



Day 7 Colonization Unit  
50 Minutes

House of Burgesses

**THE HOUSE OF BURGESSSES: THE FIRST REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT — ONE-DAY LESSON  
PLAN (GRADES 3–8)**  
*45–60 minutes*

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**TITLE:**

The House of Burgesses and the Beginning of Representative Government in America

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**OBJECTIVE:**

Students will understand why the House of Burgesses was created, explain how it gave colonists a voice in government, and connect the idea of representative government to their own lives.

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**GRADE LEVEL:**

Grades 3–8 (Differentiated)

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**MATERIALS:**

- Article: First Representative Government / House of Burgesses
- Reading comprehension activity (print or digital)
- Writing prompt: “Having a Voice — Then and Now”
- Student notebooks or writing paper

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**INTRODUCTION: HAVING A VOICE (5 MINUTES)**

Teacher says:

“Today we’re learning about the first time people in the American colonies were allowed to help make their own laws.”

Ask students:

- When have you wanted a say in a decision that affected you?
- What student organization in your school gives students a “voice?”

Transition:

“In 1619, colonists in Virginia wanted the same thing—a voice.”

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## ARTICLE READING (10–12 MINUTES)

Read:

<https://learnaboutamerica.com/american-history/13-colonies/events-of-the-13-colonies/the-establishment-of-the-house-of-burgesses>

Differentiation:

- Grades 3–5: Teacher reads aloud or reads with students. Students underline key words from the glossary.
- Grades 6–8: Independent reading with annotation. Students identify:
  - Why the government was created
  - Who participated
  - What changed for colonists

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## GUIDED DISCUSSION (8–10 MINUTES)

Teacher leads discussion using the provided questions:

- Why did Governor Yeardley want to create a new government in Virginia?
- What was the main goal of the House of Burgesses?
- How did it give people more freedom?
- Why is it important in American history?

Differentiation:

- Grades 3–5: Use sentence starters and simplified explanations.
- Grades 6–8: Require answers supported by evidence from the article.

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## READING COMPREHENSION ACTIVITY (10–15 MINUTES) Lexile 900

**Online Version:**

<https://learnaboutamerica.com/american-history/13-colonies/13-colonies-literacy-and-comprehension-activities/house-of-burgesses-online-reading-comprehension>

**Printable Version:**

<https://learnaboutamerica.com/american-history/13-colonies/13-colonies-literacy-and-comprehension-activities/house-of-burgesses-printable-reading-comprehension>

Differentiation:

- Grades 3–5: Teacher and class do the comprehension activity together.
- Grades 6–8: Students complete independently

Teacher circulates to support comprehension and clarify vocabulary.

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### **WRITING PROMPT: “HAVING A VOICE — THEN AND NOW” (15 MINUTES)**

Students respond to the writing prompt.

<https://learnaboutamerica.com/american-history/13-colonies/13-colonies-writing-activities/can-anyone-hear-me-relating-to-the-house-of-burgesses>

Grades 3–5:

- Use the provided sentence starters.
- Write one short paragraph or draw and label an illustration.

Grades 6–8:

- Write a full paragraph explaining a personal experience and connecting it to the House of Burgesses.

Prompt reminder:

Explain a time you wanted a say in a decision and how that experience is similar to why colonists created the House of Burgesses.

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### **CLOSING (3–5 MINUTES)**

Teacher reviews key ideas:

- The House of Burgesses was the first representative government in the colonies.
- It allowed colonists to elect people to speak for them.
- It ended martial law and increased freedom.
- It helped lay the foundation for American democracy.