

Exploring the Benin Kingdom: Year 5 History Flashcards

Learning objective: To identify, describe and understand the significance of the Kingdom of Benin in West Africa during the medieval period.

Use these flashcards to test your knowledge of the Benin Kingdom. Read the question on the front, think about your answer, then check the back to see if you have included the key historical details.

Who was the Oba in the Kingdom of Benin?

The Oba was the king and the spiritual and political leader of the Benin Kingdom. He held supreme authority over the people.

Where was the Kingdom of Benin located?

It was located in the tropical rainforests of West Africa, in what is now modern-day Nigeria.

What were the famous 'Benin Bronzes'?

These were intricate plaques and sculptures made by highly skilled craftspeople, used to decorate the Oba's palace and record history.

What were the 'Guilds' of Benin?

Guilds were organised groups of specialised craftspeople, such as brass workers or ivory carvers, who passed down their skills through generations.

What were the Benin Earthworks?

A vast network of moats, walls, and ditches that protected Benin City and the surrounding kingdom, showing advanced engineering skills.

How did the Kingdom of Benin become wealthy?

They built their prosperity through trade, particularly in items like pepper, ivory, and textiles with other regions and later with European merchants.

What language did the people of the Benin Kingdom speak?

The people of the Benin Kingdom were known as the Edo people and spoke the Edo language.

Why is the architecture of the palace considered significant?

The palace was the heart of the capital city, featuring grand courtyards and intricate carvings that reflected the power and history of the Oba.

What role did oral tradition play in the Benin Kingdom?

Since history was not written down in books, court historians memorised stories, songs, and genealogies to preserve the kingdom's past.

How were the Benin Bronzes created?

They used a complex method called 'lost-wax casting', where a clay mould was created, filled with molten metal, and then the mould was broken to reveal the sculpture.