



Image credit: Thomas E. Powers, "Keep off! Monroe Doctrine," Library of Congress.

*America Enters the World Stage:
The Monroe Doctrine*

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Standards of Learning: Virginia and U.S. History

Skills:

- VUS.1 The student will demonstrate skills for historical and geographical analysis and responsible citizenship, including the ability to:
- identify, analyze, and interpret primary and secondary source documents, records, and data, including artifacts, diaries, letters, photographs, journals, newspapers, historical accounts, and art, to increase understanding of events and life in the United States;
 - evaluate the authenticity, authority, and credibility of sources;
 - formulate historical questions and defend findings, based on inquiry and interpretation;
 - develop perspectives of time and place, including the construction of maps and various timelines of events, periods, and personalities in American history;
 - communicate findings orally and in analytical essays or comprehensive papers;
 - develop skills in discussion, debate, and persuasive writing with respect to enduring issues and determine how divergent viewpoints have been addressed and reconciled.

Expansion and Reform: 1788 to 1860

- VUS.6 The student will demonstrate knowledge of the major events from the last decade of the eighteenth century through the first half of the nineteenth century by:
- identifying the economic, political, and geographic factors that led to territorial expansion and its impact on the American Indians;

Objectives:

- Students will be able to identify and interpret primary source documents to increase understanding of events and life in the United States. (VUS.1a)
- Students will understand the significance of the Monroe Doctrine and how it impacted foreign policy during Monroe's presidency.
- Students will understand the legacy of the Monroe Doctrine and the ways that it was invoked in US foreign policy from the end of the American Civil War to the present.

Background:**Monroe in Paris**

George Washington appointed James Monroe as a special envoy to Paris in 1794, at the peak of the French Revolution. Though Monroe thought his Pro-French sentiments would disqualify him from the position, Washington saw them as an advantage and a way to balance different positions in his cabinet. Monroe's first address as an ambassador was a speech made to the National Convention, which was well received and expressed America's commitment to France; however, pro-British Federalists in America viewed the speech as a breach of American neutrality. Monroe left France in 1794 after U.S-France relations deteriorated dramatically following the John Jay Treaty, which attempted to end British hostility towards American borders and trade.

The Monroe Doctrine

President Monroe first articulated what would come to be called the Monroe Doctrine in his seventh annual address to Congress on December 2, 1823. Monroe declared that European powers must respect the Western Hemisphere as constituting the sphere of interest of the United States. The doctrine also warned that the United States would interpret any foreign involvement in the Western Hemisphere as aggression. The immediate purpose of the doctrine was to defend the interests of the United States in its closest neighbors. However, because of this, other nations in the Western Hemisphere and elsewhere have not always regarded the doctrine favorably, and interpretation has expanded and evolved since 1823 to the present.

Pre-Visit Activity:

Student should have an understanding of America as a new nation, through the War of 1812. In class, students should discuss the outcomes of the War of 1812, and how other nations viewed America at the time of the Monroe Doctrine in 1823.

1. Students will read the Monroe Doctrine:

The Monroe Doctrine

From President James Monroe's seventh annual message to Congress, December 2, 1823:

At the proposal of the Russian Imperial Government, made through the minister of the Emperor residing here, a full power and instructions have been transmitted to the Minister of the United States at St. Petersburg to arrange, by amicable negotiation, the respective rights and interests of the two nations on the northwest coast of this continent. A similar proposal has been made by His Imperial Majesty to the Government of Great Britain, which has likewise been acceded to. The Government of the United States has been desirous, by this friendly proceeding, of manifesting the great value which they have invariably attached to the friendship of the Emperor, and their solicitude to cultivate the best understanding with his Government. In the discussions to which this interest has given rise, and in the arrangements by which they may terminate the occasion has been judged proper for asserting, as a principle in which the rights and interests of the United States are involved, that the American continents, by the free and independent condition which they have assumed and maintain, are henceforth not to be considered as subjects for future colonization by any European powers....

It was stated at the commencement of the last session that a great effort was then making in Spain and Portugal, to improve the condition of the people of those countries, and that it appeared to be conducted with extraordinary moderation. It need scarcely be remarked, that the result has been, so far, very different from what was then anticipated. Of events in that quarter of the globe, with which we have so much intercourse, and from which we derive our origin, we have always been anxious and interested spectators. The citizens of the United States cherish sentiments the most friendly, in favor of the liberty and happiness of their fellow men on that side of the Atlantic. In the wars of the European powers, in matters relating to themselves, we have never taken any part, nor does it comport with our policy to do so. It is only when our rights are invaded, or seriously menaced, that we resent injuries, or make preparation for our defence. With the movements in this hemisphere, we are, of necessity, more immediately connected, and by causes which must be obvious to all enlightened and impartial observers. The political system of the allied powers is essentially different, in this respect, from that of America. This difference proceeds from that which exists in their respective governments. And to the defence of our own, which has been achieved by the loss of so much blood and treasure, and matured by the wisdom of their most enlightened citizens, and under which we have enjoyed unexampled felicity, this whole nation is devoted. We owe it, therefore, to candor, and to the amicable relations existing between the United States and those powers, to declare, that we should consider any attempt on their part to extend their system to any portion of this hemisphere, as dangerous to our peace and safety. With the existing colonies or dependencies of any European power we have not interfered, and shall not interfere. But with the governments who have declared their independence, and maintained it, and whose independence we have, on great consideration, and on just principles, acknowledged, we could not view any interposition for the purpose of oppressing them, or controlling, in any other manner, their destiny, by any European power in any other light than as the manifestation of an unfriendly disposition towards the United States. In the war between those new governments and Spain we declared our neutrality at the time of their recognition, and to this we have adhered, and shall continue to adhere, provided no change

shall occur, which, in the judgement of the competent authorities of this government, shall make a corresponding change, on the part of the United States, indispensable to their security.

