

# *Representations of Empire*

*Learning through Objects*

Second Edition

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**KEY STAGE 2/3**



NORTHAMPTONSHIRE  
**Black History**  
ASSOCIATION



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## Introduction

Northamptonshire Black History Association worked in partnership with Northampton Museum Service to produce this teaching resource. The pack has been developed to accompany the object handling boxes that are available for loan from Northampton Museum and Art Gallery, Guildhall Road, Northampton. NN1 1DP. Telephone 01604 838 111.

Photographs of objects in the pack ensure that it can be used without access to the resource boxes, although clearly using objects in the classroom enhances the teaching and learning experience.

The central focus of this pack is to look at Representations of Empire through museum resources - especially artefacts. It is envisaged that it could contribute to a more broadly based study of Empire at either Key Stage 2 (related to the Victorian period) or as a more general theme at Key Stage 3.

### **Activity 1: Preparatory activity**

What links do we have with other parts of the world?

This enables pupils to explore direct and family links with different parts of the world in order to create a class museum. This leads onto a consideration of links made through the development of the British Empire. Teachers may wish to explore this more fully or move onto sections 2 or 3.

### **Activity 2: What story can you find in a museum display?**

This section has been changed in the second edition of this teaching resource. The first part of the activity focuses on sources related to a museum at the time of the British Empire which are then compared with a modern museum. Generic questions have been provided to enable you to develop this exercise in any museum or museum website. Alternatively, you can go directly from Activity 1 to Activity 3.

### **Activity 3: What stories do objects tell?**

How much do objects tell us about the lives of people in the Empire?

This is the central feature of the pack. The children explore one or two themes using objects and pictures of objects in the resource boxes, together with prompt sheets from our curator and John Brownell, a member of the local community who provided insights about some of the objects from his memories of Liberia in Africa.

### **Activity 4: If an object could speak what story might it tell? Exploring the Benin Bronzes**

This focuses on the Benin Bronzes in the collection as a stimulus towards looking at those in other collections, together with the story behind their removal from West Africa.

Conclusion: The children evaluate what they have learnt about Representations of Empire.

# National Curriculum Subject Links and Objectives – Key Stage 2

## Representations of Empire at KS2: Exploring through objects

KEY QUESTIONS	HISTORY	EXAMPLES OF LINKS WITH OTHER SUBJECTS AND DIMENSIONS
<p>1. <b>Preparatory Activity</b> What links do we have with other parts of the world?</p>	<p>Understand about the social, cultural and religious diversity in Britain and/or the wider world through looking at the histories of pupils in the class (2d) Find out about the histories of pupils or people they know from a range of sources ( 4a) Communicate knowledge and understanding through discussion and producing a museum/display</p>	<p>To be able to think about the lives of people living in other places and times with different values and customs (PSHE/ Citizenship 4b) Choose material that is relevant to the topic and listeners (English: Speaking and Listening 1c) Collect and record evidence Geography 1b Analyse evidence and draw conclusions Locate parts of Britain and the world related to their study (Geography 3b)</p>
<p>2. <b>What stories can you find in a museum display?</b></p>	<p>To understand what a museum display from the time of the British Empire tells us about attitudes towards different parts of the world (2a, 3) To understand what a modern museum (local and/or virtual) shows about different part of the world (2a, 3, 4a) To be able to compare and contrast Victorian and recent representations of different parts of the world (2,3,4a)</p>	<p>Be able to reflect on spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues, using imagination to understand other people's experiences (PSHE/Citizenship2e) Make contributions relevant to the topic and take turns in discussion (Speaking and Listening 3b)</p>
<p>3. <b>What stories do objects tell?</b> How much do they tell us about the lives of people in the Empire?</p>	<p>To undertake an enquiry by asking and answering questions about objects from different parts of the Empire (4b) To understand the beliefs and experiences of people through what they have left behind (2a and 4a) To communicate knowledge and understanding of the resources through discussion (5c)</p>	<p>To be able to think about the lives of people living in other places and times with different values and customs (PSHE/Citizenship 4b) Make contributions relevant to the topic and take turns in discussion (English :Speaking and Listening 3b)</p>
<p>4. <b>If an object could speak what story might it tell?</b> Exploring the Benin Bronzes</p>	<p>Understand the attitudes of different people towards Benin at the time that the Bronzes were taken (2c) Understand different ways in which the significance of the bronzes has been interpreted and the reasons for this (3) Understand an aspect of Benin society through looking at bronzes (4a)</p>	<p>Be able to reflect on spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues, using imagination to understand other people's experiences (PSHE/Citizenship2e) Vary contributions to suit the activity and purpose of the activity, including exploratory and tentative comments where ideas are being collected together (English: Speaking and Listening 3b) Engage with challenging and demanding subject matter (English reading 5g)</p>

# National Curriculum Subject Links and Objectives – Key Stage 3

## Representations of Empire at KS3: Exploring through objects

KEY QUESTIONS	HISTORY	EXAMPLES OF LINKS WITH OTHER SUBJECTS AND DIMENSIONS
<p>1. <b>Preparatory Activity</b> What links do we have with other parts of the world?</p>	<p>Understand about the diverse experiences of men, women and children in the relatively recent past (Contribution to Key concepts: Cultural, ethnic and religious diversity 1.2a)</p> <p>Be able to identify, select and use a range of resources related to their histories as well as those of people they know (Key process: Using Evidence 2.2a)</p> <p>Communicate knowledge and understanding through discussion and producing a museum/display using appropriate vocabulary (Key process: Communicating about the past 2.3b)</p> <p>Investigate aspects of personal, family or local history and how this relates to a broader historical context (Curriculum opportunities 4a)</p> <p>Make links between history and other areas of the curriculum, including citizenship (Curriculum opportunities 4e)</p>	<p>Exploring the diverse national, regional and religious cultures, groups and communities in the UK and the connections between them (Citizenship: Key concept – Identities and diversity: living together in the UK 1.3b)</p> <p>Consider the connections between the UK and the rest of Europe and the wider world (Citizenship: Key concept – Identities and diversity: living together in the UK 1.3c)</p> <p>Take into account a range of contexts, such as school, local, regional, national, European, international and global as relevant to this topic (Citizenship: Curriculum opportunities 4h)</p> <p>Assess the validity and significance of information and ideas from different sources (English: Key concept – Critical understanding 1.4b)</p> <p>Collect, record and display information (Geography Key Concept – Geographical enquiry 2.1b)</p> <p>Appreciate different scales-from personal and local to national, international and global. (Geography: Key concept – Scale 1.3a)</p>
<p>2. <b>What stories can you find in a museum display?</b></p>	<p>Understand why museum displays interpret the past in certain ways (Key concepts: Interpretation 1.6b)</p> <p>Analysing what a photograph and newspaper report of a museum suggest about Victorian attitudes to the world ( Key processes: Historical Enquiry 2.1a)</p> <p>Understand the impact of the British Empire on different people in Britain (Contribution to Range and Content: British history 3h)</p> <p>Appreciate the role of museums in preserving, presenting and influencing people’s attitudes to the past (Curriculum Opportunities 4c)</p> <p>Make links between history and other areas of the curriculum, including citizenship (Curriculum opportunities 4e)</p>	<p>Be able to analyse and evaluate sources used, questioning different values, ideas and viewpoints and recognising bias (Citizenship Key process – Critical thinking and enquiry 2.1c)</p> <p>Listen and respond constructively to others, taking different views into account and modifying their own views in the light of what others say (English Key process – Speaking and Listening 2.1e)</p>



<p><b>3. What stories do objects tell?</b> How much do they tell us about the lives of people in the Empire?</p>	<p>Have some insight into the diverse experiences and ideas, beliefs and attitudes of men, women and children in past societies and how these have shaped the world ( Key Concept: Cultural, ethic and religious diversity 1.2) Evaluate artefacts drawn from different parts of the Empire in order to reach reasoned conclusions about what they show (Key process: Using Evidence 2.2b) Communicate knowledge and understanding using historical vocabulary (Key Process: Communicating about the past 2.3b) Make links between history and other areas of the curriculum, including citizenship (Curriculum opportunities 4e)</p>	<p>Analyse and evaluate sources used (Contribution to Citizenship: Key process Critical thinking and enquiry 2.1c) Listen and respond constructively to others, taking different views into account and modifying their own views in the light of what others say (English Key process – Speaking and Listening 2.1e)</p>
<p><b>4. If an object could speak what story might it tell?</b> Exploring the Benin Bronzes</p>	<p>Understand the diverse ideas and attitudes of people who lived in Benin and how these shaped their world (Contribution to Key concept Cultural, ethnic and religious diversity 1.2) Evaluate a range of interpretations of the past to assess their validity (Key concept: Interpretation 1.6.) Reflect critically on historical questions associated with the Benin bronzes (Key process: Historical enquiry 2.1b) Evaluate sources used in order to reach conclusions (Key process: Using evidence 2.2) Communicate knowledge and understanding about Benin’s bronzes using historical vocabulary (Key process: Communicating about the past 2.3b) Understand the impact of the British Empire on different people in Britain (Contribution to Range and Content; British history 3h) Make links between history and other areas of the curriculum, including citizenship (Curriculum opportunities 4e)</p>	<p>Analyse and evaluate sources used, questioning different values, ideas and viewpoints and recognising bias (Citizenship: Key process - Critical thinking and enquiry 2.1c) Listen and respond constructively to others, taking different views into account and modifying their own views in the light of what others say (English Key process – Speaking and Listening 2.1e)</p>

## Activity 1

### Preparatory activity: What links do we have with other parts of the world?

**Purpose:** The purpose of this activity is to enable pupils to explore direct and family links with different parts of the world and begin to see how these compare and contrast with those associated with the Empire.

Teachers may wish to explore the growth of the Empire at this point, but we have chosen to do this later in order to maximise opportunities for pupils to raise questions from looking at artefacts.

**Stage 1:** Teacher models what is required by bringing in an object about their past and getting pupils to ask him/her questions about it e.g. When did they get it? Where is it from? Why did they choose to bring it?

Teacher shows a timeline/family and spatial map of their past with key events and places which are important to them and members of their family. Pupils ask questions e.g. How long did they live in a particular place? When did they come to live near to the school? Where does their family live?

**Stage 2:** Pupils repeat this activity for themselves or someone they know (the latter is intended to deal with potentially sensitive issues related to background or family that a pupil may wish to remain private).

