

# Geography and History Activity



## A More Perfect Union

### Lesson 1 *The Articles of Confederation*

## Settlement of Northwest Territory

Until the 1800s, when people spoke of “the West” they meant lands between the Appalachian Mountains and the Mississippi River. Lands beyond the Mississippi were still claimed by foreign powers. By the 1780s, 8 of the 13 original states had explored and laid claim to various territories east of the Mississippi River.



### Landless and Landed States

The eight states claiming land in the West were called “landed” states. (The map does not show the claims of New York, which included parts of present-day Illinois, Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Virginia.) Because the future sale of western lands made the landed states potentially rich, they had an advantage over the five “landless” states (those without land claims in the West). The landless states feared they would lose population to the landed states.

To make matters worse, individual claims to western lands were made according to the unclear wording in each state’s old colonial charter. Some land claims overlapped each other. Meanwhile, thousands of settlers were crossing the Appalachian Mountains into these areas. As their numbers increased, the potential for conflict over land grew.

# Geography and History Activity *Cont.*



## A More Perfect Union

The Confederation government realized that the first step to solving the land ownership problems was to persuade the landed states to give up control of their western claims to the central government. Although it took almost 20 years, the landed states agreed.

### The Ordinances Ease the Way

When states gave up their claims to their western lands, it created the need for an orderly, fair system to prepare territories for statehood. Congress passed the Ordinance of 1785 and the Northwest Ordinance of 1787. The Ordinance of 1785 required the government to survey and evenly divide the western land north of the Ohio River before selling the land. After being surveyed, the land was divided into townships; the townships were divided into smaller parcels.

The Northwest Ordinance of 1787 created a single Northwest Territory out of the lands north of the Ohio River and east of the Mississippi River. The ordinance also laid out a system based on population for eventually dividing the Northwest Territory into three to five states.

## Understanding the Concept

**Directions** Answer the following questions in the spaces provided.

- Identifying** Which of the original states were “landed” states? Landless states?

Landed States	⇒	
Landless States	⇒	

- Analyzing Visuals** Which of the “landed” states laid claims to western lands that extended from their own established borders?

# Geography and History Activity *Cont.*



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### Applying the Concept

**3. Determining Cause and Effect** Why would the states dispute each others' claims to western territories?

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**4. Drawing Conclusions** Why was there a need for the landed states to give up their claims?

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**5. Making Generalizations** What did both the Ordinance of 1785 and the Northwest ordinance provide?

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