**Year 7: How does the British Museum link us to Benin and Asante?**

**Title: How does the British Museum link us to Benin and Asante?**

**LO: Explain how the kingdoms of Benin and Asante came to an end**

This week you will be learning about how the kingdoms of Benin and Asante came to an end. Asante and Benin were taken over (colonised) in 1896 and 1897, respectively, by the British, who ruled them until they became the countries of Ghana and Nigeria in 1957 and 1960.

**Task 1: Answer the questions about the Sankofa symbol and the Benin Bronzes.**

**Questions**

1. *What does the Sankofa symbol represent?*
2. *What about the Sankofa bird tells you that it is an important symbol for the Asante people?*
3. *What links the bronzes to the Edo word for ‘remember’?*
4. *What do the Benin Bronzes show?*
5. *What do both the Sankofa bird and the Bronzes tell us about what Africans think about the importance of history?*

**What is the Sankofa bird?**

The Sankofa bird is a symbol in Asante that means ‘go back and get it’. The bird is looking backwards but walking forwards. It refers to the Asante belief that to move forwards it is necessary to look back to history and properly understand what has happened. The Sankofa symbol is printed on many Asante cloths and objects.

**What is the importance of the Bronzes?**

In the Benin Kingdom, the people spoke the language of Edo. In Edo, the word for ‘to remember’ is the same as the phrase ‘to make in bronze’. The Benin Bronzes were objects that portrayed the history of Benin. This shows the importance of these objects in remembering and recording Benin’s history. The Benin Bronzes are now in the British Museum in London.

Insert image from: <https://www.berea.edu/cgwc/the-power-of-sankofa/>

**[](https://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=i&url=https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/06/20/bringing-home-benin-bronzes-nigeria-open-loans-rather-permanent/&psig=AOvVaw3JLVgmEIjkz4wwdETm6sVm&ust=1587730392850000&source=images&cd=vfe&ved=0CAIQjRxqFwoTCLjEneTC_ugCFQAAAAAdAAAAABAD)**

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**Task 2: Fill in the gaps about what happened to the Asante and Benin kingdoms.**

Both the kingdoms of Benin and Asante fell victim to what was known as the Scramble for Africa. This was a \_\_\_\_\_\_ when European countries such as Britain, Spain, France, Italy, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and Germany met at a conference in Berlin in 1884 and decided to \_\_\_\_\_\_ up Africa between them.

When one country takes over another country, this is known as colonisation – for example, Britain colonised the \_\_\_\_\_ of Asante and it became known as the colony of the \_\_\_ Coast. It was a colony of Britain's (under the control of) until 1957, when it gained its independence and became the country of \_\_\_\_\_\_.

When the kingdoms of Benin and Asante were colonised by Britain, their \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ were taken and used to make Britain \_\_\_\_. Many of their artefacts were put in the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Museum and remain there today. One legacy of the slave trade and colonisation is that people wrongly believe that Africa has always been poor. In reality, places like Benin and Asante were very \_\_\_\_\_\_\_, as we have seen, but had much of their wealth taken during the Scramble for Africa.

**Words: *period, Ghana, Gold, British, wealthy, resources, rich, kingdom, divide, Portugal***

**Task 3: Read the information about the fall of the kingdoms of Benin and Asante. Make a timeline of the information and key dates.**

**What led to the fall of the Benin Kingdom?**

****Benin’s first contact with the British was in about **1553**, when the British sent out two ships to the Benin River under the command of Captain Thomas Wyndham. Since then, Benin traded pepper, palm oil and eventually slaves. The Benin Kingdom started to decline in the **1700s**, as other African states turned to slavery to make money. Benin had refused to trade slaves and so started to lose power compared with other West African countries that did sell slaves.

In the **1800s**, the British became more interested in controlling resources in Benin. In **1888**, the rubber tyre was invented by a Scottish inventor called Dunlop, which was useful for bicycles and later would be useful for cars. The British realised that Benin was full of rubber trees and so in **1892** tried to sign an agreement with the Oba for access to resources. In **1896**, the Oba said that the British had been breaking the agreement, so stopped all trade on the Niger River.

