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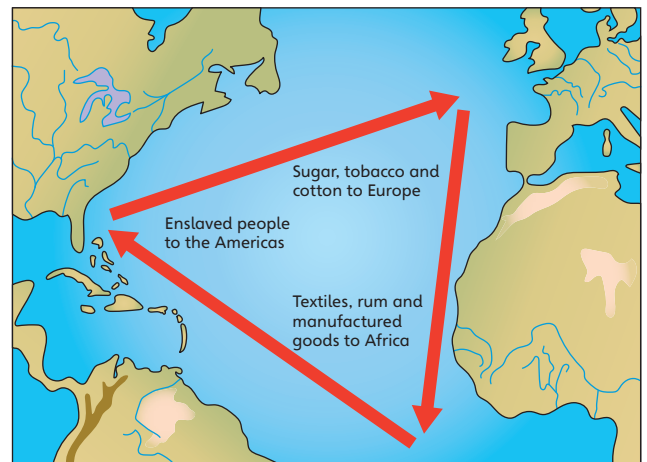
Primary History

Benin Kingdom

Name:

Class:

Knowledge organiser



Vocabulary	
Americas	North, South and Central America
Cowrie shells	Rare kind of seashell, which Europeans used as money to trade with African rulers
Empires	Groups of countries or areas that are ruled by another country
Enslaved people	People who are the legal property of someone else, and are forced to obey them
Guild	Group of people who all do the same job, usually a craft, in which beginners learn the skills to become masters
Looted	Took property by force
Moat	Long trench dug around an area and filled with water to keep invaders out
Oba	King or chief
Officials	People with authority and public duties
Plantations	Large area of land where crops are grown

Key misconception
The Benin Kingdom is not the same as the modern-day country called Benin.

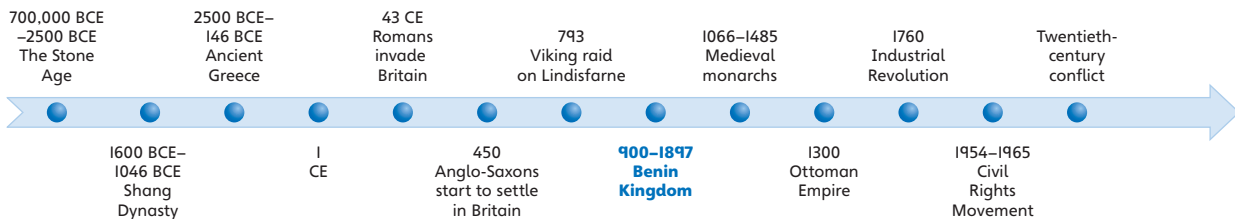
Timeline of events	
900 CE	Lots of villages join together and make a kingdom known as Igodomigodo, ruled by the Ogo.
Approximately 900–1460 CE	A 15 km moat and 16,000 km of walls are constructed around the kingdom.
1180 CE	The Oba royal family takes over from the Ogisos and begins to rule the kingdom; they are treated like gods.
1440 CE	Led by Oba Ewuare the Great, Benin wins more land.
1485 CE	The Portuguese visit the Benin Kingdom.
1514 CE	Oba Esigie sets up trading links with the Portuguese and other European visitors.
1700 CE	A series of civil wars in Benin leads to the kingdom declining in power.
1807 CE	Britain passes a law to end the slave trade, which further weakens the kingdom.
1897 CE	Benin City (in modern-day Nigeria) is destroyed by British troops, and comes under Britain's control.

Learning review

Lesson	Lesson question	You will learn...	Learning review
1	How did the Benin Kingdom begin?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where the Benin Kingdom was. • How the dynasty of the Obas began. • Who Ewuare the Great was. • Why the 1400s were considered the Golden Age of the Benin Kingdom. 	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
2	What was life like for the Edo people in the Benin Kingdom?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How the Obas ruled the kingdom. • How rural life differed from life in the city. • What the role of religion was. 	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
3	How were trade links established and what goods were traded?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When trade between Benin and European countries began. • Which European countries Benin traded with • What was traded. 	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
4	What was the transatlantic slave trade?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which continents were involved in the transatlantic slave trade. • What journey enslaved Africans made. • How Britain benefitted from the slave trade. • What the impacts of the slave trade are. 	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
5	What can the Benin Bronzes teach us about the Benin Kingdom?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How guilds worked in the Benin Kingdom. • What primary sources tell us about life in the Benin Kingdom. • What secondary sources tell us about the Benin Bronzes' reception in Europe. • Whether the Benin Bronzes belong in the British Museum. 	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
6	Assessment: What are the achievements of the Benin Kingdom?		<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

Lesson 1

How did the Benin Kingdom begin?



