

Historical Literacy Project Model Unit Gallery Template

Unit Title: Movement from the Declaration of Independence to the Constitution

Designed by: Tracie Brewer and Jennifer Wolford

District: Caesar Rodney

Content Area: History

Grade Level(s): Fourth

Summary of Unit

Unit Goals:

Rationale: This unit has many differentiated activities that allow students to work in groups, with partners, and individually. Many of the lessons are highly motivational. Students will immerse themselves in activities to fully analyze the motives of the colonists and founding fathers. The rationale for the presentation in this unit is to create activities in which student involvement and participation leads them to take a vested interest in their own learning.

Course of Study: Prior to this unit, students should have a firm foundation of the colonists desire to separate from British rule, ultimately leading up to the American Revolution. Students will also have a firm foundation of the steps the founding fathers went through during the creation and signing of the Declaration of Independence. Students will be familiar with the content and purpose of the various sections of the Declaration. This unit will begin with the students gaining an understanding of the problems that the thirteen colonies faced following the signing of the Declaration and how these led to the Constitutional Convention and the drafting and ratification of the Constitution.

Stage 1 – Desired Results

What students will know, do, and understand

Delaware Content Standards:

History Standard 1-Students will study historical events and persons within a given time frame in order to create a chronology and identify related cause-effect facts.

Big Idea(s)

Students will study the problems/concerns of the colonists and founding fathers in reference to the independent government set up following the American Revolution and in response to the Declaration of Independence. They will use this information to interpret the causes and effects of the creation and ratification of the Constitution.

Unit Enduring Understanding(s):

Students will understand that information about persons and events can be organized chronologically to reveal cause-effect relationships.

Unit Essential Questions(s)

To what extent does one event always lead to another event?

Knowledge and Skills

Students will describe the problems and concerns regarding the new independent government following the signing of the Declaration of independence.

Students will identify how these problems and concerns led to the formation of the Constitutional Convention.

Students will analyze the process followed in the drafting and ratification of the Constitution.

Students will identify the effects the Constitution had on the New Nation.

Stage 2 – Assessment Evidence

(Design Assessments To Guide Instruction)

Suggested Performance/Transfer Task(s)

Essential Question Addressed: To what extent does one event always lead to another event?

Prior Knowledge: The colonists sought separation from British rule which led to the American Revolution, the signing of the Declaration of Independence, and formation of a new independent government.

Scenario: Students will perform several formative assessments teachers can use to monitor student mastery of the standard addressing the move from the Declaration of Independence to the Constitution. These include class discussions, performing a skit, using a story road map, and a flip book comparing the government pre and post Constitution. The unit will take between three and four days.

Requirements: Students will complete several formative assessments and one summative assessment.

Final Product: Flip Book

Rubric(s)

4	Student has a clear and thorough understanding of the causes and effects of the Constitution. Response lacks inaccuracies.
3	Student has an understanding of the causes and effects of the Constitution. Response may include some errors.
2	Student has a basic understanding of the causes and effects of the Constitution. Response includes several errors.
1	Student has a limited understanding of the causes and effects of the Constitution. Response contains many errors.

Other Evidence

road map activities and classroom observations

Student Self-Assessment and Reflection

Students will use journals to record information they learned and questions they still have throughout the unit.

Stage 3 – Learning Plan

Lesson # 1

Title of the Lesson:
New Independent Government

Author(s)

Tracie Brewer and Jennifer Wolford

Lesson Description: Students will perform and analyze a skit depicting the problems incurred by citizens because of the government's debt.

Time Required: 1 class period

Essential Question Addressed: What problems or concerns did the colonists face following the signing of the Declaration of Independence?

Enduring Understanding: The new nation consisting of the 13 colonies following the signing of the Declaration of Independence did not work together. There was deep financial deficit following the American Revolution with no real way of earning money. This was causing a "call on debt" that was leaving many colonists having their belongings sold well below value or being put in "debtor's jail".

