Drawing a Boundary

Read how the Monroe Doctrine linked staying out of European conflicts to U.S. interests in the Americas.

8.C.7.2 "Examine the Monroe Doctrine as a policy of isolationism which was designed to protect the United States of America's interests in the Western Hemisphere."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two limits Monroe placed on European actions, circle two limits on U.S. actions, and put a star beside one U.S. interest the policy sought to protect.

A Warning Across the Atlantic

1 In 1823, many countries in Latin America had recently won independence from Spain. Leaders in the United States worried that European monarchies might help Spain take them back. A European power controlling nearby ports could threaten American trade and security. President James Monroe addressed Congress with a warning: the Western Hemisphere was no longer open to new European colonies. The message was not simply about defending other countries. It also aimed to keep rival powers from gaining influence close to the United States.

2 Monroe also drew a line around U.S. involvement overseas. The United States would stay out of European wars and would not disturb European colonies that already existed in the Americas. In return, European powers were not to interfere with independent nations in the Western Hemisphere. This approach is often described as isolationism, but it did not mean avoiding all contact with the world. The United States wanted distance from Europe's conflicts while protecting its own position in the Americas, where events could affect its future.

3 The declaration sounded bold, but the United States had limited military power to enforce it in 1823. Britain, whose merchants also wanted open trade with Latin America, opposed a Spanish return and had a strong navy. Monroe's warning therefore depended partly on conditions the United States did not control. Still, the doctrine stated a lasting U.S. goal: discourage new European control in the Western Hemisphere without joining Europe's struggles. Its promise to respect existing colonies also shows that the policy set boundaries rather than calling for war against every European presence.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why did Monroe's warning against new European colonies serve U.S. interests?

2. How did Monroe's policy keep the United States apart from European conflicts without avoiding all foreign affairs?

3. Why did the policy treat existing European colonies differently from attempts to control independent nations?

4. What made Monroe's warning difficult for the United States to enforce on its own?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine that, in 1823, a European kingdom announces plans to seize the harbor of an independent Caribbean island. Write a four-sentence note to Monroe proposing a response, explaining how it protects a U.S. interest, and identifying one practical limit on the response.

ANSWER KEY

Drawing a Boundary

GRADE 8 · 8.C.7.2

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two limits Monroe placed on European actions, circle two limits on U.S. actions, and put a star beside one U.S. interest the policy sought to protect. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why did Monroe's warning against new European colonies serve U.S. interests?	**It aimed to keep rival powers from gaining nearby ports and influence that could threaten U.S. trade and security.**
2	How did Monroe's policy keep the United States apart from European conflicts without avoiding all foreign affairs?	**The United States would stay out of European wars but would oppose European interference with independent nations in the Western Hemisphere.**
3	Why did the policy treat existing European colonies differently from attempts to control independent nations?	**The United States promised not to disturb existing colonies while warning Europe not to interfere with nations that were independent.**
4	What made Monroe's warning difficult for the United States to enforce on its own?	**The United States had limited military power in 1823, so the warning depended partly on conditions beyond its control, including Britain's opposition to a Spanish return.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

President Monroe, announce that seizing the harbor would violate your policy against European interference with independent nations in the Americas. A rival kingdom controlling that harbor could threaten U.S. ships and trade. Keep the United States out of unrelated European wars while making this warning public. Because the U.S. military is limited, a warning alone may not stop the kingdom.

Accept responses that connect limits on European control to U.S. trade, security, or influence in the Western Hemisphere. The note should propose a response consistent with the doctrine, name a U.S. interest, and recognize a practical limit without claiming that the United States could easily enforce its warning.