**Benin Civilisation**

**Assembly script for Year 5/6**

A class assembly for 30 children (can be adapted up or down). Use online photographs of Benin Bronze plaques compositions to get ideas for costume making. Get drummers (and all the children) to learn African drumming from YouTube videos which they can use to add atmosphere during the assembly. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n65_ZOh7jag>

**Duration**: about 15 minutes

**Cast 30**

Narrators 1 – 10

Oba

Omuada (Ada Bearer)

Omueben (Eben bearer)

Chief Zuzu

Horner blower

Bell ringer

Ewu - Zuzu’s senior wife

4 junior wives

Trader Erebo

2 traders

2 kings Emissaries - War Chief Obosa and Royal Priest Tiosa

2 drummers

2 shakers

**Props:**

Photographs of Benin Bronze plaques of The Oba, soldiers, War Chief, Royal Priest, Emissary, Chief’s wife with beak hairstyle, Benin trader with Manilla rings. These can be displayed on the stage during assembly or projected on screen.

2 Drums

2 Tambourines

I bell

Hand fan

Container (Ekpokin for emissary)

Made Ada (paper / card sculpture)

Made Eben (paper / card sculpture)

White cloth (bedsheets from home)

Red fabric if available

Red jewellery or paper craft jewellery

Soldiers outfit: helmet, shield, spear (paper / card sculpture)

Photographs of cowrie shells and Manilla

World map

*Audience come into assembly to African drumming by children.*

**Narrator 1:** Welcome to our class assembly. This term we have been learning about the legacies of the Benin Civilisation.

**Narrator 2:** We learnt that the kingdom of Benin was based in the south of Nigeria and it is not the same as the present day Benin Republic which is a neighbouring country to the West of Nigeria [show on map].

**Narrator 3:** We learnt that the kingdom started about 1,000 years ago after a number of villages came together to be ruled as one kingdom. This kingdom became known as Igodomigodo named after their first ruler Igodo. Igodomido translates as Igodo dwellings.

**Narrator 4:** Igodomigodo was ruled by a total of 31 Ogiso kings known as the sky kings. This lineage then died out.

**Narrator 5:** The Igodomigo people known as the Edos began to be ruled by the Obas and the name of the Kingdom changed to Ile Ibinu. Another king later changed this to Ubini. The Portuguese mispronounced this name to Bini when they arrived in the 1400s. The kingdom has been known as Benin since then. The people continue to be known to date as the Edo people.

**Narrator 6:** The kingdom grew very rich and powerful when they began to be ruled by the Warrior kings who expanded the kingdom right across West Africa. There were 5 warrior kings in total. The kingdom reached its height during the 15 – 16th centuries when they began to trade with Europe. The kings introduced royal art in bronze casting, ivory and wood carving.

**Narrator 7:** We would now like you to meet some major royal players’ from that period. First up is the Great Oba accompanied by his sceptre bearers, Omuada and Omueben *[drum roll as Oba enters with Omuada holding the Ada (looks like a cutlass) and Omueben (paddle shaped)].*

**Narrator 8:** Please bow your heads for the king, His Majesty the Great Oba. [All bow their heads until instructed to look up.]

**Omuada:** You may look up. *[All sit up straight.]*

**All:** Oba Ghato Okpere, Ise - Long Live the king.

**Narrator 9:** Your Majesty, we w-e-r-e juuusst wondering [stammering]…

**Oba:** Yes. My Ada *[Omuada steps forward to show this to the audience]* symbolises that I alone can issue the death penalty in capital offences cases. My eben *[Omueben steps forward to show this to the audience]* is a symbol of my authority to rule over all my people.

**Narrator 9:** Thank you Your Majesty. We are deeply honoured by Your Grace’s presence.

**All:** Oba Ghato Okpere, Ise - Long Live the king.  *[Oba leaves to drum beats].*

**Narrator 8:** Next up is Chief Warrior Zuzu with his horn blower and bell ringer.

**Narrator 9:** Please welcome all the way from the battlefields, Chief Zuzu and his entourage [Chief with his horn blower and bell ringer enter to a loud applause].

**Narrator 8:** Welcome Chief Zuzu, where have you been?

**Chief Zuzu:** Chasing away invaders. I am just on my way back from fighting some occupiers on our northern border. The other soldiers and war chiefs are close behind.

