Micky Miller • Corydon Central High School • Corydon, IN

BRINGING THE DECLARATION of INDEPENDENCE TO LIFE

Using **Engaging Congress** from the **IU Center on Representative Government**

Purpose: Participants will collaborate to connect founding principles to current curriculum standards and use CORG's Engaging Congress digital tool to design engaging, classroom ready lesson activities.

Lesson Title

Why Did the Founders Divide Power? - Micky Miller, Corydon Central High School, Corydon, IN

Target Grade Level 11–12

Time of Lesson 1–2 Class Periods (50–90 minutes total)

Indiana Academic Standards for Target Grade Level

USG.2.3 Analyze and interpret central ideas on government, individual rights, and the common good in founding documents of the United States.

USG.2.4 Explain and analyze historical and contemporary examples of Founding Era principles of American government including natural rights, federalism, social contract, constitutionalism, representative democracy, political factions, liberty, security, justice, equality, the common good, and individual rights.

USG.2.5 Explain how a shared American civic identity is grounded in Founding Era principles and values such as liberty, equality, justice, popular sovereignty, individual rights, and representative democracy.

Declaration of Independence Principle

Purpose of Government: The primary role of government is to secure these rights.

Engaging Congress Source

Unit: Separation of Powers (Laws and Sausages)
Primary Source: Articles I, II, III of the United States Constitution

Explain Engaging Congress Unit Connection

As we explore separation of powers, we will utilize Laws and Sausages to illustrate to role of the Legislative Branch.

Activity Description

In this lesson, students examine how the Declaration of Independence influenced the structure of the United States government, particularly the principle of separation of powers. Students begin by analyzing grievances against King George III and discussing why the colonists believed concentrated power could lead to tyranny. Through direct instruction and primary source analysis, students explore Enlightenment ideas such as natural rights, limited government, and consent of the governed. The lesson introduces the three branches of government and explains how the Founders divided powers among them to prevent abuse of authority.

Students then participate in collaborative activities where they connect specific grievances from the Declaration to constitutional solutions found in the U.S. government system. Using discussion, group work, and simulation-based learning, students evaluate how separation of powers and checks and balances protect liberty today. Students will utilize the "Laws and Sausages" activity through the Center on Representative Government's Engaging Congress website to put these skills to the test. The lesson concludes with reflection and assessment activities that encourage students to apply historical ideas to modern government and civic life while practicing critical thinking and civil discourse skills.

Primary Source Link(s)

The National Archives - https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript

Additional Source(s)

Engaging Congress - https://engagingcongress.org/play/index.html

Expected Learning Outcomes

Students will be able to:

*Explain the principle of separation of powers.
*Analyze grievances in the Declaration of Independence.
*Connect colonial complaints against King George III to limits placed on government in the Constitution.
*Identify powers of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches.
*Evaluate why the Founders believed dividing power was necessary.

Modifications / Differentiation

1. Differentiation Strategy (Target: Grade Level / ELL / IEP)

Differentiation for English Language Learners (ELL)
Pre-teach terms with visuals:
tyranny
liberty
judicial
executive
legislative

2. Differentiation Strategy (Target: Grade Level / ELL / IEP)

Simplify Primary Sources
Provide shortened Declaration excerpts, modern-English translations, or highlighted key phrases.
Example:

Original Text Student-Friendly Version
"He has dissolved Representative Houses repeatedly…" The king kept shutting down colonial legislatures.

List any required materials and/or attach worksheets / graphic organizer / classroom materials

Copies/excerpts of the Declaration of Independence https://www.archives.gov/founding docs/declaration transcript
Constitution summary chart
Whiteboard/projector
Branches of Government graphic organizer
Access to Engaging Congress website

List all sources / links used (content and instructional)

Center on Representative Government https://engagingcongress.org/play/index.html
The National Archives https://www.archives.gov/founding docs/declaration transcript