**Benin Civilisation Assembly**

**Year 4/5 Assembly**

**Cast (30)**

Child1 (Introduction)

Teacher

School children x4 (chd 2,3,4 and 5)

Europeans – Explorer, Scribe

Interpreter

Carriers x2

Coast guards x2

Neighbouring chief

Benin border guards x2

Sceptre- bearers (Omuada and Omueben – carriers the Royal Ada and Eben) x2

Oracle

10 Benin chiefs

Iyase - The Prime Minister

Oba Ewuare

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**Props**

4 laptops or tablets for school children

World map or Africa continent map.

Photos of bronze plaques displayed on the wall / stage area

Kings throne

Oba coral bead crown (or a made red paper crown)

Ada and Eben made from cardboard

Red beads for chiefs (or made from red paper, card or fabric)

White cotton fabric wraps for King and chiefs.

A bowl and dice for Oracle.

Suitable luggage for European explorers (cardboard boxes or portmanteau if available)

2 Bowler hats (can be made from card). Note pad and pen or pencil for European scribe

Speech cards for natives’ dialogue or can be said in English if preferred or easier.

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**Music** (Music from videos only, turn off screen so no video image is projected or visible)

The Circle of life: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HwSKkKrUzUk>

The Lion Sleeps tonight: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QvsQ9hYKq7c>

Mariam Makeba Original African Circle of life: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U6AAtKmx6Qk> (starting to play from 0.47 seconds)

Fela Kuti Opposite People (instrumental): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7-rMiaN8EH4>

Dance video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bOLBwrFfDm4> (from 0.54 seconds)

*Audience come into assembly with Fela Kuti music playing.*

**Introduction Chd 1:** Welcome to Year 4/5 assembly on The Benin Civilisation, we have a lot of information and fun facts to share with you today on this once great African kingdom. We hope you enjoy it, sit back and relax.

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*[Children are in class working on their tablets and laptops. Teacher comes in*]

**Teacher:** How are you getting on with your research?

All: Fine Miss.

**Teacher:** How fine, show me. Chd 2, you first what have you found out?

**Chd 2**: I found that the Benin Kingdom started over a thousand years ago when a group of villages came together to form Igodomigodo and that they were ruled by the sky kings called Ogisos. They ruled them for about 350 years and then the Obas began to rule them.

**Teacher:** You have been working hard, carry on. Chd 3 what have you found out?

**Chd 3:** Well, I found that the kingdom was located in the rainforest in the south of present day Nigeria [showing this on the map]. The people were and are still called the Edo people. The kings engaged in a lot of wars and so they had to build protective walls around their city to defend it. These are known as the Benin moats. I also found that the Benin soldiers were awesome. I would like to meet one of them.

**Teacher:** Let’s not get carried away, this happened a long time ago. Chd 4 what have you found out?

**Chd 4:** The kingdom changed name several times from Igodomigodo to Ile Ubini to Ubini and finally to Bini. The last name change (Benin) by which it is still known today was as a result of the Portuguese mispronouncing Ubini.

**Teacher:** What about you chd 5?

**Chd 5**: I learnt that the kings had great Queen mothers the most popular was Queen Idia. She was the world’s first Queen Mother and she helped her son Oba Esigie win many wars. Miss I am finding this very interesting, can we carry on?

**Teacher:** Of course you can, you have 10 more minutes. Back to work now everyone.

[*Children carry on working on their tablets and laptops.]*

**Chd 5**: Hey everyone come and see this.

**Chd 3:** What now?

**Chd 5**: I think I have hacked into a time travel web site. This is awesome come and see.

**Chd 4**: Really, you are so in trouble with Miss.

[*Chd, 2, 3, and 4 gather around chd 5’s tablet*.]

**Chd 3**: Wow, that is Africa.

**Chd 5:** Yes, it says, Bini Kingdom the year is 1472 and Oba Ewuare is on the throne. Shh let’s watch what is happening.

[*All 4 chn sit on the floor to watch*.]

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*Two Europeans are on a West African coast holding their luggage and looking at a map.*

**1st European**: We have finally set foot on West African soil.

**2nd European**: The weather is quite punishing.

**1st European**: Never mind the weather, it will be alright, just think about all that gold we will be taking back with us.

**2nd European**: Ah, yes the gold.

**1st European**: And what stories we shall have to tell back home.

**2nd European**: The king will be pleased with us.

**1st European**: And my family too. They will be very proud. Take care to note down every single thing that happens; who we see, who speak we to and what they say, what we do and where we go. Your superb drawings will help too. We will be sensational back in Europe [both smile and look pleased].

[*Europeans are interrupted by an African who joins them*.]

**Interpreter:** Me help you?

**1st European**: Yes, we are here to see Great Benin.

**2nd European**: And the king.

**Interpreter**: Oba

**1st European**: King Oba?

Interpreter nods head.

**1st European**: Can we see him?

**Interpreter:** No, Oba say no come.

**2nd European**: We have travelled far.

**Interpreter:** Oba say no come.

**1st European**: Never mind that, please show us the way [demonstrating with his arms].

**Interpreter**: Me help you? Where you go?

**1st European**: To Benin.

[*Interpreter beckons to two other Africans. They join them. Hold up speech cards to show dialogue*.]