The Kingdom of Igodomigodo

The Benin Kingdom in West Africa was created over 1,000 years ago, when the people who lived there, called the Edo, made large clearings in the rainforest and joined many villages together. The kingdom was originally called Igodomigodo, and was ruled by a series of kings known as the ‘Ogisos’ or ‘Rulers of the Sky’. It later became known as Benin, with the capital Benin City.

Located in what is now southern Nigeria, Benin was one of the oldest and most developed states in West Africa. Although there is now a country in Africa called Benin, this is not the same as the Benin Kingdom.

During this time, there were many great kingdoms and **empires** in West Africa, including the Kingdom of Ife, the first powerful kingdom in the region, which heavily influenced the culture of Benin. Asante was a kingdom west of Benin in what is now Ghana, and was famous for its work in gold.





- I. Draw on the map to show where the kingdoms of Benin, Ife and Asante were, and add a label to show Benin City.

The first Oba

In the 1100s, the last Ogiso king was ordered to leave. The Edo people feared that their country would fall into chaos, so they asked their neighbour, the King of Ife, for help. The king sent his son Prince Oranmiyan to restore peace. Oranmiyan settled in Benin and married a woman named Erinmwide. When he left to set up a new kingdom, his son Eweka took charge and became the first **Oba** (king) of Benin.

Ewuare the Great

Around 1440, Oba Ewuare came to power. He was known as Ewuare the Great, because he helped Benin become more powerful. His success came from building up an army, winning land, connecting the kingdom with new roads and rebuilding Benin City. This is sometimes called the 'Golden Age' of the Benin Kingdom.



2. Who was the first Oba of the Benin Kingdom? Tick the correct answer.

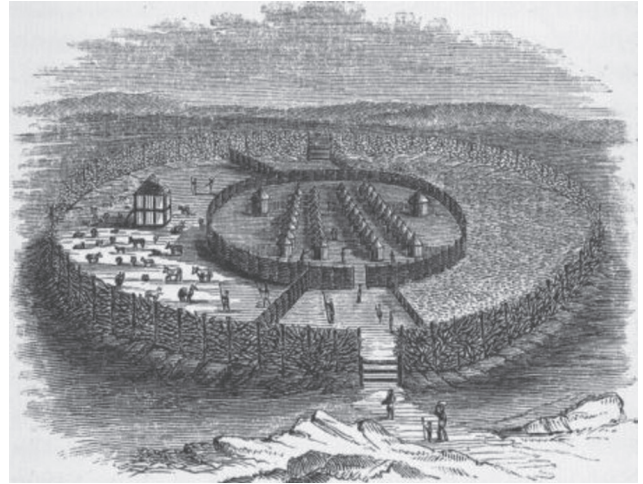
Oba Ewuare ☐

Oba Eweka ☐

Prince Oranmiyan ☐

The walls of Benin

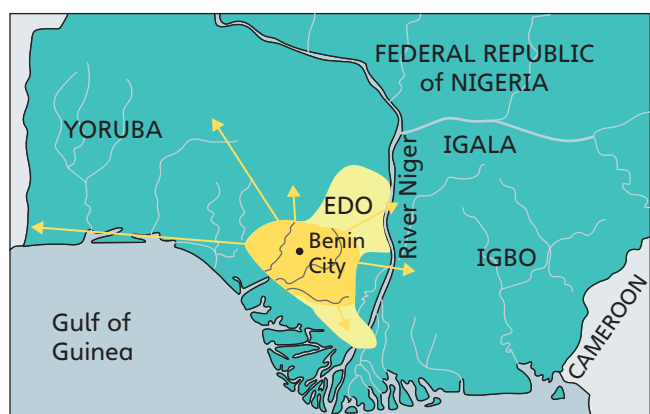
Oba Ewuare had a 15-kilometre-long **moat** dug around Benin City, and a wall built inside it, to protect the city. Access to the city was restricted by nine gateways that were closed at night and guarded by soldiers. A total of 16,000 kilometres of walls were also built beyond the city, dividing up the land into separate areas and keeping the kingdom secure.



