

Chapter Summary

The logo for 'networks' features the word 'networks' in a bold, lowercase sans-serif font. A stylized graphic of intersecting lines, resembling a network or starburst, is positioned behind the letter 'o'.

The Constitution

Lesson 1 *The Country's First Governments*

- After independence was declared, the states began to form their own governments and write their own constitutions.
- State constitutions included the ideals of the Declaration of Independence and guaranteed "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." Many state constitutions included a bill of rights that listed individual freedoms.
- The Articles of Confederation set up the Confederation Congress, a one-house legislature that had control over the Confederation's military and its dealings with foreign governments.
- Under the Articles of Confederation, Congress had very limited power. It could not pass laws without the approval of nine states; it could not enforce laws; and it could not impose taxes.
- Following victory in the Revolutionary War, Congress faced problems of debt and rebellion. The powers of the Confederate Congress were too limited to solve the problems.

Lesson 2 *Creating a New Constitution*

- In 1787, delegates from the states met to amend the Articles of Confederation. Instead, they decided to draft a new constitution that would give the national government more power.
- The delegates at the Constitutional Convention agreed to many compromises: Congress would have two houses; enslaved people would count as 3/5 of a person for representation; and the president of the United States would be elected through the "electoral college."
- The new constitution had to be approved by the states. Federalists supported the new Constitution and greater power for the national government. The Anti-Federalists opposed the new constitution because they were afraid the people would lose their individual liberties.

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Lesson 2 *Creating a New Constitution, Cont.*

- The Anti-Federalists called for adding a bill of rights to the Constitution. Federalists agreed. Based on the promise to add a bill of rights, the individual states ratified Constitution of the United States.

Lesson 3 *The Structure of the Constitution*

- The Constitution is the basic law of the United States. It also sets forth the structure of the United States government.
- The Preamble to the Constitution makes clear that the government's power comes from the people. It sets forth six purposes of the government.
- There are seven articles in the Constitution. Articles I, II, and III set up the three branches of government—the legislative branch, the executive branch, and the judicial branch.
- There are 27 amendments to the Constitution. The first ten are the Bill of Rights.
- The process for amending the Constitution is intentionally difficult to preserve its delicate balance.
- Article I gives Congress "implied powers" that allow it to make "all laws which shall be necessary and proper" to carry out its duties.

Lesson 4 *Principles of the Constitution*

- There are five major principles in the Constitution: popular sovereignty; limited government and the rule of law; separation of powers; checks and balances; and federalism.
- Under the principle of federalism, the Constitution divides governmental power between the federal government and the states.
- The "supremacy clause" makes the Constitution the "supreme law of the land."