

The Golden Age of Benin: An Explorer's Journal

Learning objective: To understand the social, economic, and cultural achievements of the Kingdom of Benin and analyse its significance in history.

Ellie the Elephant has been researching the Kingdom of Benin and needs your help to organise her notes. Read the statements below and decide if they are True or False. If you mark a statement as False, you must provide a 'Historical Correction' to explain the truth. Use your knowledge of West African history to justify your reasoning.

Word bank: Oba · Bronze · Trade · Guilds · Earthworks · Craftsmanship · Walls · Prosperity

1. True or False: The Oba was the spiritual and political leader of the Kingdom of Benin. If False, explain why. (2 marks)

2. True or False: The people of Benin were famous for their simple, unadorned clay pottery rather than metalwork. If False, explain why. (2 marks)

3. True or False: The Kingdom of Benin remained isolated and never traded with European merchants. If False, explain why. (2 marks)

4. True or False: The city of Benin was surrounded by a complex system of defensive walls and moats. If False, explain why. (2 marks)

5. Explain why the organisation of craft guilds was essential to the cultural success of the Kingdom of Benin. (3 marks)

6. Compare and contrast the power of the Oba with a leader from a different historical period you have studied. What makes the Oba's role unique? (3 marks)

Draw: Imagine you are an artist in the royal court of Benin. Draw a design for a commemorative plaque that tells a story about a great achievement of the kingdom, such as a royal procession, a trade discovery, or a harvest festival.



Extension challenge: Justify your answer: If the defensive earthworks of Benin had been breached by an invading force, what might have happened to the kingdom's trade routes and internal security? Write a short paragraph explaining the potential consequences for the citizens.