

## Key Stage 2: People of Benin

The final page of these notes can be copied and given to students who you think may need additional support during the spotlight or to adult helpers.

This session takes place in one of the Museum's formal lecture theatres where the students view pictures projected on to a large screen. It uses question and answer to involve students in looking closely at objects from the Kingdom of Benin.

### Before your visit

- This spotlight introduces the students to the local environment, the king (oba), the palace and the people who helped rule the Kingdom of Benin.
- Key themes for the session are settlement, kingship, environment, symbolism, ceremony, commemoration, trade and evidence.
- Key names and vocabulary include kingship, oba, Olokun, Oba Esigie, Queen Idia, oil palm, leopard, mudfish, red coral, ceremony, responsibility and evidence.
- Before coming to the Museum, please locate West Africa, Nigeria and Benin city on a map with your students.
- Use the Explore function to search the British Museum's collections on-line for objects from the old kingdom of Benin at [www.britishmuseum.org](http://www.britishmuseum.org)

### During your visit

- The session draws on objects that provide evidence about the people of the kingdom of Benin. The students will learn how the environment influenced notions of status in society and also explore the roles of people who lived in, worked at and visited the oba's palace.
- Rooms with objects relating to the session include:
  - Room 25: Brass plaques depicting people, red coral regalia and ivory leopards from Benin.
  - Room 68: Currency bracelets and brass plaque depicting Portuguese traders in Benin.

### People of Benin continued...

#### After your visit: follow-up activities

- Discuss how the presenter used pictorial representations to consider some key themes in Benin society. What other sorts of evidence would help us to find out more about the themes mentioned? For example, written evidence, archaeological sites and other objects.
- Review the ways in which status was expressed through the objects studied. If your class will be studying the Tudors, you may wish to compare portraits of the kings and the obas and identify symbols of power. You could also compare the evidence for palace life.

#### Curriculum links

- **National Curriculum for Art and Design at KS2**  
Pupils should be taught the Knowledge, skills and understanding through:  
*investigating art, craft and design in the locality and in a variety of genres, styles and traditions ...*
- **National Curriculum for History at Key Stage 2**  
A world history study: *A study of the key features including the everyday lives of men, women and children, of a past society e.g. Benin.*

In this session you will learn about:

- objects from the Kingdom of Benin in Nigeria.
- the environment, king (oba), palace and people of Benin.

## Key words

kingship – being a king

oba – king of Benin

Olokun – god of the sea and water

Oba Esigie – a famous king

Queen Idia – mother of Oba Esigie

oil palm

leopard

mudfish

red coral

ceremony

responsibility

evidence

## What is Africa?

- You will learn about and discuss the African continent.
- You will learn to find West Africa, Nigeria and Benin city on a map of Africa.

## Benin

- You will learn about the beginning of Benin's history.
- You will find out how to use the brass plaques and other objects from Benin as evidence of life in the past. The aspects you will consider are:
  - the environment
  - the king
  - symbols of power
  - the palace
  - the chiefs
  - the king's servants
  - trade
- You will find out about Europeans who came to Benin.