

Spring 1 and 2

Year 6 – Kingdom of Benin

What are the similarities and differences between the Kingdom of Benin and British history?



Key Vocabulary

Ogiso	The title used by the early rulers of Igodomigodo. It means 'kings of the sky'. It is thought that there were around 31 Ogiso rulers.
Oba	The title used by Eweka and subsequent rulers. Eweka was from the Yoruba people and Oba is the Yoruba word for 'king'.
Edo	The name given to the Kingdom of Igodomigodo by Oba Eweka. The people also became known as the Edo people.
Yoruba	The name of the people from the holy city of Ife. The histories of the Edo and Yoruba people are closely linked.
AD	Anno Domini – after Christ.
Legacy	A lasting impact on the world.
Period	A length or portion of time.

Powerful knowledge

- Many people in Benin either worked as builders or worked the land. The role of the farmers included jobs like clearing the forests, planting crops and looking after animals.
- The Obas were very powerful and were treated like gods, during their rule the Benin Kingdom expanded its boundaries.
- Over time there were arguments about who would be the next Oba and this led to civil wars. British troops invaded and gained control.
- 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.
- The golden age is a period in time when great tasks were accomplished. During the golden age of the Kingdom of Benin, they had great achievements in art, science, literature and philosophy.
- A desire for control over West African trade and territory ultimately led to a British invasion of Benin in 1897. Benin City was burned by the British, who then made the kingdom part of British Nigeria (which became Nigeria after the country gained independence in 1960).

What I should already know

- An understanding of Roman Britain.
- Africa is not a country – it is a continent.

Learning Journey

- To explore the location of the Kingdom of Benin and establish a timeline of eras.
- To learn about the Obas of Benin.
- To find out about the lives of craftsmen, builders and other ordinary people during the Kingdom of Benin.
- To investigate the trade network of the Kingdom of Benin.
- To explore Benin's 'Golden Age' as their civilisation reached its height.
- To find out why the Kingdom of Benin collapsed after the Golden Age, including Britain's role in its downfall.

NC Coverage

- A non-European society that provides contrasts with British history – Benin (West Africa) c. AD 900-1300.

