WHY ARE PEOPLE STILL ARGUING ABOUT THE PARTHENON SCULPTURES?



WHAT'S HAPPENING?

Greece's prime minister has promised to increase efforts to bring the Parthenon sculptures back from the British Museum. The sculptures were made in ancient Athens in the fifth century BC, when the Parthenon was built as a temple to the goddess Athena. More than 200 years ago, Lord Elgin, Britain's ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, arranged for many of the sculptures to be removed and taken to Britain. The British Museum bought them in 1816. Greece says the sculptures were taken unfairly and should be reunited with the parts that remain in Athens. The museum argues that it legally owns them and that keeping them in London allows people from around the world to see them. Talks about a possible agreement have made little progress. The argument is part of a wider debate about empire, ownership and whether museums should return objects taken from other countries.

WHY IS THIS INTERESTING?

The disagreement is not only about ancient marble. It is also about the history of the British Empire and who has the right to control another country's cultural heritage. The sculptures were designed as one connected work, so their separation raises a simple but difficult question: is it more important to protect a museum's collection or reunite an object with its original home?

THINK LIKE A HISTORIAN

"Should the Parthenon sculptures be returned to Greece?"

Source: The Guardian

https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2026/oct/06/greek-prime-minister-pledges-to-ramp-up-efforts-to-regain-parthenon-marbles