In response, in **March** **1897**, a British military expedition was launched to Benin City. The Bini army (army of Benin) launched ambushes and resisted bravely. There is some evidence that they performed the sacrifice of animals to ask the gods to save them from the British. Eventually the British took Benin City and arrested the Oba Ovonramwen. The British troops looted the city and took ivory, precious metals and the famous Benin Bronzes, which showed the history of the kingdom. On **19 February 1897**, the British started a fire, which lasted three days and burnt the city to the ground, including the palace of the Oba. The Oba was deported to the port of Calabar and 700 years of the kingdom’s history came to an end.

**What led to the fall of the Asante Kingdom?**

The Asante had always faced rivalry. In the **1800s**, their rivals the Fante, who controlled some of the coastal areas, joined up with the British. In **1823**, the British declared war on the Asante and sent Sir Charles MacCarthy to arrest the Asantehene. On the night of the attack, the British troops sang ‘God Save the King’. In January **1824**, the Asante defeated the British forces, the Fante fled and they took MacCarthy’s skull as a war trophy. In **1873**, the British had a decisive victory over the Asante with the help of the newly invented machine gun. The British burnt Kumasi and forced the Asantehene to pay Queen Victoria 50,000 ounces of gold. Some of this gold is in the British Museum. In **1896**, the British formally took over the Asante Kingdom. The Asantehene ordered the people not to resist because he feared a massacre, but this was not the end for the Asante. Asantehene Prempeh refused to pay any gold to Queen Victoria so he was deported to the Seychelles.

*Insert image of Nana Yaa Asantewaa from: https://afrolegends.com/2016/10/17/yaa-asantewaa-or-the-ashanti-cry-for-freedom/*

In **1900**, the British general insisted that he be allowed to sit on the Golden Stool, not realising how sacred it was to the Asante people. He ordered a search for it. In response, the 65-year-old queen mother of a nearby region, Nana Yaa Asantewaa, began a rebellion against the British, which became known as the War of the Golden Stool. The British lost 1,000 men and the Asante lost 2,000, but the stool was never found and still belongs to descendants of the Asante today.

**Task 4: Watch the clips below and add to your notes about the end of the Benin and Asante kingdoms.**

1. *The Golden Stool – History Of Africa with Zeinab Badawi*, 34:30–41:00 minutes: <https://bit.ly/2Kxw6Rq>
2. David Olusoga on ‘Western reactions to Benin bronzes’ in *Civilisations*: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=rp8flCwvoAU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rp8flCwvoAU)
3. George the Poet on ‘The Benin bronze’: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=3IlUMUGUorw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3IlUMUGUorw)

**Task 5: Use the sentence starters below and your own knowledge from the whole of this half-term to answer the question: What can we learn from the kingdoms of Benin and Asante about African histories?**

* **Paragraph 1:** One thing that I can learn from the Benin and Asante kingdoms about African histories is that Africa has never been cut off from the world.
* **Evidence:** *Add evidence about connections between Benin and Asante and European countries, often due to trade.*
* **Analysis:** *Explain how this shows that Africa has always been connected.*
* **Paragraph 2:** Another thing that I can learn from the Benin and Asante kingdoms is that West Africa was wealthy and important in shaping the modern world.
* **Evidence:** For example, the wealth of Benin and Asante can be demonstrated through artefacts such as the Benin Bronzes and Asante gold and Kente cloth.
* **Analysis:** *Add more information about the Benin Bronzes, Asante gold and kente cloth, explaining how they show us the wealth of Benin and Asante and how they have influenced the modern world.*
* **Paragraph 3:** Benin and Asante also show us that Africa doesn’t only have to be studied through European documents.
* **Evidence:** *What African artefacts have you studied that tell us about Benin and Asante? For example, the walls of Benin City, the Bronzes or Asante gold, the language of Edo or the Sankofa bird?*
* **Analysis:** *Explain how this shows us that African documents, artefacts and languages can be used to study the kingdoms. You may want to refer to some of the Ghanaian or Nigerian museums that you have watched in clips.*

***Challenge:*** *Can you add another PEAL that explains something that you have learnt from the kingdoms of Asante and Benin? How did they compare with England at the same time?*