The late events in Spain and Portugal, shew that Europe is still unsettled. Of this important fact, no stronger proof can be adduced than that the allied powers should have thought it proper, on any principle satisfactory to themselves, to have interposed, by force, in the internal concerns of Spain. To what extent such interposition may be carried, on the same principle, is a question, to which all independent powers, whose governments differ from theirs, are interested; even those most remote, and surely none more so than the United States. Our policy, in regard to Europe, which was adopted at an early stage of the wars which have so long agitated that quarter of the globe, nevertheless remains the same, which is, not to interfere in the internal concerns of any of its powers; to consider the government *de facto* as the legitimate government for us; to cultivate friendly relations with it, and to preserve those relations by a frank, firm, and manly policy; meeting, in all instances, the just claims of every power; submitting to injuries from none. But, in regard to these continents, circumstances are eminently and conspicuously different. It is impossible that the allied powers should extend their political system to any portion of either continent, without endangering our peace and happiness: nor can any one believe that our Southern Brethren, if left to themselves, would adopt it of their own accord. It is equally impossible, therefore, that we should behold such interposition, in any form, with indifference. If we look to the comparative strength and resources of Spain and those new governments, and their distance from each other, it must be obvious that she can never subdue them. It is still the true policy of the United States to leave the parties to themselves, in the hope that other powers will pursue the same course.

On Location Activity:

1. Students will visit the gallery “The Monroes in Paris.” Students will use the information there, as well as Monroe’s role in the Louisiana Purchase, to discuss Europe’s view of America prior to the Monroe Doctrine.
 - How was Monroe viewed by the Europeans with whom he worked?
 - Was this similar to or different from the way Europeans typically viewed Americans?
2. Students will visit the Monroe Doctrine Desk and discuss why the Monroe Doctrine was written and what impact it had.
 - What is the significance of the Monroe Doctrine?
 - How did this change the way America was viewed by other countries?
 - Did Europeans take the Monroe Doctrine and America as a nation seriously?
3. Students will move to the introductory room or the courtyard, and read the letter from Lyndon B. Johnson about how important the Monroe Doctrine is to the country (JM91.005AA). The teacher will use it as a starting point to discuss the Monroe Doctrine’s legacy.
 - *Explain or Review:* Roosevelt Corollary, John F. Kennedy’s actions in the Cuban Missile Crisis, or Ronald Reagan and the “Contra” guerilla fighters in Nicaragua. (This will depend on what students are familiar with and the scope of the class.)
 - Do you think that these interpretations align with President Monroe’s intentions for the Monroe Doctrine?

Alternate Virtual Activity: Students will view the Johnson letter (JM91.005AA) online.

Post-Visit Activity:

Students should be able to answer the following questions in writing or in class discussion:

What impact did the Monroe Doctrine have on America and abroad?

Was it possible for America to be isolated during the early Republic? Did the Monroe Doctrine accomplish an isolationist foreign policy?

How did future Presidents use and interpret the Monroe Doctrine?

Post-Visit Activity for Further Discussion: The Legacy of the Monroe Doctrine

The teacher will discuss how the Monroe Doctrine impacted American foreign policy in the years after Monroe's presidency, when America began to become a stronger world power. Depending on the span of the course and the point in the year, possible topics of when the United States invoked and interpreted the Monroe Doctrine may include:

- 1864: Napoleon III's invasion of Mexico
- 1870: US declares authority to mediate South American border disputes
- 1904: Roosevelt Corollary
- 1962: Communism in Cuba, Kennedy and the Cuban Missile Crisis
- 1980s: US involvement in civil wars in El Salvador and Nicaragua
- 2003: "Bush Corollary": Iraq invasion

Example:



1. Students will examine the political cartoon above.
 - What perspective do you think the artist is depicting? How does the artist view the Monroe Doctrine?
2. Students will answer in writing or in class discussion:
 - How did the Monroe Doctrine impact American foreign policy in the late 19th century in South America?
 - Do you think American involvement in South America at this time was a valid application of the Monroe Doctrine?

Visiting the James Monroe Museum and Memorial Library

For more information about visiting the museum or organizing a class field trip, please call:

Phone: (540) 654-1043

Or email _____ .

Hours:

The museum is open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday and from 1 to 5 p.m. on Sunday. During the months of December, January and February, the museum closes at 4 p.m. daily.

Directions:

The James Monroe Museum and Memorial Library is located in historic downtown Fredericksburg, Virginia, only one hour's drive from Washington, D.C. or Richmond, Virginia.

From Interstate 95, take exit 130A to Route 3 East. Follow Business Route 3 past the University of Mary Washington. Continue on Business Route 3 (William Street) to Charles Street. Turn right on Charles Street. The museum is housed in a one-story brick building on the right. On-street parking is available.