

The Monroe Doctrine

By Sharon Fabian

One of the many jobs that the president of the United States does is to make a yearly speech to Congress. In this speech, the president talks about important current events.

In 1823, President James Monroe was in his second term as president. He had made six of these yearly speeches so far. This year he would be making his seventh one. He would address a joint session of Congress, which means that it would be a meeting of both the Senate and the House of Representatives.

This year, President Monroe wanted to talk to Congress about issues that involved the rest of the North and South American continents. New independent countries had recently formed in South America from the Spanish settlements there. At the same time, European countries were still interested in controlling colonies in both North and South America.

Spain, France, and Russia still hoped for colonies in the Americas, and President Monroe saw this as a threat to the United States. England wanted the United States to join with them against the Spanish, French, and Russians. Some people thought that, since the United States was an independent country in America, it should support the new independent countries in South America. Monroe was afraid that this might lead to a war.

In his speech to Congress, he stated his ideas. He said, "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 power." He said that European interference in America would be "dangerous to our peace and safety."

Here are the main points that he made. First, there should be no more European colonization in America. Second, European countries should not interfere with the new, independent, Spanish American countries. Third, the United States should not interfere with European colonies that were already established in America.

This was not a law. It was just President Monroe's statement of what he believed would be best for the United States. The United States did not have any real power to enforce the provisions that he set out; however, it did receive support from England, which had a powerful Navy. England helped to prevent other countries from setting up new colonies in the Americas.

President Monroe made his speech just as the United States was becoming a world power. His speech told the rest of the world that the United States was taking an interest in more than just what happened inside of the United States. The United States was paying attention to whatever was happening in all of America.

President Monroe's speech set the stage for the United States to side with the other new countries in the Americas. It led to the United States taking on a role as the protector of the newly independent American countries.

After many years, the United States was still following the ideas set down by Monroe in his 1823 speech. The United States had believed in those ideas for so long, that it became more than just one speech. It became a doctrine -- a statement of the United States' policy. By about 20 years after President Monroe's death, his 1823 speech had become known as the Monroe Doctrine. Later presidents and congresses expanded on Monroe's ideas, and today, the Monroe Doctrine still helps to explain how the United States sees its role in the world.



Name _____



Date _____

The Monroe Doctrine

Questions

- _____ 1. James Monroe was president for _____ years.
- A. sixteen
 - B. eight
 - C. four
 - D. two
- _____ 2. The Monroe Doctrine is a statement of _____.
- A. the United States policy regarding the American continents
 - B. independence for the United States
 - C. war with Spain
 - D. all of the above
- _____ 3. A meeting of the House of Representatives and the Senate together is called a _____ session.
- A. joint
 - B. major
 - C. final
 - D. congress
- _____ 4. The Monroe Doctrine was important for _____.
- A. one year
 - B. eight years
 - C. a few months
 - D. many years
- _____ 5. Which happened last?
- A. Monroe made his first yearly speech to Congress.
 - B. Monroe made the speech that became known as the Monroe Doctrine.
 - C. Monroe was elected president.
 - D. Monroe was elected for a second term.
- _____ 6. The Monroe Doctrine said _____.
- A. There should be no more European colonization in America.
 - B. European countries should not interfere with the new, independent, Spanish American countries.
 - C. The United States should not interfere with European colonies that were already established in America.
 - D. all of the above
- _____ 7. In the 1820's the United States was _____.
- A. made up of 50 states
 - B. a brand new country
 - C. becoming a world power
 - D. made up of 13 colonies

Name _____



Date _____

_____ 8. After the Monroe Doctrine was established, the United States was seen as _____.

- A. a protector of North and South American countries
- B. a country that never gets involved in other countries' affairs
- C. a country that always sides with Europe
- D. all of the above

Copy the first quotation from James Monroe's speech in the article above. Then add three or more sentences to tell what you think President Monroe might have said next.

The Monroe Doctrine was a speech that stated President Monroe's thoughts about the United States' involvement with the other parts of North and South America. Suppose that you had just been elected president. Write a short speech giving your views about how the United States should interact with other countries, either in America or in another part of the world.
