

Germany to return Benin Bronzes to Nigeria

2nd May, 2021



Germany is to return precious artefacts that were plundered from Nigeria during the colonial era in the late-19th century. The world-famous Benin Bronzes are currently on display at a museum in Leipzig. The Bronzes comprise a collection of more than a thousand metal plaques, sculptures and statues. They were created by the Edo

people in what used to be the Kingdom of Benin from the 13th century. They decorated the royal palace of the Kingdom of Benin, in what is now Nigeria. Most of the objects were looted by British forces in 1897. Two hundred pieces were taken to the British Museum in London, while others went to museums across Europe. Nigeria has tried for decades to get them repatriated.

Experts say the 16th-18th century returning pieces are among the most highly regarded works of African art. Many Nigerians are welcoming their return. Nigeria's Institute for Benin Studies said Germany is, "leading in the global restitution movement" of former colonial powers returning looted treasures. It said: "Other European nations should be willing and open to acknowledge that all objects looted in 1897 belong to the Benin people. Like Germany, they too should initiate or join the dialogue to discuss the future of these objects." However, some Nigerians believe the objects are safer in Europe. One man said: "With the insecurity now, the safety of those artefacts cannot be guaranteed."

Sources: dw.com / thenationalnews.com / wikipedia.org

Writing

All art taken by colonial powers should be returned to where they were created. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

precious / artefacts / colonial / world-famous / statues / the 13th century / decades / highly regarded / works or art / global / treasures / looted / dialogue / objects

True / False

- a) The Benin Bronzes were taken from Africa in the early 19th century. T / F
- b) The Benin Bronzes are in a museum in Munich at the moment. T / F
- c) The Benin Bronzes were made by the Edo people from Benin. T / F
- d) The Benin Bronzes were taken by the British in 1897. T / F
- e) The article says the Benin Bronzes are the best African art. T / F
- f) The Institute for Benin Studies said Germany was a leader. T / F
- g) The Institute said other European nations should open discussions. T / F
- h) A Nigerian man said the Benin Bronzes were safer in Europe. T / F

Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------|
| 1. precious | a. prepared |
| 2. currently | b. adorned |
| 3. decorated | c. thought of |
| 4. looted | d. assured |
| 5. repatriated | e. presently |
| 6. regarded | f. begin |
| 7. restitution | g. returned |
| 8. willing | h. valuable |
| 9. initiate | i. compensation |
| 10. guaranteed | j. plundered |

Discussion – Student A

- a) What do you know about the Benin Bronzes?
- b) What do you think of the Benin Bronzes being returned?
- c) What do you know about the colonial era?
- d) What damage has colonialism done?
- e) Should all looted artefacts be returned to their original countries?
- f) What do you want to know about the Kingdom of Benin?
- g) What do you want to know about the Edo people?
- h) Should we boycott museums that house looted artefacts?

Phrase Match

- | | |
|--|----------------------------------|
| 1. Germany is to return precious | a. by British forces |
| 2. during the colonial era | b. to get them repatriated |
| 3. metal plaques, sculptures | c. be guaranteed |
| 4. the objects were looted | d. of African art |
| 5. Nigeria has tried for decades | e. artefacts that were plundered |
| 6. the most highly regarded works | f. willing and open |
| 7. former colonial | g. to the Benin people |
| 8. European nations should be | h. in the late-19th century |
| 9. all objects looted in 1897 belong | i. powers |
| 10. the safety of those artefacts cannot | j. and statues |

Discussion – Student B

- What do you think about what you read?
- What do you know about African art?
- How does African art compare with art from other continents?
- Does colonialism exist today?
- What do you think of the art of your country?
- How important is art?
- Are the objects safer in Germany?
- What questions would you like to ask descendants of the artists?

Spelling

- Germany is to return precious sfaeractt
- during the loinolac era
- metal plaques, uecsplusrt and statues
- adcrdtoe the royal palace
- Most of the objects were doltoe by British forces
- get them tedeiaatrrp
- most highly erardged works of African art
- the global ttoesruntij movement
- akogwnldeec that
- initiate or join the dileogau
- With the rentucysii now
- cannot be enaeadutgr

Answers – Synonym Match

1. h	2. e	3. b	4. j	5. g
6. c	7. i	8. a	9. f	10. d

Role Play

Role A – The Benin Bronzes

You think the Benin Bronzes is the best art. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their pieces. Also, tell the others which is the least interesting of these (and why): the Mona Lisa, Andy Warhol's Soup Cans or Aboriginal cave paintings.

Role B – The Mona Lisa

You think the Mona Lisa is the best art. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their pieces. Also, tell the others which is the least interesting of these (and why): the Benin Bronzes, Andy Warhol's Soup Cans or Aboriginal cave paintings.

Role C – Andy Warhol's Soup Cans

You think Andy Warhol's Soup Cans is the best art. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their pieces. Also, tell the others which is the least interesting of these (and why): the Mona Lisa, the Benin Bronzes or Aboriginal cave paintings.

Role D – Aboriginal Cave Paintings

You think Aboriginal cave paintings is the best art. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their pieces. Also, tell the others which is the least interesting of these (and why): the Mona Lisa, Andy Warhol's Soup Cans or the Benin Bronzes.

Speaking – Art

Rank these with your partner. Put the best at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- | | |
|----------------------|-------------------------------|
| • The Benin Bronzes | • The Great Wave off Kanazawa |
| • Rodin's Thinker | • The Terracotta Army |
| • The Mona Lisa | • Frida Kahlo Self Portrait |
| • Warhol's Soup Cans | • Aboriginal cave paintings |

Answers – True False

a	F	b	F	c	T	d	T	e	F	f	T	g	T	h	T
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.