

27/1/2021

T: Can I find out how Benin's past is recorded through a range of sources?

Success Criteria

- I can compare and discuss the ways in which British and African history has been recorded.
- I can tell you what I understand about Africa's oral tradition of history telling.
- I can act out different parts of the story of Eweka.
- I can create a storyboard of the story of Eweka.
- I can compare different versions of the story of Eweka.

codicis dicitur

Crocodyce.

Aspicus semisponsus est
dicitur hinc maculatus.



Crocodyte mire scelere
metu accolunt. serpen
sedunt. feras satibus
prehendunt.



Isti os 7 oculos
hnt i humeris.



Hic arene ha
bundant.

Scena ista: hic usq ad
Inu-
sup. ccc. pauc

metur est



auferat hinc: quod p affe
tate d affe

Recording History...

Europeans have often chosen to write down or produce pictures to record history, but does this mean it is always the 'true' picture of what happened? We have to look at all the sources available to build a bigger picture of what actually happened in the past. This could be from looking at artefacts and archaeological evidence, for example.

This is the Bayeux Tapestry, probably made in the 11th century to show the Battle of Hastings, which took place in 1066. During this battle, the Normans took over control of Britain and William the Conqueror came to power. Just 50 years or so after the Battle of Hastings, the people of the Benin Kingdom were looking for a new king. But how do we know about how Benin found a new king?



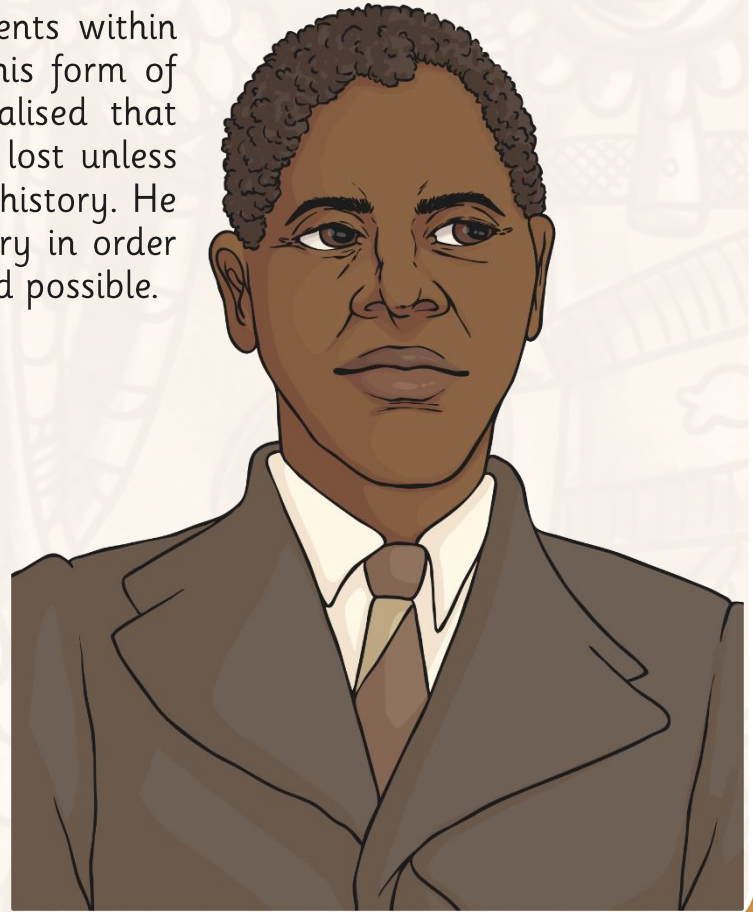
Recording History...

Most African societies have passed their history down through different generations by word of mouth and can trace this history back for hundreds, or even thousands of years. This oral tradition is history that isn't written, but instead relies on the importance of the human voice and listening.