When the pupils bring their objects in, there can be an initial 'show and tell' session. Emphasise that many of these objects can be seen differently by different people – e.g. it is important to point out that some objects can represent the lives of many different people (e.g. a can of favourite food) but each person will have a slightly different take on it.

They complete this activity by creating a class display or museum.

Decide on a basic format before the pupils begin to write the labels – style of title, font, borders (or not), colour of card, pattern of wording. Writing labels for the class exhibition is a good way of realising that there are too many messages to be conveyed in one display. The pupils have to decide what point of view they want each label to express about the object's history (it could be why they have chosen it or what it represents). However, it does not always need to be their own – the exhibition will be richer if they give other points of view, from their families and friends, as well as their own). Try to keep each label to a maximum of three simple sentences – if the pupils are tempted to write more, ask how much of the labels in museums they want to read themselves on a visit.

Once the labels are written, the pupils can decide how to mount the objects to convey the messages they think are important. What kind of background will they have? Will they have pictures and photos as well as objects? Will they allow visitors to the exhibition to touch some of the objects to find out more about them? Will they have guided tours? How will they make sure that their visitors get the messages they want to



convey about their lives? Point out other interpretations of what they are saying as they build up the exhibition.

**Note:** *There are several well known variations to this activity e.g. identifying parts of the world supplying the food we eat in a typical day – bring in a shopping bag to the classroom. Alternatively pupils could focus on aspects of their personal histories through themes such as food and drink, holidays, hair decoration, school life, life histories, hobbies etc.*

**Stage 3:** Group discussion – exploring links with different parts of the world and the different reasons why people have come from or gone to different parts of the world.

*Note: Sensitivity will be required with some students, especially refugees, who may have traumatic memories associated with their past.*

**Stage 4:** Whole class discussion - look at a map of the European Empires of the late 19th century, briefly explain what it shows . It would be appropriate to have either studied the empire as a topic before undertaking this unit of work or to integrate it with the unit at this stage. Point out that the class are going to find out what museum displays tell us before going on to look at pictures of objects brought to Northampton from different parts of the World at the time of the British Empire. Encourage pupils to raise questions e.g. What does the map suggest? (The different powers involved in empire building during the late 19th century, the areas they controlled and, in particular the scale of Britain's Empire.) What do we want to find out? What are the likely differences in the stories associated with these objects and with those brought by the children?

## Activity 2

# What story can you find in a museum display?

**Purpose:** The purpose of this section is to indicate ways in which museum displays and virtual museum websites interpret and represent the people in different parts of the world. This will vary according to the focus of their exhibits which will influence preparatory work prior to the visit. The following activities provided general suggestions and approaches which can be adapted to a range of contexts.

The first part of this activity focuses on museum displays at the time of the British Empire which are then compared with those in a modern museum /website. A museum visit develops naturally from Activity 1 but if this is impractical you could just visit the website.

### Whose story? Looking at museum displays from the time of the British Empire?

This provides an opportunity to look at what a museum display tells us about the interests of people living at the time of the British Empire. The intention is to compare and contrast this with a modern museum. We have used newspaper article describing what people could see in Abington Museum in Northampton at the time it was opened in 1899, together with photographs of exhibits which were taken in the 1930s.

The children are expected to rate a series of statements to try and suggest what the sources tell you about the ideas of people who made and used the museum. You could use this, or find pictures related to your local museum.

### Teaching and learning approach

- Thought shower reasons why we go to museums today
- Working in pairs pupils looks at photographs and newspaper source (refer to the source sheet) from the time of the British Empire and consider the following:
  - What they can see in the pictures.
  - What key words tell them about the interests/attitudes of Victorian people in the newspaper?
  - Find out about ‘Indian Mutiny of 1857’ and suggest why it was included in newspaper.

**Note:** You could indicate that the Indian Mutiny has also been called the ‘First War of Indian Independence and use this as a prompt to support your review.

## Review

Individual /pair discussion: The children rate each of the following from 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. (0 means shows nothing at all whereas 5 means shows a lot).

The sources from the time of the British Empire tell me:

- People who visited the museum were interested in many things
- People who visited the museum found out about objects from different parts of the world.
- People who visited the museum found out the opinions of the people who made and used the objects.
- The people who visited the museum were interested in finding out about different parts of the world.

## Pair/share/ class discussion

The children decide what the sources tell them about the interest of people living in Northampton at the time of the British Empire and whose voices were missing.

**Note:** Teachers can explain that during their museum visit they will be looking for similarities between the ways in which the museum they are visiting represents the Empire compared with how this was done in the past.

## Looking at a display in a modern museum: Whose story does it tell?

**Purpose:** This is intended to encourage children to look at how far a modern museum tells us about people in different parts of the world. We **strongly recommend** that you focus on one room or display area of the museum related to what you are studying in class. The questions are intended to have generic application but would be strengthened if they are modified or extended to relate to the museum you are visiting. At the end of the activity the children compare and contrast their impressions of the modern museum with those produced at the time of the British Empire.

**Starter activity:** Encourage pupils to get an impression of the room by looking around for 2 minutes and then writing the main things they have seen and/ or their feelings about the room. Follow this with the question – What are the main things which you want/need to find out?

## Exploring the displays and/or notice-boards

**Stage 1:** Ask the children look at a display case(s) .Get them to count the number of objects and list the number of different places they came from.

**Stage 2:** Ask the children look at one object and draw it carefully and then label their object with the following:

- **Observations:** How big is it? What colour is it? What might it have been used for?
- **Information provided in labels:** Where was it from? How old is it? Who brought it to the museum? Who made it? Who used it?
- **Deductions:** What does this suggest about the people who brought the objects to this museum? How much can you find out about the people who used the objects?

## Review

1. Individual /pair discussion: The children rate each of the following from 0-5. (0 means shows nothing at all whereas 5 means shows a lot).  
The sources based on displays in a modern museum tell me:
  - People who visit this museum are interested in many things.
  - People who visit this museum can find out about objects from different parts of the world.
  - People who visit this museum can find out the opinions of the people who made and used the objects.
2. Compare ratings you have given to the museum at the time of the British Empire and today and discuss similarities and differences.

## Whose story? Exploring what a virtual museum tells us about people in different parts of the world

**Purpose:** This is intended to encourage children to look at how far a virtual museum tells us about people in different parts of the world. We **strongly recommend** that you focus on part of the website – ideally an area of the virtual museum related to what you are studying in class. The questions are intended to have generic application but it is they are likely modified or extended to relate to the museum website you are visiting. At the end of the activity the children compare and contrast their impressions of the virtual museum with the displays produced at the time of the British Empire.

The children look at one of the following and rate each of the statements below from 0-5. (0 means shows nothing at all whereas 5 means shows a lot).

<http://www.horniman.ac.uk/more/history.php>

[http://www.britishmuseum.org/search\\_results.aspx?searchText=BENIN](http://www.britishmuseum.org/search_results.aspx?searchText=BENIN)

<http://www.metmuseum.org>

<http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/ism/slavery/>

- 1 The sources based on displays in a modern virtual museum tell me:
  - People who visit this museum are interested in many things.
  - People who visit this museum can find out about objects from different parts of the world.
  - People who visit this museum can find out the opinions of the people who made and used the objects.
2. Compare ratings you have given to the virtual museum at the time of the British Empire and today and discuss similarities and differences.

## Source Sheet

**Source 1:** Photographs of Abington Museum in the 1930



**Source 2:** A description of another room at the museum when it was opened in 1899

Thus on the walls of the South side of the room are to be found weapons of the South Sea Islands, and on the Eastern walls exhibits from Africa, while the northern wall contains relics of the Indian Mutiny. Some of the weapons are carved in the most artistic fashion and well repay closest inspection'.

*Northampton Daily Reporter*, 9th May 1899

## Activity 3

# What stories do objects tell? How much do objects tell us about the lives of people in the Empire?

### Introduction

This is the core activity within the pack. All of the following activities provide ways of introducing the objects found in the Museum storeroom. They raise many questions – in many cases we do not know how or why they came here. However, they do provide some insight into the lives of some people who lived within the British Empire. Explain that the objects in this pack were all given to Northampton Museum and Art Gallery by people who had acquired them in one way or another from all over the world. Most of the countries they come from were in the British Empire. Although we don't know the donors of many of the objects in the Northampton collection, we can guess from what we know of other ethnographic collections that they were traders, missionaries, soldiers, administrators, scholars and tourists.

We hope that you use this exercise with one of the object handling resource boxes as it is really necessary to handle objects in order to fully understand them - appreciating details, texture, weight in a way that it is not possible to fully appreciate in a photograph of them. However, photographs have been included to supplement the objects that you do not have.

Clearly the objects only reflect some, but not all areas of the Empire. While they reflect aspects of the lives of people in different parts of the world it is important to appreciate that the evidence:

- does not represent the Empire as a whole. The Empire was large and it is important not to generalise about the lifestyle of people in different areas on the basis of selected objects.
- should not encourage stereotype or exotic perceptions of people within the Empire – the objects should be treated as evidence which provides insights and raises questions.
- is supported by some insights about the objects from our curator/object expert and the insights of John Brownell, a member of our local community from Liberia who was able to tell us about the significance and use of some objects in the loan boxes.\* However, many questions about the objects remain unanswered such as: When was it used? How typical was it? Who owned it? What other things do we need to build up a picture of the lives and thoughts of people in different parts of the Empire?
- It reflects things which were brought back to our locality by people and/or agencies connected with the Empire – this raised questions such as: How did they get it? Why did they acquire it? Why did they donate it? Why was it left in the museum store when other objects were displayed?

*\*When the loan boxes related to this resource pack were being developed, NBHA and Northampton Museum Service held several meetings with local Black communities and the insights provided by people who came to Northamptonshire from different parts of the world encouraged us to include this perspective in this teaching resource. John Brownell who comes from Liberia has kindly told us about the significance of some of the objects in this part of Africa. His biography is included as an appendix at the end of this resource.*



Hopefully some of the above points – or indeed others – will arise from pupils during their investigations and discussions.

### **Using the objects: A Thematic Approach**

Please ensure that the pupils are aware that the objects are fragile and need to be handled with care. You could approach the resources in many ways but we have chosen to explore the objects under the following themes:

- 1) Were necklaces just about looking pretty?
- 2) Can objects bring the gods to earth?
- 3) Trading and exchanging: What do objects tell us?
- 4) What can objects tell us about survival skills?

