

LESSON PLAN

"PLAY HOUSE"



RECOMMENDED GRADE LEVEL

Grade School



OVERVIEW

This activity is designed to help students understand the process and procedures of the first day of Congress by re-enacting them in the classroom. Students have the opportunity to focus on and retain the key elements of beginning a new Congress, including electing a Speaker, taking the Oath of Office, choosing House Officers, and voting on the House Rules.



CURRICULUM CONNECTION

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



OBJECTIVES

1. Students should be able to identify key leadership positions in the U.S. House of Representatives.
2. Students should be able to discuss the roles of these Members during the first day of a new Congress.
3. Students should be able to recognize the basic hierarchy of the U.S. House of Representatives.



LESSON PLAN

1. To help introduce students to the upcoming activity, lead a brief discussion using the questions below:
 - a. How are Representatives elected to the U.S. House of Representatives?
 - b. What is the benefit of reorganizing the U.S. House of Representatives every 2 years?
2. Ask students to read the content of the First Day of Congress lesson for Grade School learners on <http://kids.clerk.house.gov> in groups or as a class. Encourage students to take notes and write down any unanswered questions they encounter.
3. Discuss and define the specific roles of each of the following Members and Officers:
 - Clerk of the House
 - Reading Clerk
 - Sergeant at Arms
 - Chaplain of the House
 - Speaker of the House
 - Dean of the House
4. After your discussion, assign the following roles to students:
 - a. Clerk of the House
 - b. Reading Clerk
 - c. Two Speaker Nominees
 - d. Dean of the House
 - e. The remainder of the class will act as the Members-elect.

5. Use the web site as a learning guide and walk the students through the Congress' first day activities.
 - a. The Clerk calls the House to Order.
 - b. The Chaplain offers a prayer (simulate with a moment of silence).
 - c. All participants recite the Pledge of Allegiance.
 - d. The Reading Clerk calls the Roll (use your class attendance sheet). Students may respond by saying "present."
 - e. Members vote on who they would like to be named Speaker. Write the nominees' names on the blackboard and ask each student, in turn, to speak the name of the person they are voting for. The Clerk can use tick marks on the chalkboard to keep a tally.
 - f. The Dean of the House administers the Oath of Office to the Speaker-elect.
 - g. The Speaker administers the Oath of Office to the Members.
 - h. The Members adopt the House Rules. They are permitted time to debate any additions to the rules. Encourage students to present any rules beyond their usual classroom rules that they think would be of value and why.
 - i. When the allotted debate time is over, take a vote by asking the students to raise their hand if they agree to adopt the House Rules. Use the blackboard to take a tally.
6. After the mock day of Congress, have a discussion with students to reaffirm everything that happened during the day and the significance of it within the organizational structure of the U.S. House of Representatives.



COMPREHENSIVE QUESTIONS

1. What are the key leadership roles in that Members play on the first day of a new Congress?
2. How many House Officers are there? Who are they and what do they do?



CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS

1. Why is the Speaker of the House an important position? What are some of the Speaker's duties?
2. Why is it important that the majority of the Members-elect be present on the first day of a new Congress?



ADDITIONAL ONLINE RESOURCES

Office of the Clerk

<http://clerk.house.gov>