Materials: Copies of skit (1 per student)

Procedures:

1. Preview of the information to be presented in the skit. Explain to students that after the war the government owed a lot of money to other countries that helped fund the war, as well as those soldiers that fought in it. At the end of the war, they issued bonds to the soldiers. These were promises to pay them for their service. Since the central government was so in debt, they were unable to buy back the bonds. Many veterans lost their possessions because they were unable to pay off their debt.
2. Select several volunteers to participate in the skit. Students perform skit for fellow classmates.
3. Following the skit, discuss with students the following:
 - What was the problem the farmer faced? (He owed taxes and money to the bank. He only had bonds and no one would take those as payment.)
 - Why wouldn't anyone accept the bonds? (The government had no money to buy them back so they were worthless at that time.)
 - What do you think happened to the farmer? Why? (Answers will vary)

Debrief: The new independent government set up following the Revolutionary War did not allow for states to work together as one nation.

Formative Assessment ("Check for Understanding"): In this lesson, the discussion after the skit can be used to gauge student understanding of the content. Students will write something they learned in their journal.

Lesson # 2

Title of the Lesson:
Constitutional Convention

Author(s)

Tracie Brewer and Jennifer Wolford

Lesson Description: Students will begin by reviewing the activity from lesson 1. After the review, students will work in groups to complete a reading road map for the children's book A More Perfect Union by Betsy and Giulio Maestro..

Time Required: 1 class period

Essential Question Addressed: How did the leaders at this time address the problems the country was facing following the Revolutionary War?

Enduring Understanding: Several key figures decided to hold a convention to figure out what could be done. A few leaders from each state were invited to the convention.

Materials: Reading road map, children's book A More Perfect Union by Betsy and Giulio Maestro (ISBN 978-0-688-10192-3)

Procedures:

1. Review of the problems facing the country after the Revolutionary War. (The new independent government of the 13 colonies following the signing of the Declaration of Independence did not work together. There was deep financial debt.)
2. Students will be put into groups of 3 or 4 and materials will be distributed.
3. In their groups, students will read A More Perfect Union and complete the activities on the reading road map.
4. The class will come back together to discuss the findings
Answers to the questions posed on the road map:
 - A few leaders from each state, May 1787
 - George Washington
 - He recorded everything discussed in the convention.
 - Each state had one vote, majority would rule, and everything was to be kept secret until the convention was over.
 - A president, congress, and court
 - Small states wanted each state to have the same number of representatives, some delegates were afraid to let the people choose the president because they thought they would make a bad choice.
 - New Jersey plan called for only small changes to the government and all states, no matter what their size, had the same number of representatives.
 - The Great Compromise consisted of some parts of the Virginia Plan, some parts of the New Jersey Plan, and some new ideas from both sides.
 - Every sentence was argued, debated, and discussed.
 - May-Sept, 4 months
 - No, ratification by each state.
 - New Hampshire
 - George Washington

Debrief: Students utilize last five minutes to discuss in groups the ways in which our country's founding fathers addressed the problems following the Revolutionary War.

Formative Assessment ("Check for Understanding"): Students will create a list in their journal of how the Constitution provided a solution.

Lesson # 3

Title of the Lesson:

Government pre vs post Constitution

Author(s)

Tracie Brewer and Jennifer Wolford

Lesson Description: Students will begin by reviewing the activity from lesson 2. After the review, students will create a flip book to compare the independent government set up following the Revolutionary War to the united government established through the writing of the Constitution.

Time Required: 1 class period

Essential Question Addressed: How did the Constitution bring the 13 colonies together as one functioning nation?

Enduring Understanding: Prior to the Constitution, each state worked as an independent government with no central leader rather than together as one nation. The country was suffering from extreme debt. Following the ratification of the Constitution, the government was united under one President, a new Congress, and Law courts.

Materials: Construction Paper, Big Book of Social Studies For Elementary K-6 by Dinah Zike

Procedures:

