

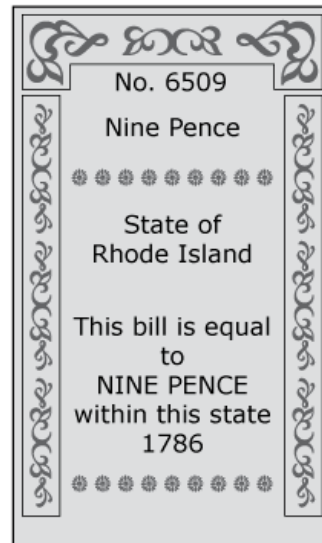
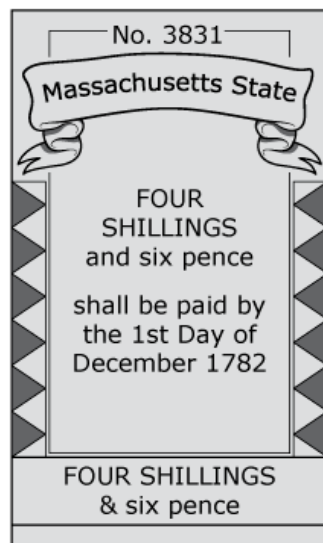
Handout 2: Development of the U.S. Government

What issues did the Founders of the U.S. government attempt to resolve as they developed the U.S. Constitution?

Directions: Work with your group to read the information provided and answer the questions. Your group should read and discuss the information together, but each student should complete their own handout.

The Articles of Confederation

The Articles of Confederation outlined the first system of government in the United States. The Articles stated that “each state retains its sovereignty, freedom and independence.” For example, each state issued their own paper currency, or money. Each state also charged a tax on goods from other states that were sold in their state. Images of paper currency from Massachusetts and Rhode Island are shown. Shillings and pence were similar to dollars and cents used today.



1. Explain how this currency system was a weakness of the Articles of Confederation.

The Constitutional Convention

Representatives from the different states gathered at the Constitutional Convention in 1787 to resolve problems posed by the current form of government. The states differed by geographic size and population size.

The following table shows information about two states from around the time of the Convention.

	Delaware	Massachusetts
Geographic Size	1,965 square miles	3,041 square miles
Number of Free Individuals	59,094	378,787
Number of Enslaved Individuals	8,887	0

Two new plans for government were proposed at the Constitutional Convention. The Virginia Plan proposed creating a national legislature with two houses. The number of representatives from each state would be based on the state's population. The New Jersey Plan proposed creating a national legislature with one house. Each state would have the same number of representatives.

2. Identify whether Delaware or Massachusetts would have most likely supported the Virginia Plan. Explain your reasoning.

3. Describe one decision or compromise made at the Constitutional Convention that helped to determine the number of representatives from each state.

Debates on the Constitution

Once the U.S. Constitution was written, it had to be ratified by at least nine state legislatures before it would take effect. Individuals that supported the new Constitution were known as Federalists. Individuals that did not initially approve of the Constitution were known as Anti-Federalists.

An excerpt from the Constitution and a summary of an Anti-Federalist position about the Constitution are shown.

Article 6 of the Constitution	Anti-Federalist Position
This Constitution, and the laws of the United States . . . shall be the supreme law of the land; and the judges in every state shall be bound [to] the Constitution . . .	In a large country, it is easy for government officials to abuse their power because they are working far away from the people. A free republic would not last for long in a country that combines the thirteen states into one. If that is the goal of this new constitution, then it should not be ratified.

4. Describe one way that Article 6 of the Constitution resolved a problem that the nation experienced under the Articles of Confederation.

5. Based on the Anti-Federalist summary, explain in your own words why the Anti-Federalists were concerned about the new Constitution.

6. Some Anti-Federalists supported the addition of the Bill of Rights to the Constitution. Explain one reason why some Anti-Federalists thought the Bill of Rights was necessary.