

Module 3: Road to the Convention

In this module, students will learn about the early national government established by the Articles of Confederation and about the state constitutions written before the U.S. Constitution. Students will explore what life was like for Americans after the Declaration of Independence and figure out why some Americans chose to participate in mob violence. They will also analyze important primary sources to uncover why the founders wanted to create a new constitution. The Google Drive folder for this module, containing the student content guide, worksheets, a vocabulary sheet, the project overview, and transcripts for all videos is [here](#).



Vocabulary

Concept Words – These words will help students understand the big ideas.

- **confederation:** a group of people or countries that join together for a common reason
- **executive branch:** the branch of government that is responsible for enforcing the laws passed by the legislature
- **judicial branch:** the branch of government that interprets laws
- **legislative branch:** the branch of government that includes the Senate and House of Representatives and is responsible for making laws

Speed Bump Words – These words can help students better comprehend the text.

- **faction:** a group of people who are acting on their own self interests
- **mob:** a large group of people engaging in disorderly, illegal conduct
- **rebellion:** refusing to follow the rules or laws set by those in power

Learning Objectives

- Understand instances of mob violence and their influence on the founding generation.
- Describe the Articles of Confederation and the type of national government it established.
- Discuss the influence of key state constitutions on the founding generation.
- Explain why the founding generation decided to write a new constitution.

Background Information

Below is a list of resources that may help provide you with additional background information on the important concepts presented in this lesson. These are not essential to read or watch before teaching the module, but can support with lesson administration, if necessary.

- Review [Road to the Convention: Articles of Confederation](#) for additional information, including video materials and supplemental classroom resources.
- For more information on the Socratic Seminar and other types of civil dialogue, review the [Constitutional Conversation and Civil Dialogue Toolkit](#).
- Full excerpts of Federalist 10 can be found in the NCC's *Founders' Library*.

Lesson Structure and Activities

[Student Content Guide](#)

Topic 1: The Articles of Confederation and Mob Violence	
3.1: Activate Prior Knowledge (10 min)	<p>Students will work with a group to brainstorm topics, ideas, questions, and predictions about what happened after the American Revolution.</p> <p>Prepare for the activity by placing students in four groups. Two groups will brainstorm topics and ideas and two groups will brainstorm questions and predictions. Provide each team with sticky notes and prepare two large pages of chart paper, one labeled “Topics and Ideas” and the other labeled “Questions and Predictions”.</p> <p>Give teams 5 minutes to brainstorm and place the sticky notes on the chart paper. Review their ideas and predictions together as a class.</p> <p>Handout: None Activity Type: Group Work Implementation Tips: Depending on the size of your class, you may have to divide students into more than four groups. In this case, just assign the same task to multiple groups.</p> <p>Students should watch the Unboxing the Constitution video to gain foundational insight into the Constitutional Convention.</p>
3.2: Mob Violence and a Rebellion in Massachusetts (15-20 min)	<p>Students should watch the Inside the Constitution video to gain insight into the time period between the Declaration of Independence and the Constitutional Convention.</p>

Topic 1: The Articles of Confederation and Mob Violence

	<p>Afterwards, students will describe Shays' Rebellion from different points of view. For this activity, you may choose to have students read it independently and take notes, then work with a partner to compare notes to write their opinion.</p> <p>Handout: 3.2: What I Saw: Shays' Rebellion</p> <p>Activity Type: Individual Activity</p> <p>Implementation Tips: The point of view options are: a member of the Massachusetts state government or a farmer following Daniel Shays. You may want to assign perspectives, depending on your class.</p> <p>This is a great option for flipped classroom usage. You can also access a transcript of the video here.</p>
3.3: The Articles of Confederation (10-15 min)	<p>Students will explore the impacts of the weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation.</p> <p>Handout: 3.3.1: The Impact of the Articles of Confederation (See 3.3.2 for Answer Key).</p> <p>Activity Type: Individual Activity</p> <p>Implementation Tips: You may choose to have students work as partners or groups when completing the activity. Ensure that students understand that events that revealed the weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation led to the Convention.</p>
3.4: Closing Activity (5-10 min)	<p>Students will check in on the Key Question(s).</p> <p>Handout: 3.4: Key Question Reflection</p> <p>Activity Type: Individual Reflection</p> <p>Implementation Tips: You may ask students to share the words they wrote down to build consensus throughout the class.</p>

Topic 2: The “Critical Period”

<p>3.5: State Constitutions (10-15 min)</p>	<p>Students will explore an overview of state constitutions to build connections with the US Constitution.</p> <p>Handout: 3.5: State Constitutions</p> <p>Activity Type: Individual Activity</p> <p>Implementation Tips: You may decide to have students work in partners for this activity. When they are done with the activity, lead a discussion about the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What did the founding generation learn from the revolutionary-era state constitutions?
<p>3.6: State Governments and Disorder (20 min)</p>	<p>In this activity, students will read parts of Federalist No. 10 and rewrite the excerpt in their own words.</p> <p>Handout: 3.6: Fear of Factions and Mobs</p> <p>Activity Type: Individual Activity</p> <p>Implementation Tips: Many of the primary source excerpts include text that can be difficult to interpret or understand. While the excerpts have been selected carefully for the intended age group, you may choose to have students complete the activities with a partner or in groups, or together as a class. Before moving on, review what students have learned about state constitutions and disorder in the states.</p> <p>After students finish the activity, you may choose to lead a discussion considering the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How would you describe Madison’s vision in your own words? • What are some of its strengths and weaknesses for his time? • Are they the same today?
<p>3.7: Civic Connection: Civil Dialogue (20-25 min)</p>	<p>In this activity, students will participate in a Socratic Seminar where they can share their views and listen and respond to each other.</p> <p>For the Socratic Seminar, you will provide students with the opportunity to practice participating in civil dialogue. You may choose to select your own topics, or you may choose to offer students the opportunity to discuss specific topics related to the module including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the purpose of government?

Topic 2: The “Critical Period”

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What role(s) do federal and state governments play in the lives of Americans? <p>For more information on the Socratic Seminar and other types of civil dialogue, review the Constitutional Conversation and Civil Dialogue Toolkit.</p> <p>Handout: None</p> <p>Activity Type: Whole Class Activity</p> <p>Implementation Tips: You may select students to lead the discussion, take notes of what was shared, or keep track of participation. If this is the first time your students are participating in a whole-class discussion, you may want to co-lead with students or select those who you think would do well in those roles.</p>
3.8: Reflect (5 min)	<p>Students will revisit the Activate Prior Knowledge activity and complete the Key Question Reflection.</p> <p>Handout: 3.4: Key Question Reflection</p> <p>Activity Type: Individual Reflection</p> <p>Implementation Tips: You may choose to have students share their answers to the Key Question(s).</p>

Answer Guidance

Review the handouts below for specific guidance on student answers:

- [Impact of the Articles of Confederation Answer Key](#)

Module 3 Learning Project: Shays' Rebellion: From Script to Screen

[Teacher Overview](#)

[Student Instructions](#)

In this activity, students will storyboard or design scenes that they could use to make their own documentaries about Shays' Rebellion. When students have completed their storyboards, they will display their completed designs in an in-person or virtual gallery walk.

Activity Type: Individuals, partners, groups

Implementation Tips: Prior to beginning the project, you may choose to identify clips from one or more of the Ken Burns' documentaries below to show students as examples.

- [Benjamin Franklin](#)
- [The American Buffalo](#)

Set up a large sticky note or whiteboard for students to share their responses with the class. Alternatively, you could have students generate a class word cloud using their definitions.