

## LESSON PLAN

### "GETTING TO KNOW THE HOUSE"



#### RECOMMENDED GRADE LEVEL

High School



#### OVERVIEW

This activity is designed to help students get to know the Representatives serving their district in the U.S. House of Representatives. Students will be tasked with researching and analyzing the political background, voting history, and floor activities of the Representatives serving several local districts.



#### CURRICULUM CONNECTION

- U.S. History, American Government, Social Studies
- U.S. House of Representatives, First Day of Congress, Locally Elected Representatives



#### OBJECTIVES

1. Students should be able to identify and discuss the Representatives currently serving their districts.
2. Students should be able to discuss the organizational hierarchy of the U.S. House of Representatives and its Members.
3. Students should be able to identify their Representatives' roles in the House hierarchy.
4. Students should be able to recognize the background and political ideologies of their representatives.



#### LESSON PLAN

##### Day One

1. To help introduce students to the upcoming activity, lead a brief discussion using the questions below:
  - a. Why is the U.S. House of Representatives so much larger than the U.S. Senate? What fundamental ideas caused the U.S. House of Representatives to be nicknamed "The People's House?"
  - b. How many congressional districts does your state have?
  - c. Who is currently representing your district?
  - d. What is the basis for the organizational structure of the U.S. House of Representatives?
2. Ask students to read the content of the First Day of Congress lesson for High School learners on <http://kids.clerk.house.gov> either independently or in groups. Encourage students to take notes and write down any unanswered questions they encounter.
3. Once students have completed the reading, answer and discuss the Comprehensive Questions and Critical Thinking Questions below as a group.
4. Choose one of the options listed under the category Main Exercise. Students can use the online resources listed at the end of the activity to complete the Main Exercise. Give the students class time to plan their exercises and ask them to complete any required research and writing for homework.

## Day Two

5. Take half an hour to discuss the students' findings regarding their local district Representatives.
6. Ask the students to write a letter to their Representative addressing an issue that concerns them. Students should research their Representatives' views and floor history regarding their choice.



## COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What are the primary duties of the Speaker of the House?
2. What is a quorum and how many Members does it take to achieve one?
3. What duties does the Whip perform? Where does the term originate?
4. Which day does the Constitution specify a new Congress should begin? Is it possible for this date to be changed?
5. What is a viva voce roll call vote? What is this type of vote used to accomplish on the first day of a new Congress?
6. Who is the Dean of the House? What function does he/she perform on the first day of Congress?
7. Describe the interactions between the Majority and Minority Party Leaders on the first day of Congress.
8. After the House Rules have been adopted, what are some examples of other types of legislative business that are sometimes conducted on the first day?



## CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS

1. What is the significance of the Oath of Office? What does it say and what does it mean to the Members who take it?
2. What are the benefits of reorganizing the U.S. House of Representatives every 2 years?



## MAIN EXERCISE

### **Option 1: Who is My Representative?**

1. Assign the students one of several local congressional districts in the area where they live. For homework, instruct the students to use the House's Web site (<https://forms.house.gov/wyr/>) to find the name of the Representative from their assigned district.
2. Instruct the student to use the Clerk's Web site (<http://clerk.house.gov>) and other online and offline sources to research their Representative's background, political views, and floor activities.
3. Students should come back to class prepared with a one- to two-page essay about their Representative

### **Option 2: Hypothetical**

1. You are a newly elected Representative who has been asked to make a five-minute floor speech in which you must address a key issue that faces your local community. Instruct the students, as a homework assignment, to research and prepare their speech to be given in class the next day.
2. Following a decennial census, your state has been redistricted. You are campaigning to be elected as Representative of a new seat added to the U.S. House of Representatives for your state. How will you get elected? What is your slogan? What are the issues on which you will campaign?

### **Option 3: Cooperative**

1. Working in small groups, choose a Representative serving any district in your state.
2. Locate the committees the Representative serves using the Clerk's web site (<http://clerk.house.gov>).
3. Pick one of these committees and find their web site using the House's Committee Offices list (<http://www.house.gov/house/CommitteeWWW.shtml>).

4. Scenario: You are a news reporter writing an article on the recent activities of this particular committee. Use the committee website as well as additional online and offline resources to compile your facts. The article should be no less than 600 words and include an interesting graphic or relevant photo.



## **ADDITIONAL ONLINE RESOURCES**

Online *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress*  
**<http://bioguide.congress.gov>**

Office of the Clerk  
**<http://clerk.house.gov>**

Library of Congress/THOMAS  
**<http://thomas.loc.gov>**

Speaker of the House  
**<http://speaker.house.gov>**