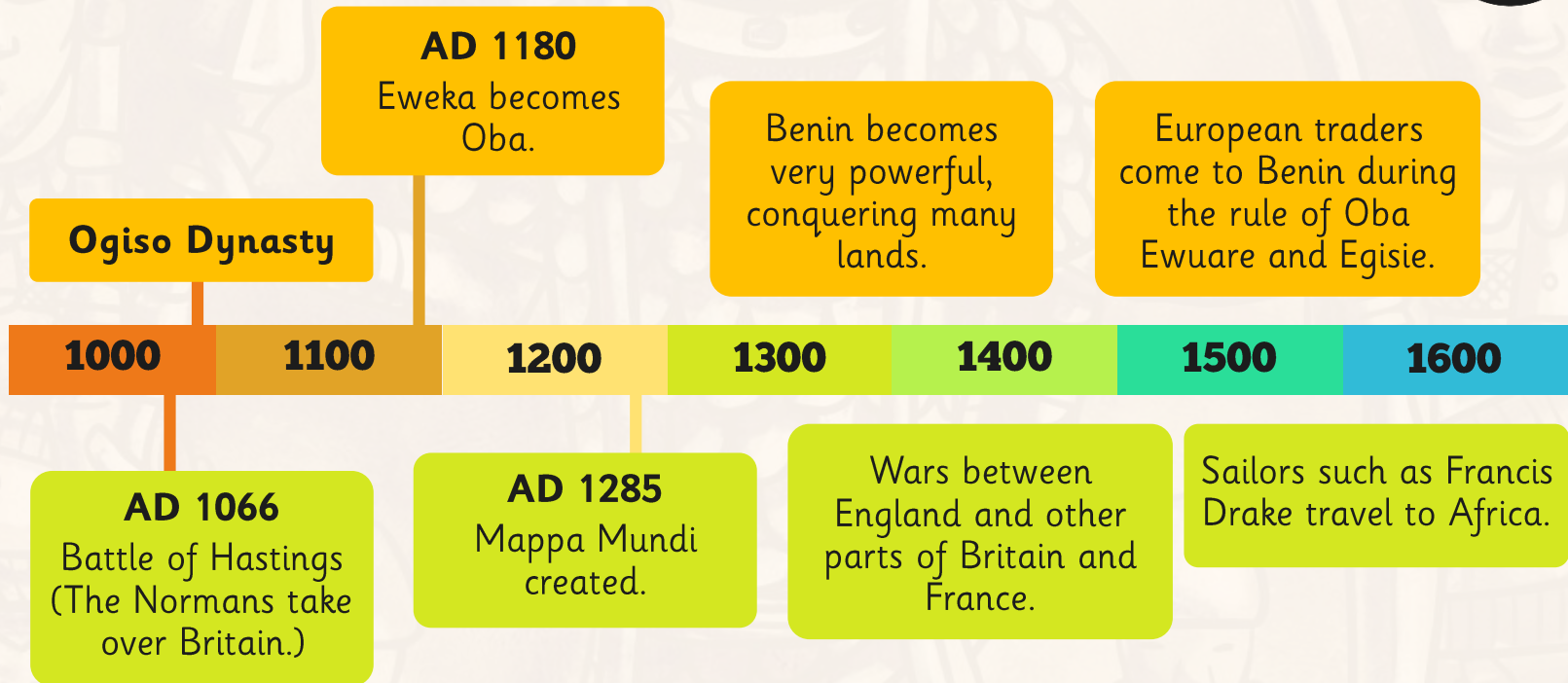
In recent times there have been fewer story-telling events within African communities which provide the backbone of this form of oral history. Nigerian historian, Jacob Egharevba, realised that many of his peoples' histories and traditions would be lost unless he began to write down some of the stories of Benin's history. He interviewed older men who lived during the 19th century in order to record the oldest forms of the tales and traditions and possible.

One of the stories he recorded was of how the Yoruba people of Ife and the Edo people of the Benin Kingdom became linked when a new king came to power. Oral tradition tells us that this new dynasty was created in around AD 1180. The first ruler of this dynasty was Oranmiyan from Ife. He ruled for only a few years before returning to Ife and leaving his son, born to him by an Edo wife, to rule Benin. His son was named Eweka.

