



LESSON 1

OBSERVATION, INFERENCE AND CONTEXT

Age/Grade Level: This program is correlated to AZ State Standards for Grades 4 through 8.

Duration: 45 minutes, or one class period.

Group size: One class, or up to 30 students.

Goals: This lesson helps students think about an object in relationship to what it is (observation) and where it is found (context). It attempts to create awareness of the importance that items, *i.e. artifacts*, remain in their original places. It also demonstrates how items can lose their original significance when placed in a different context. Students then draw conclusions (inferences) based on those criteria.

Essential Questions: What is context? And why is it important in site preservation?
How is context used to determine the significance of an artifact?
How can observational skills be used to make inferences as to what may have happened at a site?

Procedures:

- Divide the students into 4 or 5 groups.
- Ask one student from each group to remove one special personal item from his or her desk, backpack or pocket.
- Have each of the other students in the group write down:
 - a) what they think the item is.
 - b) what the purpose of the item is.
 - c) what does the object tell us about the student who owns it?
 - d) why do you think your classmate has the object with him/her?
 - e) any other inferences they may have.
- Ask the owner of the item to provide information on the item and its importance.
- Compare and discuss each group's observations and inferences to the owner's responses.
- Discuss the correlation between making observations and drawing conclusions.
- Ask students how their inferences would change if the item had been found on the playground (out of context).
 - a) Would they know if it belonged to a boy or a girl?
 - b) Would they know the age of the person who lost it?
 - c) Would they know why someone was carrying the item around and what significance it had to that person?

- d) The fact that the item was found in a classmate's backpack means something (context). If the same item is found on the playground it loses some, if not all, of its meaning.
- Discuss a similar situation with artifacts at a prehistoric ruins site. Discuss how important it is that an artifact not be removed from the site. Discuss the importance of archaeological site preservation.

Vocabulary: artifact
 context
 inference
 observation
 site preservation

Correlation to Arizona State Standards

Science

Grade 4 Grade 5 Grade 6 Grade 7 Grade 8

Strand 1 Inquiry Process

Concept 1 Observations, Questions and Hypotheses

PO1	PO1	P02	PO1	PO1
PO2	PO2			
PO3				

Concept 3 Analysis and Conclusions

PO1	PO1	PO1	PO1	PO1
PO2	PO2	PO2	PO2	PO2
PO3	PO3	PO3	PO3	PO3
PO4	PO4		PO4	P05
PO5	PO5		PO5	P06

Concept 4 Communication

PO1	PO1	P03	P03	PO1
P03	P03	P05	P05	P05

Strand 2 History and Nature of Science

Concept 2 Nature of Scientific Knowledge

	P03	P03	P01
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