

Name: _____ C: _____

Date: _____

RH.6-8.2: Reading for Main Idea

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| Another problem caused by the debt from the Revolution was the struggle between creditors (lenders of money) and debtors (borrowers of money). After the war, wealthy people who had lent money to the states favored high taxes so that the states would be able to pay them back. However, high taxes sent many farmers into debt. When a creditor sued a farmer in court for repayment and won the case, the government | seized the farmer's land and animals and sold them at auction. Debtors and creditors also disagreed over the usefulness of paper money. Debtors wanted to increase the supply of money to lessen its value and enable them to pay off their debts with cheap currency. Creditors, in contrast, wanted to keep the supply of money low so that it would keep its full value. Both groups had much to lose. |
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| The lack of support from states for national concerns led to foreign-relations problems for the Congress. First, since the United States could not repay its debts to British merchants and would not compensate Loyalists for property losses suffered during the Revolutionary War, Britain refused to evacuate its military forts on the Great Lakes. Furthermore, Spain's presence on the borders of the United States posed another threat to westward expansion. In 1784, Spain closed the Mississippi River to American navigation. This action deprived Western farmers of a means of shipping their crops to Eastern markets through New Orleans. Though Northerners were willing to give up navigation rights | on the Mississippi in exchange for more profitable trade concessions, Westerners and Southerners insisted on access to the Mississippi. However, Congress was too weak to resolve either of these challenges by Spain and Britain. The problems the Congress encountered in dealing with foreign nations revealed the basic weaknesses of the Confederation government. Americans' fear of giving the national government too much power had resulted in a government that lacked sufficient power to deal with the nation's problems. The forthcoming Constitutional Convention would change all of this. |
| Main Idea | |

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| When states ceded, or gave up, their western lands to the United States, the new nation became "land rich" even though it was "money poor." Government leaders searched for a way to use the land to fund such services as public education. | The fastest and easiest way to raise money would have been to sell the land in huge parcels. However, only the rich would have been able to purchase land. The Land Ordinance of 1785 made the parcels small and affordable. |

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| <p>The Land Ordinance established a plan for dividing the land. The government would first survey the land, dividing it into townships of 36 square miles, as shown on the map below. Then each township would be divided into 36 sections of 1 square mile, or about 640 acres, each. An individual or a family could purchase a section and divide it into farms or smaller units. A typical farm of the period was equal to one-quarter section, or 160 acres. The minimum price per acre was one dollar.</p> <p>Government leaders hoped the buyers would develop farms and establish communities. In this way settlements would spread across the western territories in an orderly way. Government surveyors repeated the process thousands of times, imposing frontier geometry on the land.</p> <p>In 1787, the Congress further provided for the orderly development of the Northwest Territory by passing the Northwest Ordinance, which established how states would be created out of the territory.</p> <p>To encourage the growth of religion within the township, the surveyors set aside a full section of land.</p> | <p>Most of the land within the section was sold to provide funds for a church and a minister's salary. This practice was dropped after a few years because of concern about the separation of church and state.</p> <p>The ordinance encouraged public education by setting aside section 16 of every township for school buildings. Local people used the money raised by the sale of land within this section to build a school and hire a teacher. This section was centrally located so that students could reach it without traveling too far.</p> <p>Congress reserved two or three sections of each township for sale at a later date. Congress planned to sell the sections then at a tidy profit. The government soon abandoned this practice because of criticism that it should not be involved in land speculation.</p> <p>Rivers and streams were very important to early settlers, who used them for transportation. Of most interest, however, was a meandering stream, which indicated flat bottomland that was highly prized for its fertility.</p> |
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| <p>Daniel Shays was angry. A veteran of the Revolutionary War battles at Bunker Hill and Saratoga, he had returned to his farm in western Massachusetts. Because of the heavy debt that he carried, however, he faced debtors' prison. Shays felt that he was the victim of too much taxation.</p> <p>During the summer and fall of 1786, farmers like Shays kept demanding that the courts be closed so they would not lose their farms to creditors. Their discontent boiled over into mob action in September of 1786 when Daniel Shays led an army of farmers to close the courts. In 1787, Shays's army, 1,200 strong, marched through the snow toward the arsenal at Springfield.</p> <p>State officials hurriedly called out the militia. Four of the rebels were killed and the rest were scattered. Clearly, though, if so many farmers were rebelling, there was something seriously wrong.</p> <p>Shays's Rebellion, as the farmers' protest came to be called, caused panic and dismay throughout the nation.</p> | <p>Every state had debt-ridden farmers. Would rebellion spread from Massachusetts elsewhere? Not only was private property in danger, but so was the new nation's reputation. As George Washington himself exclaimed, "What a triumph for our enemies . . . to find that we are incapable of governing ourselves."</p> <p>It was clearly time to talk about a stronger national government. In order to prevent abuse of power, the states had placed such severe limits on the government that the government was too weak.</p> <p>Fearing that the new nation was about to disintegrate, George Washington addressed this issue:</p> <p>"The consequences of . . . [an] inefficient government are too obvious to be dwelt upon. Thirteen sovereignties pulling against each other, and all tugging at the federal head will soon bring ruin on the whole. . . . Let us have [government] by which our lives, liberty, and property will be secured or let us know the worst at once."</p> |
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