**Sarah Amick – Founding documents and philosophies in a literature circle**

**Background** – Each year, we look at the founding documents of the US and historical documents and opinions that our founding fathers used in forming our country. These documents often present problems for our struggling readers and can lead to boredom for our advanced readers unless we differentiate the instruction. I feel that literature circles can be the way to effectively teach this lesson.

**SOLs addressed** - GOVT.1a, GOVT .2b, GOVT .2c, GOVT.2e, GOVT .2f

**Pre-assessment –** Students would have been formerly assessed prior to this lesson to determine reading and comprehension levels. Students would have also had a ticket out on the day prior to this lesson asking them to list everything they knew about the Constitution.

**Objective** – Students will be able to interpret key documents that influenced our founding fathers as well as writings of philosophers that were inspirations of the founding fathers. Students will also be able to describe how these readings were incorporated into the writings of Jefferson, Mason and Madison.

**Process** – Students will participate in a literature circle using the following: Students will participate in a literary circle using the following documents or excerpts thereof: Magna Carta, English Petition of Rights, English Bill of Rights, Two Treatises on Government, Leviathian, the Spirit of the Laws, Virginia Declaration Rights, Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom and the Declaration of Independence. Students will have to perform a variety of roles related to the literature circle with accuracy and contribution to the discussion. Documents would be adjusted for the students reading levels within their groups.

Duration – This lesson will take several days. **Day one** will be a demonstration of the various roles of the circle with a simple story. (will ask librarian for suggestions) **Day two** students will be placed in their group according to reading ability and will be assigned one of the following roles:

○ Public Orator – will develop questions that the group will discuss the next day. Writer will be prepared to lead the discussion of the questions.

○ Master Engraver – this person will draw a picture or create a political cartoon to express the main idea of the reading. They will be able to describe the details and explain why they drew what they did

○ Webster’s Wizard – this person will develop a list of words and their definitions that they feel others in the group might not understand. They should also write a brief definition and a synonym for each. The next day they will lead the group discussion and help the group write new sentences with the identified words and also come up with another synonym and an antonym

○ Minutemen – Identify passages that they feel the group would benefit from hearing out loud and identifying ideas such as natural rights, government, freedom, equality or others they feel important

○  Radical Rascal – Student will locate areas in the text which reflects an idea that might be considered radical for that time.

The first set of documents the students will use with be Magna Carta, English Petition of Rights and the English Bill of Rights

**Day Three –**Students will switch roles and will examine Two Treatises on Government, Leviathian, The Spirit of the Laws. They will follow the same procedure as they did on day two

**Day Four** – Students will examine the Virginia Declaration of Rights and the Declaration of Independence.

**Assessment –** Students would be graded each day based on participation, readiness, completion of their role. Also, each student would have to produce a part of a newspaper that expresses the main themes they learned during the process. They could have the choice of a visual, an advice column, front page article, letter to the editor, or advertisement.

**Sources**

Ian Linden giving students choices

Differentiation with literature circles Carol Wilson

Multiple intelligence overview