

NARRATIVE COMPARISON OF PANTHÉON

The following table compares two distinct online narratives found about the Panthéon: the Official Tourism Narrative and a Critical/Historical Narrative.

Feature	Official Tourism Narrative	Critical/Historical Narrative
Source Type	Tourism websites, Official Monument sites, Travel blogs.	Historical journals, Academic articles, Independent cultural critics.
Core Message	The Panthéon is a timeless, beautiful architectural marvel and the sacred, permanent resting place of France's "Great Men and Women."	The Panthéon is a politically contested site with a "turbulent" history, reflecting shifting national ideologies and flawed notions of heroism.
Focus	Architecture, Famous Names, Grandeur, Visitor Experience (Dome view, ticket sales).	Political "oscillation" (changing from church to temple six times), Controversial selections, Exclusion, Ideological battles.
Key Language	Marvelous exterior, Awe-inspiring, Grandeur and serenity, Temple dedicated to memory, Masterpiece, Iconic, Solemn atmosphere. (Emphasis on admiration and permanence)	Turbulent history, Ideological battles, Pitfalls of national memory, Oscillation, Excluded until 1995 (Marie Curie), Contested site, Repository of shifting regimes. (Emphasis on conflict and change)
Target Emotion/Appeal	Pride (in French heritage), Awe (architectural beauty), Emotional Appeal (connecting with great figures).	Critical Analysis (intellectual challenge), Intrigue (uncovering secrets), Skepticism (questioning official history).
Impact on Opinion	Shapes public opinion to see the Panthéon as an uncomplicated national shrine, encouraging reverence and tourism.	Shapes public opinion to view the Panthéon as a historical document that is constantly being edited, encouraging intellectual engagement and questioning.

How Language Changes What We Think of the Place

The shift in language fundamentally alters the perception of the Panthéon:

- **Tourism's use of superlatives and fixed terms** (iconic, masterpiece, temple of memory) abstracts the building from its political context, presenting it as an eternal, finished monument. This language is designed to celebrate and encourage visitation.¹
- **Critical language**, focusing on turbulent, oscillation, ideological battles, politicizes the building. It turns a "shrine" into a "theater of ideological battles," transforming a passive site of memory into an active site of debate. It forces the audience to consider the human, often messy, process behind the creation of a national symbol.