

The Kingdom of Benin: A Historical Investigation

Learning objective: To research and describe the significance of the Benin Kingdom, focusing on its society, trade, and artistic achievements.

Use this writing scaffold to organise your historical report. Think about the legacy of the Oba and the skilled craftspeople of Benin City. Use the word bank to help your writing flow.

Hidden within the dense rainforests of West Africa, the Kingdom of Benin grew into one of the most powerful and organised civilisations of the medieval period.

Word bank: furthermore · consequently · in addition to · prosperous · sophisticated · significant · monarchy · craftsmanship · strategically · nevertheless

1. The Role of the Oba: Explain why the Oba was considered the most important figure in Benin society. Start by saying: The Oba held absolute authority because... (3 marks)

2. Trade and Wealth: Compare and contrast how the Kingdom of Benin traded with other nations. Start by saying: Benin became a prosperous trade hub by exporting goods such as... (3 marks)

3. Artistic Legacy: Justify why the Benin Bronzes are considered vital evidence for historians. Start by saying: The intricate bronze plaques are significant because they reveal... (3 marks)

4. City Planning: Describe the layout of Benin City. Start by saying: Unlike many other cities at the time, Benin City was designed with... (3 marks)

5. What might happen if the Kingdom of Benin had not been located near major trade routes? Explain your reasoning. (4 marks)

6. Look at the work of Ellie the elephant, who loves history. If she were to visit the ruins of the city walls, what questions would she ask the local historians? (4 marks)

Extension challenge: Imagine you are an explorer arriving at the gates of Benin City in the 15th century. Write a diary entry describing the sights, sounds, and the atmosphere of the bustling marketplace. How does the organisation of the city surprise you compared to other settlements you have visited?