

1. Consider the question, “Is art worth a life?” Discuss.
2. Which of these four do you most agree?
 - a. Fighting for art is worth risking one’s life.
 - b. I’d fight for art if I had to.
 - c. I’d fight passionately for other things, but not for art. Art is important—but it’s not worth risking a life.
 - d. No lofty idea is ever as important as a human life.Debate these four positions.
3. The Monuments Men were not typical soldiers. What qualities did they demonstrate that made them heroes?
4. In a battle, which do you think is more powerful: intelligence or strength? How did the story of the Monuments Men affect your opinion?
5. How conscious were you of the collateral damage war can wreak upon a civilization before reading *The Monuments Men*? What had you not been aware of that you are now?
6. Why are works of art or monuments meaningful to the countries they are created in? In what ways does art belong to a country or culture? What are the moral repercussions of stealing art or destroying monuments?
7. Hitler wanted to gain ownership of art in order to place it in the Third Reich’s museums—ones that already existed, and then in the Führermuseum that he planned on building in his hometown of Linz, Austria. Why did he want art that was from all over Europe? Why did he think that appropriating art from other people and countries would glorify the Third Reich?
8. Many of the Monuments Men had languished in assignments that did not make use of their talents before being transferred to the MFAA. Why is it important that every talent be put to use during times of war, and how do these men’s and women’s stories illustrate that?
9. It was the concerned lobbying of art professionals and scholars that brought about the formation of the Roberts Commission by FDR, which led to the creation of the MFAA. This was the first effort of its kind made during wartime. Where do you see the results of the Monuments Men’s preservation efforts at work today? In what ways do we benefit from the work they did during World War II?
10. The Monuments Men’s directive was to preserve cultural properties in war zones, provided that they did not interfere with any military operations. At what points did these two directives conflict with each other, and how was that handled?
11. On page 394 of *The Monuments Men* book, Monuments Man Harry Ettlinger says, “My knowledge of the Holocaust started really with the realization that it was not only the taking of lives—that I learned much later in my experience—but the taking of all their belongings...[For me] Neuschwanstein was the start of really opening up that part of history that should never be forgotten.” How has the story of the Monuments Men helped you to better understand what was lost during the Holocaust?
12. Who owns art? Why is art important to the culture in which it is created?

13. There are still thousands of works of art that went missing during World War II and have yet to be found. What do you think can be done about this?
What are the most effective ways to raise awareness about the cultural cost of stolen art?
14. Comment on the resolution introduced by Paul Sachs:
“If, in time of peace, our museums and art galleries are important to the community, in time of war they are doubly valuable. For then, when the petty and the trivial fall away and we are face to face with final and lasting values, we must summon to our defense all our intellectual and spiritual resources. We must guard jealously all we have inherited from a long past, all we are capable of creating in a trying present, and all we are determined to preserve in a foreseeable future.”
15. Robert Edsel said this about Rose Valland: “Destiny might have placed her in the right place at the right time, but she had seized it. Others had run or hid; some had even turned to the Nazi side. She had risked her life for her principles and her country. It wasn’t for the personal glory. It never was. She had protected the art. She had stood up for what was right.” Do you consider Rose Valland a true hero?
16. While the Nazis stole objects that held high financial and/or artistic value, they also seized items that held only personal, family or cultural value. Was this just another way to degrade Jews and an effort to destroy their culture?
17. In what ways do objects hold significance and memory for us? Can a trivial knickknack kept in a drawer carry the same emotional value as a priceless work of art that is prominently displayed on a wall in a home (or perhaps hidden from public eyes)?
18. How do you think you would respond to the loss of all of your possessions? To lose your family would be shattering. At that point, would the loss of all your family possessions matter? How much?
19. Hitler applied to the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts twice, and was rejected both times. Students who were accepted included Jews who painted in styles he vehemently opposed. Some of the Academy’s admission committee judges were Jewish. Do you think these factors contributed to both Hitler’s anti-Semitism as well as his seizure of art that he would then display at his Fuehrer Museum in Linz? Why or why not?
20. With the looting of the National Museum of Iraq following the U.S. invasion of that country in 2003, do you feel that we have learned any lessons from the Monuments Men’s efforts? Is there still a need to make protecting artistic works and cultural landmarks a priority when entering into war?
21. In 1939, the art world turned its attention to the Galerie Fischer in Lucerne, Switzerland, for a sale of Post-Impressionist and Modern works of art. The 126 works on the auction block were pieces that the Nazis had appropriated from public museums in Germany. Deemed “degenerate” because they did not fit Hitler’s vision of good art, the lot included pieces by artists such as Picasso, Matisse, Gauguin, and van Gogh. The expectation was that the sale of these works would fetch high prices, and although not advertised as such, the understanding was that the proceeds were to benefit the Nazi regime. The Fischer auction saved a great deal of art. Some of these paintings and sculptures might otherwise have been destroyed. Many museum professionals and dealers at that time, however, refused to participate so as to not support the Nazis. Debate the ethics of participating in the Galerie Fischer auction and the reasons to buy or not to buy the art.