

UNITED STATES HISTORY

SECTION II

Total Time—1 hour, 35 minutes

Question 1 (Document-Based Question)

Suggested reading period: 15 minutes

Suggested writing period: 45 minutes

Directions: Question 1 is based on the accompanying documents. The documents have been edited for the purpose of this exercise. You are advised to spend 15 minutes reading and planning and 45 minutes writing your answer.

Write your responses on the lined pages that follow the question.

In your response you should do the following.

- State a relevant thesis that directly addresses all parts of the question.
- Support the thesis or a relevant argument with evidence from all, or all but one, of the documents.
- Incorporate analysis of all, or all but one, of the documents into your argument.
- Focus your analysis of each document on at least one of the following: intended audience, purpose, historical context, and/or point of view.
- Support your argument with analysis of historical examples outside the documents.
- Connect historical phenomena relevant to your argument to broader events or processes.
- Synthesize the elements above into a persuasive essay that extends your argument, connects it to a different historical context, or accounts for contradictory evidence on the topic.

1. Analyze the major causes and effects of the American transition from the Articles of Confederation to the Constitution.

Document 1

Source: Letter from the Rhode Island Assembly to Congress (November 30, 1782)

“Sir: In obedience to the direction of the lower house of assembly of this State, I enclose their unanimous resolution [to reject] the recommendation of Congress, respecting an impost on imported goods, &c. and to state some of [their] principal reasons. . . .

“1st. Because it would be unequal in its operation, bearing hardest on the most commercial states, and so would press peculiarly hard upon this State, which draws its chief support from commerce:

“2dly. Because it proposes to introduce into this and the other states, officers unknown and unaccountable to them, and so is against the constitution of this State: and

“3dly. Because, by granting to Congress a power to collect moneys from the commerce of these states, indefinitely as to time and quantity, and for the expenditure of which they are not to be accountable to the states, they would become independent of their constituents; and so the proposed impost is repugnant to the liberty of the United States.”

Document 2

Source: Letter from Delegate Joseph Jones of Virginia to George Washington (February 27, 1783)

“One ground of discontent in the army, and on which they found the opinion that justice is not intended to be done to them, is the delay in complying with their requests [for bonus and back pay]. But with those acquainted with the deliberations of public bodies, and especially of so mixed a body as that of Congress, allowances will be made for slow determination. Every class of public creditors must know the inability of Congress to pay their demands, unless furnished with the means by the several States, and the exertions of that body have not been [lacking] heretofore to obtain the means. . . .”

Joseph Jones was an American lawyer and statesman from Virginia. Jones was a member of the Virginia House of Burgesses, a delegate to the Virginia constitutional convention of 1776 and he served on the Continental Congress in 1775.

Document 3

Source: John Jay's Instructions to the United States Minister to Great Britain (March 7, 1785)

"You will in a respectful but firm manner insist that the United States be put, without further delay, into possession of all the posts and territories within their limits, which are now held by British garrisons. And you will take the earliest opportunity of transmitting the answer you may receive to this requisition. . . .

"You will represent to the British Ministry the strong and necessary tendency of their restrictions on our trade to incapacitate our merchants in a certain degree to make remittances to their's. . . .

"You will represent in strong terms the losses which many of our and also of their merchants will sustain if the former be unseasonably and immoderately pressed for the payment of debts contracted before the war."

Jay was born into a wealthy family of merchants and government officials in New York City. He became a lawyer and joined the New York Committee of Correspondence and organized opposition to British rule. He joined a conservative political faction. Jay was a Minister (Ambassador) to Spain, France and Secretary of Foreign Affairs, helping to fashion United States foreign policy.

Document 4

Source: Daniel Gray, Massachusetts Farmer Worcester December 7, 1786.

An ADDRESS to the PEOPLE of the several Towns in the County of Hampshire, from the Body now at arms.

Gentlemen,

WE have thought proper to inform you of some of the principal causes of the late risings of the people, and also of their present movement, viz.

1st: The present expensive mode of collecting debts, which by the reason of the great scarcity of cash, will be necessity fill our gaols with unhappy debtors, and thereby render a reputable body of people incapable of being serviceable either to themselves or the community.

2d. The monies raised by impost and excise being appropriated to discharge the interest of governmental securities, and not the foreign debt, when these securities are not subject to taxation.

