

History A-Level: African Kingdoms Task



This task will give you a taste of some of the African civilisations (1400-1800) that we will encounter in our course! Locate the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology in central Cambridge (off Downing Street). Find the central Anthropology hall (look for the huge totem pole!) and to the left of the totem pole, in the corner, you will find the West African and Nigerian exhibits. Spend a moment just to enjoy the craftsmanship behind the objects and the fascinating array of motifs. Then take a closer look and think about what we can learn from these objects.

Head upstairs to the gallery and find the Benin bronzes section. Again, take a moment to enjoy the incredible bronzes and then consider what we can learn from them.

The question we would like you to answer is: **should the Benin Bronzes be returned to Nigeria?**

- Please write at least one paragraph on the arguments for returning them to Nigeria.
- Please write at least one paragraph on the arguments against returning them to Nigeria.
- Then write a justified conclusion, making sure you counter or 'defeat' the opposing argument.

There has been a huge amount of discussion recently, so it is very easy to find relevant news articles online. Should you need a starting point, however, this is a good article:

<https://www.nationalgeographic.co.uk/travel/2022/09/benin-bronzes-return-to-nigeria>

Alfred and the Making of England Task

This course will explore the Viking invasions of England in the ninth to eleventh centuries and the how the West Saxons kings rose to meet that challenged and in doing so created a new country, the Kingdom of England. We will focus in particular on King Alfred, the only English king to be called "the Great," whose energetic reign turned the tables on the Vikings and begun the making of England.

In preparation, please complete the following work before you arrive in September:

PART 1: Listen to "This Union: Episode 4, Wessex" on BBC Sounds

(<https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m000z02h>).

PART 2: Please read the introduction to Marc Morris, *The Anglo-Saxons* (attached). You do not need to purchase this book, but we will refer to it regularly throughout the course and it is a recommended purchase.

With both of those in mind, please write no more than a single side of A4 on the following questions:

-What did Alfred do to defeat the Vikings and save Wessex?

-Why do you think Alfred is called "the Great"?

-What are your preconceptions about the "Dark Ages"? (Do you think, for example, that people at the time were less sophisticated, intelligent, or creative than us?)

-Why do you think it might be useful, interesting or important to study the Anglo-Saxon period?

Optional Extra: If you want a summer fiction read to introduce you to the Anglo-Saxons, try Bernard Cornwell's *The Last Kingdom* (2004) and the rest of the series! This is now also an excellent Netflix series.