1. Distribute materials and instruct students on how to make a two part flip book.
 - Fold construction paper in half , hamburger way.
 - Cut top half of construction paper in middle, until you reach the fold. Do not cut past the fold, as this will cut the paper in half and it will no longer be useable.
 - Label one side “Government before the Constitution” and the other side “Government after the Constitution”.
2. As a whole group, using the power point Confederation Era Notes discuss the elements of the independent government. Lead the discussion with the following questions and students should fill in their side of the flip book labeled “Government before the Constitution”.
 - What did the government look like following the American Revolution? (Slide 3-states given independence to operate)
 - What were the main weaknesses? (Side 4 & 5-Afraid of strong national government, so states given individual power. National government did not have power to tax or enforce laws. National government did have power to wage war but since they couldn’t tax, there was no way to pay for it. Government could issue money but the states didn’t have to use it. The states had their own money.)
 - Look at the following picture and try to figure out what is going on? (Slide 6 and 7)
 - Shay’s Rebellion was the “straw that broke the camel’s back”. What were the main reasons for this rebellion? (Slide 8-Farmers taken to court, jail, and land was taken away from them. Farmers had had enough and revolted against the states government).
 - Do you think the farmers were right to rise up against the state government? (answers will vary)
 - Why did Shay’s Rebellion frighten the founding fathers and affect the government currently in place? (Slide 9-Farmers began to use force to prevent the courts from meeting so they couldn’t

take anyone's land or put them in jail. Farmers defeated 4,400 rebels sent by the Governor to stop the farmers.)

- What was the outcome of this rebellion? (Slide 10-Leaders realized the current government was too weak and a stronger, more united one was needed.)
- This rebellion ultimately led to formation of the Constitutional Convention and the creation of the Constitution.

3. As a summative assessment, have students fill in the side of the flip book that highlights the characteristics of the government after the Constitution. Tell them to think back to the purpose of the Constitutional Convention and the elements of the Virginia Plan.

Debrief: Shay's Rebellion was the ultimate turning point that led up to the creation of the Constitution.

Formative Assessment ("Check for Understanding"): The completed flip book can be used to gauge student understanding of how the Constitution created a more united government, the same government we have today.

Resources and Teaching Tips (Consider the two questions below when completing this section.)

- **What text/print/media/kit/web resources best support this unit?**
 - [A More Perfect Union](#) by Betsy and Giulio Maestro (ISBN 978-0-688-10192-3)
 - [Big Book of Social Studies For Elementary K-6](#) by Dinah Zike
 - <http://government.pppst.com/articles/html> (Click on Confederation Era PowerPoint)

- **What tips to teachers of the unit can you offer about likely rough spots/student misunderstandings and performance weaknesses, and how to troubleshoot those issues? Be especially mindful to identify any misconceptions that students are likely to have as they enter this unit and that might interfere with their learning.**

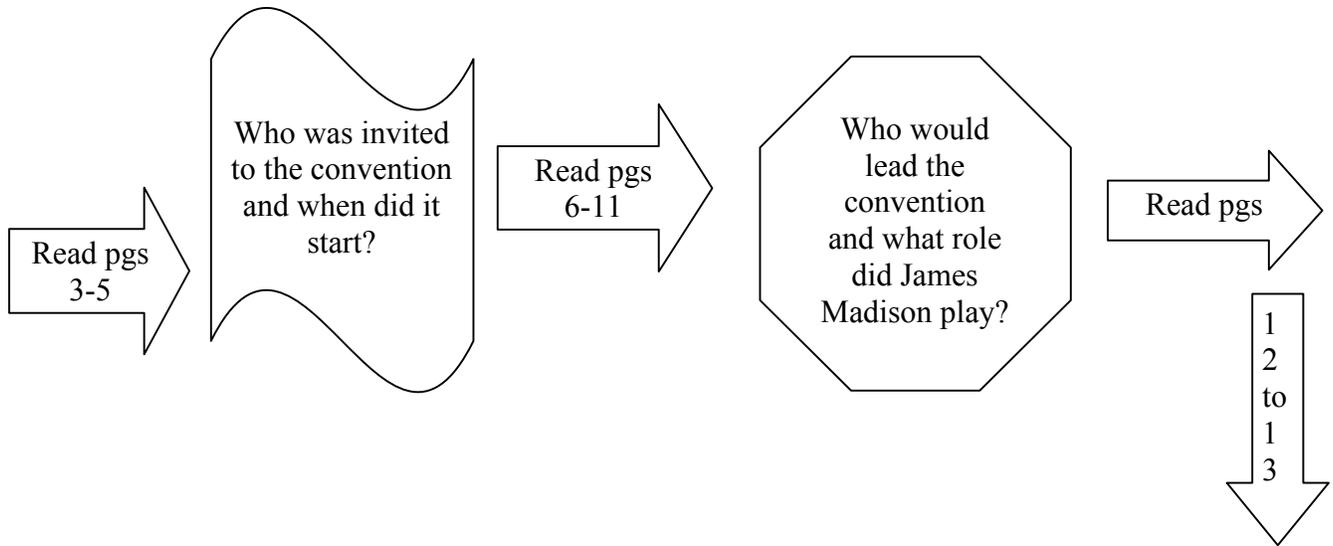
It is critical that students understand the events that occurred in the colonies leading up to the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Students must be knowledgeable about the restraints colonists were living with under British Rule and what changes they wanted the new independent government to bring.

