NEWS LESSON

Should Britain Return Greece's Ancient Sculptures?



BEFORE YOU READ

1 Warm up

Talk about these questions with a partner.

1. Would you rather see an ancient object where it was made or in a big world museum?
2. What gives an object a sense of belonging to a place?
3. Would a perfect copy offer the same museum experience?

2 Key words

These words are in the article. Write the letter of the meaning (A to H) in each box.

1	**sculptures**	☐	A	in a way that the law allows
2	**temple**	☐	B	statues and other art made by carving stone or wood
3	**empire**	☐	C	a discussion where people give different opinions
4	**surviving**	☐	D	a group of countries ruled by one powerful government
5	**legally**	☐	E	still existing after a long time
6	**argues**	☐	F	controlled a country as its leader or government
7	**ruled**	☐	G	gives reasons to show that something is true
8	**debate**	☐	H	a building where people pray or worship

3 Read

Read the article and underline the key words from task 2. The paragraphs are numbered.

Greece wants the Parthenon sculptures in the British Museum to come home. Who do they really belong to?

1 Inside the British Museum in London, visitors can see ancient marble sculptures that once decorated the Parthenon, a famous temple in Athens. The sculptures are more than 2,000 years old. They are often called the Elgin Marbles, after the British diplomat who took them to Britain in the early 1800s. For many years, Greece has asked for them to be returned.

2 When the sculptures were removed, Greece was controlled by the Ottoman Empire. Lord Elgin said he had permission from Ottoman officials to carry out work at the ancient site, but people still disagree about what he was allowed to take. Several large pieces were moved to Britain, and the British government later bought the collection. The sculptures have been in the British Museum for more than 200 years.

3 The Greek government believes the pieces belong together with other Parthenon sculptures in Athens. It says they are part of an important ancient building and of Greek cultural history. The Acropolis Museum, near the Parthenon, has space to display them. Greece wants visitors to understand how the surviving pieces originally fitted together.

4 The British Museum takes a different view. It argues that the sculptures were acquired legally and that displaying them alongside objects from other cultures helps people learn about world history. There is also a British law that normally stops the museum giving away items from its permanent collection. Officials have discussed possible loans or an arrangement in which the sculptures spend time in both countries, but ownership remains a major problem.

5 This argument is bigger than one museum. Collections around the world contain important objects from countries that were once ruled by foreign powers. Some people believe those objects should return to the places where they were made. Others think large international museums allow more people to see them. The difficulty is deciding what is fair today when the objects changed hands so long ago. Whatever happens, the debate asks an important question: who has the right to tell a country's history?

Sources: ARTnews. Picture: AI illustration.

4 True, false or not given

Circle **T** (true), **F** (false) or **NG** (the article does not say).

1. Lord Elgin came from Britain. T F NG
2. The British Museum can freely give away objects from its permanent collection. T F NG
3. Lord Elgin had family in Greece. T F NG
4. Officials have talked about the sculptures spending time in both countries. T F NG
5. The Acropolis Museum has no space for the sculptures. T F NG

5 Vocabulary

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed.

collection **curator** **diplomat** **loan** **ownership** **permission** **treaty**

1. You need written _____ from the owner before you take photos inside the private gallery.
2. She works as a _____ and represents her country in a foreign capital.
3. My grandfather has a large _____ of old coins.
4. Who has legal _____ of the painting is still unclear after the sale.
5. The museum asked the gallery for a short _____ of the painting for its summer show.

6 Verb forms

Write the correct form of the verb in brackets.

1. Lord Elgin _____ several large pieces from Athens to London. (TAKE)
2. In the end, the British government _____ the collection. (BUY)
3. The museum _____ that the sculptures were acquired legally. (SAY)
4. Last week, we _____ to the museum by train. (GO)
5. The guide _____ up a photo of the temple to show us. (HOLD)

7 Language focus: phrasal verbs

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed. A phrasal verb is a verb plus a small word. The small word changes the meaning, so learn the two words together.

break find give go look set stand

1. Visitors can _____ out more about the temple on the museum's website.
2. Greece wants Britain to _____ back the sculptures.
3. The museum will _____ up a new room for ancient art.
4. I will _____ up the history of the Acropolis before my trip.
5. When you finish this room, _____ on to the next one.

SPEAK

8 Talk about it

Discuss in pairs or small groups. Give reasons for your answers.

1. What would a fair agreement over the sculptures look like?
2. Does easy access for visitors settle where an object should stay?
3. Who should help tell the story beside an object in a museum?

9 Role-play: Grandmother's painting

Work in pairs. Read your card, then have the conversation. Swap roles and do it again.

Student A · the cousin who wants to keep it

You and your cousin have inherited a valuable painting from your grandmother. You want to keep it in the family home, where she hung it. Explain why it matters to you, and listen to your cousin's idea.

Student B · the cousin who wants to lend it

A local museum has asked to show the painting for a year. You think more people should see it. Explain your idea, and try to find an arrangement you can both accept.

Useful phrases

I'd hate to see it leave the family.
That's a fair point, but more people could enjoy it.
What if we lent it for six months?
I don't think it's right to give it away.
We'd still own it, wouldn't we?
Let's try to find a compromise.

Afterwards, tell the class: where did the painting end up, and was it a fair decision?

ANSWER KEY

2 Key words

1 B · 2 H · 3 D · 4 E · 5 A · 6 G · 7 F · 8 C

4 True, false or not given

1 T · 2 F · 3 NG · 4 T · 5 F

5 Vocabulary

1 permission · 2 diplomat · 3 collection · 4 ownership · 5 loan

6 Verb forms

1 took · 2 bought · 3 says · 4 went · 5 held

7 Language focus

1 find · 2 give · 3 set · 4 look · 5 go

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