**Interpreter:** These two want to see the Great Oba, I have told them this is not possible.

**1st Carrier:** Let’s take them to the border chief. He will deal with them.

**2nd Carrier:** They have a lot of load so they will pay us well.

[*Interpreter turns to speak to Europeans.]*

**Interpreter:** Come we go.

**1st European**: Thank you.

**2nd European**: I suppose these two are carriers. Can they manage all our luggage?

**1st European**: They will have to do.

[*Carriers pick up European luggage. All set off to Circle of life music.]*

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*All arrive in neighbouring village. 2 border guards are on duty.*

**1st guard**: Stop! Who goes there? Identify yourselves!

**2nd guard**: Step right here.

*[All five step forward*.]

**Interpreter in native dialect**: These two want to see the Great Oba, I have told them this is not possible but they insist so we are taking them to your chief so he can help them.

**1st border guard:** They will have a long wait. Take them and mind how you go [pointing to the chief].

**Interpreter:** Thank you. [*All five walk to the chief.]*

**Interpreter in local dialect:** Good afternoon Your Highness, these two want to see the Great Oba, I have told them this is not possible but they insist so we have brought them to you so you can help them.

**Coast Chief:** You have done well. I will send a message to the Great King immediately. Carriers find yourselves a place to sleep for the next few nights. This will take some time. [*He nods smiling to the Europeans. Play Circle of life music.*]

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*Great Oba Ewuare’s palace. His council of chiefs are waiting for him. He comes in with his sceptre- bearer [Omuada].*

All Chiefs: Oba Ghato Okpere! Ise! (long Live the King! Amen!) [*Beating chests and standing up*].

[*Oba sits down on throne. Chiefs sit back down]*

**Oba:** You have all heard about these visitors wanting to see us?

**All:** Yes, Your Majesty.

**Oba:** What does the oracle say?

[*Iyase, Prime Minister beckons to Oracle. He comes in.]*

**Iyase Prime Minster:** What do our ancestors say about these strange people wanting to see us?

**Oracle:** *[Looking into his bowl.]* Your Majesty, our ancestors are giving a mixed message. They say the strangers bring with them a double edged sword.

**Iyase Prime Minister:** How so?

**Oracle:** Translated it means that the Whiteman will bring progress and sorrow with him.

**Oba:** Chiefs what can you make of this message from our ancestors?

**Chief 1:** It looks like the Whiteman brings good and bad omen with him.

**Chief 2**: But how can that be, it can be either good or bad.

**Chief 3**: We need to consider this very carefully. Bringing good is good for everyone. However, bringing bad cannot be good for anyone.

**Chief 4**: I say we don’t see them. We do not want any strangers endangering our people.

**Chief 5:** If we don’t receive them, don’t we also miss out on the progress promised?

**Chief 6:** The sun never misses a day; the bad period will pass and day will follow.

**Chief 7:** Do our ancestors say there is anything they can do to help us avert the bad?

**Oracle**: [*Looking into his bowl.*] They reply no. They also say they require no sacrifices. You should be brave and let things play out.

**Chief 8:** In other words, we need to use wisdom and bravery with the Whiteman.

**Chief 9:** Your Majesty, we should agree to see the Whiteman and welcome him wholeheartedly.

**Chief 10:** Your Majesty, never let it be said that the lion was ever scared of anyone. The sun never misses a day; we will be just fine.

**Oba:** Agreed, we shall see them. Prime Minister send a message to them that we have prepared beds for them. [*Oba gets up to leave.]*

**All chiefs and Oracle:** Oba Ghato Okpere! Ise! (long Live the King! Amen!) [*Beating chests and standing up.*]

[*All chiefs sit back down and look pensive. Play The Lion Sleeps tonight music.]*

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*Back in the classroom, the children are interrupted by the teacher.*

**Teacher:** What are you all doing on the floor, have you finished your research?

**All**: Yes Miss.

**Teacher:** Child 5 let’s start with you. What did you find out?

**Chd 5**: I found out that the kings made ivory and wood carving royal art so they could control their production and when Europeans explorers came, they sold these to them as tourist souvenirs.They made lots of money from this.

**Teacher**: Child 2.

**Child 2:** The kings used bronze plaques to record all their important events like their war victories and important visitors. They bought arms from Europeans and paid them to train their soldiers and fight in wars with them too.

**Teacher:** Chd 4 have you anything else to add?

**Chd 4:** The Benin Civilisation was at its height for over 200 years from early 1400s to late 1600s.

**Teacher**: Well done all of you. You have certainly found out a lot.

**Chd 1**: Miss I have something to add.

**Teacher:** Go on.

**Child 1**: We also found out that the Benin Kingdom came to an end due to infighting among the chiefs and all the wars they engaged which weakened them. They had a king who gambled all their riches away, then they had a civil war which crippled the administration and worst of all their trained soldiers kept leaving to set up new settlements. Finally, in 1897, the British sacked the last king of the old kingdom in 1897. *[Gasps]*

**Chd 3:** That must have been very sad for the Benin people. Sad, sad time.

[*Whole class dance to Miriam Mak*eba - The Lion Sleeps tonight. Dance moves from Youtube video link above start from 0.54 seconds].

**Chd 1:** Thank you for coming to our assembly, we hope that we have educated you about the Benin Civilisation a great African Kingdom.

***[Applause]***

*Audience depart with Fela Kuti Opposite People music playing.*