We assume that you may only use one or, at most two themes. For this reason we have produced a common investigative approach with each theme. Each theme consists of the following stages:

**An introduction** – this provides the context of the exercise, provides opportunities to share its purpose and relate it to the pupils prior experience.

**Step 1:** Model the task – each task is led by the teacher and provides a structure for subsequent independent work. For this you could raise questions with the children as indicated within the different themes.

**Step 2:** Group investigation – split the class into equal size groups. Each group is to observe and raise questions about the objects using the approach used in the introductory exercise.

**Step 3:** Groups use the ‘Curators’ suggestions’ sheet and where appropriate the ‘Community Member’s insight’ sheet to try and answer their earlier questions and raise others.

**Step 4:** Envoys share what they have learnt with other groups. New groups are formed to share their findings with other members of the class. If you have four groups, A, B, C and D, each of four pupils, the groups have to be reconvened so that the new groups have one member drawn from each of the original four groups. Clearly, you would adjust according to the size of the class.

**Review:** Whole class discussion drawing their ideas together. The quality of discussion during the review – particularly insights about the strengths and limitations of the objects in telling stories about the Empire relate to the central purpose of the task. You may of course use this as a basis for investigative work where the pupils use textbooks and/or the web to try and answer some of their questions.

**You do not have to follow our template!** The following provide examples of changing/enhancing parts or all of the structure we have provided.

**An alternative introduction:** You could provide a specific focus for the exercise such as creating a class museum, display, TV documentary, which each of the stages of the activity would be expected to feed into.

**An alternative approach to step 1:** Modelling the task: Seat the pupils in a circle and pass the object around. Everyone in turn must make a comment on something they notice about the object – it can be very simple, such as ‘It feels smooth’, or ‘It’s the same size as my pencil case’. Afterwards the children could consider the questions raised by the observation grid on the Interactive White Board. The first question could be split up into size, colour, weight, texture, whether fragile or not. You can choose any questions but really need to build up from looking at the object towards speculating about what it may have been.

**An alternative approach to step 2:** Drawing objects: Drawing is one of the best ways to get to know objects. Here are some ideas for different kinds of drawing. Draw the object with felt tips on a large piece of paper. To make sure it fills the whole page, you can make a pencil margin a few centimetres from the edge of the paper that must contain the picture of the object. This could be done as a group activity. The pupils each write a detailed description of the object (for some pupils a word or sentence bank of words could be an alternative). The descriptions are then handed round, so that everyone is making a drawing based on a description. A discussion of the results could then lead into a redrafting exercise of the descriptions.

**An alternative to using envoys:** You could use a carousel approach where pupils move from one table to another. Alternatively, you could miss out this stage and draw together ideas from different groups at the start of your review.

**An alternative to using pre-selected themes:** You could choose to use a range of objects and get the pupils to group them and explain their reasons for doing this. We recommend that you follow an introduction with a modelling activity before getting the pupils to do this activity. It may also be useful to create prompt cards with relevant supporting information from the different themes. Finally, the review could begin with the pupil’s justifying their choice before discussing what the objects have told them and remaining issues that they still need to find out about.

**Reflective questioning:** Give groups an object and ask them to deduct as much as they can from it. Drip feed further objects, curator and community information extracts to the group at intervals and ask them to see how each additional resources confirms, extends or challenges their ideas.

Some ways of modifying and/or extending the thematic studies which follow:

- Using a digital movie camera, produce a 'Film Detective' documentary film using the artefacts.
- Memory testing – pair work where one person looks at the object for 30 seconds and describes it to their partner.
- Once they are familiar with all the religious objects in Theme 2 'Can objects bring the gods down to Earth?' the pupils could select one to write a poem about its effect on them.
- Write instructions about how to make one of the artefacts, or actually use it as a stimulus for making body adornment (e.g. making beads or a Toe-post sandal) used in Theme 1 'Were necklaces just about looking pretty?'
- Discuss different attitudes and practices in food preparation, consumption and wastage as part of Theme 4 'What can objects tell us about survival skills?'

## Investigation Sheet A

<b>What our object tells us</b>	
<b>What does our object look like?</b>	<b>Where is it from?</b>
<b>What does it feel like?</b>	<b>How heavy is it?</b>
<b>What might it have been used for?</b>	<b>What questions do we want to ask?</b>
<b>Why do we think this?</b>	

# Investigation Sheet B

<b>Notes made listening to envoys</b>		
<b>OBJECT</b>	<b>MAIN THINGS ABOUT IT</b>	<b>MAIN QUESTIONS</b>

# Theme 1

## Were necklaces just about looking pretty?

### Resources:

Piece of camwood	(Loan Box 1)
All beaded objects	(All boxes)
Brass anklet	(Loan Box 1)
Bedouin brooches	(Loan Box 3)
All combs	(Loan Box 1 & 3)
Ivory band	(Loan Box 2)
Cowrie crown	(Loan Box 3)
Beaded Band	(Loan Box 1)
Toe-post sandal	(Loan Box 2)

**Introduction:** Pupils thought-shower ideas about special things they wear to change their appearance e.g. Why do people wear particular clothes when going to a wedding, party or football match? How did they feel if/ when they did face painting? Do any of them henna their hands? What is its significance? Do they know people who have tattoos? Why do they have them? Why do they think people dye their hair?

Are any of the things suggested so far, liked or disliked / find silly or unsure? Ask pupils to give reasons for this – draw out the fact that issues like familiarity / unfamiliarity can affect their feelings - they may feel this with some of the things we are going to look at, but other people could find some of our ornaments and clothes equally strange.

**Step 1:** Model task: What can we tell from looking at an ornament? Pupils look at the cam wood object (or picture) and thought-shower what they can see using the following prompts:

What can we see? e.g. size, colour, shape, what it is made from?

What can we work out from looking at it? e.g. skills in making it, what it may have been used for, value, any thing it may remind them of.

What do we still need to know? e.g. Where it was from? How old is it? When it was used? Why was it used? Who used it? How important was it?

Teacher explains that it was used for body decoration or dyeing cloth and shares other information about it – pupils see if this answers any of their questions.

**Step 2:** Give different groups objects/or pictures and ask pupils to ask the same questions used above with the new objects.

**Step 3:** Groups use the ‘Curators’ suggestions’ sheet and where appropriate the ‘Community Member’s insights’ sheet to try and answer their earlier questions and raise others.



**Step 4:** Envoys share what they have learnt with other groups. If you have four groups (A, B C and D) each of four pupils, the groups have to be reconvened so that each new group has a member drawn from each of the lettered groups. Clearly, you could change the number and size of groups according to the size of the class.

**Review:** Whole class discussion draws the ideas together including:

- key things which they have learnt from the activities. Are they just about looking pretty?
- strengths and limitations that this has with respect to showing life in the Empire.
- remaining things that they still do not know, reasons for this and ways in which they could go about answering their questions.

**THEME 1: WERE NECKLACES JUST ABOUT  
LOOKING PRETTY?**

**Prompt sheet 1: Curator**

What does our curator suggest? What further questions do they have for you?

**Combs** – decorative rather than practical because it is weak and unsuited for combing thick hair.

**Ivory band** – this was used as an ornament and for trade.

**Cowrie crown** – this was both an ornament and trade object.

**Brass anklet** – this was both an ornament and trade object. Why do you think it was suitable for each of these things? A woman used to put it on when she married, therefore ask the pupils to consider the following questions: What reasons can there be for its weight? What examples can the pupils think of in which someone shows by their appearance that they are married, or rich, or both today? Why are they used?

**Toe-post sandal** – How comfortable would the toe-post sandal be to wear? What would people have for 'suffer to be beautiful'? Can you think of any other ways in which people do painful things for the sake of their appearance?

**THEME 1: WERE NECKLACES JUST ABOUT  
LOOKING PRETTY?**

**Prompt sheet 2: Community Member's insights**

What John Brownell tells us about the history of beads and combs in Liberia.

**Beads**

They are worn by women coming from a traditional society in Liberia and they are a form of jewellery. Some women wear them around their neck and sometimes around their waist so it's a way of showing beauty of the women. You have a whole lot of jewellery and variety of colours and designs of beads that are worn by the girls. And also women are given beads around their waist for shape and sometimes some of them wear it on their ankle, alright, so basically the beads is very popular all over Africa and is used for beautification and also for religious purposes. Some of these beads are used by people who are from the Muslim faith it is almost in a form, of what the Christians call the rosary. What they normally do is just sit and check them, just check them over and over, over and over...almost in the form of like the Catholic rosary and used for their religious purposes.

**The comb**

This is basically used by the women because in Africa the texture of the hair is very tough and so this comb are made specifically to be able to deal with the hard texture or composition of the hair. It is used also to add little beauty to the hair. They are made in a variety of sizes they can be used as, what you call beauty hair; some of the women dress and just stick it in their hair and so basically it is just a hair product used in a variety of forms and fashion to make the hair look beautiful.



*Piece of Camwood (Loan Box 1)*



*Piece of Camwood (Loan Box 1)*





*Beaded Objects (All Boxes)*





*Brass Anklet (Loan Box 1)*



*Brass Anklet (Loan Box 1)*





*Bedouin Brooches (Loan Box 3)*



*All Combs (Loan Box 1 & 3)*





*Ivory Band (Loan Box 2)*



*Cowrie Crown (Loan Box 3)*





*Beaded Band (Loan Box 1)*





## Theme 2: Can objects bring the gods to earth?

### Resources:

Stone carving of Ganesh	(Loan Box 1)
Brass cast of 'kitchen scene'	(Loan Box 3)
Brass cast of figure group with tiger	(Loan Box 2)
PNG figures	(Loan Box 1)
Chinese carved stone joss stick holder	(Loan Box 1)
North American ceremonial red stone pipe	(Loan Box 2)
Benin temple bell (Africa)	(Loan Box 2)
Maiden spirit mask (Africa)	(Loan Box 3)

### Introduction

Either:

- (a) As a class thought-shower objects and activities (praying to Mecca; making the sign of the cross) which the children know about which have anything to do with religious belief and draw out ideas which they have about the significance of each. Talking partners – select one object they are relatively familiar with and think of ways in which they could explain its importance to someone who knew nothing about it and feedback to the class
- OR
- (b) Give talking partners pictures of religious buildings and images and ask them to suggest ways in which they look special. During feedback draw out how they provide elements of awe and wonder.

