



### 2018/2019 Research Topic 3

THW require museums to return artifacts to their country of origin



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### Helpful research links:

<http://www.bbc.com/culture/story/20150421-who-should-own-indigenous-art>

<https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2015/jun/29/museums-looting-art-artefacts-world-culture>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2005/11/17/arts/design/museums-under-fire-on-ancient-artifacts.html>

This research booklet is intended as a starting point for both junior and senior high students. Debaters are expected to conduct their own additional research. Ideas presented are intended to inspire greater inquiry, and debaters should broaden the scope of the debate to other topics beyond those presented here.

### Model and Definition

Proposition team should create fair and balanced definitions for the debate.

A model may clarify to the judges a team's position and can be a valuable tool. If proposition team would like to implement a model, they may want to consider questions such as the penalties for non-compliance, whether any compensation is required, etc.

### Potential Proposition Points

#### 1. Righting historical wrongs

Often, artifacts that are displayed in a country that is not the artifacts country of origin were stolen, looted, or otherwise taken without the meaningful and informed consent of the owner. While people alive now are often not directly responsible for this theft, that does not erase the fact that a wrong has been committed that has not been meaningfully rectified. Therefore, it is principally required that museums return ownership of these artifacts.

#### 2. Further appreciation for the art

Artifacts can be better appreciated when placed in the actual context in which it was created. This is because the surrounding culture helps inform why a particular artifact holds importance for a group of people and its artistic or historical appeal, all of which improve tourist appreciation for the work.

#### 3. Advances the culture the artifact originates from

These artifacts held by other museums are often very significant works in the culture or history of the people living in the country of origin. By returning these artifacts, we allow those people (who may not have been able to travel to other museums around the world to see these artifacts or otherwise interact with them) to better engage with their culture and history, further advancing their collective identity.



## Potential Opposition Points

### **1. Historical artifacts should be accessible to the greatest number of people**

Historical artifacts are an important way for individuals to learn about the past and they should be shared with people. The country of origin should not have a monopoly over knowledge since these artifacts are a part of our collective history.

### **2. It is important for these artifacts to be removed from their country of origin in order to be preserved.**

Many times, countries of origin do not have a safe way to preserve these artifacts. Museums allow for the secure preservation of important historical artifacts and the most important thing is the preservation of our history. For example, wooden artifacts in Africa would decay due to the humidity.

### **3. The acquisition of artifacts is not always clear**

Although some artifacts may have been acquired illegally in the past, the evidence for these kinds of activities is often ambiguous. It is almost impossible to conclude with certainty which artifacts were acquired legally or illegally. This would require time and resources that can be better allocated to museums' core objectives.

