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Practice Essay #6

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As you read the passage below, consider how Christopher Hitchens uses

- evidence, such as facts or examples, to support claims.
- reasoning to develop ideas and to connect claims and evidence.
- stylistic or persuasive elements, such as word choice or appeals to emotion, to add power to the ideas expressed.

Adapted from Christopher Hitchens, “The Lovely Stones.” ©2009 by Condé Nast Digital. Originally published July 2009.

- ¹ The great classicist A. W. Lawrence . . . once remarked of the Parthenon¹ that it is “the one building in the world which may be assessed as absolutely *right*.” . . .
- ² Not that the beauty and symmetry of the Parthenon have not been abused and perverted and mutilated. Five centuries after the birth of Christianity the Parthenon was closed and desolated. . . . Turkish forces also used it for centuries as a garrison² and an arsenal, with the tragic result that in 1687 . . . a powder magazine was detonated and huge damage inflicted on the structure. Most horrible of all, perhaps, the Acropolis was made to fly a Nazi flag during the German occupation of Athens. . . .
- ³ The damage done by the ages to the building, and by past empires and occupations, cannot all be put right. But there is one desecration and dilapidation that can at least be partially undone. Early in the 19th century, Britain’s ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, Lord Elgin, sent a wrecking crew to the Turkish-occupied territory of Greece, where it sawed off approximately half of the adornment of the Parthenon and carried it away. As with all things Greek, there were three elements to this, the most lavish and beautiful sculptural treasury in human history. Under the direction of the artistic genius Phidias, the temple had two massive pediments decorated with the figures of Pallas Athena, Poseidon, and the gods of the sun and the moon. It then had a series of 92 high-relief panels, or metopes, depicting a succession of mythical and historical battles. The most intricate element was the frieze, carved in bas-relief,³ which showed the gods, humans, and animals that made up the annual Pan-Athens procession: there were 192 equestrian warriors and auxiliaries featured, which happens to be the exact number of the city’s heroes who fell at the Battle of Marathon. Experts differ on precisely what story is being told here, but the frieze was quite clearly carved as a continuous narrative. Except that half the cast of the tale is still in Bloomsbury, in London, having been sold well below cost by Elgin to the British government in 1816 for \$2.2 million in today’s currency to pay off his many debts. . . .

¹ An ancient Greek temple located on the grounds of the ancient citadel, the Acropolis of Athens

² A military fort or base

³ Raised carvings made of stone

- 4 . . . [T]here has been a bitter argument about the legitimacy of the British Museum’s deal. I’ve written a whole book about this controversy and won’t oppress you with all the details, but would just make this one point. If the *Mona Lisa* had been sawed in two during the Napoleonic Wars and the separated halves had been acquired by different museums in, say, St. Petersburg and Lisbon, would there not be a general wish to see what they might look like if re-united? If you think my analogy is overdrawn, consider this: the body of the goddess Iris is at present in London, while her head is in Athens. The front part of the torso of Poseidon is in London, and the rear part is in Athens. And so on. This is grotesque. . . .
- 5 It is unfortunately true that [Athens] allowed itself to become very dirty and polluted in the 20th century, and as a result the remaining sculptures and statues on the Parthenon were nastily eroded by “acid rain.” . . . But gradually and now impressively, the Greeks have been living up to their responsibilities. Beginning in 1992, the endangered marbles were removed from the temple, given careful cleaning with ultraviolet and infra-red lasers, and placed in a climate-controlled interior. . . .
- 6 About a thousand feet southeast of the temple [is] the astonishing new Acropolis Museum. . . . With 10 times the space of the old repository, it display[s] all the marvels that go with the temples on top of the hill. Most important, it show[s], for the first time in centuries, how the Parthenon sculptures looked to the citizens of old. . . .
- 7 The British may continue in their constipated fashion to cling to what they have so crudely amputated, but . . . the Acropolis Museum has hit on the happy idea of exhibiting . . . its own original sculptures with the London-held pieces represented by beautifully copied casts. This creates a natural thirst to see the actual re-assembly completed. So, far from emptying or weakening a museum, this controversy has created another [museum], which is destined to be among Europe’s finest galleries. And one day, surely, there will be an agreement to do the right thing by the world’s most “right” structure.

Write an essay in which you explain how Christopher Hitchens builds an argument to persuade his audience that the original Parthenon sculptures should be returned to Greece. In your essay, analyze how Hitchens uses one or more of the features listed in the box above (or features of your own choice) to strengthen the logic and persuasiveness of his argument. Be sure that your analysis focuses on the most relevant features of the passage.

Your essay should not explain whether you agree with Hitchens’s claims, but rather explain how Hitchens builds an argument to persuade his audience.

