CHAPTER 3

FROM EARLIEST TIMES TO INDEPENDENCE

Native American Cultures
A. The First Americans
B. Native American Empires
C. Native Americans In the U.S.

The Europeans Come to the Americas
A. The Spanish and Portuguese
B. The First English Colonies
C. Why Settlers Came
D. The English Colonies Expand

From Colonies to an Independent Nation
A. The American Revolution
B. The Articles of Confederation
C. The Constitutional Convention
D. The States Debate Ratification

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Year</th>
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<td>Jamestown colony founded</td>
<td>1607</td>
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<td>First Africans arrive in Virginia</td>
<td>1619</td>
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<td>Pilgrims land at Plymouth Rock</td>
<td>1620</td>
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<tr>
<td>American Revolution begins</td>
<td>1775</td>
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<td>Declaration of Independence issued</td>
<td>1776</td>
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<td>Articles of Confederation adopted</td>
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<td>Constitutional Convention meets</td>
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WHAT YOU SHOULD FOCUS ON

In this chapter, you will learn about the people who first settled the lands that came to be called the Americas. By the 1500s, Europeans began exploring and colonizing the Americas. Eventually, the British emerged as the leading power in North America. In the 1770s, a conflict developed between the American colonies and Great Britain, leading the colonies to declare their independence from Britain. The American Revolutionary War began, and the colonists eventually defeated the British.

The United States achieved its independence, but faced new problems in trying to form a government. As you read this chapter, you will learn about:

- **Settlement of the Americas**
  The first people to settle in North and South America came from Asia thousands of years ago. They developed a variety of lifestyles. In the 1500s Europeans began to arrive — at first a small number, and then a flood of settlers. In North America, Europeans founded colonies along the Atlantic coast.

- **American Revolution**
  North American colonists objected to the British imposing taxes on them without their consent. Their protests started a conflict that led to independence from Great Britain. In the Declaration of Independence, Americans asserted that the purpose of government was to meet the needs of the governed.

- **The Critical Period**
  Under our first system of national government, called the Articles of Confederation, most governmental powers were held by the states. Under this system, the national government proved to be too weak to deal with the problems facing the new nation.

- **The Constitutional Convention**
  A Constitutional Convention met in Philadelphia to create the framework for a new national government. After a series of difficult compromises, they wrote the U.S. Constitution, which has remained the basis for our national government for more than 200 years.

In studying this period, you should focus on the following questions:

- What factors motivated Europeans to come to the Americas?
- What problems did the American colonists face?
- What basic ideas are found in the Declaration of Independence?
- What problems did the new nation face under the Articles of Confederation?
THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION (1775-1783)
In the early stages of the fighting, the colonial army barely managed to escape from one disaster after another. However, under the leadership of General George Washington, the colonists won battles at Trenton, New Jersey (1776) and Saratoga, New York (1777). These victories helped convince France to supply military assistance to the Americans. With the help of the French, Washington managed to force the British to surrender at Yorktown in 1781. Under the terms of the Treaty of Paris (1783), the British recognized American independence and surrendered all the land between the Mississippi River and the Atlantic coast, from the Great Lakes to Florida.

THE ARTICLES OF CONFEDERATION: THE NATION'S FIRST GOVERNMENT

After winning independence, each of the former colonies became an independent state. They soon realized the need for some form of national (central) government. At the same time, they were afraid of creating a central government that would be too powerful. They had already had a bad experience with the strong central government of Great Britain. In 1781, the thirteen states adopted the Articles of Confederation, which provided for a weak central government. The state governments, not the central government, held most of the power. Most actions by the
central government required the cooperation of the states. For example, the central government could not collect taxes, settle disputes among states, control trade or enforce laws. It was left to each state to carry out the acts of the Confederation Congress.

THE ARTICLES OF CONFEDERATION: SOME ACCOMPLISHMENTS
The Articles of Confederation helped keep the new nation together and created a method for admitting new states to the nation. After winning independence from Great Britain, the United States found itself in possession of lands north of the Ohio River and east of the Mississippi. The new Confederation Congress passed the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, a law that divided this territory into smaller areas, and set up procedures for their admission into the union as new states.

THE ARTICLES OF CONFEDERATION: SOME PROBLEMS
Many Americans felt that the new central government had too little power to do its job properly. For example, the central government did not have the power to tax or borrow directly. It had to request money from the states. Each state printed its own money, making trade between states difficult. The central government also had no national army. To make matters worse, some former Revolutionary War soldiers were losing their farms because they were unable to pay their state taxes or their debts to wealthy merchants. When a small uprising — known as Shays' Rebellion — broke out in Massachusetts in 1786, there was no national army to be called upon to restore order. Many people, especially merchants and landowners, began demanding a stronger national government.

NOTE: Some class tests, as well as state examinations, contain several kinds of data-based questions. Knowing the different types of data and learning how to interpret them will be a regular feature found in every content chapter of this book. The following section deals with interpreting one type of data — a political cartoon. Since political cartoons may appear on your class test or on state examinations, it will be helpful to know how to interpret them.
THE CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION

In 1787, representatives from the states met in Philadelphia to revise (change) the Articles of Confederation. Fifty-five of the nation's leaders attended — including George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, James Madison and Alexander Hamilton. The representatives quickly decided that a new national constitution (a plan for government) was needed to replace the existing Articles of Confederation. It was agreed that a stronger central government was necessary. This government would be led by a chief executive and would have a national legislature and a national court system. They also thought the new central government should have the power to raise taxes and form an army. However, there were some disagreements, requiring the delegates to compromise. Two of the main compromises reached at the Convention involved representation in the national government, and slavery.

