



# CONNECTICUT MIDDLE SCHOOL DEBATE LEAGUE

## October 19, 2019 Scrimmage Coaches' Note

**Notes for coaches on the resolution: TH supports the restitution of cultural objects.**

### **A note on the sample cases:**

These cases are not intended as complete cases for the debaters to use. I know that they are too long and might be too complicated. In addition, debaters may very well have ideas for other contentions they might like to run. My contentions are by no means an exhaustive list of potential arguments. Instead, I have tried to include as much of the good research on this topic and as many of the interesting examples as I could. If debaters don't have time to do much research themselves, they will find many good examples in these cases. However, I encourage all debaters to do research for themselves and, especially, to look at pictures of some of the cultural objects in question! I think the debate is much more interesting and fun if debaters can picture some of the things they'll be talking about.

### **Debate theory involved in this resolution:**

I think this is a great resolution to talk to debaters about modeling/framing/voting criteria. Debates often boil down to how the two sides interpret the resolution and whose interpretation the judge thinks is more applicable. In this debate, I anticipate many rounds will boil down to this clash over framing: proposition will argue that they win if they can prove that restitution is best in *most* cases while opposition will argue that they win if they can prove restitution is harmful in *any* instance. Basically, one side wants the debate to be about the majority of examples while the other wants it to be about the outliers. I think there are reasonable arguments to be made for either model. For example, proposition could argue that their model is better because, in the real world, there are always going to be a few instances where things go wrong but that they shouldn't be used to create policy. On the other hand, opposition might say that policy should be (and often is) written to prevent the worst-case scenarios from occurring. If both sides brought a different framing of the debate to the round and sufficiently defended their interpretation of the resolution, then the debate would essentially occur at two levels. At the more basic level, you would still have the clash over contentions. But, at a higher level, you would also have the debate over how the judge should make their decision (known as the voting criteria). Then, when the judge sat down to write their ballot, they would be able to use a determination over who won the framing debate to evaluate the contentions—making it pretty easy for the judge to then determine a winner.

In CTMSDL debates, I have often seen rounds with fantastic constructive speeches and sub-par rebuttals. This isn't because the rebuttal speakers are not good—they are! It's because they're using their rebuttals for *refutation*. It's ok for rebuttal speakers to do some refuting, but this isn't

the purpose of their speeches. What the speech is really for is for defending the framing/voting criteria that was laid out in the constructive speeches. If rebuttal speakers can do that, they'll not only have given a great speech, they'll have most likely won the round!

I hope you enjoy this resolution.

--Eliza

List of my favorite sources on this topic:

1. <http://restitutionreport2018.com>

Here you can find English and French copies of the report commissioned by the French government on restitution. This is by far the best source in favor out there! It looks long, and it is complicated, but it's mostly appendices and the examples are great.

2. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/africa/culture-war>

In my opinion, this is one of the best sources that argues against restitution. James Cuno is one of the leading experts against returning objects.

3. <https://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2015/01/21/when-should-antiquities-be-repatriated-to-their-country-of-origin>

Room for Debate from the NYTimes takes experts on both sides and has them write op-eds on a topic. These articles are short and very middle-school friendly.

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

This is a good, readable source on the specific issue of native objects.

5. <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/archaeology-and-history/magazine/2017/03-04/parthenon-sculptures-british-museum-controversy/>

This easy to read source talks about the Elgin Marbles, probably the most famous case of disputed ownership.

6. [https://www.ted.com/talks/chip\\_colwell\\_why\\_museums\\_are\\_returning\\_cultural\\_treasures?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/chip_colwell_why_museums_are_returning_cultural_treasures?language=en)

A TED talk in favor of restitution. Interesting, easy to understand, and with good visuals.

7. <https://time.com/3725026/isis-destruction-mosul-museum-artifacts/>

The video in this article shows ISIS destroying artifacts, it could be interesting for debaters to watch.