

The Monuments Men

Extra Credit Assignment

Extra Credit:

This assignment is worth 5 points added onto the Unit 14 Test for the 5th Six Weeks.

*You will receive up to 5 points for your work depending on the thoroughness and thoughtfulness of your responses. You may receive fewer points if your responses lack insight, effort, and/or completeness.

Requirements:

1. Go see the movie *The Monuments Men*, and turn in your movie ticket stub along with the completed assignment.
2. Respond to the following prompts/questions. Include the prompt or question as the beginning/heading of your response.
3. All responses must be typewritten.
4. Deadline/Due Date: This assignment must be turned in no later than Friday, March 28.
5. In order to receive full credit, all requirements must be fulfilled.

Prompts:

1. In your own words, briefly summarize *The Monuments Men* and provide the historical context for the movie.
2. Using the following quote from the movie to jumpstart and expand your response, why was it so important to the men and women of the *Monuments, Fine Arts, and Archives* program (aka *MFAA* or *Monuments Men*) to protect and save art during World War II? Why is it important to preserve historical and cultural artifacts?

You can wipe out an entire generation, you can burn their homes to the ground and somehow they'll find their way back. But if you destroy their history, you destroy their achievements and it's as if they never existed. That's what Hitler wants and that's exactly what we are fighting for.

-Frank Stokes (George Clooney's character)

3. U.S. forces landed in Sicily in July 1943. From there, they invaded Italy in September 1943. A series of battles resulted in enormous collateral damage to buildings, monuments, and art. People who were interested in classical architecture and art raised concerns about the devastation. In addition, there were also reports that Allied soldiers were helping themselves to inappropriate war souvenirs.

In response, General Eisenhower issued a historic command on December 29, 1943 that included the following:

Today we are fighting in a country which has contributed a great deal to our cultural inheritance, a country rich in monuments which by their creation helped and now in their old age illustrate the growth of the civilization which is ours. We are bound to respect those monuments as far as war allows.

If we have to choose between destroying a famous building and sacrificing our own men, then our men's lives count infinitely more, and the buildings must go. But the choice is not always so clear-cut as that. In many cases the monuments can be spared without any detriment to operational needs. Nothing can stand against the argument of military necessity. This is an accepted principle. But the phrase "military necessity" is sometimes used where it would be more truthful to speak of military convenience or even personal convenience. I do not want it to cloak slackness or indifference.

Speculate on soldier reaction to Eisenhower's command. How do you think most military personnel reacted to this new policy? Do you think they welcomed it? Why or why not? What issues might emerge from the command to do battle while remaining mindful of the charge to prevent damage to historical art and architecture? Does this seem like a decision that is in the best interest of winning the war?

4. Is protecting or saving art worth risking one's life? Why or why not? Defend your answer.