The walls of Benin

The Benin Kingdom expands

Oba Ewuare was the first of five great warrior kings. His son, Oba Ozolua, was believed to have won 200 battles. Oba Ozolua was followed by Oba Esigie, who expanded the kingdom eastwards to form an empire and won land from the Kingdom of Ife. Oba Ozolua and Oba Esigie both encouraged trade with the Portuguese, who first visited the Benin Kingdom in 1472 CE. The Obas used the wealth they gained from trading to build up a vast army.



The arrows show the directions that the Benin Kingdom expanded in from the 15th to the 17th century



3. Explain how trade with the Portuguese benefitted Benin. Write your answer.



4. Explain how Oba Ozolua and Oba Esigie made the Benin Kingdom more powerful. Write your answer.



5. Read the statements below. Order them from 1 to 7 to show how important you think they were in helping the Benin Kingdom to become a successful empire. Number 1 should be the most important, and number 7 the least important.

	The Benin Kingdom traded goods with other countries.
	There were no schools, and people did not read or write.
	The Edo people were ruled by kings called Obas.
	The Benin Kingdom had a large, powerful army.
	A large moat was built around Benin City.
	The history of the Benin Kingdom was passed down through storytellers.
	Smaller tribes joined together to form a bigger group.



Lesson 2

What was life like for the Edo people in the Benin Kingdom?



Quiz

1. In what modern-day country was the Benin Kingdom located? Write your answer.

2. What did 'Ogisos' mean? Write your answer.

3. What were the people living in the Benin Kingdom called? Write your answer.

4. How long was the moat around Benin City? Write your answer.

5. Why was Oba Ewuare known as Ewuare the Great? Write your answer.

The rule of the Obas

The people of Benin worshipped many gods. They believed that their Oba was a god.

Everyone had to show great respect to the Oba. People approached him on their knees and nobody could look at him without his permission.



1. Look at this plaque of an Oba. How can you tell that the Oba was very important in the Benin Kingdom? Write your answer.

The Oba's duties

The Oba lived apart from ordinary people, inside the palace in Benin City. Most of the time, he was very busy with his duties as king. He held meetings with his **officials** and led religious ceremonies. The Oba owned all the land in his kingdom. He gave orders to his chiefs and officials about how to run it, and he decided when his armies should go to war.



2. What duties did the Oba have? Write your answer.

Who helped the Oba?

Although the Oba was a thought to be a god, he had many chiefs and officials to help him run his kingdom. These chiefs and officials helped run the royal court, organise the craft workers and make agreements with European merchants.

There were three classes of chiefs. King makers worked closely with the Oba, palace chiefs and town chiefs. Palace chiefs came from rich families and their jobs were passed down from father to son. These chiefs worked to enforce justice (fair treatment of people) at the palace. Town chiefs ran the villages and governed ordinary people, and played an important role in the smooth running of all the areas outside Benin City.

Led by the Oba, these three types of chiefs also made decisions on things such as war, taxes and the dates of important ceremonies.



3. Order the ranks of chief from 1 to 3. Number 1 should be the most important, and number 3 the least important.

	Palace chiefs
	Town chiefs
	King makers



4. Name three jobs that chiefs and officials helped the Oba with. Write your answer.

Life in Benin City

In 1691, a Portuguese ship's captain wrote this about Benin City: 'Great Benin, where the king resides, is larger than Lisbon; all the streets run straight and as far as the eye can see. The houses are large, especially that of the king, which is richly decorated and has fine columns. The city is wealthy and industrious. It is so well governed that theft is unknown, and the people live in such security that they have no doors to their houses.'



5. Write down any words or phrases in the captain's statement that give information about the Oba.



6. What does the captain's statement tell you about life in Benin City? Write your answer.

Rural life

Many people in Benin lived in villages in the rainforest. They built their houses from mud, wood and palm leaves, and made their own tools from iron to clear away trees and create fields for farming. They grew crops such as grain, gourds (vegetables like squash or pumpkin), peppers, onions and beans. Villagers hunted for food, eating monkeys, antelopes, reptiles and rodents. They also gathered a lot of plants, herbs and spices from the forest for cooking. They used trees and plants for medicines, and even as fabric for clothes.



