Standard 8.30 Lesson

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8.30 Analyze the weakness of the Articles of Confederation, including no power to tax, no common currency, no control of interstate commerce, and no executive branch, failure of the Lost State of Franklin and the impact of Shays’ Rebellion. (C,E,H,P,TN)

Articles of Confederation

The Articles of Confederation

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ML8qtTpVuDs

(Pictured Above: The paper money issued by the Continental Congress was known as "Continents." Not backed by silver or gold, the currency did not retain its value, and the saying "not worth a Continental" took root.)

While the state constitutions were being created, the Continental Congress continued to meet as a general political body. Despite being the central government, it was a loose confederation and most significant power was held by the individual states. By 1777 members of Congress realized that they should have some clearly written rules for how they were organized. As a result the ARTICLES OF CONFEDERATION were drafted and passed by the Congress in November.
This first national "constitution" for the United States was not particularly innovative, and mostly put into written form how the Congress had operated since 1775.

Even though the Articles were rather modest in their proposals, they would not be ratified by all the states until 1781. Even this was accomplished largely because the dangers of war demanded greater cooperation.

The purpose of the central government was clearly stated in the Articles. The Congress had control over diplomacy, printing money, resolving controversies between different states, and, most importantly, coordinating the war effort.

The most important action of the Continental Congress was probably the creation and maintenance of the Continental Army. Even in this area, however, the central government’s power was quite limited. While Congress could call on states to contribute specific resources and numbers of men for the army, it was not allowed to force states to obey the central government’s request for aid.

The organization of Congress itself demonstrates the primacy of state power. Each state had one vote. Nine out of thirteen states had to support a law for it to be enacted. Furthermore, any changes to the Articles themselves would require unanimous agreement. In the ONE-STATE, ONE-VOTE RULE, state sovereignty was given a primary place even within the national government. Furthermore, the whole national government consisted entirely of the unicameral (one body) Congress with no executive and no judicial organizations.

The national Congress’ limited power was especially clear when it came to money issues. Not surprisingly, given that the Revolution’s causes had centered on opposition to unfair taxes, the central government had no power to raise its own revenues through taxation. All it could do was request that the states give it the money necessary to run the government and wage the war. By 1780, with the outcome of the war still very much undecided, the central government had run out of money and was BANKRUPT! As a result the paper money it issued was basically worthless.

Robert Morris, who became the Congress’ superintendent of finance in 1781, forged a solution to this dire dilemma. Morris expanded existing government power and secured special privileges for the BANK OF NORTH AMERICA.
in an attempt to stabilize the value of the paper money issued by the Congress. His actions went beyond the limited powers granted to the national government by the Articles of Confederation, but he succeeded in limiting runaway inflation and resurrecting the fiscal stability of the national government.

Articles of Confederation from the History Channel
http://www.history.com/topics/articles-of-confederation

Review of the Articles of Confederation
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EsSlpZX8DOQ

The Lost State of Franklin
http://www.tnhistoryforkids.org/places/state_of_franklin

After the Revolutionary War, Tennessee was part of North Carolina. The governor of North Carolina was not giving the western part what they needed as far as protection and other services. After a meeting in Greenville, in 1784, many people decided to make their own state, naming it Franklin. John Sevier would serve as their governor. Congress never recognized the state of Franklin as a real state and therefore became known as the Lost State of Franklin. Many reasons for its failure were the lack of paper currency and opposition to the State of Franklin actually becoming a state. At the time the Articles of Confederation was serving as our Constitution and it has its weaknesses too. After the failure of Franklin, Tennessee became part of the Southwest Territory.

State of Franklin

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zpuf-3S5yMQ

Shays’ Rebellion

( Pictured Above: The modern day Northampton courthouse, built in 1884 on the same site as the courthouse where Shays’ Rebellion occurred.)
The crisis of the 1780s was most intense in the rural and relatively newly settled areas of central and western Massachusetts. Many farmers in this area suffered from high debt as they tried to start new farms. Unlike many other state legislatures in the 1780s, the Massachusetts government didn’t respond to the economic crisis by passing pro-debtor laws (like forgiving debt and printing more paper money). As a result local sheriffs seized many farms and some farmers who couldn’t pay their debts were put in prison.

These conditions led to the first major armed rebellion in the post-Revolutionary United States. Once again, Americans resisted high taxes and unresponsive government that was far away. But this time it was Massachusetts’s settlers who were angry with a republican government in Boston, rather than with the British government across the Atlantic.

The farmers in western Massachusetts organized their resistance in ways similar to the American Revolutionary struggle. They called special meetings of the people to protest conditions and agree on a coordinated protest. This led the rebels to close courts by force in the fall of 1786 and to liberate imprisoned debtors from jail. Soon events flared into a full-scale revolt when the resistors came under the leadership of DANIEL SHAYS, a former captain in the Continental Army. This was the most extreme example of what could happen in the tough times brought on by the economic crisis. Some thought of the SHAYSITES (named after their military leader) as heroes in the direct tradition of the American Revolution, while many others saw them as dangerous rebels whose actions might topple the young experiment in republican government.

James Bowdoin, the governor of Massachusetts, was clearly in the latter group. He organized a military force funded by eastern merchants, to confront the rebels. This armed force crushed the movement in the winter of 1786-1787 as the Shaysites quickly fell apart when faced with a strong army organized by the state. While the rebellion disintegrated quickly, the underlying social forces that propelled such dramatic action remained. The debtors’ discontent was widespread and similar actions occurred on a smaller scale in Maine (then still part of Massachusetts), Connecticut, New York, and Pennsylvania among others places.

While Governor Bowdoin had acted decisively in crushing the rebellion, the voters turned against him in the next election. This high level of discontent, popular resistance, and the election of pro-debtor governments in many states
threatened the political notions of many political and social elites. SHAYS’ REBELLION demonstrated the high degree of internal conflict lurking beneath the surface of post-Revolutionary life. National leaders felt compelled to act to put an end to such popular actions that took place beyond the bounds of law.

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and
Shay’s Rebellion  
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and Mr. Hughes and The Articles of Confederation and the Northwest Ordinance  
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ML8qtTpvD5s