

Europe Case Study

Who Owns the World's Treasures?





Directions

Prior to the lesson

- Print the readings, images, Discussion Cards, and Opinion/Proof graphic organizer. Make copies according to the number of students you teach. You will need one set of images for each small group of 3-4 students. You do not need to copy a set of the readings for each student unless you wish for them to mark the text with highlighting, etc.
- Prepare your materials. Copy and cut out the number signs.

Day of the lesson

1. Prepare for the discussion by having students **read the two-page handout** and complete the **Opinion / Proof**. You can choose to assign your students a side (Greece or Great Britain) or have them read and take notes for both sides of the argument.
2. Put your students into small groups (3-4) for the discussion. Give a **set of the images** to your students to examine, then ask the question "*Who should own the statues from the Parthenon?*" Give your students time to discuss the answer in their small group.
3. Prepare for a large class debate by passing out the **number cards**. Assign a different card for each group. Share the first question to the whole group. Call on a speaker from each group to stand and share their answer. They will then call on the speaker for the next group by calling out another groups' number.
4. Once the debate is concluded, you can ask follow-up questions to further the discussion. These questions can include: "*Who owns the world's heritage sites? What should be done to protect shared heritage sites? Should all museums return artwork to their country of origin?*"



Looking for an extension? Encourage your students to research other World Heritage Sites and how they are protected. The UNESCO site can provide valuable information to your students: <https://whc.unesco.org/en/about/>

Elgin Marbles



Statue of a woman dancing from the Parthenon, now part of the Elgin Marbles collection in the British Museum, London.



Ancient Greek marble sculpture from the Parthenon, on the Acropolis in Athens, now part of the Elgin Marbles collection in the British Museum, London.

Elgin Marbles



Over 6 million tourists visit the Elgin Marbles every year. British Museum in London, England.

The Parthenon



The Caryatid porch on the Acropolis in Greece. These are now replicas. Five of the originals are in the Acropolis Museum while the sixth is in the British Museum, after it was detached in 1804 by Lord Elgin.

The Parthenon



Over 1.5 million tourists visit the Parthenon every year. In the background you can see many of the other buildings located on the Acropolis.

The Parthenon



The Greek government built the Acropolis Museum in 2009. Many of the statues located in this museum are duplicates, with the originals being housed in the British Museum.

The Parthenon

Cultural heritage sites and artifacts fill the world around us. The pyramids of Ancient Egypt, the temples of Petra in Jordan, the sculptures of ancient Greece - all reflect the culture and religion of the period when it was created. But as time passes it becomes difficult to determine who owns these precious artifacts and heritage sites. Does it belong to the country of origin? Does it belong to the people who can protect them? Or does it belong to the worldwide community, open and visible for all to see?

Thousands of years have passed since some of these ancient artifacts were created, who owns them now? In addition to time, many precious pieces of art were removed by invading armies or purchased through illegal means. Some famous artwork has been destroyed by hostile governments such as when the Taliban destroyed statues of Buddha in 2001. Should conquering countries return stolen artwork? Should artifacts be removed if they are in danger of being destroyed? Who protects our world heritage sites? Questions like these cause conflict between countries around the globe.

One example of this controversy surrounds the Parthenon in Athens, Greece, a World Heritage site. The Parthenon was built on the Acropolis in Athens over 2,500 years ago to honor the goddess Athena. Originally built as a temple, the Parthenon has also served as a church, a mosque, and even an armory. Decorated with ornate statues, the Parthenon symbolizes the achievements of Ancient Greece, including democracy and the foundations of Western civilization. The Parthenon is important to people around the world and has been copied by many other countries - including the United States. A full-scale replica of the Parthenon was built in Tennessee and many government buildings in the United States are styled after the Parthenon to represent our commitment to law and democracy.



The Parthenon is built on the top of a hill called the Acropolis. It is one of the world's greatest cultural monuments and is a UNESCO World Heritage site.