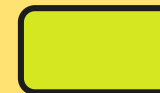
Eweka became the new Oba and so the Oba dynasty began.



Britain and Africa's History



Do you know of any other important events that happened in either Africa or Britain to add to this timeline?



British History



Benin History

The Story of Eweka



This is a shortened version of Jacob Egharevba's story of Eweka, A *Short History of Benin*, 1968.

The Ogiso dynasty ruled Benin in the twelfth century. Owodo, the last Ogiso ruler banished his only son Ekaladerhan from Benin, after lies were told about him by Esagho, his senior wife. Three years later the lies told about him were found to be untrue and messengers were sent to ask him to return home but he refused. He even dug pits to protect himself and many soldiers were killed when they fell into them. The people of Benin had hoped that he would become the next ruler but gave up this idea on hearing what had happened to the soldiers.

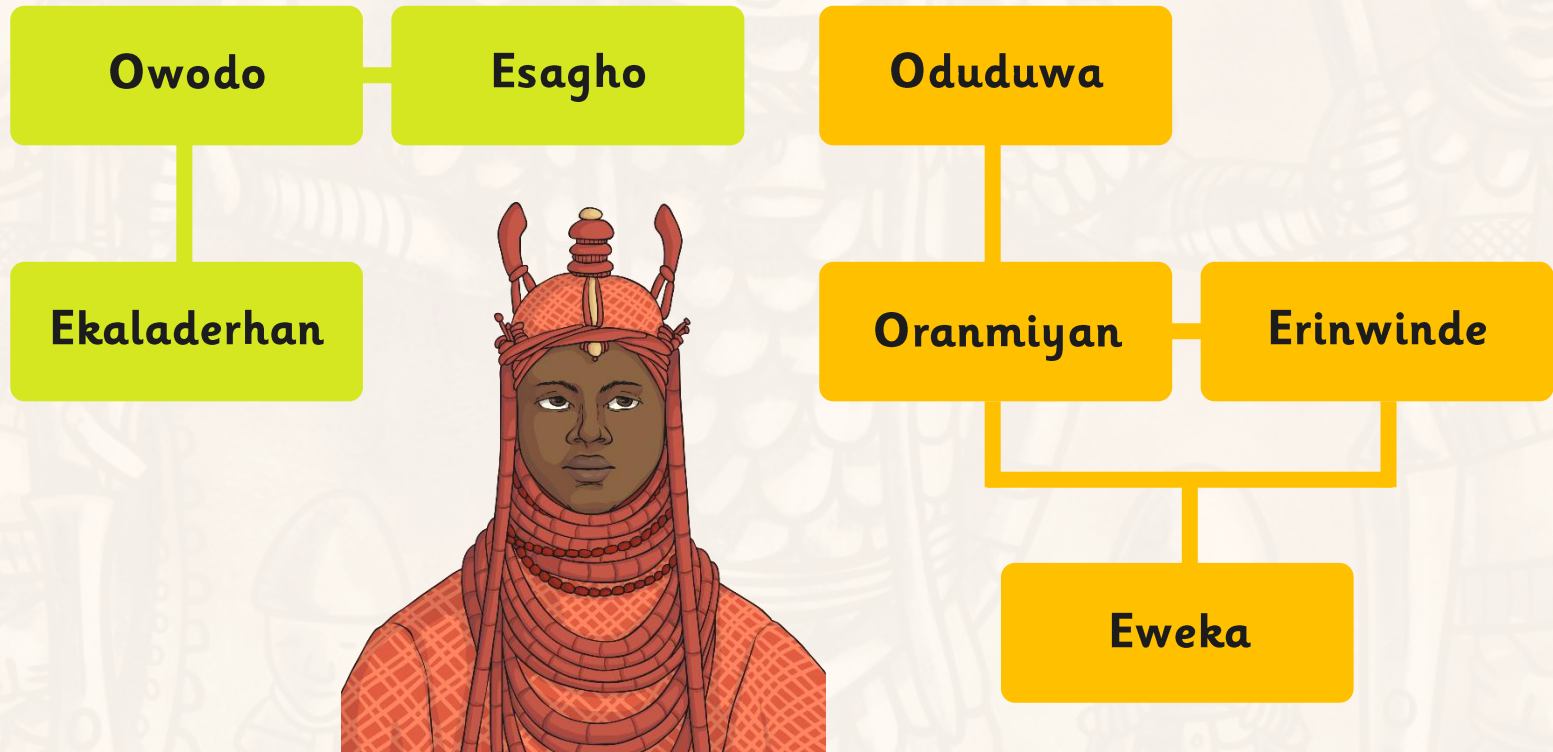
Owodo did not rule over his people very well and they eventually banished him. For the next few years they did not have an Ogiso but they asked Evian, one of the most important men in Benin to look after them. However, the people were not happy when Evian tried to make his eldest son the next ruler saying that only an Ogiso could do this. The people of Benin asked Oduduwa, the powerful Oba of a neighbouring city called Ife, to send one of his sons to be their ruler.

