



# KINGDOMS OF THE RAIN FOREST

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# Kingdoms of the Rain Forest

- **Main Idea (Objective):**



- Africa's rain forest blocked invaders and provided vital resources to inhabitants.



# Kingdoms of the Rain Forest

- **Lecture Focus (Essential Question):**



- What does our state make that people in other places want to buy? Africa's Rain Forest Kingdoms had something the Savana Kingdoms wanted...it was not gold or salt, but something just as valuable...food.

# Kingdoms of the Rain Forest

- The Ghana, Mali and Songhai Empires ruled the wide open **Savannas** of Africa.



- However, the dense rain forest along the Equator kept these empires from expanding to the southern coast...essentially, no armies could breach the rain forest.

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# Kingdoms of the Rain Forest

- People living in the Rain Forests built their own kingdoms and eventually massive empires.



- The first of which was the **Benin**, which arose in the **Niger Delta**.

# Kingdoms of the Rain Forest



- The second, the **Kongo**, was formed in the **Congo River Basin**.



# Kingdoms of the Rain Forest



- **Griots** who live in the Niger River Delta to this day still tell stories about **King Ewuare**, who founded the Kingdom of Benin around 1440 C.E.

# Kingdoms of the Rain Forest

- In describing their ancestor, these Griots tell tales of King Ewuare's accomplishments, one storyteller stated:

*"He fought against and captured 201 towns and villages...He took their rulers captive and caused the people to pay him tribute"*

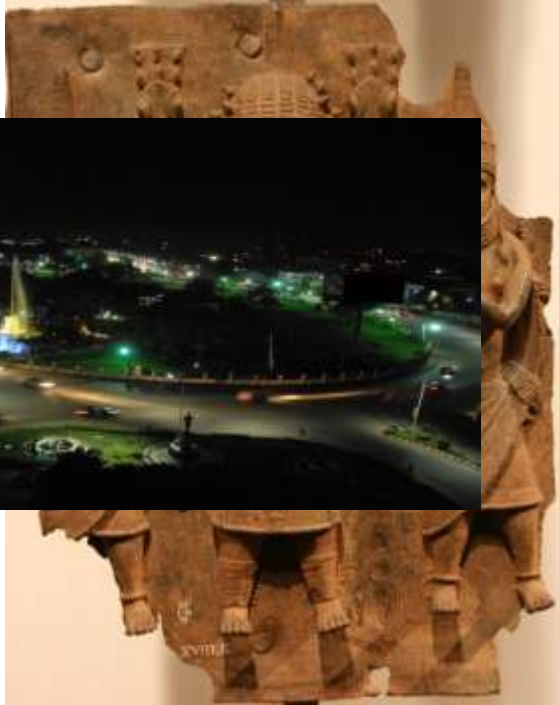
- J.V. Egharevba,

*A Short History of Benin*



# Kingdoms of the Rain Forest

- Ewuare became king in a violent coup against his brother **Uwaifiokun** which destroyed much of Benin City.



- After the war, Ewuare rebuilt much of the city of Benin, reformed political structures in the kingdom, greatly expanded the territory of the kingdom, and fostered the arts and festivals... his legacy is still an important part of African history to this day.



# Kingdoms of the Rain Forest



- Benin City today.

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# Kingdoms of the Rain Forest



- Since the Kingdom was tucked into the forest region of Africa it was not discovered until the 1800's by the British...they quickly saw the wealth of this region and conquered it immediately.



# Kingdoms of the Rain Forest

- One of the most unique part of the Benin Empire was their art.
- They wove cotton fabrics with stripes of color and carved wood masks that are still world famous today.
- Art made from metal, wood and ivory, plus the fabrics made by Benin artists were in high demand by other civilizations and tribes.



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- Farmers in the Rain Forest Kingdoms enjoyed many natural advantages including rich farmable soil and a warm climate with plenty of rain for crops to flourish.



# Kingdoms of the Rain Forest

- In cleared out areas of the forest, Benin farmers often produced a surplus, or extra supply, of foods like bananas, yams and even rice.



- Food surpluses supported rulers and made for a healthy class of artisans.

# Kingdoms of the Rain Forest

- Kongo weavers, for example, wove fabrics from tree bark and other plant fibers.



- These Velvet like fabrics became very sought after by Europeans for hundreds of years.



# Kingdoms of the Rain Forest



- To this day this region of Africa still produces incredible textiles.



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# Kingdoms of the Rain Forest



- Rain Forest Kingdoms that bordered the dry Savannas traded their surplus of food and crafts for copper, salt and leather goods.

# Kingdoms of the Rain Forest

- Later, when the Europeans arrived, traders from Benin and Kongo met their ships along the coast.



- They began a trade network, one that even included captives that were taken during wars...**what does this sound like?**



# Kingdoms of the Rain Forest

- **Questions:**

- **1)** What did the African Rain Forest protect their kingdoms and empires from?
- **2)** What were the names of the two biggest Rain Forest Kingdoms and where did they begin?
- **3)** What does the term surplus mean and how did it apply to the Rain Forest Kingdoms?
- **4)** What advantages did farmers in the rain forest have over farmers in other parts of Africa?

