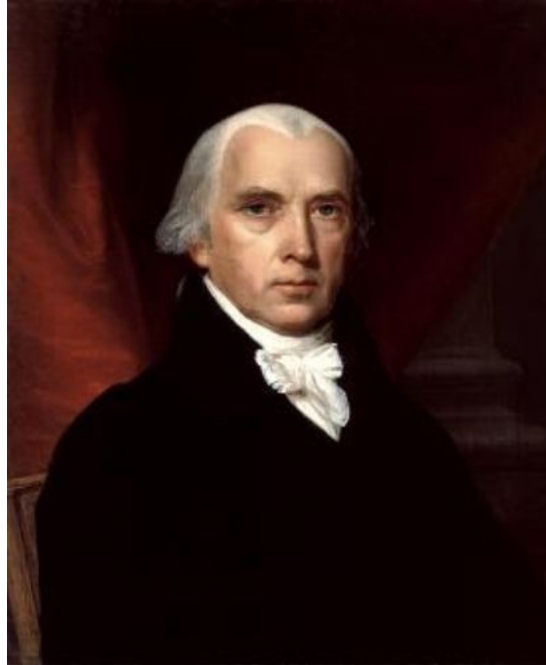


# American Government - James Madison: A Man with a Plan

by ReadWorks



After winning independence from England, America's early days were rocky ones. The national government set up by the Articles of Confederation was weak. It could make laws and rules. It could not, however, make the states follow them.

Each of the 13 states acted almost like an independent country. Each state had its own currency. Each state set its own laws. The states weren't working together for the good of the nation, so they bickered constantly. No one could agree which states would pay for the Revolutionary War. The national government could not collect taxes from the states. The state governments were simply too strong. National leaders like George Washington worried out loud. The national government was "little more than the shadow without the substance," he said.

Things got so bad that the states finally agreed to take action. A man from Virginia named James Madison led the way. He called for the Constitutional Convention. Men from all thirteen states met at the convention in Philadelphia in 1787 to write the Constitution. The document would create a new national government. Washington was there. Other important leaders, like Alexander Hamilton and Benjamin Franklin, also came.

Madison arrived at the convention armed with a plan. Because Madison was from Virginia, he called it the Virginia Plan. Madison's plan argued that each state's votes in Congress should be based on the number of people living in that state. Before, each state had gotten one vote in Congress no matter how big or small it was or how many people lived there.

Not everyone agreed with Madison's ideas. The delegates at the convention asked for many compromises. Without them, they wouldn't sign a final draft of the Constitution. These compromises were difficult to reach. In the end, they helped strengthen our government. Still, Madison's Virginia Plan was very important. For all his work, James Madison is known today as the "Father of the Constitution."

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Who met at the Constitutional Convention?

- A. people from the U.S. and England
- B. men from all thirteen states
- C. politicians from Virginia
- D. James Madison and Abraham Lincoln

2. Why was the Constitutional Convention held?

- A. Each state's government was too weak.
- B. Americans wanted to win independence from England.
- C. The national government was too weak.
- D. The states wanted to form the first American government.

3. When George Washington said that the national government was, "little more than shadow without the substance," he probably meant that

- A. the colonies should have a King.
- B. the states needed more power.
- C. that the colonists needed more food.
- D. the national government needed more power.

4. Read the following sentences: "After winning independence from England, America's early days were rocky ones. The national government set up by the Articles of Confederation was weak."

The word **rocky** most nearly means

- A. awesome
- B. fun
- C. difficult
- D. powerful

5. The main idea of this passage is that

- A. James Madison caused big arguments between different states.
- B. James Madison created a plan that made sure all states were equal regardless of size.
- C. James Madison created a plan that helped form the Constitution.
- D. James Madison took over the Constitutional Convention and wrote the Constitution by himself.

6. What is one example in the passage of problems between the state governments and the national government?

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7. Based on the passage, why would Madison be known as "the Father of the Constitution?"

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8. The question below includes an incomplete sentence. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence.

Madison's Virginia Plan was an important part of the Constitutional Convention,  
\_\_\_\_\_ compromises were needed for it to work.

- A. although
- B. after
- C. because
- D. as a result