

Ellie's Explorer Fact-File: The Kingdom of Benin

Learning objective: To research and record key historical features of the Kingdom of Benin, exploring its society, trade, and artistic achievements.

Use your history textbooks and library resources to complete this fact-file. Ellie the Elephant has a brilliant memory for the past, so try to include specific details about how this civilisation flourished in West Africa. Write in full, clear sentences and ensure your facts are historically accurate.

Word bank: Oba · bronze · craftsmanship · trade · civilisation · archaeology · sculpture · West Africa · palace · fortification

1. Geographical Context: Where was the Kingdom of Benin located, and how did its position help the kingdom grow? (3 marks)

2. The Role of the Oba: Describe the position of the Oba in Benin society. Why was the leader so important to the people? (3 marks)

3. Artistic Legacy: Explain the significance of the famous Benin bronzes. What do these artefacts tell us about the skills of the people living there? (4 marks)

4. Trade and Economy: Compare and contrast the goods that the Kingdom of Benin traded with other nations. What did they export and import? (4 marks)

5. Justify your answer: Explain why historians consider the Kingdom of Benin to be a highly organised and advanced civilisation during the 13th to 19th centuries. (5 marks)

6. What might happen if the kingdom had not developed its sophisticated wall and moat system? How would this have changed their daily lives or safety? (5 marks)

Extension challenge: Imagine you are an archaeologist who has just discovered a new artefact from the Kingdom of Benin. Write a formal museum label for this object, describing what it is, what it was used for, and why it is a valuable piece of history.