In about AD 1170 Oduduwa sent Prince Oranmiyan, his son, to rule over the people of Benin. Oranmiyan lived in a palace which was built for him in Benin, married a beautiful Edo lady called Erinwinde and had a son called Eweka. However, Oranmiyan said that only someone born in Benin should rule it and made his son, Eweka, the Oba. This was to be called the Eweka dynasty.

Read this together with your partner.

Can you complete the family trees?

The Story of Eweka



Check your version of the family tree.

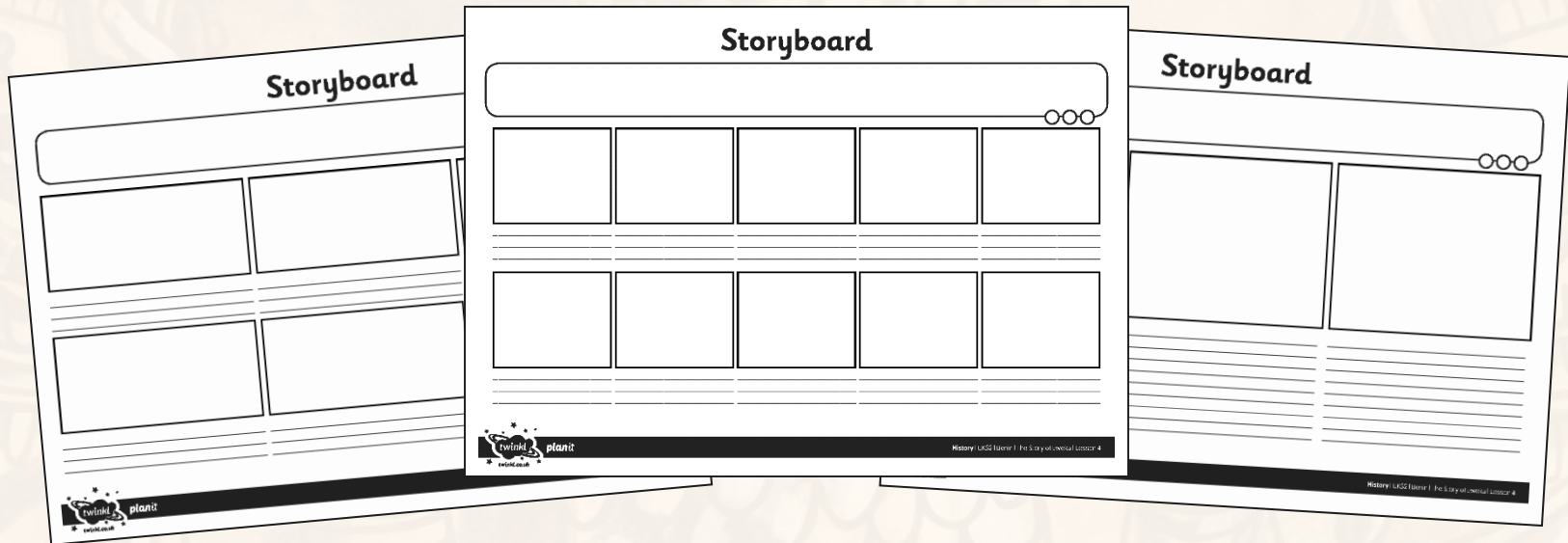
Do you have any questions about it?