During the feedback it is useful for the teacher to emphasise that:

- Religion takes many forms but that it always has elements of awe, wonder and reverence.
- In some cultures, every action and object is imbued with a religious significance.
- Sometimes quite simple actions have religious importance, even if this is just part of a routine observance, such as crossing oneself or greeting someone in a certain way.

### Step 1: Modelling the task with The Maiden Spirit Mask

**Resource:** Maiden spirit mask (or photograph)

Ask the pupils if they have seen, worn or made a mask and different reasons why they people make masks. Draw out ideas e.g. Masks can have a powerful effect on both the wearer and the beholder, giving anonymity or new identity. Any expression must be conveyed by the body, not the face.

Show the pupils the Maiden Spirit mask from Gabon. Ask the pupils to

- Describe what they can see – e.g. size, colour, shape
- Suggest anything which it tells them e.g. Is there anything about it that might suggest it has religious significance?
- Can they think of any questions they need to ask to understand its significance?

Give pupils the ‘Curators’ suggestions’ (prompt sheets 1 and 2) and Community member’s insights’ (prompt sheet 3) in order to decide:

- How many of their questions it answers.
- What information they consider to be most useful or important in understanding the most.
- Any questions that still need answering.

## **THEME 2: CAN OBJECTS BRING THE GODS TO EARTH?**

**Prompt sheet 1:** What our curator tells us about the mask:

- The mask comes from Gabon, a country in West Africa.
- It represents a female guardian spirit.
- It was worn during a dance at full moon, dusk or dawn.
- It would be worn by a dancer on stilts dressed in long clothes and standing more than ten feet tall.
- The white on the face represents death but also power against witchcraft.
- The white on the face helps to fight evil spirits.
- It shows the power of ancestral spirits (people who have died) who are there to give comfort and protection.

## **THEME 2: CAN OBJECTS BRING THE GODS TO EARTH?**

**Prompt sheet 2:** What else does our Curator suggest?

**The Benin Temple Bell** – This relates to a belief in ancestral spirits. What might the temple bell have been used for? What other religions use bells, and for what purpose?

**Joss stick holder and the pipe** – What other religious objects use fire? What is its purpose?

**Stone carving of Ganesh, brass cast of ‘Kitchen scene’ and brass cast of figure group with tiger** relates to Hindu faith.

## **THEME 2: CAN OBJECTS BRING THE GODS TO EARTH?**

**Prompt sheet 3:** Community member’s insights’: What John Brownell tells us about the history of masks in Liberia.

When you see this mask coming out in a village it means there is a traditional feud or problem ... On the other hand you are awarded this mask as your status in the traditional society grows. Traditional dancers wear these masks to come out to perform. People join in these traditional activities to be able to participate in the village activities. You don’t find them in the cities. People use them for decoration nowadays in their homes, but in traditional Africa you would not have them in homes of people who are not members of a particular society.

**Step 2:** Group work: Exploring different objects

In groups or, as a carousel, pupils are given objects and are then asked to complete the following:

- Describe what they can see as fully as possible using the object grid.
- Raise questions and see how far they can be answered from the prompt grid
- Suggest what the objects tell you about the religion it represents.
- Indicate on a map, different parts of the world the objects are from.

**Step 3:** Groups use the 'Curators' suggestions' sheet and where appropriate the 'Community Member's insights' sheet to try and answer their earlier questions and raise others.

**Step 4:** Envoys share what they have learnt with other groups. If you have four groups (A, B C and D) each of four pupils the groups have to be reconvened so that each new group has a member drawn from each of the lettered groups. Clearly, you could change the number and size of groups according to the size of the class.

**Step 5: Review**

Group's feedback the main points, which they have found out about the significance of religious belief, followed by whole class discussion. The following may serve as prompts:

What are the similarities and differences between different objects and (a) The Maiden Sprit and (b) the religious symbols you mentioned in their own experiences/modern religious symbols?

What remaining questions pupils still have?

How well do they reflect different beliefs within different parts of the Empire?

What do they need to know in order to find this out? (e.g. the views of the people using them; when they were used; if they are still used, dating the objects to identify when they were used, testimonies from people in cultures who used them either recently or in the past.)



*Stone Carving of Ganesha (Loan Box 1)*





*Brass Cast of 'Kitchen Scene' (Loan Box 3)*



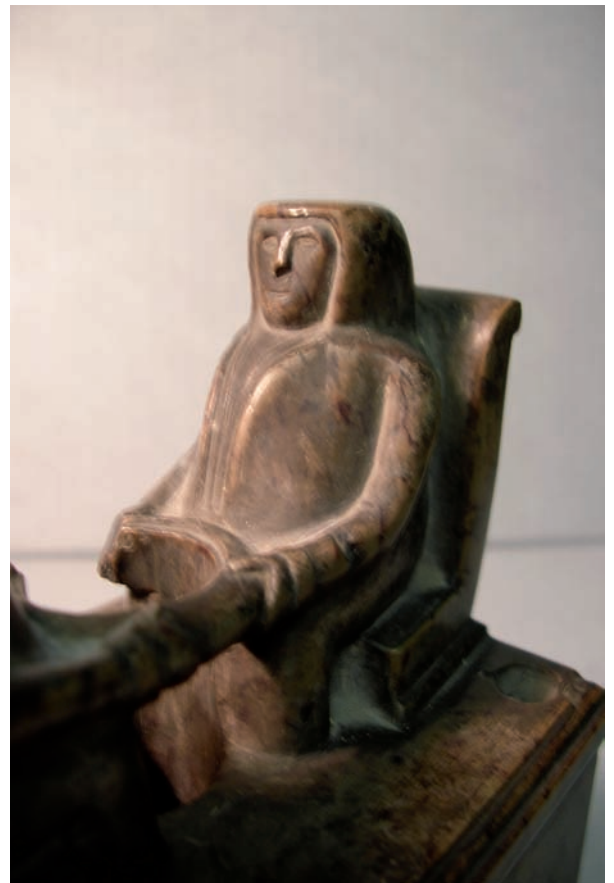
*PNG figures (Loan Box 1)*







*Chinese carved stone joss stick holder (Loan Box 1)*





*North American ceremonial red stone pipe (Loan Box 2)*



*Benin Temple Bell (Loan Box 2)*







*Maiden Spirit Mask (Loan Box 3)*



## Theme 3: Trading and exchanging: What do objects tell us?

### Resources:

Opium pipe	(Loan Box 2)
African pipe	(Loan Box 2)
'Native' tobacco	(Loan Box 2)
Beaded gourd snuff container	(Loan Box 3)
Cowrie crown	(Loan Box 3)
All beaded objects	(All boxes)
Ivory band	(Loan Box 2)
Brass rod	(Loan Box 3)
Paddle	(Loan Box 3)

### Introduction

Pupils thought-shower ideas: What objects are important to them? How did they get them? Why do they not need money to buy things? What are the differences between things they have been given and things they have bought?

Point out that all the objects for this activity, apart from the paddle, have been used for buying and selling, some of them for thousands of years (e.g. beads). Gifts are often given as a way of gaining favour or creating an obligation. This could raise the issue of gifts/favours/inducements/bribery which has many different interpretations in different cultures.

**Step 1:** Model task: Select one object and get the class to thought-shower the following:

- Describe it as fully as they can (size, colour, shape, weight etc).
- Suggest as much as they can about it.
- Suggest things that they still want to find out.

**Step 2:** Group work: Repeat the above questions with different objects and also identify

- Objects which were to do with tobacco.
- Objects which could be carried around easily.
- Objects which are decorative.
- Objects which could be presents.

**Step 3:** Groups use the 'Curators' suggestions' (prompt sheet 1) and 'Community member's insights' (prompt sheet 2) to try and answer their earlier questions and raise others.

**Step 4:** Envoys share what they have learnt with other groups. If you have four groups (A, B C and D) each of four pupils, the groups have to be reconvened so that each new group has a member drawn from each of the lettered groups. Clearly, you could change the number and size of groups according to the size of the class.

Use prompt sheets to see how far this answers or raises more questions.

**Step 5: Review**

Whole class discussion draws the ideas together including:

- the key things which they have learnt from the activities about the importance of body ornament.
- strengths and limitations that this has with respect to showing life in the Empire.
- things that they still do not know, reasons for this and ways in which they could go about answering their questions.

