

The Kingdom of Benin: Historical Investigator's Report

Learning objective: To analyse the significant achievements, social structure, and artistic legacy of the Kingdom of Benin.

Welcome, historical investigators! Ellie the elephant has been digging through the archives to learn about the powerful Kingdom of Benin. Use your research skills to complete this report. You will need to consider how trade, leadership, and craftsmanship defined this civilisation. Ensure your answers use formal historical language and provide evidence to support your claims.

Word bank: Oba · Bronze · Guilds · Trade · Civilisation · Terracotta · Diplomacy · Architecture

1. The Role of the Oba: Explain the significance of the Oba in Benin society. How did their leadership influence the organisation and daily life of the kingdom? (4 marks)

2. Artistic Mastery: The Benin Bronzes are world-famous. Justify why these artefacts were so important for recording the history and status of the kingdom. (3 marks)

3. Economic Prosperity: Compare and contrast the types of trade goods exchanged between the Kingdom of Benin and European merchants. What does this tell us about the kingdom's global connections? (4 marks)

4. Social Structure: Describe the role of the craft guilds. Why might having specialised groups of artists and workers be beneficial for a growing empire? (3 marks)

5. Historical Change: What might have happened to the social structure of Benin if the kingdom had not established such strong trade routes with other nations? (4 marks)

6. Evidence Evaluation: If you were an archaeologist finding a piece of Benin pottery today, what questions would you ask to determine its historical context? (2 marks)

Extension challenge: Imagine you are a royal messenger in the 16th-century Kingdom of Benin. Write a formal account describing the bustling trade markets and the intricate architecture of the city walls. Use at least five words from the word bank and explain how the city's design protected its people.