**Narrator 9:** And who have you got with you right now?

**Chief Zuzu:** Here, my horn blower whose job it is to announce our presence in the area *[horn blower steps forward to blow horn].* And this is my bell ringer who rings the bell to announce our victory over the enemy *[bell ringer steps forward to shake bell].*

**Narrator 8:** Thank you for sharing this with us Chief Zuzu. *[Chief Zuzu leaves the stage to bell ringing.]*

**Narrator 9:** Next up is Ewu, beautiful wife of Chief Zuzu.

**Ewu:** *[Steps forward with two companions to the shaking sound of Ekuse or tambourine, with hand fan and handkerchief over her mouth.]* I miss my husband who has been away fighting for two years. Each day I go to the palace to ask for news about their welfare and each time I am told that they are doing great. But that does not stop me worrying that he may not be back for a very long time.

**Narrator 8:** We are sorry to hear that. Can you give us a twirl so we can see your costume? *[Ewu turns around to show her outfit to the audience].*

**Narrator 9:** Thank you very much, you look lovely and peaceful just like the meaning of your name.

*[There is a commotion, 4 other women step forward.]*

**Narrator 8:** What is going on?

**All four women:** We are Chief Zuzu’s wives too.

**Woman 1**: Ewu is the senior wife, the rest of us are his junior wives.

**Woman 2:** I am the mother of his first son, the heir to his chieftaincy title. This makes me the most important wife. My son will serve and advise the Oba as a chief whereas all your sons will only get pieces of land and some goats, pigs, sheep and cows.

**Woman 3 and 4:** *[Cough.]* We are important too.

Woman 2: Only for cooking his meals *[sniggers*].

**Narrator 9:** We get the picture. You are all welcome. At least everyone gets to inherit something. That makes you all important in our eyes. [Shows exit with hands, bowing slightly.]

**All women:** Thank you.

*[Ewu and the four women leave to the shaking of Ekuse or tambourine].*

**Narrator 8:** Now for a real treat. Please welcome Trader Erebo all the way from the African International Market post.

*[Trader Erebo rushes onto the stage holding Manilla rings.]*

**Trader Erebo:** How long will this take because I am just about to close a trade deal with some traders from the north, it has taken one whole month to agree terms which are favourable to us. So as you can understand I cannot stay long but I can show you what I have. Here is the Manilla ring *[holds up pictures of Manilla rings].* This is used as trading currency with traders from across the seas, people call them Ebo or Whiteman. Here are the cowrie shells *[holds up pictures of cowrie shells]* we use these to trade with our brothers across land from the north.

*[Enter 2 other traders.]*

**Trader 1:** The traders from the north are about to go?

**Traders 2:** You chose a good time to take a break.

**Trader Erebo:** I was not taking a break, these people here sent me a message to come quickly so I did. *[Turning to Narrators]* You see, I told you. May I go now?

**Narrator 9:** Of course you may, thank you for taking the time to come and speak to us. You are a very rich man to have so many Manillas. We hope you make a lot of profit today.

**Trader Erebo:** Ehh, that is always guaranteed *[nods, smiles and leaves with the other traders, waving to audience].*

**Narrator 8:** Last but not the least joining us today are the king’s emissaries. Please make some noise for War Chief Obosa and Royal Priest Tiosa

*[War Chief Obosa and Royal Priest Tiosa enter to loud applause.]*

**Chief Obosa:** Thank you, Thank you all.

**Narrator 8:** How was the mission to remove that king from his throne?

**Chief Obosa:** Very successful, thank you.

**Royal Priest Tiosa:** We have the enemy’s crown in here [opens the Ekpokin container] to show the Oba that our mission was accomplished *[rapturous applause from audience]*.

**Narrator 9:** Need we say more, a very big well done to you. We hope the Oba rewards you handsomely.

**Chief Obosa:** We are sure he will. His blacksmiths will be immortalising us on the bronze plaques very soon, I would imagine *[nodding his head proudly]*.

**Narrator 10:** In preparation for the War Chief’s victory celebration, we would now like to play some African drumming for you. We hope you enjoy it.

*[African drumming from the class.]*

**Narrator 10:** This is the end of our assembly. We hope that you have learnt something about Kingdom of Benin civilisation. Please put your hands together for Year 5/6. Thank you.

*Applause.*