

Notes for teachers

National curriculum links

- History: Benin – a non-European society
- Art and Design

About this session

This presentation looks at the Edo people of the old Kingdom of Benin through the object evidence in the British Museum's collection.

Location lecture theatre

Format students view images projected on a screen and participate through a Q&A

Capacity up to 120 students, usually from different schools

Duration 45 minutes

Price £1.50 per student

In detail

- The session begins with a discussion about the geography and diversity of Africa before focusing on the location of Benin City and explaining the origins of the Kingdom of Benin.
- The students learn how the environment influenced Edo society, explore the roles of the king (*oba*) and people who lived in, worked at and visited the *oba*'s palace.
- Students compare evidence from African and European artists for the design of the palace.
- The session concludes with reference to earliest recorded contact with Europeans and the development of trading relations.

Before your visit

- Locate Nigeria and Benin City on a map, think about the forest environment in this part of West Africa.
- Introduce/revise the key themes and vocabulary mentioned above.
- Think about what other events were happening in the world when the Kingdom of Benin started to develop around 1,000 years ago.

After your visit

- Discuss the role of the *oba* and ask the students to write a diary entry to describe a day in the lives of his servants.
- Create a large collage of the *oba*'s palace, Benin City and its natural environment using object evidence from the British Museum's website, the internet and text books.
- Revise the ways in which status was expressed through the objects from Benin. Compare portraits of the kings from other kingdoms and the *obas* and identify symbols of power.

Find out more

- More Africa [resources and sessions](#)
- Take a look at the galleries with [Google Street View](#)

Visit notes for students and adult helpers

You can print this summary sheet and take it with you during your visit.

Learning objectives

Find out more about the African continent

Discover the old Kingdom of Benin in Nigeria in West Africa

Develop an understanding of the environment, king (oba), palace and people of Benin

Understand how to use objects to find out about life in Benin

Key words

Edo – the people of the Kingdom of Benin

Kingship

Oba – king of Benin

Olokun – god of sea and water

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