

Elgin Marbles dispute

The Elgin Marbles at the British Museum are at the heart of a 200-year-old dispute between Britain and Greece, which is calling for their return

ELGIN MARBLES

Sculptures taken from ruined Parthenon between 1801-05 by **Lord Elgin**, British ambassador to Ottoman Empire

Marbles contain sculptures from **pediments**, **metopes** and **frieze**



Sculptures from east pediment



Horse of Selene

1 PEDIMENTS: Include 17 life-sized figures. Most impressive, on east pediment, depict birth of goddess Athena



2 METOPES: High relief panels above colonnade, illustrate battles between Centaurs and legendary Lapith people. **Elgin Marbles contain 15 of original 92 metopes**



PARTHENON: Temple to goddess Athena built on Acropolis of Athens in 5th century BC by sculptor **Phidias**

West pediment
Depicts contest between Athena and Poseidon for supremacy over Athens

Athena Parthenos
Large statue covered in gold and ivory in inner chamber

Roof
Dressed in marble tiles

East pediment

3 FRIEZE: Carved in low relief around temple inside colonnade – shows Athenians in festival procession

Metopes

Elgin Marbles contain 75 metres of original 160m frieze



450-430 BC
Perikles, leading statesman of Athens, commissions reconstruction of Acropolis

1458: Ottomans capture Athens – Parthenon becomes mosque



1801: Ottoman Sultan grants permission for Lord Elgin to remove sculptures



1807: Elgin Marbles first exhibited in London

1817: Acquired by British Museum

1961: Marbles moved to Duveen Gallery, where they remain

500 BC

AD 1500

1600

1700

1800

1900

2000

404 BC: Athens' Golden Age ends after defeat to rival city Sparta

AD 500-600: Parthenon becomes church under Roman Emperor **Justinian**. Many sculptures destroyed



1687: Parthenon heavily damaged when Venetians bombard Ottoman garrison, igniting gunpowder stored inside temple

2009: Acropolis Museum opens, with Parthenon Gallery built specifically to house sculptures

