

SHOULD STOLEN ART AND ARTIFACTS BE RETURNED TO THEIR CULTURE OF ORIGIN?

THIS ACTIVITY SHOULD TAKE ABOUT 90 MINUTES. IF LEARNERS ARE ABLE TO REVIEW MEDIA PRIOR TO THE LESSON, ACTIVITY TIME SHOULD BE 45 TO 60 MINUTES.

INVESTIGATE

Read, watch, and listen to the three media resources on the Thinkalong module. Learners can use the Investigate graphic organizer to summarize each piece of media and record new information. Below are summaries of the three pieces of media curated in the Thinkalong module.

RESCUED OR SEIZED? GREECE'S LONG FIGHT WITH UK OVER PARTHENON MARBLES

PBS NewsHour | September 22, 2018 | Video

8:36 minutes

The Parthenon Marbles are at the center of the most well-known art restitution debate.

- The Parthenon Marbles, displayed in the British Museum, are almost 50% of the marble sculptures that once decorated a famous ancient Greek temple called the Parthenon, the remains of which still stand atop the Acropolis in Athens, Greece.
- In the early 19th century, a British Ambassador, Lord Elgin, acquired the marbles from Ottoman officials who were in control of Athens at the time.
- According to the British Museum, Lord Elgin rescued the marbles that were at risk for damage or deterioration by bringing them back to London and eventually gifting them to the British Government.
- Greece argues that the objects should be returned to Athens and reunited with the rest of the building's marbles, now in the Acropolis Museum, contending they were unlawfully obtained by Elgin.
- The British Museum argues that having the marbles split between London and Athens is ideal, because it allows more people to experience the famous artworks.

AFRICAN ART RESTITUTION

The World | January 10, 2020 | Audio

5:43 minutes

Europe's major museums are being asked by African nations to return thousands of objects taken during the era of Colonialism.

- Since its independence in 1960, the West African country of Benin (formerly Dahomey) has requested repeatedly that objects in Western museums, taken during Colonialism, be returned to the country.
- In 2018, the French President, Emmanuel Macron, called for African artworks in French museums that were taken during the Colonial era to be restituted.
- Scholars cite that likely over 90% of all African art is housed outside of the African continent today.
- Those resistant to restitution argue that African countries lack the appropriate infrastructure to house valuable, sometimes fragile, cultural objects.
- The US and Europe address the question of restitution differently because museums in Europe are state-owned, while the majority of US museums are private. As a result, objects in European museums can only be restituted by governmental legislation.

Using public media — video, audio and digital reports — about newsworthy topics, these classroom-based exercises help learners to think critically about media messages, develop informed opinions, and practice how to take a stand.

ONCE PLUNDERED BY COLONIALISTS, CHINESE ART IS BEING STOLEN BACK

Here & Now | August 28, 2018 | Audio

9:50 minutes

This interview suggests that the Chinese government might have been involved in recent thefts from US and European museums of Chinese art that was taken during Colonialism.

- A series of thefts of Chinese art from US and European museums have taken place since 2010.
- Thieves are targeting objects that were removed from China between 1840 and 1949, when China was invaded by Colonial armies.
- The Chinese government has repeatedly requested the return of objects that they argue were stolen.
- Author Alex W. Palmer suggests that the Chinese government's intense interest in retrieving the objects suggests that Chinese officials might be playing a role in their theft, or they might simply be benefitting from the actions of free agents.

KEY WORDS

Look out for these important keywords in the news stories. Discuss the definitions with your learners and see how they affect the understanding of the story.

- Colonialism
- Restitution
- Repatriation
- Artifact

CONTEMPLATE

Learners will use media literacy questions to critically engage with news by thinking about its purpose, searching for bias and discussing missing perspectives. They will answer the 5 Key Questions of Media Literacy created by the Center for Media Literacy, which are:

1. Who created this message?
2. What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?
3. How might different people understand this message differently than me?
4. What values, lifestyles and points of view are represented in, or omitted from, this message?
5. Why is this message being sent?

A graphic organizer is included in this guide and the Thinkalong website to help learners answer these five questions about each piece of media.

DEBATE

Use the debate tool on the module webpage to help form evidence-based responses to the debate question.

Thinkalong is designed to help learners engage with real issues that are relevant to their lives. [Structured discussions](#) allow learners to practice their critical thinking skills through evidence-based debate with their peers. Discussions are designed to take about 30 minutes. Educators are encouraged to modify aspects that work best for their learners.

To encourage civil discourse, please review the [Code of Conduct](#) with your learners.

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