**THEME 3: TRADING AND EXCHANGING: WHAT DO OBJECTS TELL US?**

**Prompt sheet 1:** What our Curator suggests:

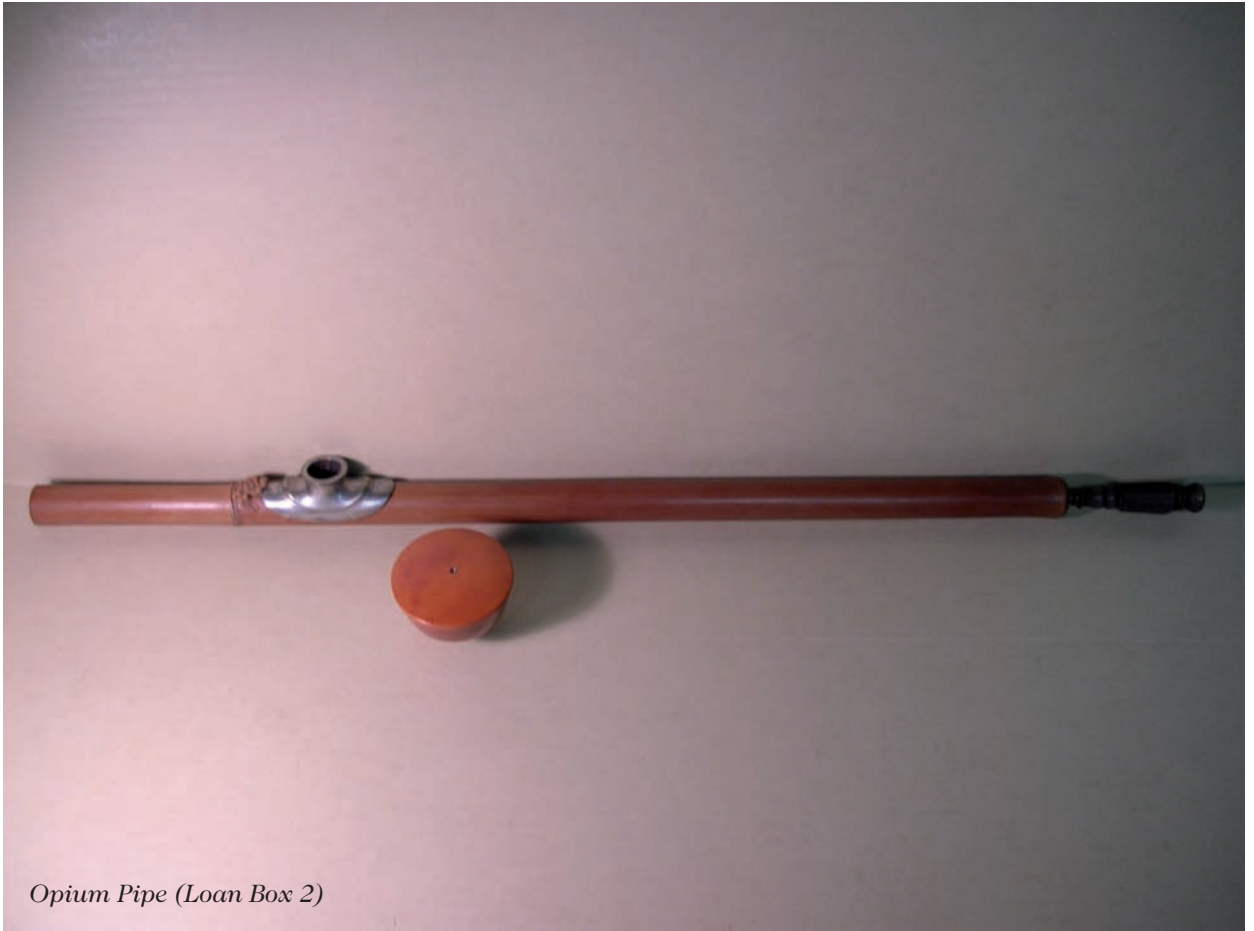
- Tobacco was a form of currency (it was used for buying and selling).
- The beaded gourd snuff container had snuff and beads - two forms of currency.
- The group of objects starting with the cowrie crown are all decorative and status items which were also used as currency.
- The brass rod was only used as an item of currency in the Congo. It was used between the time when people used cowrie shells and Belgian francs after the Congo was made part of the Belgian Empire.
- The paddle was not used as currency but paddles like this were often given to people as marks of respect. There are a great many of them in the museum, and could have been given to John Taylor (the person who gave it to the museum), as a ceremonial gift.

**THEME 3: TRADING AND EXCHANGING: WHAT DO OBJECTS TELL US?**

**Prompt Sheet 2:** Community member's insights: What John Brownell tells us about Ivory in Liberia.

**Ivory** is from elephants in West Africa, particularly the Eastern part of Liberia – this is used as jewellery. People use them in different styles, sometimes they are made in the form of necklaces. Some are made small enough for earrings and some are made for bracelets for the hand...ivory products are very expensive.





*Opium Pipe (Loan Box 2)*





*African Pipe (Loan Box 2)*





*'Native' Tobacco (Loan Box 2)*



*Beaded Gourd Snuff Container (Loan Box 3)*





*Cowrie Crown (Loan Box 3)*

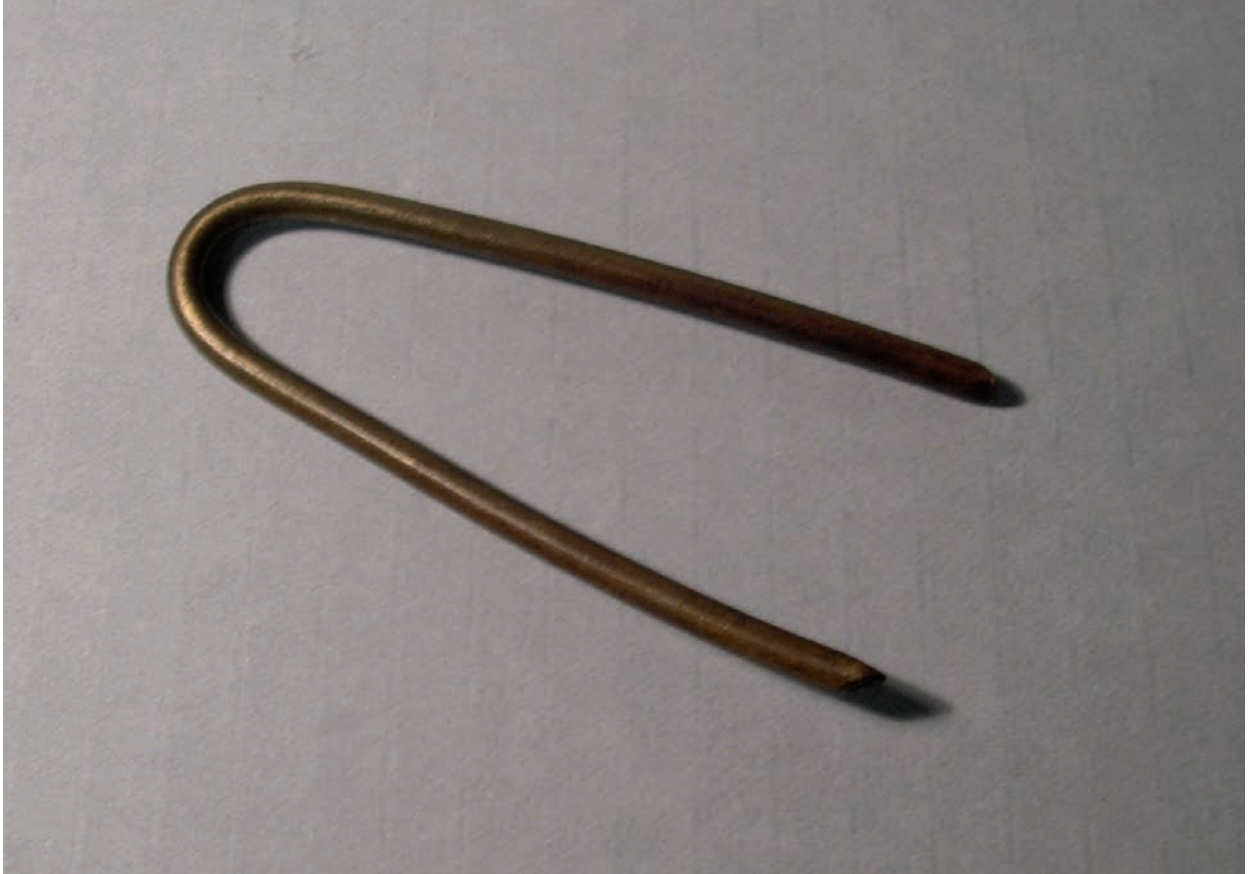


*All Beaded Objects (All Boxes)*

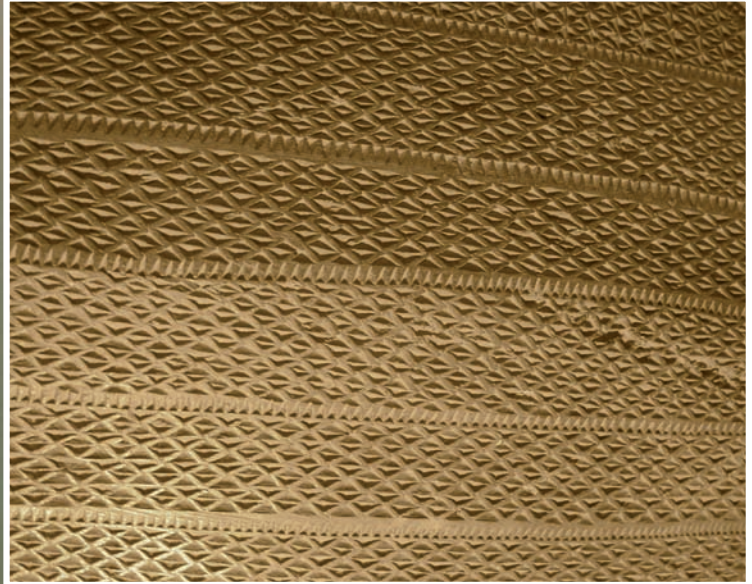
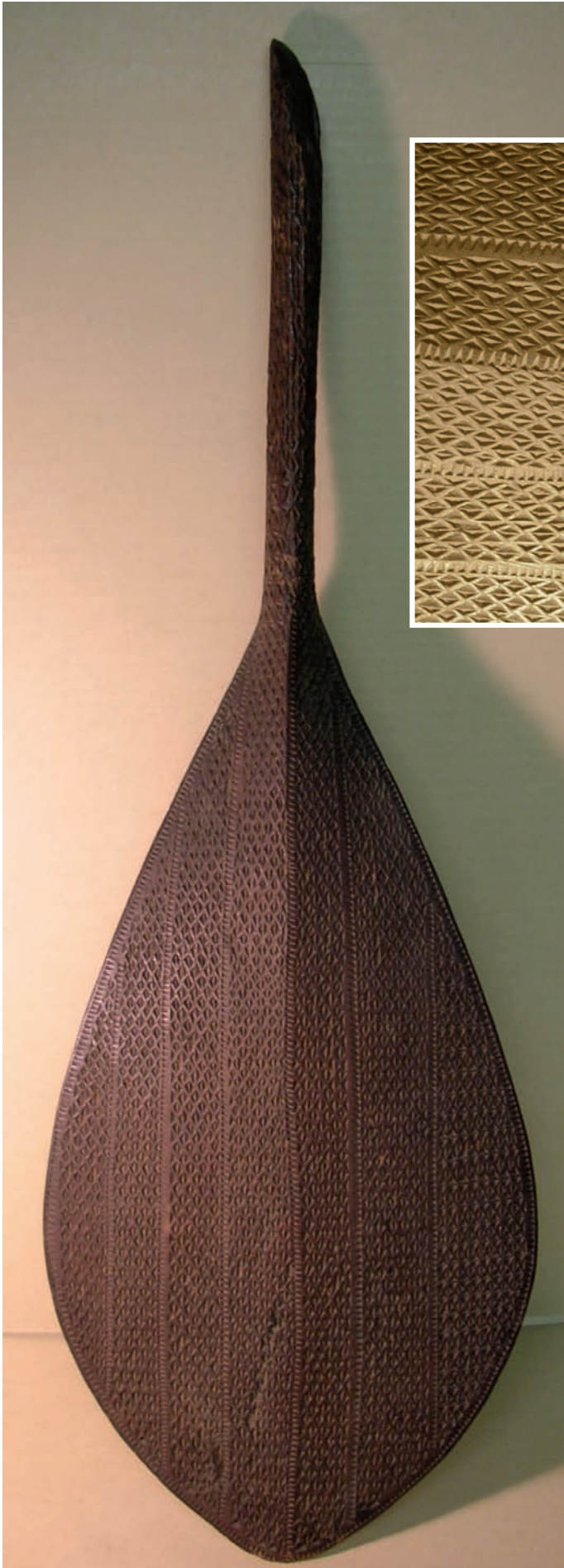


*Ivory Band (Loan Box 2)*





*Brass Rod (Loan Box 3)*



*Paddle (Loan Box 3)*

## Theme 4: What can objects tell us about survival skills?

### Resources:

Spear thrower	(Loan Box 1)
Boomerang	(Loan Box 1)
Parrying shield	(Loan Box 3)
Knobkerrie	(Loan Box 2)
Pot carrier	(Loan Box 2)
Gourds	(Loan Box 3)
Spatulas	(Loan Box 1)
Cast of kitchen scene	(Loan Box 3)
Wooden paper-knife	(Loan Box 2)

### Introduction

Ask the pupils to imagine that they are taking part in the TV serial 'Lost'. Their aircraft has just crashed. Make a list of things that they need to help them to survive.

Tell them that all of these objects we are going to look at were used in highly skilled ways which often took years to perfect –they were also functional and met the needs of people in the same way that the things which we listed are important to us.

### Step 1: Model task with the whole class

Pupils look at the spear thrower

- Describe it as fully as possible.
- Suggest what it was used for.
- Suggest how it shows great skill – both use and decoration.

At this point the teacher should inform the class that Aborigines in Australia developed them and they are useful in that it gave greater power to the throwing action. Originally, they were unvarnished with red or white colouring rubbed into the carved patterns. The varnish on some of these objects shows that Europeans used them as ornaments.

**Step 2:** Groups select 2 or 3 of the other objects and repeat the above questions using observation grid.

**Step 3:** Groups use the 'Curators' suggestions' (prompt sheet 1) and 'Community Member's insights' (prompt sheet 2) to try and answer their earlier questions and raise others.

**Step 4:** Envoys share what they have learnt with other groups. If you have four groups (A, B C and D) each of four pupils, the groups have to be reconvened so that each new group has a member drawn from each of the lettered groups. Clearly, you could change the number and size of groups according to the size of the class.

**Step 5:** Review

Whole class discussion draws the ideas together including:

- Has the collection of objects been about survival skills?
- Are the objects similar in purpose to the ones they suggested for 'Lost'? Do they show skills that we have lost?
- What are the strengths and limitations in using these objects to try and understand people's lives within the Empire?
- What questions do they have? What can they do to try and answer them?

#### **THEME 4: WHAT CAN OBJECTS TELL US ABOUT SURVIVAL SKILLS?**

**Prompt sheet 1:** What our Curator suggests

- Gourds illustrate how food is carried in some cultures (although of course generally these are bigger than the ones in the loans boxes). Carrying food and water long distances is a necessity when people and communities live far away from where they are produced.
- Carrying rings of rope – were used to help carry very large loads.
- The knobkerrie is a weapon to be found all over the world. In a recent NBHA ‘Show and Tell’ event, someone from Malawi described how in his country each person makes his own knobkerrie, making sure it is carved in such a way that it suits his balance and weight. This illustrates how the skills these objects represent are often still being carried on in their countries of origin.
- The parrying shield was used to defend one’s self. The combatant would be parrying blows with it, while aiming blows with a stick or knobkerrie with the other hand – so both hands were engaged in very quick, independent, precise actions.

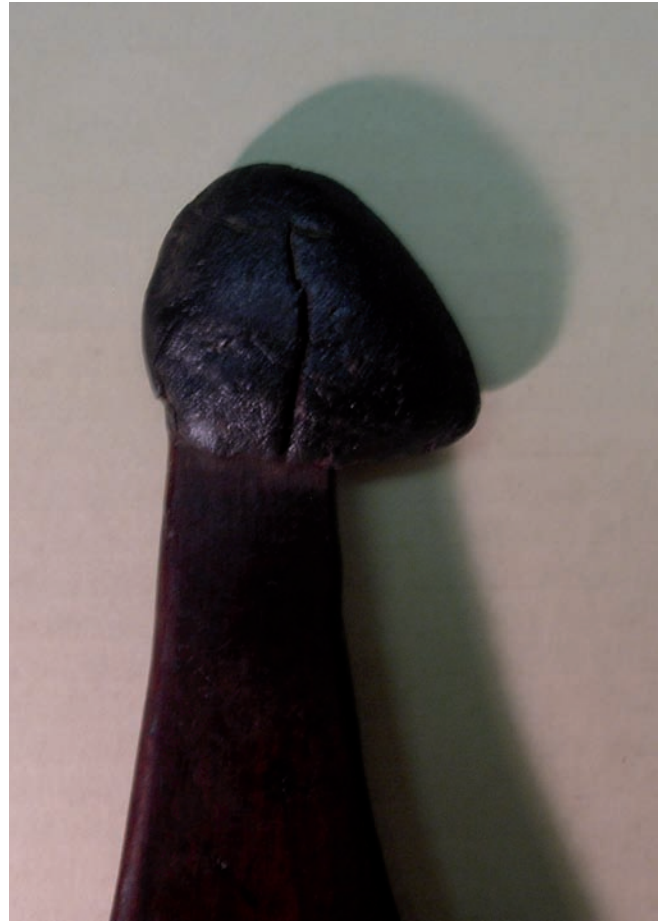
The knobkerrie, boomerang and spear-thrower were all used for killing animals.

#### **THEME 4: WHAT CAN OBJECTS TELL US ABOUT SURVIVAL SKILLS?**

**Prompt Sheet 2:** Community member’s insights: What John Brownell tells us about boomerangs in Liberia.

In Liberia you have people who look after rooms at night to protect and we call them watchmen. They work at night to look for burglars, and most of them have something like this. If they see a burglar trying to escape, they throw it in such a way it goes between the legs and then the person falls to the floor. People use it for games as well... some of them can throw it away and then it spins and comes back. So basically its designed for sports and used by security guards at night that they can use to catch criminals.





*Spear Thrower (Loan Box 1)*



*Boomerang (Loan Box 1)*





*Spatulas (Loan Box 1)*



*Parrying Shield (Loan Box 3)*





*Knobkerrie (Loan Box 2)*





*Gourds (All Boxes)*



*Pot Carrier (Loan Box 2)*



*Cast of Kitchen Scene (Loan Box 3)*





*Wooden paper-knife (Loan Box 2)*

## Activity 4

# If an object could speak what story might it tell?

### Exploring the Benin Bronzes

**Purpose:** This activity is intended to explore some of the objects in the loan boxes in greater detail by reference to their historical context. These artefacts came to Northampton in approximately 1900 but we have no other records about them and are therefore going to try and work out what their story is.

These objects provide opportunities to enrich a range of topics such as the study of Benin, Slavery and the Scramble for Africa.

One of the labels suggests that tourists brought them. Certainly copies of the bronzes have been made for tourists in the 20th century. However, there are many Benin bronzes in different museums and collections in different parts of the world and this exercise will attempt to explore what the bronzes tell is about Benin and why so many are no longer there. The pupils will use Northampton's Benin Bronzes as a stimulus to looking into this story.

### Looking at the Benin Bronzes

**Stage 1:** Pupils look at the Benin Bronzes in the loan box (or pictures Benin A and/or Benin B in this booklet) and deduct as much as they can from them – How big are they? What colour are they? How might they have been made? What information is given? What might they have been used for? What does it remind them of? They use prompt sheet 1 to attempt to answer their questions.

**Stage 2:** Pupils are given the prompt 'Lost Wax Process' prompt sheet and use this and the Northampton Bronzes to produce and label a flow diagram.



BENIN A



*Benin Warrior c 1900*

BENIN B



*The Benin Bell c1920*

### Prompt sheet 1

- These bronzes are small versions of those which can be seen in the British Museum in London or the Metropolitan Museum in New York
- The Warrior is dated 1900, three years after the Benin Empire came to an end.
- The Bell is dated 1920, twenty three years after the end of the end of the Benin Empire. Does this relate to when it arrived here or when it was made? We assume that it indicates when the object was put in the museum.
- The Oba (King) shook the Bell at the altar to contact his spirits. Warriors also rang the bell for protection during campaigns.
- In the twentieth century copies of the bronzes were made for tourists.

### Prompt Sheet 2: The Lost Wax Process

The way in which the bronzes were made has been called 'The Lost Wax Process'. The first thing to be done was to make a clay mould. Wax was put around this mould and then another layer of wet clay was placed around this. When this was heated the wax melted and hot liquid metal was poured in. When the whole thing hardened the clay was broken off and scraped out leaving the bronze head.

*Note: You can find out about the 'Lost Wax Process' in the New York Metropolitan Web site [http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/beni\\_1/hd\\_beni\\_1.htm](http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/beni_1/hd_beni_1.htm)*

**Stage 3:** The teacher locates the 'Commemorative Head of the Queen Mother' at the British Museum website.

[http://www.britishmuseum.org/search\\_results.aspx?searchText=BENIN](http://www.britishmuseum.org/search_results.aspx?searchText=BENIN)

This is a particularly beautiful object and children could be encouraged to suggest if it tells them any more about Benin e.g. People were skilled, power of the Queen, possibly ceremonial object. It may be useful to indicate that the bronzes were made by guilds craftsmen for the Oba (the King) and they were used for worshipping.

**Stage 4:** Pupils investigate the above web sites to find out about the following from at least six objects. They can make deductions from looking at the objects. There is also a prompt sheet that may prove useful.

