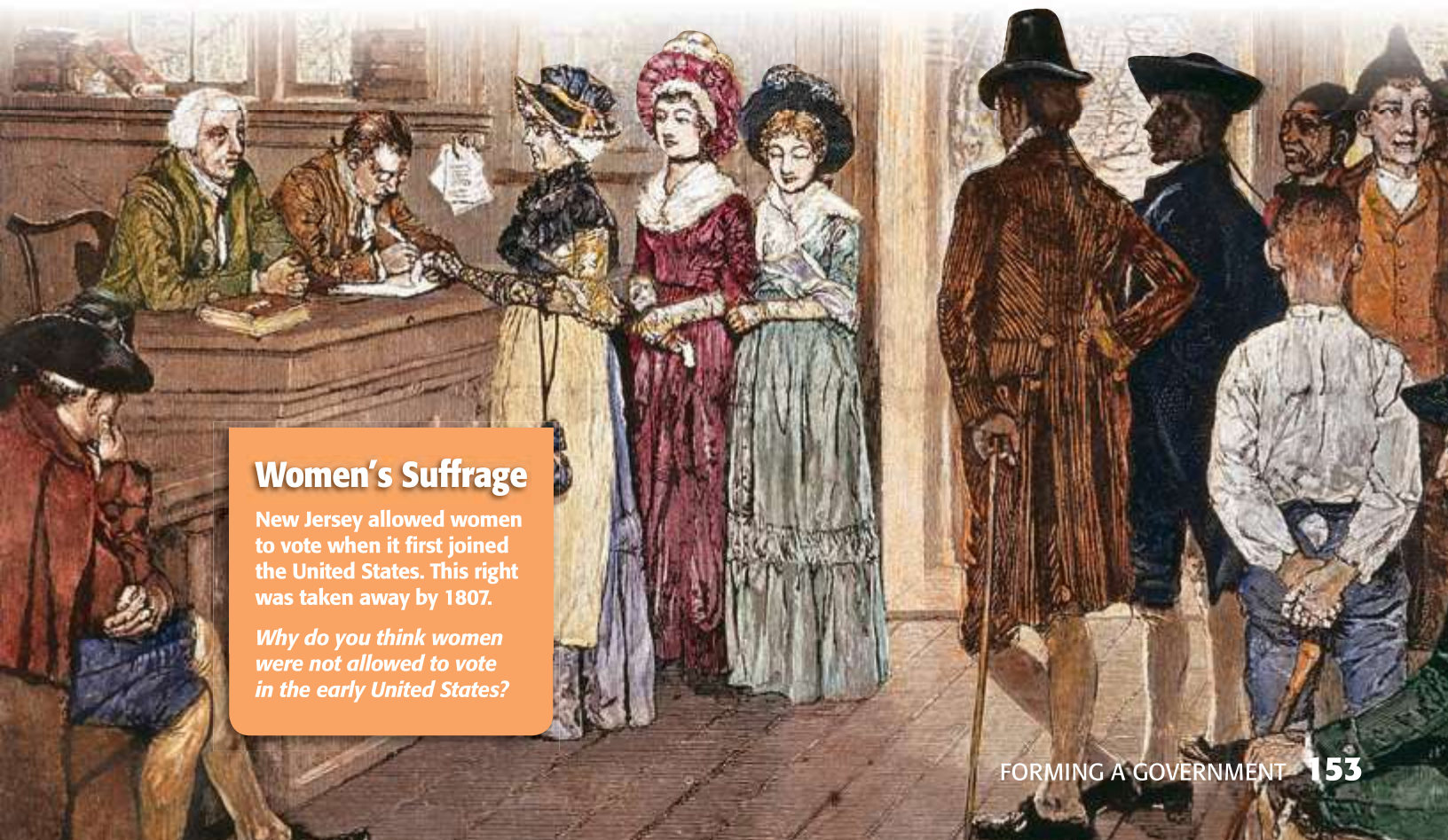
crimes. Some banned slavery. The Massachusetts constitution of 1780 is the oldest state constitution still in effect.

Thomas Jefferson's ideas about religious freedom were included in the **Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom**. This document declared that no person could be forced to attend a particular church or be required to pay for a church with tax money.

Right to Vote

Under British rule, only free, white men that owned land could vote. Many states' constitutions expanded **suffrage**, or the right to vote, by allowing any white man who paid taxes to vote. In every state, however, only landowners could hold public office. Some states originally allowed women and free African Americans to vote, but these rights were soon taken away. Suffrage would not be restored to these groups for decades to come.

READING CHECK Comparing What two principles were common to state constitutions written during the Revolutionary War?



