

Courtesy of George Brauer, Director
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Gridding An Archaeological Site

Lesson Objectives:

In their study of site gridding students will use a map and the Cartesian coordinate system to:

- Establish a grid system over an archaeological site
- Determine the location of artifacts within each grid unit
- Construct an hypothesis concerning the distribution of artifacts in the grid

Materials:

- Ruler
- Pencil
- A copy of the Lake Side Site Artifact Scatter
- A copy of the Lake Side Site Artifact Location Record
- A piece of tracing paper or plain white copy paper

Vocabulary:

- Datum Point:** an arbitrarily established point on the site from which all measurements are taken
- Flake:** a piece of stone removed from a larger piece of stone
- Post-Hole:** an impression left in the soil where a wooden post once stood
- Grid Unit:** a designated square within a site grid
- Sherd:** a fragment of a larger object

Background Information:

Once a site has been excavated, it is gone forever. Because sites are destroyed during excavation, archaeologists are required to record the context of all material located on the site. One way to ensure the preservation of the location of items uncovered is by recording all materials excavated. The first step in this process is establishing a site grid. A site datum point is marked at a fixed point of elevation near the site. Two perpendicular axes intersecting at the site datum point are then drawn and a rectangular grid is superimposed over the entire site. Each grid square is marked on a map and then on the site. In this process, each grid is assigned its own number within the entire grid.

During excavations the locations of recovered objects are recorded in the appropriate grid square. When the archaeologist returns to the lab to interpret the objects excavated, the maps and data recorded can be used to make inferences about past events and human activities that took place on the site.

Activity Procedure:

Have students assume the role of an archaeologist who has just finished surveying a potential site. During the surface survey a number of artifacts were identified. They need to be recorded for future study.

Ask: How might the archaeologist accurately record any material identified during the survey?

1. Project a transparency of the Resource Sheet entitled: Lakeside Site Artifact Scatter. This is the site surveyed by the archaeologist.
2. Have students locate the Site Datum Point, map key, and north arrow
3. Have students use their rulers to construct a grid system over the site using the scale 1 square inch. Model the procedure with students.
4. Label each grid square within the grid. Refer to the model included in this activity packet.
5. Distribute the Artifact Location Record. Have students record the grid square designation and type of artifact in the space provided.
6. Ask:
 - How could you account for the distribution of ceramic sherds in the site?
 - Explain the location of other data recorded on the site map.
 - What does the data tell us about the activities conducted on site?

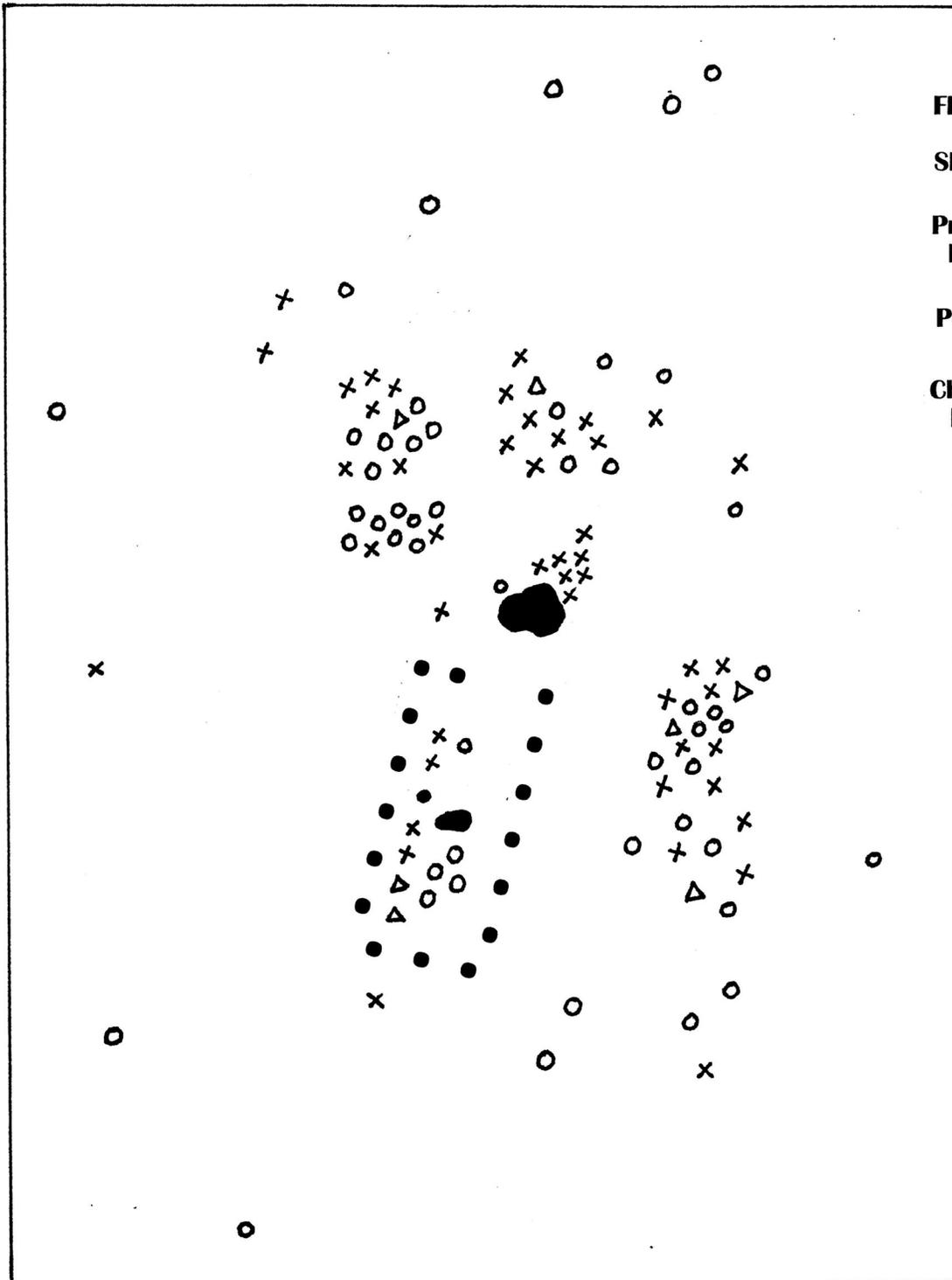
Assessment:

Have students respond to the following prompt:

Explain the importance of establishing a site grid.

The Lakeside Site - Artifact Scatter

▲
North



Flake x

Sherd o

Projectual Point ▲

Post Mold ●

Charcoal Deposit ●●●

● Site Datum Point

