

Topic:	Year group	Term
Kingdom of Benin	Year 6	8 sessions

### Background knowledge

The historical kingdom of Benin was established in the forested region of West Africa in the 1200s C.E. The kingdom reached its greatest power and size under Oba Ewuare the Great. He expanded the kingdom and improved the capital, present-day Benin City; the city was defined by massive walls. The height of power for Benin's monarchs began during this period. To honour the powerful obas, the people of Benin participated in many rituals that expressed their devotion and loyalty, including human sacrifices.

The success of Benin was fuelled by its lively trade. Tradesmen and artisans from Benin developed relationships with the Portuguese, who sought after the kingdom's artwork, gold, ivory, and pepper. In the early modern era, Benin was also heavily involved in the West African slave trade. They would capture men, women, and children from rival peoples and sell them into slavery to European and American buyers. This trade provided a significant source of wealth for the kingdom.

### What should I already know?

Pupils should have already studied ancient civilisations such as the Ancient Egyptians and the Mayans in Y4 and Y5 respectively. They may have studied some of the countries in Africa in other topics and be aware of its diverse landscape, climate and wildlife.

National Curriculum Objectives / Key Skills	The Journey
<p><b>Characteristic features:</b></p> <p>I can explain beliefs and attitudes in terms of why people might have had those ideas.</p> <p>I am able to describe and explain ways of life at different levels of society and understand that people would have different outlooks on life depending on their social standing. I can avoid sweeping generalization saying instead, it all depends on who you were, what position you had in society.</p> <p><b>Enquiry:</b></p> <p>I can start to raise questions about what the evidence tells us. I am aware of the need not to rush to</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Why do YOU think we should study Benin in KS2 history? A look at the significance of Benin.</li> <li>2. What sort of place was Benin 500 to 1,000 years ago?</li> <li>3. What can we tell about Benin society at this time from the images and artefacts that have survived?</li> <li>4. Who were the leaders of Benin?</li> <li>5. What did ordinary people do for jobs in the Kingdom of Benin?</li> <li>6. Why did the Victorians get involved in Benin and what were the effects on the Benin people?</li> </ol>

conclusions based on flimsy evidence. Will use phrases such as, *We cannot tell for sure. Most evidence suggests.*

I can start cross-referencing information to see if other sources agree, rather than taking everything on face value.

#### Interpretations:

I understand that all history is to some extent interpretations and see why some people might write different versions of the same event; even when using the same evidence historians can put a different gloss on events.

7. Ask and answer our own questions on Benin.
8. Should the Benin Bronzes be returned?

#### Comparisons/links with other topics:

##### **Who were more advanced, the Saxons and Vikings or the Benin?**

The Benin peoples were skilled craftspeople. Comparison of the Saxon and Viking artefacts can be made with the bronzes and artefacts that we have of the Benin? Which shows more skill? Why do you think this? Comparisons can also be made between Benin plaques depicting Obas and Tudor portraits of Henry VIII and Elizabeth I. How do both societies symbolise power? How do their rulers look important?

Religion - Because the Kingdom of Benin periods stretches from Saxon and Viking times right the way up to Victorian times, there's opportunities to explore and compare the evolving beliefs in Britain with that of the Benin people. The Benin people were polytheistic throughout and even believed their Obas were divine whereas Viking Britain slowly became Christian although some Vikings still held onto their pagan beliefs. Gradually through the medieval and early modern period Britain was firmly a Christian state.

## Outcomes

### An overview of what children will know / can do

Working towards: Children will evidence some of the key historical skills listed above and will demonstrate some understanding of the sources and workings of Benin.

Expected: Children will demonstrate most of the key historical skills listed above and will be able to answer enquiry questions with confidence using some sources and historical theories to support their answers.

Exceeding: Children will confidently demonstrate the key historical skills listed and will be able to formulate arguments and reasons for the success, achievement and decline of the Benin civilisation using sources, historical theories and their own judgements.

Key Vocabulary		Timeline / Diagrams	
<b>Key Vocabulary</b>		<b>Key Events</b>	
<b>Ogiso</b>	The title used by the early rulers of Igodomigodo. It means 'kings of the sky'. It is thought that there were around 31 <b>Ogiso</b> rulers.	<b>AD 900</b>	The kingdom begins to develop and boundaries are established around the region called Igodomigodo in what is now Nigeria.
<b>Oba</b>	The title used by Eweka and subsequent rulers. Eweka was from the <b>Yoruba</b> people and <b>Oba</b> is the <b>Yoruba</b> word for 'king'.	<b>AD 1100</b>	The last <b>Ogiso</b> of Igodomigodo, Owodo, dies and there is nobody to rule.
<b>Edo</b>	The name given to the kingdom of Igodomigodo by <b>Oba</b> Eweka. The people also became known as the <b>Edo</b> people.	<b>AD 1180</b>	Eweka becomes the new ruler and changes the name Igodomigodo to <b>Edo</b> . He calls himself the <b>Oba</b> .
<b>Yoruba</b>	The name of the people from the holy city of Ife. The histories of the <b>Edo</b> and <b>Yoruba</b> people are closely linked.	<b>AD 1300-1700</b>	The 'golden age' of <b>Edo</b> . It has a large, powerful army and skilled craftspeople.
<b>ohen</b>	A priest who performed religious ceremonies.	<b>AD 1489</b>	The <b>Edo</b> people begin trading with the Portuguese, who call the place 'Benin'.
<b>animists</b>	People who believe that humans, animals and objects all have souls or spirits.	<b>AD 1553</b>	The first British ships arrive in Benin. Britain becomes a major power in the slave trade and is keen to gain more control.
<b>brass</b>	A yellowy metal made of a mixture of copper and zinc.	<b>AD 1897</b>	The British enter Benin City without permission. Fighting breaks out (the 'Benin Massacre') and only two British officers survive. As punishment, the British launch the 'Benin Punitive Expedition' and destroy Benin City, stealing many treasures. The <b>Oba</b> is exiled and the British colonise Benin.

### Assessment questions / outcomes

- Why do you think Benin is worthy of study? Why might it not be as well-known as Ancient Egypt or Greece?
- Why is it so hard to know what Benin was like 500 to 1,000 years ago?
- Which artefacts told you the most about what Benin was like? Which was least useful?
- Which leader do you think was most important to Benin?
- What were the main reasons the Victorians got involved with Benin? What did this mean for the Benin people?
- Should Britain return the artefacts from the Benin people? Why? Why not?