

Name: _____ C: _____

Date: _____

RH.6-8.2: Reading for Main Idea

Title:	
In a world where most nations were still governed by kings, there were few political systems that could serve as models for the new republic. The nation's founders searched history for political precedents for the new government. In the previous century, the English had established a shortlived republic after the execution of King Charles I. During the Middle Ages, Italian cities such as Florence, Pisa, Genoa, and	Venice had become self-governing city-states. Swiss communities also had resisted royal control, forming alliances that developed into the Swiss Confederation. In ancient times, republics and various democratic systems had existed in Greece and in Rome. However, none of these models could be adapted easily to the political situation of the new United States, with its need to balance the concerns of state and national governments.
Main Idea:	

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While the states developed their individual constitutions, the Continental Congress tried to draft one for the states as a whole. However, there was much disagreement over the role of the national government. The delegates had to answer three basic questions. Although the states were equal as political entities, they were unequal in size, wealth, and population. These differences posed a serious dilemma. Should delegates to a	new government represent people or states? Should each state elect the same number of representatives regardless of its population? Or should states with large populations have more representatives than states with small populations? For the time being, the members of the Continental Congress saw themselves as representing independent states. As a result, they made the decision that each state would have one vote regardless of population.
Main Idea	

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Until this time most people assumed that a government could not share supreme power with smaller administrative units, such as provinces or states. However, the Congress proposed a new type of government in a set of laws called the Articles of Confederation—one in which two levels of government shared fundamental powers. State governments were supreme in some matters, while the national government was supreme in other matters. The delegates called this new form of government a confederation, or alliance. In true Enlightenment fashion, John Dickinson hoped that the new system of government would reflect the order and harmony found in nature. "Let our government be like that of the solar system. Let the general government be like the sun	and the states the planets, repelled yet attracted, and the whole moving regularly and harmoniously in their several orbits." —John Dickinson from The Records of the Federal Convention of 1787 The Articles of Confederation gave the new national government power to declare war, make peace, and sign treaties. It could borrow money, set standards for coins and for weights and measures, establish a postal service, and deal with Native American peoples. The Articles, however, created no separate executive department to carry out and enforce the acts of Congress and no national court system to interpret the meaning of laws.
Main Idea	

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<p>By 1779, 12 states had agreed to accept the new government, but conflict over western lands delayed final approval for two more years. Some states had claims to lands west of the Appalachian Mountains. Maryland, which had no such claims, feared that states with land claims would expand and overpower smaller states. It refused to approve the Articles until all states turned over their western lands to the United States. Consequently, the landed states gave up their western claims, and with Maryland's approval, the Articles of Confederation went into effect in March 1781.</p> <p>The Confederation Congress then faced the question of how to govern the public lands west of the Appalachians and north of the Ohio River that offered rich land for settlers. Congress passed the Land Ordinance of 1785, which established a plan for surveying the land. (See the Geography Spotlight on page 138.) In the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, Congress provided a procedure for dividing the land into</p>	<p>territories. The Northwest Ordinance also set requirements for the admission of new states, which, however, seemed to overlook Native American land claims. There were three basic stages for becoming a state:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Congress would appoint a territorial governor and judges. 2. When a territory had 5,000 voting residents, the settlers could write a temporary constitution and elect their own government. 3. When the total population of a territory reached 60,000 free inhabitants, the settlers could write a state constitution, which had to be approved by Congress before it granted statehood. <p>The Land Ordinance of 1785 and the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 became the Confederation's greatest achievements. These laws established a blueprint for future growth of the nation.</p>
Main Idea:	

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<p>After its success in dealing with the Northwest Territory, the Confederation encountered overwhelming problems in dealing with more immediate issues. These problems ranged from economic issues, such as taxation and the national debt, to political issues, such as the nature of Congressional representation. In addition to these domestic issues, there were also many foreign-relations problems that the Confederation was powerless to solve.</p> <p>The most serious problem was that the country under the Confederation lacked national unity. Each state functioned independently by pursuing its own interests rather than those of the nation as a whole. In addition, the Confederation didn't recognize the differences in population among the states. Each state, regardless of its population, had only one vote in Congress. Thus, the political power of Georgia, with a population of 23,375 in 1770, was equal to that of</p>	<p>Massachusetts, with a population of 235,308. Furthermore, the Articles could not be amended without the consent of every state; a single state could stall the amendment process. Therefore, changes in government were difficult to achieve.</p> <p>The most serious economic problem was the huge debt that the Congress had amassed during the Revolutionary War. The war had cost the nation \$190 million—a huge amount of money in those days. The Continental Congress had borrowed from foreign countries and had printed its own paper money. After the war, Continental currency became worthless.</p> <p>Lacking the power to tax, the Congress requested the states' approval to impose a tariff, or tax on imported goods. It planned to use the revenue to repay foreign loans. However, one state, Rhode Island, rejected the proposed tax, so it was not adopted. Unable to impose taxes, the Confederation Congress also had no control over interstate or foreign trade</p>
Main Idea:	