7. What may have been different between rural life in the Benin Kingdom and in Britain? Write your answer.

Religion

Most Edo people followed a religion called Voodoo. Like the Ancient Greeks, they worshipped many gods and honoured them in ceremonies, some of which are still performed today.

Every town and village had its own god or goddess, who everyone worshipped. Olokun was a very popular god. As well as ruling the ocean, he was the god of wealth. Other popular gods were Oto the Earth goddess, Ogun the god of iron and warriors, and Osun the god of medicines and magic.

Voodoo also involves a belief in animism: the idea that spirits inhabit all things, including animals and plants.



8. Read the statements below. Tick 'True' or 'False' for each one.

- | | | |
|---|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| a. The Voodoo religion believes that all people are animals. | True <input type="checkbox"/> | False <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b. The Edo people worshipped one god above all others. | True <input type="checkbox"/> | False <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c. Animism is the belief that animals are more important than humans. | True <input type="checkbox"/> | False <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d. One of the popular gods was the god of iron and warriors. | True <input type="checkbox"/> | False <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e. Animism is the belief that all things have spirits. | True <input type="checkbox"/> | False <input type="checkbox"/> |
| f. All of the Edo ceremonies have now died out. | True <input type="checkbox"/> | False <input type="checkbox"/> |

Lesson 3

How were trade links established and what goods were traded?



Quiz

1. Name two ways in which people showed their respect for the Oba. Write your answer.

2. Which three types of chief helped the Oba run his kingdom? Write your answer.

3. What is animism? Tick the correct answer.

- a. the belief that animals should not be eaten ☐
- b. the belief that spirits inhabit all things ☐
- c. the belief that animals should be worshipped ☐

4. Name three crops that villagers in Benin grew. Write your answer.

5. What materials were rural houses in Benin made from? Write your answer.

The geography of Benin City



Benin's location next to the Atlantic Ocean and the River Niger made it easily accessible for traders

How did Benin create trade links with Europe?

The Portuguese were the first Europeans to visit Benin.

Records suggest that Ruy-de-Sequeira was the first Portuguese person to visit Benin, in 1472, while Oba Ewuare was king. However, the two countries did not form a strong relationship then.

In 1485, Alfonso d'Aveiro went to Benin with the support of King John II of Portugal. At this time, Oba Ozolua was interested in the visitors and wanted to trade with them.

Oba Ozolua was ready to allow the Portuguese men to trade in **enslaved people** and other goods. He even sent one of his most important officials, the chief of Ughoton, back to Portugal to meet the king and discuss their new trading relationship.



- I. Why do you think Oba Ozolua was interested in trading with Europeans? Write your answer.

What did Benin trade?

The people of Benin traded with European merchants (including the Portuguese, British, French and Dutch traders). Instead of using money, they exchanged goods.

These are some of the goods that they exchanged:

- Brass manilla bracelets from Europe (which people in Benin melted down and used to make plaques and statues)
- **Cowrie shells** from Europe (which African rulers used as money)
- Guns from Europe
- Enslaved people from Benin (captured when soldiers from Benin raided other kingdoms)
- Peppercorns from Benin
- Ivory from Benin
- Textiles from Benin, such as cotton





2. Read the statements below. Tick 'True' or 'False' for each one.

- a. The Europeans got guns from trading with the Benin Kingdom. True ☐ False ☐
- b. The Benin Kingdom traded enslaved people from African kingdoms to Europe. True ☐ False ☐
- c. Cowrie shells were used as money by Europeans. True ☐ False ☐
- d. The Europeans got peppercorns from trading with the Kingdom of Benin. True ☐ False ☐
- e. The Benin Kingdom got gold bracelets from trading with Europeans. True ☐ False ☐
- f. Ivory from Benin was traded to Europeans. True ☐ False ☐

How did the Benin Kingdom become powerful?

