**Parthenon Marbles:**

The sculptures of the frieze, pediments, and metopes of the Parthenon were removed at the beginning of the 19th century when Lord Elgin bought them from the Turkish Ottomans who ruled Greece at the time and brought them to his home in England. His own financial troubles forced him to sell the sculptures to the British government in 1816, since which time they have been on display in the British Museum in London.

Greece gained independence from the Turks in 1832 and has many times over the last centuries asked for the return of the so-called “Elgin Marbles.” Britain has refused, at times stating that they were bought in good faith from the legitimate government at the time, that they would have been destroyed in the wars of the 19th century had they remained in Greece, and that they were safer, better cared for, and available for more people to view in London than they would be in Athens.

Recently, the Greek government completed a state-of-the-art museum, overlooking the Parthenon, to serve as a home for the marbles. They have again requested their return. As yet, the British government has refused. What do you think? To whom do the marbles belong? Why does the modern state of Greece have any more claim to them than any one else? Is there any way that Britain’s argument is valid?

What would such a return mean for all the other items in the British Museum and in museums around the world? Should every art object be returned to near its place of origin? These are difficult questions and there are no easy answers, but considering them tells us a lot about the way that we use art to define our culture.