

*Who Owns the World’s Art? Oba Head Study*

*Grades 7-12*

*Mrs. Michelle Peltier – Zionsville West Middle School*

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| **Introduction** | |
| Who owns the world’s art? This lesson explores the Kingdom of Benin and its conflict with Britain that led to the theft and dispersal of African art around the world. Due to the nature of the conflict, there is now an outcry from Nigeria to return stolen artifacts. This leads to the question: should Western museums return artifacts to previously held colonies? | |
| **Indiana Standards Connections** | |
| **Social Studies Grade 7:**   7.H.11 Explain the reasons for European colonization of Africa, Asia, and the Southwest Pacific and analyze the long- and short-term impact that colonization and imperialism had on the social, political, and economic development of these societies from both European and indigenous perspectives. (E)  7.H.14 Identify and explain recent conflicts and political issues between nations or cultural groups and evaluate the solutions that different organizations have utilized to address these conflicts. (E)  7.G.1 Formulate a broad understanding of the location of countries within Africa, Asia, and the Southwest Pacific.  **Geography and History of the World (9-12)**  GHW.4.1 Analyze and assess ways that colonialism and imperialism have persisted and continue to evolve in the contemporary world. (E)  GHW.7.1 Recognize that conflict and cooperation among groups of people occur for a variety of reasons, including nationalist, racial, ethnic, religious, political, economic, and resource concerns that generally involve agreements and disagreements related to territory on Earth’s surface  GHW.7.2 Analyze the physical and human factors involved in conflicts and violence related to nationalist, racial, ethnic, religious, economic, political, and/or resource issues in various parts of the world, over time. Assess the human and physical environmental consequences of the conflicts identified for study. (E) | **World History (Grades 9-12)**  WH.4.4 Explain consequences of the conquests and colonization as a result of the worldwide voyages of exploration, including the transatlantic slave trade, Columbian Exchange, and the effects on native populations in the Americas. (E)  WH.5.5 Analyze the causes and consequences of European imperialism upon the indigenous peoples of Africa, Asia, and Oceania.  WH.7.4 Explain issues and problems of the past by analyzing various interests and viewpoints of the participants involved.  WH.7.6 Formulate and present a position or course of action on an issue by examining the underlying factors contributing to that issue, and support that position  **Note: This lesson can also be used to meet several standards within the Indiana English/Language Arts Standards for grades 7-12.** |
| **Compelling Questions:**  What does the Oba head represent?  Who owns the world’s artifacts?  Should artifacts be returned to the formerly colonized countries? | |
| **Lesson Objectives:**  Students will learn the history of the Oba head and the Berlin Bronzes.  Students will determine and defend their opinions on whether or not museums around the world should return stolen art and other materials to their native countries. | |
| **Materials** | |
| * Oba head site/map [Commemorative Oba Head: Explore Collections: Windows to the World: Digital Artifacts for Global Educators: Indiana University Bloomington](https://w2w.indiana.edu/explore-collections/oba-head.html) * Oba head description and provenance: [Commemorative Head of an Oba | Collections Online (indiana.edu)](https://artmuseum.indiana.edu/collections-online/browse/object.php?number=75.98) * Video - [British museums grapple with returning prized, looted artefacts to countries they came from (youtube.com)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EXlGRKsxZts) * Articles for background information   + [African art and the effects of European contact and colonization (article) | Khan Academy](https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/art-africa/african-art-introduction/african-art-europe/a/african-art-effects-of-european-colonization)   + [The Benin “Bronzes”: a story of violence, theft, and artistry (article) | Khan Academy](https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/art-africa/west-africa/nigeria/a/the-benin-bronzes-a-story-of-violence-theft-and-artistry)   + [Repatriating artworks (article) | Khan Academy](https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/special-topics-art-history/arches-at-risk-cultural-heritage-education-series/whose-art/a/repatriating-artworks) * Current Event articles   + [Nigeria Debates the Fate of Returning Benin Bronzes - New Lines Magazine](https://newlinesmag.com/reportage/nigeria-debates-the-fate-of-returning-benin-bronzes/)   + [Why western museums should keep their treasures | British Museum | The Guardian](https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2018/nov/25/benin-bronzes-why-western-museums-should-keep-treasures)   + [Who Owns the Benin Bronzes? The Answer Just Got More Complicated. - The New York Times (nytimes.com)](https://www.nytimes.com/2023/06/04/arts/design/benin-bronzes-nigeria-ownership.html) * Students should also search for current news articles monitoring the situations between countries, governments, and museum entities on the topic of repatriation of artifacts. * computer | |
| **Learning Plan** | |
| **Activities**   * Show Oba head on W2W website and information from the IU Collections website; discuss the artifact itself (material, size, location, etc.) * What is an Oba? Where was the Kingdom of Benin? Where is Nigeria? * Video [British museums grapple with returning prized, looted artefacts to countries they came from (youtube.com)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EXlGRKsxZts) * Students should read the articles and decide which stance they will take. Teacher can pick and choose which articles to assign. (The Khan Academy articles are great background information, while the others are interesting current event information.) * Students will either write a response or prepare for a debate on the topic. Teacher can either make this an independent, partner, or group activity. (See assessment suggestions below.) | |
| **Assessment Suggestions**  **Option 1:** Students will write a brief argument essay on the topic of repatriation and the return of artifacts to their native land and people. ***Should stolen artifacts be returned to their native land?***  Students should cite the sources given, as well as do some independent research that includes current news articles monitoring the situations between countries, governments, and museum entities on the topic of repatriation of artifacts.  Teacher can determine how long the writing assignment should be and how information should be cited.  **Option 2:** Students will prepare a debate on the topic of repatriation and return of artifacts to their native land and people. ***Should stolen artifacts be returned to their native land?***  Students should cite the sources given, as well as do some independent research that includes current news articles monitoring the situations between countries, governments, and museum entities on the topic of repatriation of artifacts.  Teacher can determine the type of debate and how students will be scored. | |
| **Extensions**   * [The Punitive Expedition of 1897 and the Benin Bronzes | STUFF YOU MISSED IN HISTORY CLASS - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lC6rVJfXNuI) (podcast; suggested use for high school students only) | |