The trading relationship between the Europeans and the people of Benin was crucial for Benin's growth in power. From the seventeenth century the Europeans sold a huge number of firearms to Benin, and Benin's soldiers learnt a lot, particularly from the Portuguese, which helped them on the battlefield.



3. Fill in the blanks with words from the box to complete these sentences.

European

century

guns

The introduction of _____ to Benin from
_____ traders in the seventeenth _____
assured victory on the battlefield.



4. In your own words, explain how the Benin Kingdom became so powerful. Write your answer.

Trading brass

Although West Africans had discovered how to smelt copper and zinc ores back in the tenth century, as well as how to cast brass, they did not produce enough metal to supply the casting industry of Benin City.

This meant that the Portuguese had the perfect opportunity to offer Benin brass in the form of bracelets called 'manillas', which the brass workers melted to use again.

The Edo people believed that brass was sacred. They used it to make art such as plaques, and decorative figures and heads to represent Obas and defeated rulers.

Unit progress check in

1. What were the kings of the Benin Kingdom called?
Write your answer.

2. What two kinds of defences were built around Benin City to protect it? Write your answer.

3. What was the title of the most important type of chief, who helped the Oba run the kingdom? Write your answer.

4. Which crops did villagers in Benin grow? Tick the correct answers.
 - a. onions ☐
 - b. tomatoes ☐
 - c. beans ☐
 - d. apples ☐
 - e. grapes ☐
 - f. grain ☐
5. Name two gods who were popular with the Edo people, and what they were gods of. Write your answer.

6. Name four items that were traded between Benin and Europe. Write your answer.

Lesson 4

What was the transatlantic slave trade?



Quiz

1. Read the statement below. Tick 'True' or 'False'.

The Portuguese were the first Europeans to visit Benin.

True ☐ False ☐

2. Which countries were involved in trading with Benin? Tick the correct answers.

- a. Portugal ☐
- b. Britain ☐
- c. France ☐
- d. Japan ☐

3. What did Benin brass workers do with manillas? Write your answer.

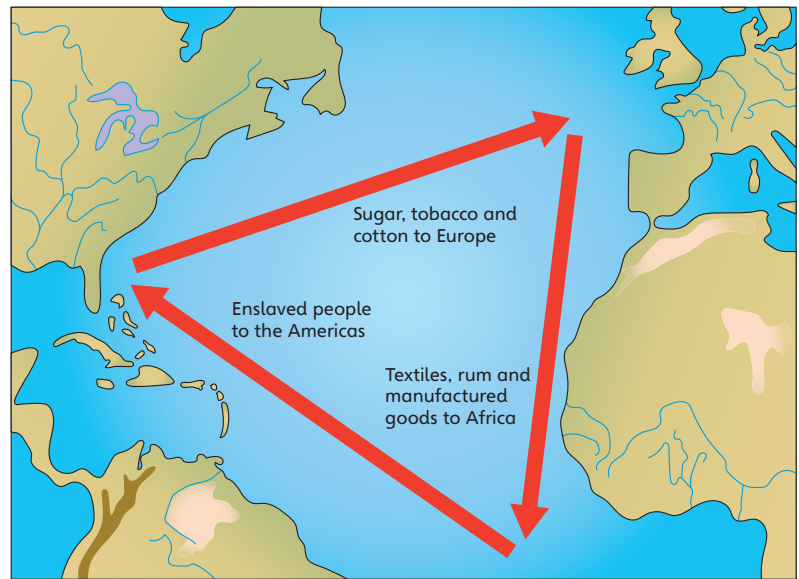
4. What did African rulers use as money? Write your answer.

5. Name two factors about the location of the Benin Kingdom that helped the Edo people to trade. Write your answer.

The transatlantic slave trade

The transatlantic slave trade was the enforced transport by slave traders of enslaved African people, mainly to North, South and Central America. It began in the fifteenth century and lasted until the end of the nineteenth century.

Most of the enslaved people came from West Africa and were sold by other West Africans to European slave traders.



