Strengths and Weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation

**THE CONFEDERATION**

**Strengths of the Articles**
- Governed the nation during & after the American Revolution
- Ability to wage war and make peace
- Sign treaties (like Treaty of Paris 1783)
- Authority to conduct foreign affairs
  - Maintain relations with foreign countries
- Borrow money
- Issue currency
  - Print & circulate money

**Weaknesses of the Articles**
- Gave the national government very few powers
  - Americans were afraid that a strong government would lead to tyranny
- Each state had only one vote in Congress
- Left most important powers to the state governments
- The Articles of Confederation were a reactionary response to the issues the colonists had opposed under English rule

**Legislative (Congress)**
- **Representation**
  All states have one vote in Congress no matter how large or small their population.

**Legislative (Congress)**
- **Trade**
  - Congress can’t regulate trade with foreign countries
  - Congress can’t regulate trade between states (interstate trade)

**Legislative (Congress)**
- **Defense**
  - Foreign relations problems
    - Spain wants to limit U.S. access to New Orleans
    - Britain still has troops in forts on U.S. land (Fort Detroit)
    - Mediterranean pirates kidnapping American sailors
Legislative (Congress)

**Sovereignty**
- States have the final authority on all laws passed by Congress

> "I do not conceive we can exist long as a nation without...a power which will saturate the whole Union in as energetic manner as the authority of the state governments extends over each state."
> - George Washington

Executive (President)

- There isn’t one. NO ONE to ensure that the laws are carried out

Judicial (courts)

- No national court, only state courts.
- NO ONE to administer justice and interpret the laws for the national government

Constitutional Convention (1787)

- January 21, 1786 - Virginia Legislature invited delegates from all states to Annapolis, Maryland, for Annapolis Convention
  - Only few state delegates in attendance
  - Proposed all states meet in Philadelphia on May 14, 1787 to discuss ways to improve Articles of Confederation in a "Grand Convention."

> "I am mortified beyond expression, that in the moment of our independence we should by our conduct render ourselves ridiculous and contemptible in the eyes of all Europe."
> - George Washington

Military

**Shays' Rebellion**
- Property was going to be auctioned off for failure to pay debt; and debtors were to be thrown in jail
- A group of farmers and Rev. War veterans upset about taxes that they could not pay started a rebellion, lead by Daniel Shays
- Confederation Congress had no power to form a national army to put down the rebellion
- Rebellion put down by militias paid for by wealthy citizens

> "We are all in dire apprehension that a beginning of anarchy with all its calamities has approached, and have no means to stop the dreadful work."
> - Richard Henry Lee