MAJOR CONSTITUTIONAL COMPROMISES

**ISSUE: How should states be represented in the national legislature?**

**GREAT COMPROMISE.** The thirteen states had different size populations. The larger states, such as Virginia, felt they should have a greater say in the national government. Smaller states, such as Georgia, felt each state should have an equal voice. In the end a compromise was reached. Two "houses" were created in the legislature. In the **House of Representatives**, each state would be represented according to the size of its population. This allowed states with a larger population to have a greater number of representatives. In the **Senate**, each state, no matter how large or small, would be equal — represented by two Senators. This satisfied the states with smaller populations. Approval by both houses of Congress would be needed to pass a law.

**ISSUE: How should slaves be counted?**

**THREE-FIFTHS COMPROMISE.** Southern states wanted slaves counted as part of their population, to increase their membership in the House of Representatives, but not for purposes of taxation. Northern states wanted slaves counted for taxation but not for representation. The states compromised by agreeing to count every 5 slaves as 3 free persons for the purposes of both taxation and representation.

THE STATES DEBATE RATIFICATION

It was decided that, before the Constitution could become the law of the country, nine states would have to **ratify** (approve) it. People in each state had strong opinions as to whether to accept or reject the new system of government proposed in the U.S. Constitution.
REASONS FOR ACCEPTANCE
Some of the reasons given by supporters for accepting the Constitution were these:

- A stronger central government was needed to replace the Articles of Confederation. Such a government needed a national leader (like a President) and greater powers to better protect the nation from internal unrest or an attack by foreign enemies. A national court system was also needed to settle disputes between states.

- There was no reason to fear that a strong central government would use its powers against the people. The Constitution provided that powers would be separated among the different branches (parts) of the central government and divided between the states and the central government. No single branch would be too strong.

REASONS FOR REJECTION
Some of the reasons given by opponents for rejecting the Constitution were these:

- A strong central government might take away people’s freedom. For example, the new government could build a strong army and then use it to collect unpopular taxes.

- There was no Bill of Rights in the proposed Constitution to protect important individual liberties, such as the right to a fair trial and freedom of speech.

By the end of 1788, eleven states voted to accept the Constitution. Support was won in many states by promising that a Bill of Rights would soon be added to the Constitution. In 1789, George Washington was inaugurated as the first President of the United States.

SUMMING UP: FROM COLONIES TO AN INDEPENDENT NATION
The colonists in the British colonies established many important democratic traditions. Unhappy with British taxation, the American colonists declared their independence from England. The Declaration of Independence was issued to justify the colonists’ actions. Although the American Revolution was successful, the new government created under the Articles of Confederation faced many problems. To correct the problems, the Articles of Confederation were replaced with the U.S. Constitution in 1787.

THINKING IT OVER

What difficulties do you now think people might have in creating a new government?
CHECKING YOUR UNDERSTANDING

**Directions:** Complete the following cards. Then answer the multiple-choice questions.

**DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE**
- What was it?
- Key ideas:
- Importance:

**ARTICLES OF CONFEDERATION**
- What was it?
- Strengths:
- Weaknesses:

**AMERICAN REVOLUTION**
- What was it?
- Major cause:
- Major result:

**THE GREAT COMPROMISE**
- What was it?
- Significance:

1. The major problem facing the thirteen newly independent states was how to
   1. attract foreign nations to build factories in America
   2. lower taxes
   3. create some form of central government
   4. establish a Supreme Court

2. The Articles of Confederation created a
   1. republic with a chief executive
   2. strong central government
   3. national government with legislative and judicial branches
   4. loose association of free and independent states

3. The right of the people to overthrow a government that abuses its power is a main theme of the
   1. Mayflower Compact
   2. Articles of Confederation
   3. Declaration of Independence
   4. U.S. Constitution

4. One of the major arguments for independence in the Declaration of Independence was that
   1. the British refused to buy goods from the colonies
   2. a government run by a king was evil
   3. the colonists were superior to the British
   4. people have natural rights as human beings

5. Which document contains the phrase “all men are created equal”?
   1. Magna Carta
   2. Mayflower Compact
   3. Stamp Act
   4. Declaration of Independence

6. Which belief is expressed by the quotation: “we ... will not hold ourselves bound by any laws in which we have no voice or representation”?
   1. the necessity of a separation of powers
   2. government by the consent of the governed
   3. freedom of the press and of assembly
   4. the right to a writ of habeas corpus
SUMMARIZING YOUR UNDERSTANDING

Directions: Confirm your understanding of the following terms and concepts by checking those you can explain. For those you are unfamiliar with, find the ♦ symbol in the margin next to the term and review the information.

- Native American Indians
- Maya, Aztecs, Incas
- Mayflower Compact
- Indentured Servants

- Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade
- Mercantilism
- Declaration of Independence
- American Revolution

- Democracy
- Articles of Confederation
- Constitutional Convention
- Great Compromise

Directions: Fill in the information called for in the following organizers.

THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

Rights people have:

Where governments get their power:

Purpose of governments:

What should be done if a government fails in its obligations:

THE CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION

When did it take place?

Who attended?

Where was it held?

Why did it meet?

Major results: