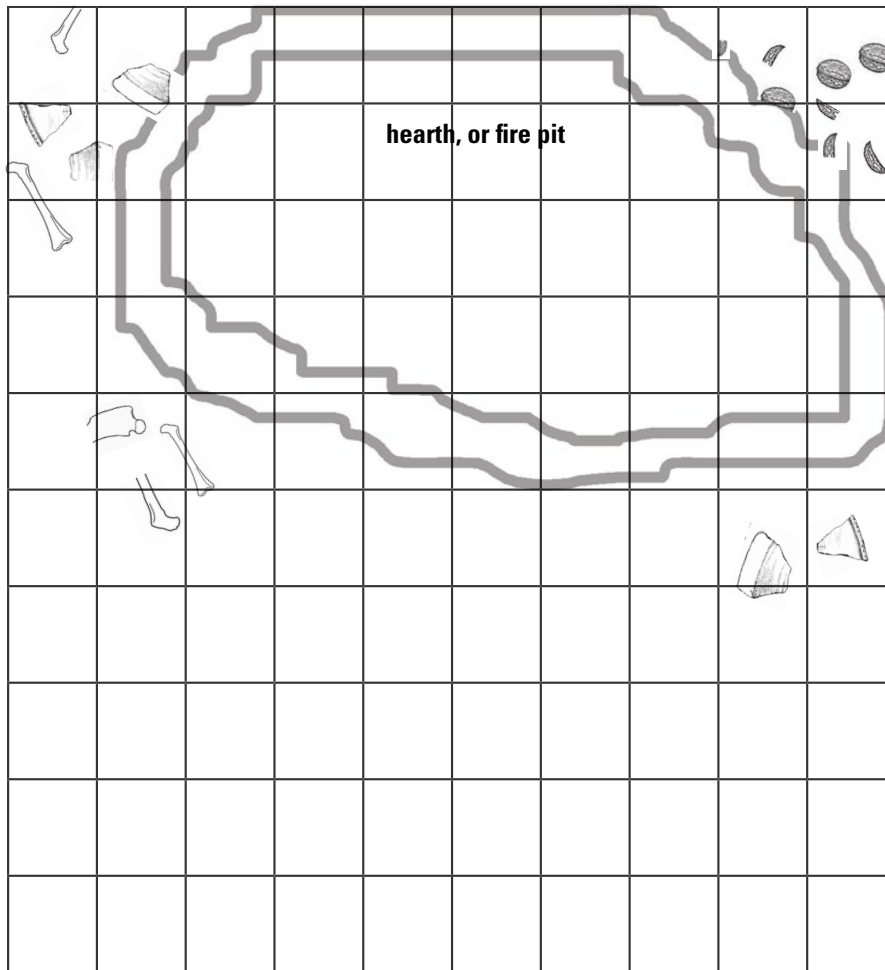





## Context Is Everything

Dr. E. L. Boxwood, an archeologist, conducted a dig, or **excavations**, at an archeological site in Arkansas. An **archeological site** is a place where people lived and left objects, like their trash, behind. Dr. Boxwood studied the site by digging away soil in layers and recording everything she found in each layer. She recorded the **artifacts** that she found and where people left them (the context) to learn about the lives of people in the past. By looking at the location of the artifacts and their relationship to one another (context), she is able to piece together a picture of the things the people who lived at this site did. Dr. Boxwood very carefully drew maps of two excavation units, Unit A and Unit B. Help Dr. Boxwood by using the maps to answer the questions.

Excavation Unit A



**The Acorn Site**  
Excavation Unit A - Plan Map Key

-  **Burned shell** - Pieces of burned hickory or acorn shell.
-  **Pottery fragments** - Pieces of a broken bowl or cooking pot.
-  **Animal bones** - Pieces of deer bones from someone butchering the animal.



Dr. E. L. Boxwood  
15 October 2016



1. The first step in archeological research is to take field notes about what you see or find. Archeologists look at their excavation units very carefully and write notes about everything they see. This helps archeologists learn about the people who left the things at the site. To begin your notes, look at Excavation Unit A and list the artifacts that Dr. Boxwood found in the table under **Artifacts (Objects)**.
2. Where is each artifact located, or what is it near? This is the artifact's context. Write this information in the table under **Context**.

Excavation Unit A Table

Artifacts (Objects)	Context	Use or Function
<b>Hearth</b>	Northwest corner surrounded by pottery fragments, animal bones, and burned shell.	Warmth, cooking and preparing food.

