The Parthenon Sculptures

The Parthenon sculptures are from an ancient Greek temple in Athens in Greece. Where the sculptures should be displayed causes a lot of disagreement.

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Over 200 years agoa man called Lord Elgin visited Athens and brought the Parthenon sculptures back to London. They have been displayed in the British Museum in London since 1817.

Some people want the sculptures to be returned to Greece, where a museum has been built specially for them. Others think they should stay in the British Museum, where they can be looked at with objects from around the world.

**Activity**

Your task is to debate whether the Parthenon sculptures should be returned to Athens or stay in the British Museum in London.

Split into two groups. One group should think of arguments why the sculptures should be returned to Athens. The other group should think of arguments why the sculptures should stay in the British Museum.

**Parthenon key facts to research:**

* When was the Parthenon built?
* Where were the sculptures displayed on the Parthenon?
* What do the sculptures show?

A picture containing building, sculpture, stone

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**Did you know?**

The Parthenon sculptures were originally painted with lots of bright colours**!**

**Ideas for where to research the Parthenon sculptures:**

* For an introduction to the Parthenon watch this video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OkI9lbmTyg0>
* For the debate around the Parthenon sculptures watch this video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_q_anSjKpIM>
* Check out this website: <http://www.parthenon.newmentor.net/children.htm#elgin>
* Read this article by Classicist Mary Beard <https://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/greeks/parthenon_debate_01.shtml>
* Learn about what the sculptures show from this website: <https://academickids.com/encyclopedia/index.php/Parthenon>

Group A: Return the Parthenon Sculptures to Greece

**Can you think of 4 reasons why the Parthenon sculptures should be returned to Greece?**

**Some ideas to help with your arguments:**

* Where were the sculptures made? Should they be displayed in the same place that they were made?
* How did the sculptures end up in London? Did Lord Elgin have permission to remove the sculptures?
* Could the British Museum display replicas instead?
* Some of the sculptures are still in Greece. Is it a good thing or a bad thing for the sculptures to be split up?

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A picture containing building, outdoor, sky, place of worship

Description automatically generatedA picture containing sculpture, building, old, stone

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**Can you think of 4 reasons why the British Museum should keep the Parthenon Sculptures?**

**Some ideas to help with your arguments:**

* In the British Museum the sculptures can be seen alongside objects from around the world. Is this a good way to display the sculptures?
* If the sculptures are returned to Greece, will other countries want objects from the British Museum to be returned?
* Does the British Museum take good care of the sculptures?
* Who can see the sculptures in the British Museum? Is it free to visit?

Group B: Keep the Parthenon Sculptures in the British Museum