But over the thousands of years of existence, the Parthenon has fallen into disrepair. In 1687, while it was being used as an armory, an invading army targeted the Parthenon and blew off the roof, destroying a large portion of the building and many of its ornate statues. The Parthenon was left in ruins. Statues were stolen and even broken up to be used as building material. A very small number of the sculptures remain at the Parthenon in Athens. Most of the statues and artwork have been moved to the British Museum, the Louvre in Paris, or other museums around Europe.

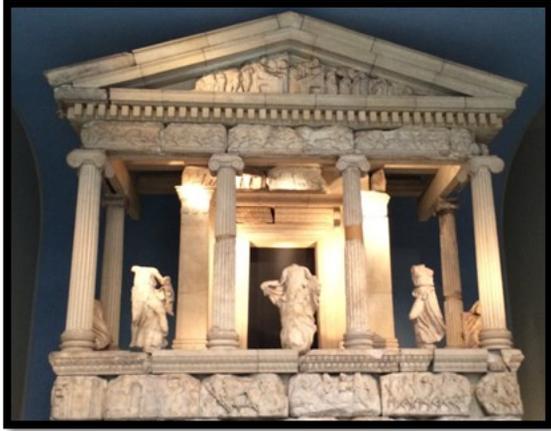


Controversy exists about the ownership of these precious statues from the Parthenon - who owns them and where do they belong? If world heritage sites belong to the people of the world, does it matter where they are located? To answer these questions, it is important to discover why they were moved.

Many of the original statues were removed from the Parthenon.

The Controversy

In the early 1800's, many of the statues from the Parthenon were removed from Greece by a British ambassador called Lord Elgin. Lord Elgin loved Greek art and was upset when he saw the damaged statues around the Parthenon. He was given permission by the Turkish government (who controlled Greece at this time) to measure, sketch, and copy the statues that lay in ruins around the Parthenon. Soon however, he claimed that he had a royal decree from the Turkish Sultan to remove the statues, and Lord Elgin started shipping the statues to England.



The Elgin Marbles are statues and other pieces of artwork brought to England by Lord Elgin. He spent over 70,000 pounds to have the artwork shipped to England.

Once these statues arrived in Great Britain, Lord Elgin planned on using them to decorate his mansion. He had paid a large amount of money to protect the statues and ship them to his home. However, when the statues arrived, Lord Elgin needed money and ended up selling them to the British Museum.

Now called the Elgin Marbles, the British Museum has displayed these statues for over 100 years. Millions of people have visited the Elgin Marbles in the British Museum over the last 200 years. The purchase of these statues was controversial, and they remain controversial today - mainly because the Greek government claims that Lord Elgin stole the statues, and that he really didn't have a royal decree to remove them. Many people claim that these statues represent the cultural heritage of Greece and are irreplaceable.

The government of Greece has been working for over 40 years to have the statues returned. The British Museum has kept the statues, claiming that if they had remained in Greece, they would have been destroyed long ago. The question remains, who owns these statues that represent the cultural heritage of Greece?

Greek Claims

- The statues were stolen, no royal decree has ever been found.
- The statues should be returned to their original home and placed on display in the Museum of the Acropolis, built specifically for these statues.
- Other countries have returned artwork taken from the Parthenon.
- The artwork should be in its original and cultural environment.
- The artwork is part of the legacy of Greece.

British Claims

- The statues were purchased legally from the Turkish government.
- Greece was not strong enough to protect the statues from invading armies and they could have been destroyed.
- Greece doesn't have the technology to preserve and care for the statues.
- More people can see the statues if they are in the British Museum.
- The statues are part of everyone's shared heritage and are important to the world.

Europe

Opinion / Proof

What do you think? Support your opinion with 3 facts from the reading and two of your own original ideas.

Opinion

Proof

The statues should be returned to Greece.



1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Europe

Opinion / Proof

What do you think? Support your opinion with 3 facts from the reading and two of your own original ideas.

Opinion

Proof

The statues should stay in the British Museum.



1.

2.

3.

4.

5.