## Building up our story of the Benin Bronzes

Theme	Objects which show this	Why I think this
The Oba's power		
Religious belief		
Technical/artistic skills		
Links with Europe		

**Prompt sheet 3: What some symbols on the Benin Bronzes may tell us.**

- A leopard or crocodile may have been intended to show that the Oba (King) was powerful and strong.
- Flowers may have represented healing.
- A python was the god Osun's messenger and punished people who did wrong.

**What is the story behind the Benin Bronzes?**

**Stage 5:** Who made the Benin Bronzes?

The purpose of this exercise is to show the way in which people have represented the past does not always match what happened.

Clearly several people in the early 20th century believed that Europeans made the Bronzes – whereas the evidence suggests that the people of Benin produced them. Students could:

- Investigate what terms in the quotations meant (e.g Renaissance, Atlantis).
- Suggest what the quotations say about the beliefs of the people who made them.
- Find differences between what the quotations were saying and the information provided in the prompt sheet 4.
- Suggest questions that need answering.



**Who made the Benin Bronzes: Some views expressed in the early 20th Century?**

*The Ancient Greeks  
must have made  
the Benin Bronzes*

*The Benin Bronzes  
must come from  
Atlantis, the 'Lost  
Continent'*

*The Benin Bronzes  
must have been  
made by the Ancient  
Egyptians.*

*The Benin Bronzes must  
have been taken there by  
the Portuguese traders  
(Sir Harry Johnston in  
1910*

### **Prompt Sheet 4: A Brief History of the Benin and the Bronzes**

Traditional Benin oral histories say that Oba Ewuare introduced casting commemorative heads in the 15th century, although some brass objects made in the 13th century have been found – it is not certain whether they were made by the lost wax process.

The first Europeans to arrive in Benin in the 15th and 16th centuries as part of what we call the ‘Voyages of Encounter’ or ‘Voyages of Discovery’. Some wanted to buy and sell things. They sold brass to Benin from the late 15th. Very praise worthy things were written about Benin at this time. A Dutchman called Olfert Dapper, who admittedly did not actually go there wrote:

The King’s palace is on the right side of the town, as you leave by the Gate of Gootton. It is a collection of buildings which occupy as much space as the town of Harlem, and which is enclosed with walls. There are numerous apartments for the princes, ministers and fine galleries, most of which are as big as those on the Exchange in Amsterdam.

Dapper, O.(1686) Description l’Afrique. Amsterdam. Cited in: Hodgkin (1960) Nigerian Perspectives: An Historical Anthology. London: OUP, p123.

**Stage 6:** How did Benin Bronzes end up in museums in different parts of the world?

**Purpose:** To understand the context in which the Benin Bronzes were taken from Benin.

Pupils will explore the context of the massacre and siege of Benin broadly set in the context of the British Empire. (It may be considered appropriate to have covered the growth of empires using general textbooks in order to provide a general context for this exercise). The children will explore what happened in 1897 and relate this to how the Bronzes ended up in different parts of the world.

Introduction: The teacher reads the prompt sheet 5 with the pupils and relates events to the ‘Scramble for Africa’. Working in groups the pupils undertake the following tasks.

- (a) Use the context cards to sort out the long term and short term reasons why the Benin Bronzes may have ended up in places like Northampton Museum.
- (b) Use the cards to put a sympathetic case for (i) the Oba of Benin and (ii) the people who took the bronzes away from Benin.
- (c) Who do you think has the best case? Give reasons for your answer.

*Note: A good alternative to the above, which uses decision making role play cards, can be found in Midwinter, C. (1994) Benin. An African Kingdom: Exploring the History, Geography, Culture and Environment of Benin, Past and Present. Godalming: WWF. pp87-96.*

**Review:** The class should consider:

- how far they can answer questions raised at the end of stage 3.
- discuss any other questions raised by the current activity.

**Prompt Sheet 5: How did Benin Bronzes end up in museums in different parts of the world?**

We do not know how the Benin Bronzes ended up in Northampton but it is possible to find out how many came to be in museum collections in different parts of the world after 1897. Objects in museums may have been given by different people who went from Britain to different parts of the Empire such as traders, soldiers, missionaries, tourists etc. By what happened in Benin in 1897 is it possible to suggest how the objects were taken from their home? Further objects were found in later years and eventually people made them for tourists.

**Sorting Cards**

<p>The 'Scramble for Africa' involved European countries like Britain taking over as much of Africa as they could in the late 19th century.</p>	<p>The British were increasing their power in the Benin area. A Protectorate was set up in the Niger River delta.</p>
<p>Some Africans continued to rule provided they did what the Europeans wanted.</p>	<p>Many African rulers who fought or stood up for themselves often faced brutal wars and lost their kingdoms.</p>
<p>The Europeans wanted palm oil supplies for their industries.</p>	<p>In 1892 the Oba of Benin signed a Treaty with the British saying that he would be protected by Britain.</p>
<p>The 1892 Treaty said that the Oba would not do the same with other countries and would help the British Trade.</p>	<p>The Treaty was very long and the Oba signed it with a cross.</p>
<p>When the Oba came to power he expected a civil war and killed his opponents.</p>	<p>Oba's had many problems in the 19th century and feared civil wars, conflicts with neighbours, as well as the demands from Europeans.</p>
<p>The Oba repeatedly stopped trade taking place. In 1896 Moore, the British Consul of the Protectorate, asked the government if he could remove him but was told no.</p>	<p>Moore came home to Britain on leave in 1897. His deputy Phillips was new to the area and sent a message to the Oba saying that he was going to visit him.</p>
<p>The Oba asked Phillips not to visit him because he was having a religious festival. This was an annual ceremony called Ague, during which strangers could not see him.</p>	<p>Phillips thought that the Oba was making an excuse and went to him with a small unarmed party.</p>
<p>Phillips and his party were murdered by some of the Oba's men before they reached Benin. The Oba later said that he wanted a discussion but his chief wanted war.</p>	<p>The British sent troops to lay siege to Benin. A fire destroyed much of the city. Many bronzes were stolen by them and ended up in different parts of the world, including Northampton.</p>
<p>The people who killed Phillips were executed. Moore accepted that the Oba was not responsible but after he fled, he lost his kingdom.</p>	<p>Since the time of the Benin Empire copies of the Benin Bronzes have been made for tourists.</p>

## **Conclusion: Representing the Empire**

In groups, students rate how much they have found out about the following:

*Rating 0 (nothing at all) – 5 (a great deal)*

- (a) The people who went from Britain to different parts of the Empire.
- (b) The people who already lived in the areas that they went to.

Ask students to explain their decision and suggest whose stories they still need to find more about.



## Object Handling Boxes – Northampton Museums Education Service

The ethnographic material held at Northampton Museum was acquired by the museum mainly through donation between the late 19th century and the late 20th century. The objects come from a wide geographical spread – Asia, Oceania, Australia, Africa, North and South America and a few pieces from distinct ethnic groups within Europe. The larger part of the collection comes from Africa. The diversity of these objects is a positive aspect of this collection, and it provides good cross cultural themes and links such as missionaries, Opium wars, Benin, Slavery (including a branding iron and a slave's shackle), the Scramble for Africa, Life in the Empire, Trade and Tourism, Craft and Collectors.

Northampton Museums Service is delighted to have worked in partnership with Northamptonshire Black History Association on the Shaping the Future project, which aims to provide greater educational access to the museum's diverse ethnography collection. The end result has been the creation of this resource pack and the three ethnography loan boxes, which contain a broad selection of ethnographic artefacts from the museums' collections.

Objects can be incorporated into many different activities – but they all have the same basic theory in common, by exploring material culture, either in the form of objects, specimens, documents or art we can learn about the object itself, its relationship to other objects and ultimately we can learn about the people who made, used and collected the object.

Introducing pupils to real objects, real evidence of the world around them and of the past, encourages them to think beyond their everyday experience. As teachers we can nudge pupils down avenues of research and observation based on the evidence before them, which will hopefully encourage a thoughtful and considered approach to other aspects of their learning and understanding too.

Give a pupil an object to look at and you'll almost always engage their interest, the crucial first step to learning. Unlocking the enormous potential of objects as tools for learning depends on how we look at, think around and talk about those objects, it depends on asking the right questions, those which spark off conversations and reflections.

By using this resource pack and one of the ethnography boxes, teachers will be able to inspire their pupils with these amazing objects and give them a valuable learning experience and a good understanding of the Representations of Empire.

*Deborah Cox, Senior Museum Education Officer,  
Northampton Museum Service.*

**Northampton  
Museums  
Education  
Service**  
Ethnography Box 1

Plan of top layer of box



- Comb
- Carved Wooden Spatula
- Spear Thrower
- Boomerang
- Padlock & Key Rhodes Reserve
- String of Blue Beads

Plan of bottom layer of box



- Carved Wooden Figures
- Piece of Camwood
- Spectacle Case
- Beaded Band
- Brass Anklet
- Stone Carving of Ganesh
- Carved Stone Joss Stick Holder

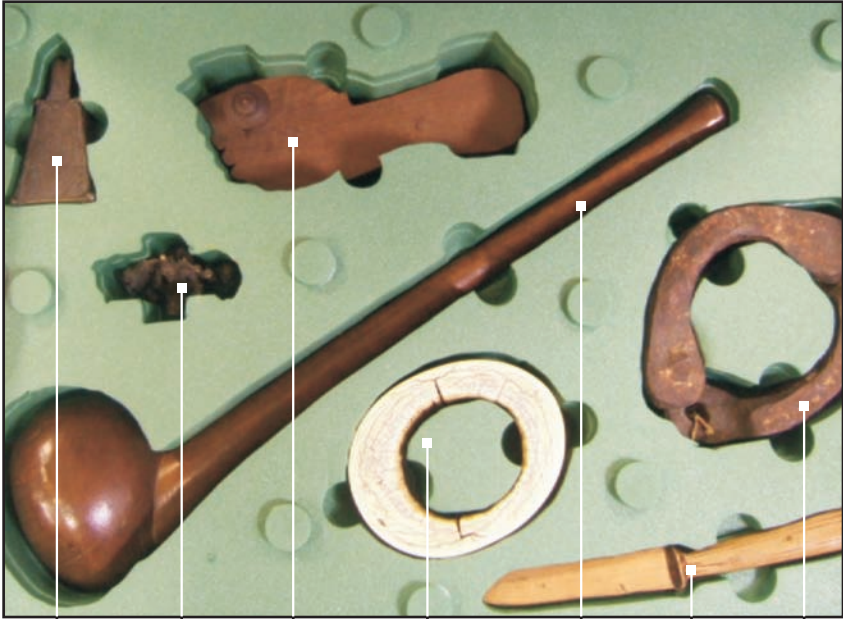
**Northampton  
Museums  
Education  
Service**  
Ethnography Box 2

