

The Kingdom of Benin: A West African Power

Learning objective: To understand the significance, societal structure, and achievements of the Kingdom of Benin during the 13th to 19th centuries.

Use your historical knowledge of the Kingdom of Benin to answer the following questions. Provide as much detail as possible to show your understanding of this significant African civilisation.

Ellie the elephant has been reading about the Kingdom of Benin. She discovered that it was a highly organised state located in modern-day Nigeria. Famous for its incredible metalwork, its powerful rulers, and its sophisticated capital city, Benin was a centre of trade and culture that flourished for hundreds of years.

Word bank: Oba · Bronze · Earthworks · Trade · Guilds · Benin City

1. Who was the 'Oba' and what role did they play in the Kingdom of Benin? (2 marks)

2. The Kingdom of Benin was famous for its 'bronze' plaques. Explain how these items tell us about the history of the kingdom. (2 marks)

3. Describe the defensive 'Earthworks' that surrounded Benin City. Why were these important for the city's protection? (2 marks)

4. Identify two types of goods that the people of Benin traded with European visitors during this period. (2 marks)

5. How did the craft 'guilds' help the Kingdom of Benin maintain its status as a centre for art and excellence? (2 marks)

Draw: Draw a detailed scene of a Benin City street. Include the tall city walls, people trading goods in the market, and the intricate patterns you might find on a bronze plaque.



Extension challenge: Imagine you are an artist living in Benin City in the 16th century. Write a short diary entry explaining which object you are crafting today and why it is important for the Oba's palace.