

The Kingdom of Benin: A Journey into the Past

Step into the past with Ellie the Elephant and discover the golden age of a mighty African empire!

- The Oba was the supreme ruler of the kingdom; he was considered both a political leader and a spiritual figure who held absolute authority over his people.
- Benin City was protected by a massive series of walls and ditches known as 'earthworks', which were some of the most extensive human-made fortifications in the world at the time.
- Expertise in craftsmanship was organised into professional guilds, where artists specialised in wood carving, ivory carving, and metal casting to create treasures for the palace.
- The kingdom thrived because of its strategic location, allowing it to become a major hub for trade, exchanging goods like pepper, cloth, and ivory with merchants from across the seas.
- The layout of Benin City was remarkably planned, featuring wide, straight streets that were kept clean and were well-lit by large oil lamps at night.

Did you know? Did you know? The Kingdom of Benin was famous for its magnificent 'Benin Bronzes', which were actually made of brass! These intricate plaques and sculptures decorated the royal palace and told the story of the kingdom's history, acting like a giant, metallic library for the people to admire.

Key vocabulary: Oba · Bronze · Benin City · Guilds · Earthworks · Trade · Craftsmanship