# Kingdoms of the Rain Forest

- **Questions:**

- **1) What did the African Rain Forest protect their kingdoms and empires from?**
  - **Invasions from the Savana Kingdoms**
- **2) What were the names of the two biggest Rain Forest Kingdoms and where did they begin?**
  - **Benin Kingdom along the Niger River Delta and the Kongo along the Congo River Basin**
- **3) What does the term surplus mean and how did it apply to the Rain Forest Kingdoms?**
  - **Extra supply and the rainforest kings were able to support all rulers and artisans comfortably**
- **4) What advantages did farmers in the rain forest have over farmers in other parts of Africa?**
  - **The rain forest offered rich soil and a warm wet climate for growing crops**

# History Mystery Time: **Benin Art**



- History Mystery Time: **The Art of the Rainforest**



# History Mystery Time: **Benin Art**



- According to oral history, the fourth king of Benin, **King Ewedo** decided to start having lifelike memorial sculptures of royal ancestors created.

# History Mystery Time: **Benin Art**



- All of these heads have necklaces made of coral beads because they are part of the royal clothing.

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# History Mystery Time: **Benin Art**

- At the end of the 1400's the Obas, or Kings, organized craftspeople into guilds...remember guilds are medieval association of craftsmen or merchants



- These guilds were able to produce some of the most incredible metal work from this period in human history.

# History Mystery Time: **Benin Art**

- Benin became famous for its brass and bronze sculptures and ivory and wood carvings.



- Today's these works of art are priceless pieces of human history.

# History Mystery Time: **Benin Art**

- The **Ivory Trade** is now illegal throughout the world, which makes the Benin and Kongo ivory works of art incurably valuable and rare.



- Ivory has, however, entered an illegal underground trade in which the ivory tusks of the hippopotamus, walrus, narwhal, and most commonly, Asian and African elephants are illegal poached.



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# History Mystery Time: **Benin Art**

- The ivory trade has led to endangerment of species, resulting in restrictions and bans.



- Ivory was formerly used to make piano keys and other decorative items because of the white color it presents when processed but the piano industry abandoned ivory as a key covering material in the

# Writing Activity: Enslavement

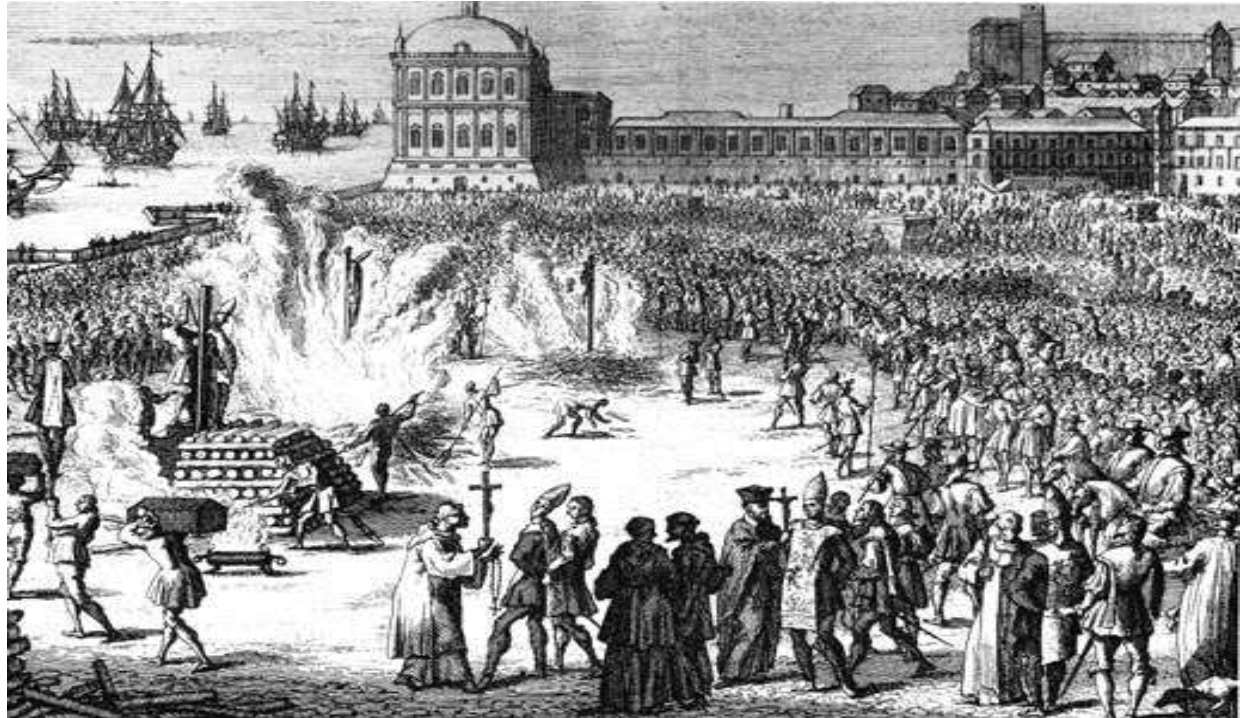
- Writing Activity: **Enslavement**
- King Alfonso of the Kongo Kingdom protested the enslavement of his people.
- Eventually Europeans, specifically the **Portuguese** realized that they could make a fortune on human trafficking and began kidnapping people in the Kongo Kingdom and forced them into bondage.





# Writing Activity: Enslavement

- In 1526 C.E. King Alfonso wrote a letter to King John III of Portugal and stated, "*Merchants daily seize our subjects...they grab and cause them to be sold*".



- The Portuguese did not stop taking people following the plea from King Alfonso.

# Writing Activity: **Enslavement**

- In a well written and thought out letter I want you to create a similar plea to King John III or Portugal, offering reasons why his people should stop the immoral trade and enslavement of human beings.
- This letter should contain ideas and examples as to why this is wrong.
- There is no page or paragraph requirement, you should write as much as needed to properly display your point of view.

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