Women's Suffrage

New Jersey allowed women to vote when it first joined the United States. This right was taken away by 1807.

Why do you think women were not allowed to vote in the early United States?

The Land Ordinances of 1785 and 1787

Surveying the West

In 1785 the Northwest Territory was organized into lots that could be sold, and in 1787 a government was organized.

One section = 1 square mile

Half section
320 acres

Quarter section
160 acres

Each township contained 36 sections.
Each section was one square mile.

6	5	4	3	2	1
7	8	9	10	11	12
18	17	16	15	14	13
19	20	21	22	23	24
30	29	28	27	26	25
31	32	33	34	35	36

One township = 36 square miles

GEOGRAPHY SKILLS

INTERPRETING MAPS

- Location** Which states were formed out of the Northwest Territory?
- Region** Into how many sections was a township divided?

Articles of Confederation

The Second Continental Congress was organized to create a national government. The Continental Congress appointed a Committee of Thirteen, with one member from each colony. This group was assigned to discuss and draft the Articles of Confederation, the new national constitution.

Under the **Articles of Confederation**, Congress would become the single branch of the national government, but it would have limited powers in order to protect the liberties of the people. Each state had one vote in the Congress. Congress could settle conflicts among the states, issue coins, borrow money, and make treaties with other countries and with Native Americans. Congress could also ask the states for money and soldiers. However, states had the power to refuse these requests. The government did not have a president or a national court system.

The Second Continental Congress passed the Articles of Confederation on November 15, 1777. Then it sent the Articles to each state legislature for **ratification**, or official approval, before the new national government could take effect.

Conflicts over claims to western lands slowed the process, but by 1779 every state except Maryland had ratified the Articles. Maryland's leaders refused to ratify until other states gave up their western land claims. Thomas Jefferson assured Maryland that western lands would be made into new states, rather than increasing territory for existing states. Satisfied with this condition, in March 1781 Maryland ratified the Articles. This put the first national government of the United States into effect.

READING CHECK Summarizing What were two weaknesses of the new national government?

Northwest Territory

Congress had to decide what to do with the western lands now under its control and how to raise money to pay debts. It tried to solve both problems by selling the western lands. Congress passed the **Land Ordinance of 1785**, which set up a system for surveying and dividing western lands. The land was split into townships, which were 36 square miles divided into 36 lots of 640 acres each. One lot was reserved for a public school, and four lots were given to veterans. The remaining lots were sold to the public.

To form a political system for the region, Congress passed the **Northwest Ordinance of 1787**. The ordinance established the **Northwest Territory**, which included areas that are now in Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. The Northwest Ordinance created a system for bringing new states into the Union. Congress agreed that the Northwest Territory would be divided into several smaller territories with a

governor appointed by Congress. When the population of a territory reached 60,000, its settlers could draft their own constitution and ask to join the Union.

In addition, the law protected civil liberties and required that public education be provided. Finally, the ordinance stated that “there shall be neither slavery nor involuntary servitude [forced labor] in the . . . territory.” This last condition banned slavery in the Territory and set the standard for future territories. However, slavery would continue to be a controversial issue.

THE IMPACT TODAY

The surveying system created by the Northwest Ordinance still applies to public lands today, and even many existing private land boundaries are determined by these original measurements.

READING CHECK Analyzing Information

How did the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 affect the United States?

SUMMARY AND PREVIEW The Northwest Ordinance settled the future of the Northwest Territory. In the next section you will read about other challenges the new government faced.

Section 1 Assessment

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ONLINE QUIZ

Reviewing Ideas, Terms, and People

- Identify** What documents influenced ideas about government in the United States?
 - Draw Conclusions** What impact did the **Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom** have on the U.S. government?
 - Elaborate** Why is the separation of government powers a requirement for a society to be free?
- Identify** What was the **Articles of Confederation**?
 - Summarize** What powers were granted to Congress by the Articles of Confederation?
 - Predict** What are some possible problems that might result from the lack of a national court system?
- Describe** How were public lands in the West divided by the **Land Ordinance of 1785**?
 - Evaluate** In your opinion, what was the most important element of the **Northwest Ordinance of 1787**? Why?
 - Elaborate** What does the assignment of township lots reveal about values of Americans at this time?

Critical Thinking

- Categorizing** Review your notes on the Articles of Confederation. Copy the chart below and use it to show the strengths and weaknesses of the new government.

Articles of Confederation

Strengths	Weaknesses

FOCUS ON WRITING

- Thinking about the Articles of Confederation** Make a list of powers the Articles of Confederation gave the national government. Which ones seem strong? Can you think of any important powers that are missing?