

15 The “I” Search Paper

Writing an “I” Search paper is an opportunity for the student to describe and reflect on the process of research that was used to complete a project (Macrorie, 1988). An “I” Search paper fosters original thought, reduces plagiarism, and builds research skills.

Instructions:

The first step is for students to record in a research journal what they already know about a topic prior to beginning their research. This might include a preliminary hypothesis that answers the research question.

Students then create an outline that details their plan for conducting their research and completing the project. This may include topics, key words for Internet search strategies, identifying resources, and a timeline for completing the project.

As students conduct their research, they should record in a research journal the sources they examine, what they learn from them, changes to their research strategy and timeline, difficulties they encounter, and strategies used to overcome these difficulties.

Once the research project is completed, students are then ready to use their research journal to write their “I” Search paper. This paper should include a narrative describing each of the phases listed below.

Phase I – The Opening

- Describe what you knew about the topic and your preliminary hypothesis before starting research.

Phase II – The Research Process

Explain the steps taken during the course of your research including:

- Where you began your research.
- How you were led to other sources such as books, periodicals, Internet sites, interviews, etc.
- How your research strategy changed from your original plan.
- The difficulties encountered and your efforts to overcome them.

Phase III – Analysis of What I Discovered

- Describe the most significant information learned about your topic and how this changed your thinking about the topic.
- Include details, examples, and/or quotes to support this new thinking.

Phase IV – My Growth as a Researcher

- What skills did you develop or improve during your research?
- How might you conduct your research differently in the future?

Phase V – The Product

- Paper
- Presentation or performance

Monroe Doctrine

Phase I – The Opening

- What I already know:

The Monroe Doctrine was a part of Monroe's message to Congress on December 2, 1823

The Doctrine stated that any further European colonization of the Western Hemisphere would be seen as a threat to peace by the United States, which presumably meant that the United States would recognize the independence of South America

- Hypothesis: The Monroe Doctrine preserved the United States' position of foreign non-entanglement while protecting its interests in South America and its reputation in Europe.

Phase II – The Research Process

- I started my research by consulting *James Monroe: The Quest for National Identity* by Harry Ammon.
- I then searched online and found the actual text of the doctrine at <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/monroe.htm> and read some interpretations of the doctrine at <http://usinfo.state.gov/usa/infousa/facts/democrac/50.htm#140>

- The research revealed that the actual doctrine was really written by Adams (Monroe's secretary) and that Canning (a British official) had previously suggested a joint resolution in regards to the South American countries. The doctrine was really a stand against the possibility of Spanish or French colonization and control of South America, and without the backing of the British fleet, the Monroe Doctrine in practice would not have amounted to very much.

New Hypothesis: The Monroe Doctrine, while seemingly insignificant, laid the foundation for future American imperialism.

Phase III – Analysis of What I Discovered

- Basic Information and details from research:

1823 – Among Monroe's cabinet and advisors there was initial enthusiasm for a joint proclamation with Canning but the Americans' feelings toward the British were less than cordial and a joint proclamation would therefore not have very much public support.

Monroe supports the cause of human freedom and independence in Latin America.

At one time, Monroe wished to publicly endorse the Greek Revolution, thus acknowledging them as a liberated government.

The doctrine says that it is "... impossible that the allied powers should extend their political system to any portion of either continent without endangering our peace and happiness."

Latin America had been struggling for independence, and the U.S. had recognized the new republics in Argentina, Chile, Peru, Colombia, and Mexico in 1822.

The main purpose of the doctrine was to stop European Colonization.

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Proved to be the beginning of an independent American foreign policy, which only succeeded with the help of the British fleet.

"...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..."

- Analysis:

The Monroe Doctrine was probably a bit ambitious for its time, as the United States had no real way of enforcing its claims, but it did demonstrate that the Europeans held different positions than did the Americas.

The doctrine is also unique in that it is the first show of strength in the U.S.'s convictions and support for a foreign nation, although it was effectively "empty" as Monroe had to abide by the popular non-entanglement philosophy

Phase IV – My Growth as a Researcher

- I practiced my reasoning and analytical skills, and as a researcher began to discern useful and reliable sources from those sources that would not be undesirable
- In the future I might find a wider range of opinions about the topic, and would probably rely more heavily on printed source materials.

Phase V – The Product

- Design a Presentation:

Part I – Introduce the ideas behind the Monroe Doctrine

Need for independence of Latin America

Preservation of such ideals by the United States

Need to condemn future European colonization

Part II – Actually quote the first part of the Monroe Doctrine

Part III – Analyze its significance

Beginning of Imperialism

Showed the U.S. to be a world power

Began the process of firmer foreign relations and diplomacy, allowed the U.S. to gain a better position as far as prestige and reputation are concerned

Part IV – Conclusion

Why did the Monroe Doctrine work?

Public perception of a strong government demanding the respect in the world of the ideals for which it was founded

Did it really help the South American countries?

Not to the extent they were hoping for, but it did begin the process of better trade and diplomatic relations