3d. A suspension of the Writ of Habeas Corpus, by which those persons who have stepped forth to assert and maintain the rights of the people, are liable to be the taken, and conveyed even to the most distant part of the commonwealth, and thereby subject to an unjust punishment.

4th. The unlimited power granted to Justices of the Peace, Serriffs, Deputy-Serriffs and Constables, by the Riot Act, indemnifying them in the prosecution thereof, when perhaps wholly actuated from a principle of revenge, hatred and envy.

5th. __ be assured, that this body now at arms, dispite the idea of being initiated by British emissaries, which is to strenuously propagated by the enemies of our liberties: We also with the most proper and speedy measures may be taken to discharge both our foreign and domestic debt.

Per Order,
DANIEL GRAY, Chairman of a Com. for the above purpose.

Document 5

Source: Federalist Papers #30, Alexander Hamilton, published on December 28, 1787 under the pseudonym Publius

IT HAS been already observed that the federal government ought to possess the power of providing for the support of the national forces; in which proposition was intended to be included the expense of raising troops, of building and equipping fleets, and all other expenses in any wise connected with military arrangements and operations. But these are not the only objects to which the jurisdiction of the Union, in respect to revenue, must necessarily be empowered to extend. It must embrace a provision for the support of the national civil list; for the payment of the national debts contracted, or that may be contracted; and, in general, for all those matters which will call for disbursements out of the national treasury. The conclusion is, that there must be interwoven, in the frame of the government, a general power of taxation, in one shape or another.

Money is, with propriety, considered as the vital principle of the body politic; as that which sustains its life and motion, and enables it to perform its most essential functions. A complete power, therefore, to procure a regular and adequate supply of it, as far as the resources of the community will permit, may be regarded as an indispensable ingredient in every constitution. From a deficiency in this particular, one of two evils must ensue; either the people must be subjected to continual plunder, as a substitute for a more eligible mode of supplying the public wants, or the government must sink into a fatal atrophy, and, in a short course of time, perish.

Document 6

Source: Federalist Papers #38, James Madison, published on January 12, 1788 under the pseudonym Publius

A third does not object to the government over individuals, or to the extent proposed, but to the want of a bill of rights. A fourth concurs in the absolute necessity of a bill of rights, but contends that it ought to be declaratory, not of the personal rights of individuals, but of the rights reserved to the States in their political capacity. A fifth is of opinion that a bill of rights of any sort would be superfluous and misplaced, and that the plan would be unexceptionable but for the fatal power of regulating the times and places of election.

Document 7

Source: "Brutus" Letter XVI April 10, 1788, "John DeWitt" Letter III Nov. 5, 1787, Anti-federalists Papers

They uniformly exercise all the powers granted to them, and ninety-nine in a hundred are for grasping at more. It is this passionate thirst for power, which has produced different branches to exercise different departments and mutual checks upon those branches. The aristocratical hath ever been found to have the most influence, and the people in most countries have been articulately attentive in providing checks against it. Let us see if it is the case here. -- A President, a Senate, and a House of Representatives are proposed. The Judicial Department is at present out of the question, being separated excepting in impeachments. The Legislative is divided between the People who are the Democratical, and the Senate who are the Aristocratical part, and the Executive between the same Senate and the President who represents the Monarchical Branch. -- In the construction of this System, their interests are put in opposite scales. If they are exactly balanced, the Government will remain perfect; if there is a preponderancy, it will firmly prevail. When great and extraordinary powers are vested in any man, or body of men, which in their exercise, may operate to the oppression of the people, it is of high importance that powerful checks should be formed to prevent the abuse of it.

Document 8

Source: The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745-1799. John C. Fitzpatrick, Editor.--vol. 29

Mount Vernon, September 24, 1787.

Dear Sir: In the first moment after my return I take the liberty of sending you a copy of the Constitution which the federal Convention has submitted to the People of these States. I accompany it with no observations; your own Judgment will at once discover the good, and the exceptionable parts of it. and your experience of the difficulties, which have ever arisen when attempts have been made to reconcile such variety of Interests and local prejudices as pervade the several States will render explanation unnecessary. I wish the Constitution which is offered had been made more perfect, but I sincerely believe it is the best that could be obtained at this time; and, as a Constitutional door is opened for amendment hereafter, the adoption of it under the present circumstances of the Union is in my opinion desirable.