

The Kingdom of Benin

Learning objective: To understand the history and achievements of the Kingdom of Benin.

Read the story about the Kingdom of Benin with Ellie the elephant. Use the word bank to help you understand the text. Answer the questions in the spaces provided.

Ellie the elephant loves history. Today, she is learning about the Kingdom of Benin. This was a powerful place in West Africa a long time ago. The Kingdom was led by a ruler called the Oba. He was very important and lived in a grand palace in the city of Benin. The people of Benin were famous for being excellent artists. They made beautiful statues and plaques out of bronze. These items showed stories of their history and their kings. The people of Benin were also very good at trade. They sold things like cloth, pepper, and ivory to people from other lands. They used their money, which was made of small shells called cowries, to buy things they needed. Because they were so good at trading and making art, the Kingdom became very wealthy and strong. Ellie thinks it is amazing that they recorded their history through their beautiful art. By looking at these bronze pieces today, we can learn how people lived in the Kingdom of Benin hundreds of years ago.

Word bank: Benin · Kingdom · Oba · Bronze · Craftsmen · Trade

1. What was the name of the ruler of the Kingdom of Benin? (1 mark)

2. What were the statues and plaques made from? (1 mark)

3. Why do you think the people of Benin made art to show their history? (2 marks)

4. Based on the text, what helped the Kingdom become strong and wealthy? (2 marks)

5. If you lived in the Kingdom of Benin, what kind of art would you make to tell your own story? Give a reason. (2 marks)

Draw: Draw a picture of a bronze plaque from the Kingdom of Benin. Include a pattern around the edge.



Extension challenge: Find out what 'cowries' are. Why do you think people used shells as money back then?