

Social Studies Debate #1

Based on the evidence in this article, **should the Parthenon Marbles be returned to Greece?** Why or why not?

(Use a highlighter or pencil to underline key evidence in this article. Write your comments and questions in the right margin.)

WHST.6-8.1a, b & c

Ideas (Claim)

I can choose a side of an argument and identify reasons that support my choice. (R)

Name _____

Date _____ Period _____

Notes on my thoughts, reactions and questions as I read:

The Parthenon Marbles

From "The Parthenon Marbles." *The Parthenon Marbles*. Hellenic Electronic Center, Web. 22 Oct. 2015.



When and why was the Parthenon built?

2500 years ago, the city of Athens was attacked by soldiers from Persia. The Athenians had to leave their city. Eventually they managed to defeat the Persians but Athens was

now a ruin. It would have to be rebuilt. The man who took charge of rebuilding Athens was called Pericles. He got all the best architects, sculptors and other craftsmen together and they rebuilt Athens. It was full of wonderful buildings. But the best building of all was the Parthenon.

What was the Parthenon?

The Parthenon was a temple to the goddess Athena. It was built on top of a hill called the Acropolis. You could see it from all over Athens. Inside the Parthenon there was a huge statue of the goddess Athena. Outside the Parthenon, high up on its four walls there was a frieze. This frieze was a series of sculptures that went all the way round the building.



These sculptures were not added to the building. The sculptors actually cut the frieze out of the very stone which formed the walls of the building. Many people think that this frieze is one of the most wonderful works of art ever created.



What happened to the Parthenon?

The Parthenon did not remain a temple to Athena forever. The statue of Athena was destroyed. When Christianity spread through Europe, the temple was turned into a church. Later, the Turks took over Athens and they turned it into a mosque. However, the building survived for hundreds and hundreds of years. Then in 1687 an Italian general called

Francesco Morosini arrived in Athens. He was at war with the Turks. He fired on the Acropolis. He knew that the Turks were using the Parthenon as an arsenal -- where weapons are stored. The Parthenon was full of gunpowder. One of the shells fired by Morosini landed in the Parthenon and all the gunpowder exploded. This did terrible damage to the Parthenon. The roof was blown off and everything inside was destroyed. But, incredibly, the frieze survived.

Who was Lord Elgin?

Elgin was a Scottish Lord who hoped to do well in politics. At the beginning of the 19th century Lord Elgin was appointed ambassador to the Ottoman Empire. The capital of the Ottoman Empire was in Istanbul in what is now called Turkey. At that time relations between Britain and Turkey were very good. Why? Egypt had been part of the Ottoman Empire until Napoleon, the French general, defeated the Turks and occupied Egypt. The British defeated Napoleon and the French left Egypt. As a result the Turks were very grateful to the British.

Why did Elgin take the Marbles?

Lord Elgin wanted to find some ancient Greek statues to decorate his mansion in Scotland. He travelled in Greece, looking for things to send back to Britain. He employed an artist to make drawings of Greek statues and buildings. When he came to the Acropolis he was given permission to remove anything which was lying on the ground. But Elgin decided to take the statues of the Parthenon frieze and send them back to England.



In order to take the frieze, Elgin had to get workmen to saw the frieze off the building. It also involved destroying parts of the building in order to lower the sculptures to the ground. Elgin did a lot of damage to the Parthenon building.



Elgin took about half of the frieze and some other sculptures from the Parthenon. He sent them back to England. After that things went very badly for Elgin. He found himself so short of money that he decided to sell the Parthenon Marbles to the British government. Some Members of Parliament thought that Elgin had done a terrible thing in removing

the Parthenon Marbles. However, it was decided to buy the Parthenon Marbles from Elgin and put them in the British Museum. And they have stayed there ever since.

Why didn't the Greeks stop Elgin?

When Elgin took the Parthenon Marbles, Greece was not an independent country. It was part of the Ottoman Empire. The Turks ruled in the lands of the Greeks. So the Greeks were not able to stop Elgin from taking the Marbles. Twenty years later the Greeks started a war of independence and soon Greece became an independent country. Immediately the Greeks demanded the return of the Parthenon Marbles, but their request was refused.

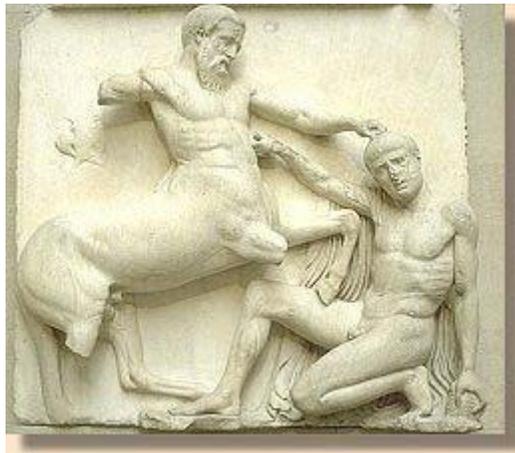
The Campaign for the return of the Marbles to Athens

In the early 1980s, a famous Greek actress called Melina Mercouri became Minister of Culture in the Greek government. She began the campaign for the return of the Parthenon Marbles. That campaign continues today, although Melina Mercouri died in 1994.

Arguments in favor of returning the Parthenon Marbles to Greece

1. The Parthenon Marbles were stolen from Greece by Lord Elgin. Elgin did not have permission to cut sculptures from the Parthenon. He only had permission to take pieces that were lying on the ground.

2. It is wrong that half of the Parthenon Marbles are in London and half are in Athens. They should all be in the same place. They were created in Athens, so they should be on display in Athens.



3. The British Museum has not looked after the Marbles as well as they say they have. In the 1930s the Marbles were cleaned. This cleaning damaged the surface of the Marbles.

