

The Splendour of the Kingdom of Benin

Learning objective: To understand the social and cultural achievements of the Kingdom of Benin.

Read the text carefully and answer the questions below. Use full sentences for your answers.

Ellie the elephant loves traveling through time to uncover hidden history. She recently visited the ancient Kingdom of Benin, located in what is now modern-day Nigeria. Established in the 10th century, this West African civilisation grew into a powerful and wealthy empire. The kingdom was led by a ruler known as the Oba, who was considered both a political and spiritual leader. The people of Benin were famous for their incredible artistic skills. Craftspeople created beautiful, intricate objects out of bronze and brass, known today as the Benin Bronzes. These plaques and sculptures were not just for decoration; they served as a historical record, documenting the lives of the Obas and the achievements of the people. Unlike many other societies of the time, the city of Benin was very well-organized, with wide, straight roads and a sophisticated system of walls and moats to protect the residents. Ellie discovered that the kingdom thrived for centuries through clever trade and strong leadership, leaving behind a legacy of creativity and engineering that still fascinates historians today.

Word bank: Oba · Kingdom · bronze · craftsmanship · intricate · civilisation · archaeologists

1. What title was given to the ruler of the Kingdom of Benin? (1 mark)

2. Name two materials that the craftspeople of Benin used to make their famous sculptures. (2 marks)

3. Why were the bronze plaques considered important to the history of the kingdom? (2 marks)

4. What does the description of the city's roads and walls suggest about the people who lived in Benin? (2 marks)

5. Why do you think it is important for modern historians to study the Benin Bronzes today? Justify your answer. (3 marks)

Draw: Draw a picture of a Benin bronze plaque showing a scene from everyday life in the kingdom, using patterns and shapes for the border.



Extension challenge: Research how the people of Benin traded goods across West Africa. Write a short paragraph explaining what items they might have exchanged for bronze or brass.