A common misconception students have is that after the Revolutionary War, the country was strong and well run.. Approximately 10 years passed from the start of the independent government before leaders discussed the need for changes and the possibility of making those changes.

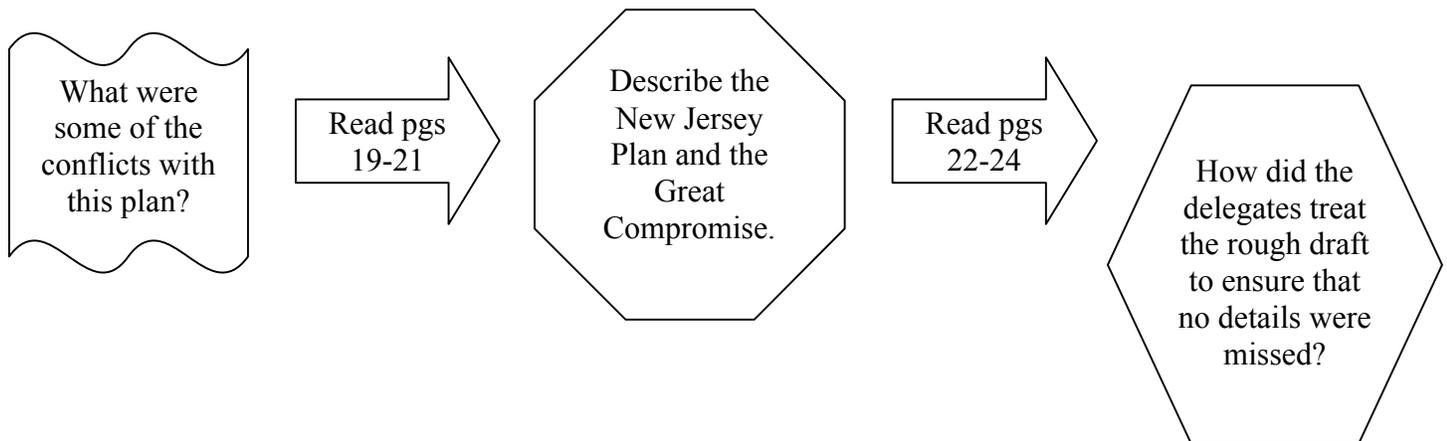
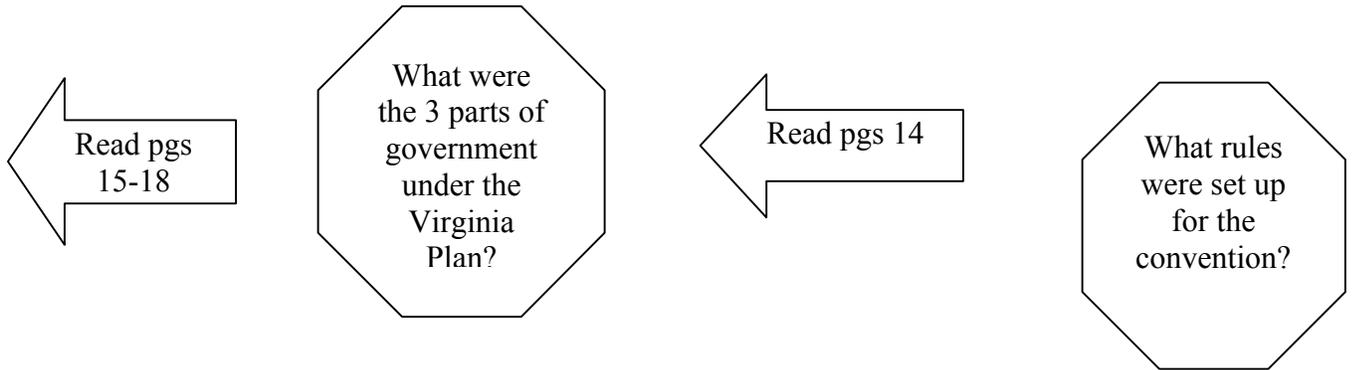
Not directly presented in this lesson (but eluded to) is the fact that not all colonists and state representatives wanted a new government. It is important that students realize that when the decision to form a new government with one central leader was made, not all of the people thought it was going to be successful.

