

Kingdom of Benin | History | Years 5 & 6 | Summer Term 2021-22

AD 900 to AD 1180	AD 1180 to AD 1440	AD 1400 to AD 1600	AD 1605 to AD 1700	AD 1700 to AD 1897
Early Benin: Era of Ogisos The people of Benin lived in small communities that formed a kingdom known as Igodomigodo. Ruled by a dynasty of kings called 'Ogisos'.	Era of Empire Consolidation Eweka I becomes new ruler of Kingdom of Benin and 'Oba' dynasty begins. He changed the name of the Kingdom from Igodomigodo to Edo.	Golden Age Benin is first visited by Europeans. Benin grew from a thriving city-state into a great, wealthy kingdom. Trade is important.	Era of European Influence Europeans continue to visit and trade with Benin.	Benin began to decline British began to take control and promote colonialism. The British seized the Kingdom of Benin in AD 1897.



National Curriculum History

Pupils should continue to develop a chronologically secure knowledge and understanding of British, local and world history, establishing clear narratives within and across the periods they study. They should note connections, contrasts and trends over time and develop the appropriate use of historical terms. They should regularly address and sometimes devise historically valid questions about change, cause, similarity and difference, and significance. They should construct informed responses that involve thoughtful selection and organisation of relevant historical information. They should understand how our knowledge of the past is constructed from a range of sources.

In planning to ensure the progression described above through teaching the British, local and world history outlined below, teachers should combine overview and depth studies to help pupils understand both the long arc of development and the complexity of specific aspects of the content.

Artefacts

	Oral histories (eventually written down)
	Sculptures of Obas
	Bronze plaques (made by guild)
	Ivory bell and salt cellar (made by guild)
	Artwork showing Portuguese soldiers (made in Benin)

Cause and Effect

How was the Kingdom of Benin organised?

The Kingdom was ruled by dynasties of kings called 'Ogisos' and 'Obas'. The Obas led the Edo people to great wealth and power before their kingdom eventually fell under the colonial rule of the British Empire in 1897.

What were the Benin's greatest achievements?

By the 15th century, Benin was an important power in West Africa with thriving trade routes, a strong army and many artworks being produced.

What led to the decline of the Benin empire?

Civil wars weakened Benin and greatly reduced the population. Its wealth reduced following abolition of slavery. Towards its end, much of Africa was invaded, occupied and colonised by European countries.

Vocabulary

Ogiso / Oba: The dynasty of kings of the Benin Empire.

Empire: an extensive group of states or countries ruled over by a single monarch, an oligarchy or sovereign state.

Civilisation: The society, culture and way of life of a particular area.

Dynasty: A line of hereditary rulers of a country.

Colonial: Relating to a country controlled by a more powerful country.

Guild: Groups of people who have special skills.

Trade: Action of buying and selling goods and services.

Slavery: The practice or system of owning slaves.

Golden Age: A period in time when great task and achievements were accomplished.

Punitive Expedition: military action designed to punish a state or group of people outside of the borders of the punishing state..

Key Learning: When did this event happen? Beyond Living Memory (pre-history to classical era) 776BC to 146BC

1 **Where and when was the Kingdom of Benin? What else was happening in the world at the same time?**

Find out where modern-day Benin is and which countries are near it in West Africa. Discover that the Kingdom of Benin was located in modern day Nigeria and think about what was happening in Britain during the time of the Kingdom of Benin.

2 **How do we know about the Kingdom of Benin from AD 900 to AD 1300? How reliable are oral histories compared to archaeological artefacts?**

Recap when and where the Kingdom of Benin was before gaining a brief overview of the civilisation from 900 to 1300. Consider how we know about Benin and what different sources can tell us. Benin did not have a writing system, so most of what we know about the Benin Empire during this time was told in stories (known as oral histories). Eventually these were written down, after passing verbally through several generations. Focus particularly on the difference between archaeological finds and oral histories, and conflicting sources of evidence.

3 **Who were the leaders of the Kingdom of Benin? How do artefacts help us to acquire this knowledge?**

Consider what we can learn about the leaders of Benin from bronze artefacts. Find out about the Obas of Benin and the dates and key features of their reigns. Edo people believed their leaders were semi-divine and could communicate with gods and spirits. Discuss and compare to other systems of government from prior learning – what are the similarities and differences?

4 **What were the lives of the Edo people of Benin like? What roles did they have in the Kingdom of Benin?**

Recap knowledge of Benin royalty from previous lesson before comparing this with the lives of ordinary people. Explore different jobs in Benin, including artists, craftsmen and builders. Make inferences for what everyday life was like at this time, then discuss to compare to social structures in other civilisations from prior learning.

5 **Who did the Kingdom of Benin trade with and what did they trade? What was the impact of trade on the Kingdom of Benin and its neighbours?**

Explore the effects of different trade routes on the Benin Empire. Discover what commodities Benin imported in and exported out, and some of the ways in which Europeans carried out trade with Benin. Identify the importance of trade to the Benin Empire.

6 **What were the greatest achievements of Benin's Golden Age? How did they help the development of the kingdom?**

Identify what a Golden Age is (by retrieving prior learning) and place Benin's Golden Age on a timeline. Find out some of the reasons why this period is known as the Golden Age of Benin and identify key features of the period. Compare this with what was happening in Britain at the same time.

7 **What were the causes that led to the decline of the Benin Empire? How significant was the impact of each cause? Who ultimately destroyed Benin and why?**

Investigate the decline of the Benin Empire. They will think about the effect of civil war on a civilisation and some of the reasons why Benin's fortunes changed thanks to the abolition of slavery, the 'Scramble for Africa' and other factors. Make links to prior learning through discussion, including: dissolution of empires, imperialism, cause and effects of war. Extended writing opportunity: Do you agree or disagree with the British Punitive Expedition to Benin? Why or why not?