1. Where were the enslaved African people taken to?
Write your answer.

The route

The transatlantic slave trade is sometimes called the 'triangular trade', since it was three-sided and involved three stages:

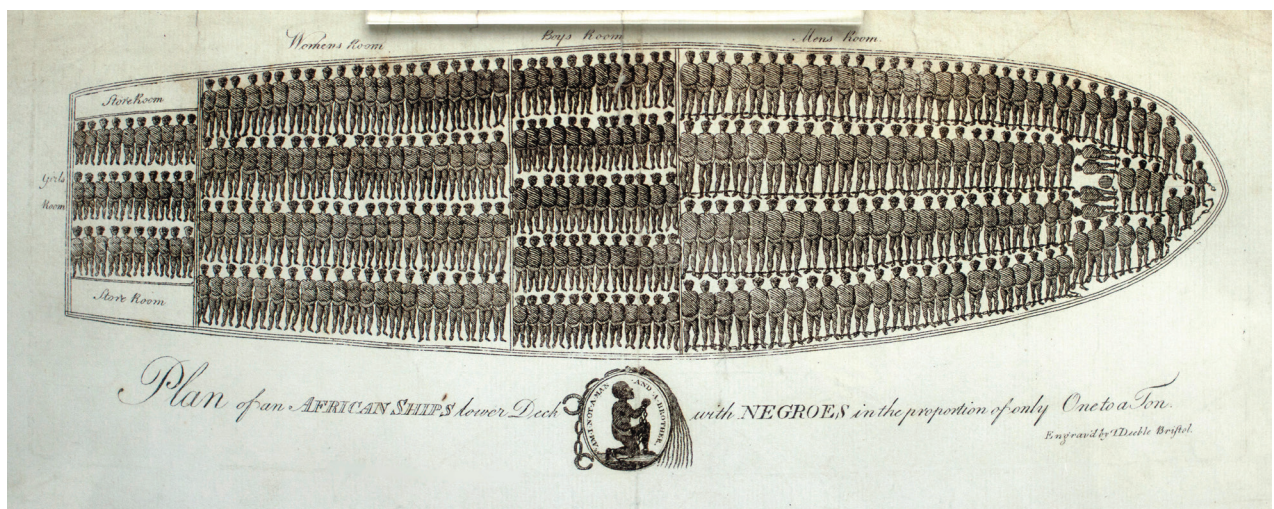
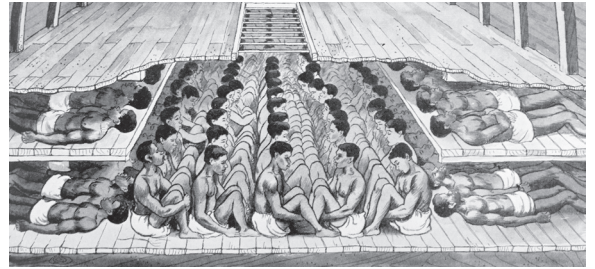
1. Goods were taken from Europe to Africa to exchange for enslaved people.
2. Enslaved people were transported from Africa to the **Americas**, where they were set to work for free on **plantations**.
3. Raw materials produced by slave labour, such as sugar, rice and cotton, were taken back to Europe to sell.



2. Which three continents were involved in the transatlantic slave trade? Write your answer.

The middle passage

The middle passage was the second of the three transatlantic slave trade stages, in which ships carried enslaved people to the Americas. In total, over two million people died on the journey.



3. What do the two pictures tell you about the conditions on the slave ships? Write your answer.

British involvement in the slave trade

Britain was heavily involved in the slave trade. By the early eighteenth century, Britain was the world's leading slave-trading power. It is thought that British ships were responsible for transporting at least two to three million Africans in that century.

An increasing demand for workers on sugar plantations in Barbados and other British West Indian islands meant that Britain became even more involved in the slave trade. The sugar colonies were Britain's most valuable colonies, bringing in £4 million by the end of the eighteenth century. Such huge profits helped Britain to finance the Industrial Revolution.

The end of the slave trade

In 1807, Britain passed a law ending the slave trade. However, an illegal trade continued for many years, and slavery continued to be legal in some countries for another 80 years.



4. In what year did Britain pass a law to end the slave trade? Write your answer.

The impact of the slave trade

The transatlantic slave trade has had an enormous impact on the modern world. It contributed to the growth of racist ideas in America and Europe, as well as weakening African societies due to the loss of millions of young, healthy people. Meanwhile, countries including Britain were able to develop their industries quickly because of the money that the slave trade brought in.