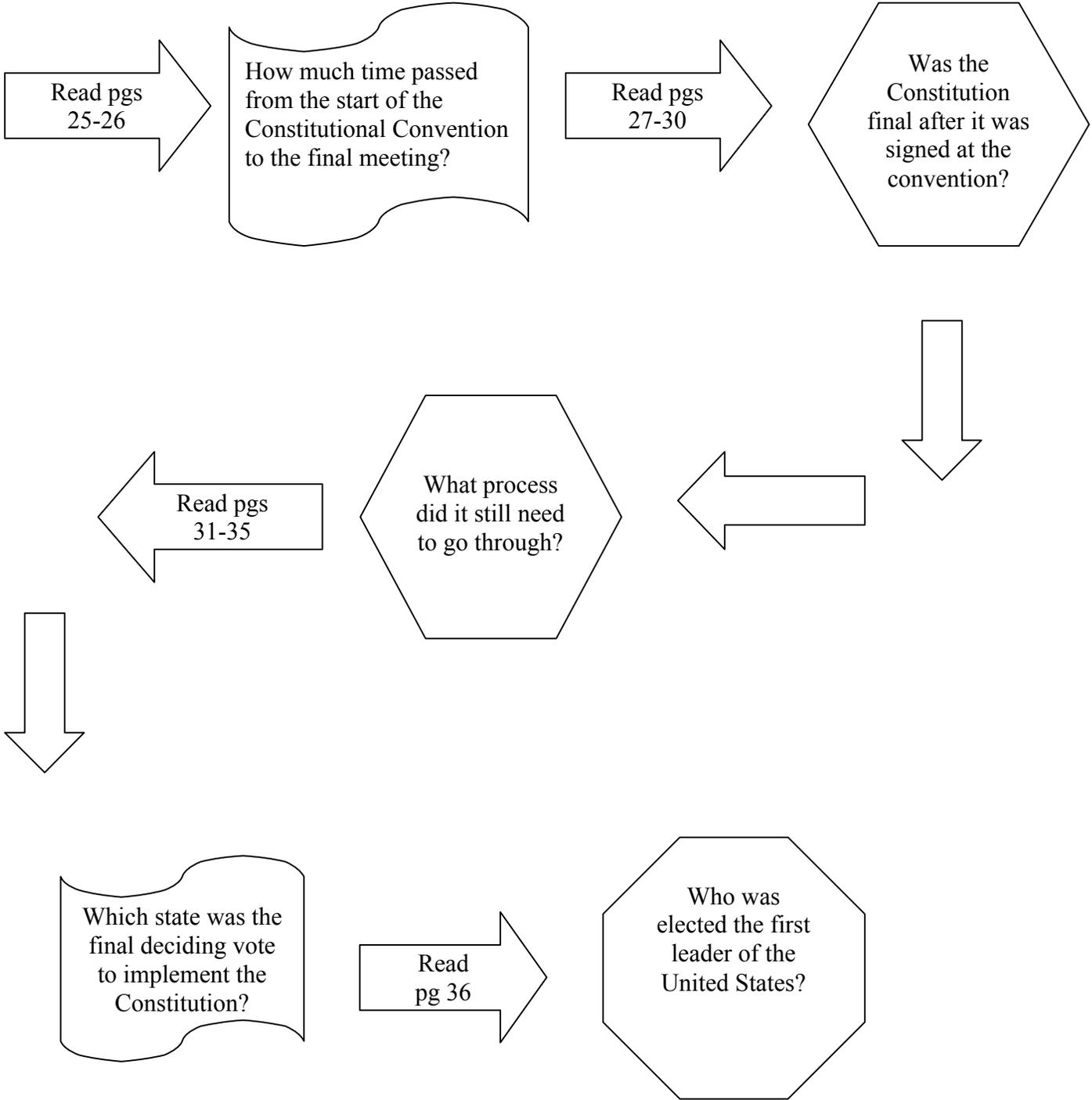
A More Perfect Union

Reading Road Map



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Skit

Characters: Farmer (Revolutionary War Veteran), banker, tax collector, narrator

Narrator: The year is 1785. The American Revolution has been won and the colonists have declared their independence from Britain. Things should be looking up, but instead, the citizens of this new nation are having great difficulties coming together as one. One cause of this unrest is the huge financial debt left over from the Revolutionary War.

Today, we take a look at how this problem affects different citizens of the United States of America. In this scene, a farmer who is a veteran of the Revolution, has been called upon to repay a bank loan he took out for his farm. At the same time, a government tax collector is coming to him for the back taxes he owes on his land. The farmer, who was paid with bonds (promise notes for payment) for the time he spent fighting in the Revolutionary War, goes to the bank to repay his loan.

Farmer: Hello, sir. I am here to repay the loan I took out for my farm. I don't have any cash money at this time, but I do have these government bonds. You can take these as payment.

Banker: I'm sorry but we can't accept those bonds as payment. I also need to let you know that the longer you take in repaying this loan, the more money you will owe. The bank will keep charging you interest on the outstanding balance of your loan. I strongly urge you to find some other way to repay us...and quickly.

Farmer: You don't understand. I fought in the war for our freedom. This was the payment I received from our government. Why won't you accept them?

Banker: The government is more in debt than you. There is no way they have the money to pay off these bonds. Your bonds are nothing more than an empty promise, an IOU from a government that has no money back them up.

Farmer: What should I do?

Banker: I suggest you talk directly to a government official. Ask them to pay you for the bonds and when you get the cash, bring it back here. Good luck.

Narrator: The farmer leaves the bank and heads back home. Waiting for him is a government tax collector. The gentleman is obviously nervous. They had a very hazardous job. Tax collectors often faced violence and some were even killed while trying to collect the taxes from citizens.

Farmer: May I help you?

