

Question Sheet for Creating a New Nation

1. In the opening minutes of Episode 6, Historian Gordon Wood remarked that George Washington's resignation of his commission and taking leave of public life at the end of the Revolutionary War was an "electrifying event throughout the world." Why was it so electrifying?
2. Wood also mentions the difficulty of "bringing together separate states." Why do you think the states might have resisted having a national government instead of 13 separate governments?
3. In Episode 6, Abigail Adams writes a letter to her sister in which she refers to the "inherited power" of British nobility and aristocracy saying, "There's a servility of manners here, a distinction between nobility and common citizens, which, happily, is foreign to Americans." Do you agree with Abigail Adams's statement? Explain your view.
4. In the episode, Alexander Hamilton laments the inaction of the government to enforce the law put forth by the Articles of Confederation. Review the Articles. List at least three issues or problems you see that would back up Hamilton's view.

5. After Shay's Rebellion, it became obvious that something needed to be changed, so the Constitutional Convention was called to revise the Articles of Confederation. The first vote of this Convention was to, in the words of the narrator, "keep their proceedings absolutely secret". Why do you feel the convention was not open to the public? Could this be done today? Explain your answers.

6. Compare the preamble to the Articles of Confederation with the preamble to the US Constitution. Why would the framers of the Articles write the names of all the states in the preamble, while the framers of the Constitution simply wrote, "We, the People..."?

7. In Episode 6, the narrator mentions that the role of checks and balances in a large democracy is to protect the rights of minorities from potential tyranny. How do you think checks and balances might accomplish this? Give at least two examples, either hypothetical or historical, from your reading and/or studies of the Constitution.

8. As the Constitution is completed and submitted for ratification, the supporters of the document are known as "Federalists" and the opponents as "Anti-Federalists". One issue that divided the two groups was whether the Constitution should contain a "Bill of Rights". What arguments both for and against a Bill of Rights might the two groups have developed?