The Story of Eweka: Storyboard



Ready... Lights... Camera... Action!

- Imagine that you are a film director and you want to create a film about the story of Eweka.
- Create a storyboard of the different parts of the story.



A Different Version of Events



Can you think of any problems with this version of the story of Eweka?

Why would the people of the Benin Kingdom ask people from Ife to help them if they had no connection with them?

How would they have known that the people of Ife existed?

What happened to Prince Ekaladerhan?
How would anyone have known where to find him?

A Different Version of Events



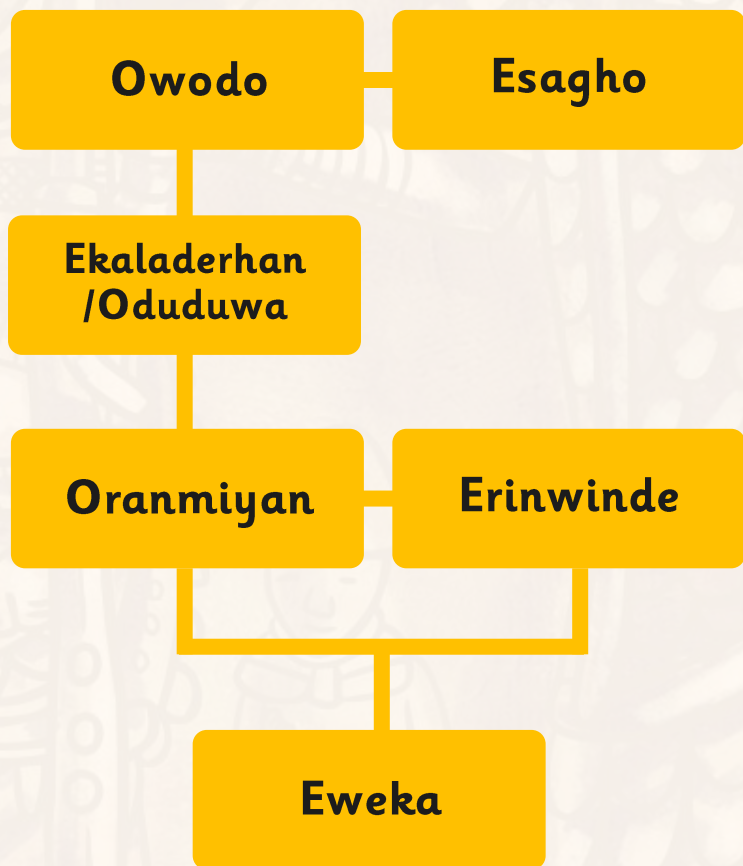
Some people and historians believe that these things happened instead:

After wandering into the forest, Ekaladerhan came to Ife where he won the hearts of the people. The Yoruba people in Ife believed that he descended from heaven to help them, and they called him Oduduwa.

His knowledge of how to rule, magical powers and kindness led Oduduwa (Ekaladerhan) to become the ruler of Ife.

Some years later, his father asked Oduduwa (Ekaladerhan) to return to Benin. He refused, but he sent his son Oranmiyan in his place.

A Different Version of Events



Questions

1. How do these different ideas change the story of Eweka?
2. Why do you think that this story is so important to the history of Benin that people still debate and talk about what they believe happened today?
3. One of the main differences is about who Oduduwa was. Was he actually Prince Ekaladerhan? This would mean the Eweka was actually Ogiiso Owodo's great-grandson. What do you think?