3. Archeologists try to say what an artifact was used for by studying where it was found and what other things are nearby. Look at what you wrote for each artifact in the Context column of the table. What does the context tell you about each artifact's use (or function)? Write your answer in the **Use or Function** column.
4. Now take a look at your table. Choose three artifacts and write three sentences that explain what people did with them. For example, why are their broken pieces of ceramic pots near the hearth, or fire pit? Why are nut shells and animal bones also found near the hearth? What does all of this tell us about the activities of the Native Americans who left the things at this site?

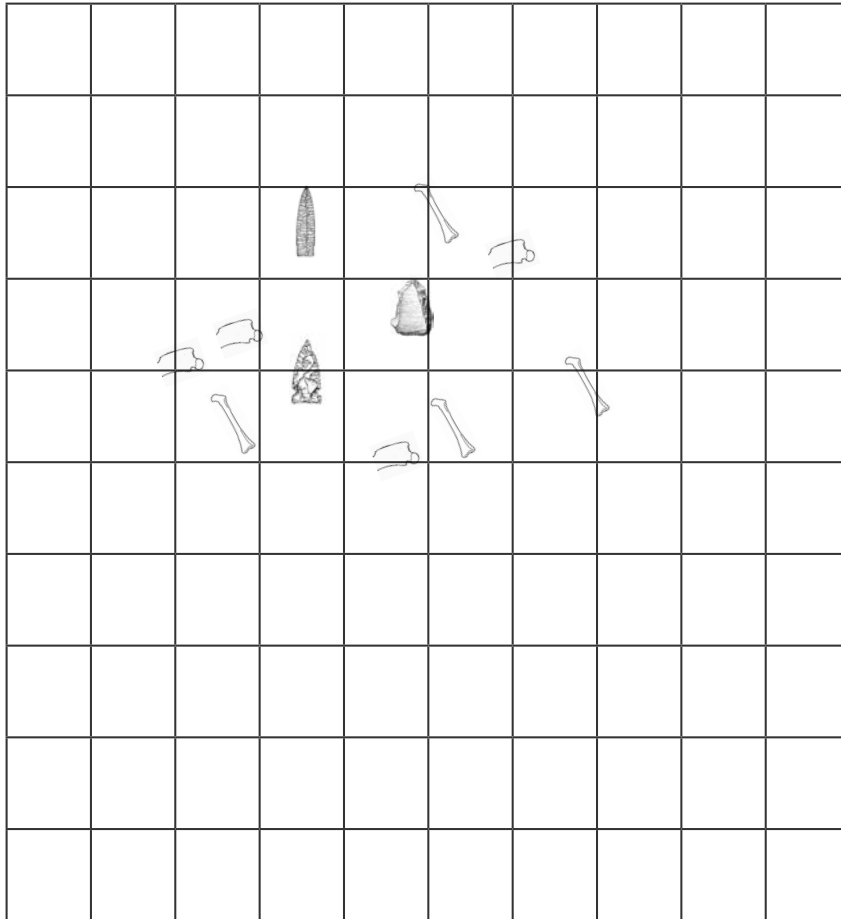
a.

b.

c.



**Excavation Unit B**



**The Acorn Site**  
Excavation Unit B - Plan Map Key



**Spear point** - The sharpened point of a spear. It is made of stone and used for hunting. It is often mistakenly called an arrowhead.



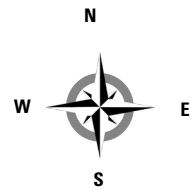
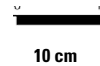
**Scraper** - A tool made of stone that is used to scrape a deer hide or other animal.



**Knife** - A stone tool used to cut up and butcher a deer or other animal.



**Animal bones** - Pieces of deer bones or other animal from someone butchering the animal.



Dr. E. L. Boxwood  
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5. Look at Excavation Unit B. List the artifacts that Dr. Boxwood found in the **Artifacts (Objects)** column of the table.
6. Write the context (what is it near) of each artifact in the **Context** column.
7. What does the context of each artifact tell you about its use? Write your answer in the **Use or Function** column.

**Excavation Unit B Table**

Artifacts (Objects)	Context	Use or Function



8. Look at your table for Excavation Unit B, choose three artifacts and write three sentences about what people did with each one. Hint: Why is there animal bones in the same place as the spear point and scraper?
- a.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - b.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - c.
9. Compare Excavation Unit A with Excavation Unit B. How are they similar? How are they different?
10. Draw a picture or write a short story about what Native Americans were doing in these two areas of the archeological site.

