

"Panama Canal: America's Route to World Power"

Process Paper Word Count: 482

Before the project even started, we knew we wanted to work with each other, so naturally, we started to brainstorm early. For the most part, neither of us had ideas we felt strongly about, but initially, we thought an idea revolving around a scientific revolution, or a significant war would be interesting. Later, when we considered the notion of exploring the Panama Canal, we worried that the Panama Canal wasn't significant enough. However, with some light research, the intrigue of how "just a canal" could reshape the geographical, economic, and political landscape of the world was enticing.

Initially, we looked up reliable reference sources, like World Book Online, in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the Panama Canal. Afterward, we collected sources that archived sets of primary sources, like treaties, speeches, and maps so that we had a basis of evidence. Garnering a variety of primary and secondary sources, when it was time to investigate our compelling question, very few of our sources were actually useful and our research process nearly had to restart. However, since we now had a compelling question, we could develop our thesis. With the thesis, we honed in on more specific sources to help with the analysis. Specifically, we looked for raw data, detailed maps, and politically and socially revealing speeches and treaties. Using these chunks of evidence made gaps in our research clear, and therefore fixes easier to find.

A Website offers many advantages, and it's accessibility and potential for high-level analysis made it perfect for our project. Since we had different class times, working on an exhibit, performance or even a documentary would be difficult to schedule. However, with a website, we could add anything, anywhere, and at any time. Additionally, the higher word limit of the website allowed us to flesh out our reasoning. Since there is a focus on multiple nations in our project, to do justice for all required an extensive amount of reasoning and evidence. Also, the website offers flexibility on what type of evidence we could use, and how in-depth we could get with it. These reasons made this category ideal.

The Panama Canal, like many significant accomplishments, broke multiple barriers—most profoundly, the geographical and physical barriers of the Isthmus of Panama. However, the economic and political barriers that it broke are significant as well, and our project places

a great focus on this. Through connecting two oceans, the entirety of the western hemisphere has more cost-effective means of travel, which increases trade. Nations like the U.S. could develop mutually beneficial economic relationships with countries in the eastern hemisphere, which indirectly enhances the political standings between them. With this, the economic barrier of cost of trade is partially broken along with the previously unlikely political relations. The impacts of the Panama Canal have been immense, and with its latest expansion, it will continue to reshape trade.