Tax Collector: (in a shaky voice) I'm Mr. Smith and I've come because you are behind on your property taxes. I'm supposed to inform you that if you fail to repay, your property can and will be taken. Are you able to repay?

Farmer: Sir, I can pay you right now. I have these hundred dollar bonds. You can have them as payment.

Tax Collector: (clearing his throat) I'm sorry but I can't accept those. The government needs cash. The bonds cannot be used for tax purposes. Is there any other way you can pay them?

Farmer: I don't understand. The government gave these to me as payment. Why won't they accept them as payment in return? What good are these pieces of paper if I can't use them?

Tax Collector: I understand how you feel, but I really can't take them. I need to let you know that you have 30 days to repay the taxes or your property will be seized and sold off for repayment. I'm sorry.

Narrator: The farmer goes to see a government officer the next day. He waits in a small room with other veterans of the War. He is called to a table where he meets with an officer of the state.

Government Officer: What can I do for you?

Farmer: I need you to buy these bonds from me. I have an outstanding loan on my property and I also owe back taxes. If I don't repay, they are going to take everything I own. No one will take these bonds as payment, so I am coming to you to cash them in.

Government Officer: Uhm, yes, I see. Well, the truth is that we do not have the resources, at this time, to buy back the bonds. I'm sure if you come back in a year, we will be able to buy them then.

Farmer: A year? The bank is going to take my land. That is if the tax collector doesn't first. I need that money. I've had these bonds for 4 years. How much longer do I have to wait?

Government Officer: I do understand, however; there really is nothing I can do for you at this time. As I said, come back in a year. I am sure we will be able to work things out for you then.

Narrator: What we have just witnessed was a scene that was played out many times between the end of the Revolution and the signing of the Constitution. This was a time of a great many rebellions... groups of citizens coming together and trying to force the hands of government officials, often times with violence. The country, though newly formed, was already beginning to flounder and fall apart. Something had to be done. This was a main reason behind the need for a new, national government.