Plan of top layer of box



- Chinese Doll*
- Ceremonial Stone Pipe*
- Opium Pipe*
- African Pipe*
- Slave Branding Iron*
- 'Native' Tobacco*
- Pot Carrier*
- Beaded Necklace*

Plan of bottom layer of box

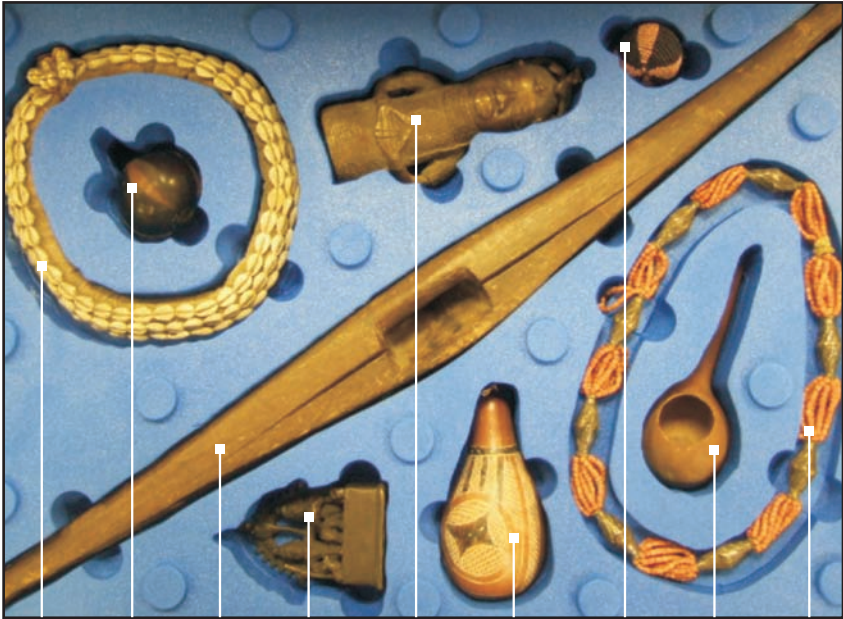


- Benin Bell*
- Figure of Group with Tiger*
- Toe-Peg Sandal*
- Ivory Band*
- Knobkerrie*
- Paper Knife*
- Slave Leg Iron*



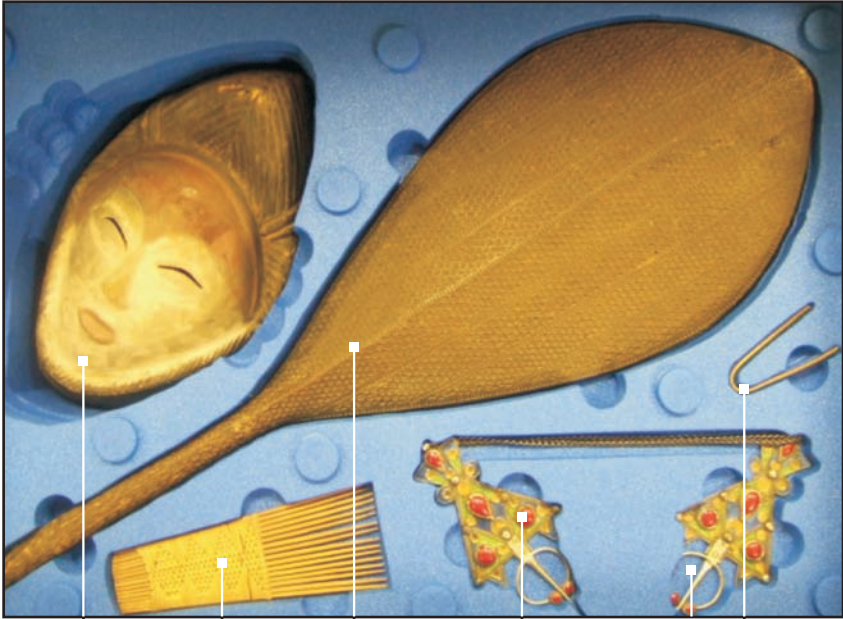
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Ethnography Box 3

Plan of top layer of box



*Cowrie Crown*  
*Parrying Shield*  
*Benin Warrior Figure*  
*Beaded Gourd Snuff Container*  
*Bead and Metal Bead Necklace*  
*Gourd with Wire Decoration*  
*Kitchen Scene*  
*Gourd with Incised Decoration*  
*Gourd Scoop*

Plan of bottom layer of box



*Maiden Spirit Mask*  
*Split Cane Wool Comb*  
*Paddle*  
*Bedouin Brooches*  
*Brass Rod*



**Community  
Member:  
John Nimly  
Brownell**

**Biography**

John Brownell was born in Monrovia, Liberia on October 8th 1968. He was the tenth of 11 children. His father was well educated and had his own law firm; the family owned a rubber plantation. His parents were separated when he was quite small; his mother was a market seller. John was an able pupil and when he graduated from the Catholic High School in 1986 he went on to Monrovia University to study Physics. From 1989, when the Civil War started, his life and education were disrupted. In June 1990, he fled to Sierra Leone as a refugee. In 1991, after peacekeepers came to Liberia, he returned to Monrovia and resumed his studies when the university reopened in 1992, finally graduating in March 1994. John's time was split between working at the university as a teaching assistant and working for the church in Monrovia. He was programme committee chair for the Episcopal Youth Council, and on the Diocesan Planning and Development Committee.

During his final year at university, John designed a solar drying system, which more than halved the time for food drying compared to conventional methods. As a result of his work, he was invited to Italy to take part in a project researching Non-Conventional Energy. Unfortunately, due to the war the letters did not arrive in time. However, he got his chance in 1998 when he went to Trieste University in Italy where he completed a graduate programme in Condensed Matter Physics. While there he met his future wife Juliet (from Northampton) who was on holiday visiting Venice.

In 2001, John came to live in Northampton. He was unable to get work using his Physics qualifications and eventually got a job at a warehouse on Brackmills. In April 2003, he helped found the Liberian Association in Northampton and is the current chairman. He has organised appeals for supplies to be sent to refugees in Liberia. John hopes one day to return to Liberia and help rebuild his country.

In September 2003 his daughter, Johnette from a previous relationship, came to join him and his wife. Up until the age of three she had been missing behind rebel lines with her mother.



## Bibliography

### Some useful textbooks and resources

This pack has focussed on using artefacts rather than a wider historical context of Benin, Africa or the Empire, although it should contribute to the wider themes. The following selection of books and resources provide a means of developing these themes more fully.

### Educational publications

Claire, H. (1996) *Reclaiming our Pasts. Equality and Diversity in the Primary History Curriculum*. Stoke: Trentham

Durban, G. (1990) *A Teacher's Guide to Learning from Objects*. London: English Heritage.

DfES (2007) *The Diversity and Citizenship Review* (Chair Sir Keith Ajegbo) [http://publications.teachernet.gov.uk/eOrderingDownload/DfES\\_Diversity\\_and\\_Citizenship.pdf](http://publications.teachernet.gov.uk/eOrderingDownload/DfES_Diversity_and_Citizenship.pdf)

Wrenn, A., Wilkinson, A., Webb A., Gillespie, H., Riley, M., Harnett, P., Harris, R., Lomas, T. (2007) *Teaching Emotive and Controversial History* 3-19. London: The Historical Association.

### Teaching resources

The following provide a useful basis for exploring the teaching of Benin and/or African History more broadly.

### Key Stage 2

MacDonald, F. (1998) *Ancient African Town*. London: Franklin Watts

Midwinter, C. (1994) *Benin. An African Kingdom: Exploring the History, Geography, Culture and Environment of Benin, Past and Present*. Godalming: WWF

### Key Stage 3

Riley, M., Byrom, J., Culpin, C. (2004) *This is History: Impact of Empire*. London: Hodder Murray

Walsh, B. (2003) *Empires and Citizens*. Cheltenham: Nelson Thornes

It is also possible to find information and exercises related to Benin/Africa for all key stages on the British Museum web site

The British Museum (n.d) Explore the British Museum [online] London: The British Museum. Available from:  
[http://www.britishmuseum.org/search\\_results.aspx?searchText=BENIN](http://www.britishmuseum.org/search_results.aspx?searchText=BENIN)  
[accessed 1st May 2008]

### Academic text books

Coombes, A.E. (1997) *Reinventing Africa. Museums, Material Culture and Popular Imagination*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press

Davidson, B. (1987) *Lost Cities of Africa*. London: James Curry

Egharevba, J.U. (1968) *A Short History of Benin*. Ibadan: Abadan University Press

Garlake, P. (2002) *Early Art and Architecture of Africa*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Girshick Ben Amos, P. (1995) *The Art of Benin*. London: British Museum Press

Hodgkin, T. (1969) *Nigerian Perspectives. An Historical Anthology*. London: OUP

Home, R. (1982) *City of Blood Revisited a new look at the Benin Expedition of 1897* London: Rex Collin {sadly this is difficult to obtain outside a university library but its approach is both readable and illuminating}

Oliver R, Atmore A (2001) *Medieval Africa: 1250-1800*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Parker, J. and Rathbone, R. (2007) *African History: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

## Teachers' Panel

This has been co-ordinated by:

Nikki Taylor	Director, Northamptonshire Black History Association, Shaping the Future Project
Julia Bush	Senior Lecturer in History, University of Northampton. Company Secretary of Northamptonshire Black History Association
Paul Bracey	Senior Lecturer in Education, University of Northampton. Secretary of Midlands History Forum; Committee member of the History Teacher Education Network ; Company Director of Northamptonshire Black History Association.

The following teachers were participants in a panel set up to advise the development of this resource.

Angie Alloway	Studfall Junior School, Corby, Northants
Sandra Kirkland	Naseby Primary School, Naseby
Julia Curtis	Millbrook Junior School, Kettering
Luke Lister	Northampton Academy, Northampton
Robert McNally	Northampton School for Girls, Northampton
Emma Jacklin	Kingsthorpe College, Northampton



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