5. What are some of the ways the transatlantic slave trade had an impact on the Benin Kingdom? Write your answer.

Lesson 5

What can the Benin Bronzes teach us about the Benin Kingdom?



Quiz

1. Name three types of raw materials that were grown on plantations in the Americas. Write your answer.

2. What was the second stage of the transatlantic slave trade called? Write your answer.

3. How many people died on ships on the journey from Africa to the Americas? Write your answer.

4. Read the statements below. Tick 'True' or 'False' for each one.

a. In 1907, Britain outlawed the slave trade.

True ☐ False ☐

b. After 1907, all slave trading stopped.

True ☐ False ☐

c. Slavery was still legal in some countries after 1907.

True ☐ False ☐

5. Name two impacts of the transatlantic slave trade on the modern world. Write your answer.

Guilds

In the Benin Kingdom, people who did the same job lived and worked together in a **guild**. There were more than 40 guilds in Benin City, covering all sorts of jobs, such as medicine, drumming, acrobatics and dance.



Art in Benin

Many Edo people worked in guilds for craft makers. There was a guild for blacksmiths, and one for ivory and wood carvers. One of the most important craft-makers' guilds was the brass guild, where artists made plaques and sculptures from brass to decorate the royal palace. These brass works of art became known as the Benin 'Bronzes'.

Between the 1200s and the 1700s, Edo artists created hundreds of brass plaques. The plaques illustrate lots of events of the Benin Kingdom, including battles and major ceremonies, as well as important people, such as the Obas. The plaques are very detailed, and show historical clothing, headdresses, weapons and jewellery, which helps us to understand life in the kingdom.



1. Some people might argue that these plaques give a one-sided view of the Benin Kingdom. Do you agree? Write your answer.



2. What key things does this Benin Bronze tell you about the Benin Kingdom? Write your answer.



Brass animals

As well as the plaques, Edo artists created figures and heads of Obas and of defeated rulers to celebrate victories in battle. They also made brass animals, including crocodiles and leopards, to represent the power of the Oba.



3. Which of the crocodile's and leopard's characteristics would be good representations of an Oba? Write your answer.

European versus Benin artwork



4. Look at these examples of European art and art from the Benin Kingdom. What are some of the similarities and differences between them? Write your answers.



Similarities



Differences

Misconceptions

When the British attacked Benin City in the late nineteenth century, they **looted** many of Benin's plaques and figures.

When the bronze plaques arrived in Europe, they caused a sensation. The artworks showed a powerful, wealthy and military way of life, which challenged European views of Africa. People struggled to understand how African craft makers could have made such works of art, and some even suggested that the Benin artwork had been influenced by European art.



5. Why might Europeans have been surprised by the Benin Bronzes? Write your answer.

The plaques today

Today, plaques and figures from the Benin Kingdom are displayed in museums and galleries around the world, including the British Museum in London. Many people believe they should be returned to West Africa, where they were created. There is also an argument that, when they are in museums, they spread information and interest in Edo history and way of life.



6. What are the pros and cons of keeping the Benin Bronzes in the British Museum? Write your answers.

Pros

Cons

Lesson 6

Unit check out



Write an answer to this question: What are the achievements of the Benin Kingdom?

Key words

Atlantic Ocean	guilds	slave trade
brass	manilla bracelets	walls
cowrie shells	Obas	
Edo	River Niger	

Title: What are the achievements of the Benin Kingdom?

Introduction

- When was the Benin Kingdom created?
- Where was the Benin Kingdom?
- Who were the first rulers?

Paragraph 1

- What was the influence of Ewuare the Great on the kingdom's success?
- What impact did the Golden Age have?

<p>Paragraph 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did European trade help the Benin Kingdom become more powerful? • How did Benin's location benefit the kingdom? 	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>Paragraph 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What cultural items were produced by the Benin Kingdom? • How were these items received in Europe? • What has their cultural impact been? • Where are these artworks now, and why? • What purpose to they serve? 	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>Extension</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss whether you agree that the trade relations did more harm than good. 	<hr/> <hr/>
<p>Conclusion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What were the main achievements of the Benin Kingdom? • Which do you think had the greatest impact on the kingdom's success? • What is the lasting impact of these achievements? 	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

Benin Kingdom

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Benin Kingdom

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