



Teacher's Aid

Creating Your Archaeological Dig Site

As read in previous material, your dig site is presumed to be located on the outskirts of the Greek city of Thessalonika. Thessalonika was chosen for your pseudo-dig as it is located at the crossroads of a number of important trade routes that existed during the times of ancient Greece, Rome and finally the Byzantine Empire. All of the coins and artifacts found in your dig materials could easily be discovered in such a location.

To set up the site, look around your grounds and find a suitable grass free area where you can begin to mark out your grid using the dowels and string included in the materials.

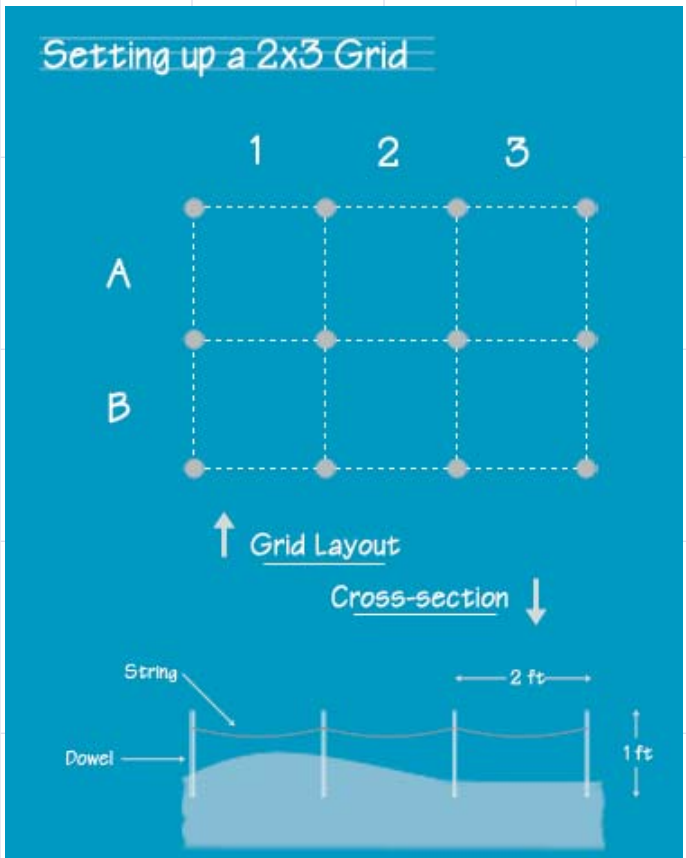
Student Project- Creating the Dig Site:

Using a yardstick, allow the students to measure a number of 2'x2' grid squares as seen in the accompanied chart. Place the dowels into the ground at each nexus point, then proceed to connect them all with the string. Dependant upon the number of students, you may wish to add or decrease the number of grid squares. Remember to bring a pair of scissors to cut the string.

Assign the vertical grid squares with numbers (I.E. 1,2,3, etc.) and the horizontal squares with letters (I.E. A,B,C etc.). In this manner, each grid square can be assigned a number such A1, B2, etc. Now cover the site with a plastic tarp, or even trash bags, (this will help protect the site from idle hands) and use rocks or piles of earth to keep the tarp in place. Return to the classroom. You will add the coins/artifacts to the site before the next session.

Back in the classroom, have the students divide themselves into two or three teams and have them chose a team leader. The team leaders will be responsible for logging their team's discoveries as for type and grid location, while the rest of the team will be the diggers.

NOTE: All the coins/artifacts have arrived in separate plastics bags, each clearly noted as to content. As many of these ancient materials are rather small, many could easily be lost once buried. We suggest that the teacher remove them from their bags, and transfer/divide them into the accompanying bags, again being sure to clearly mark them as to content. The more bags, the more discoveries the students will be able to unearth.



"Salting" the Dig Site

As is evident at all archeological digs, it is axiomatic that the deeper one digs, the older material one finds. This may be an unwieldy process for the teacher to create when burying the materials in the earth of the dig site. Instead, we suggest that you simply pre-assign various grid squares to be at a certain assumed depth. I.E. Squares 1A and 1B are at one foot deep. Place your Byzantine coins/artifacts here. Assume Roman materials at 2 feet and Greek materials at three feet and add the other coins/etc. to the grid squares accordingly. **Be sure that you note down how many items are in each square so that none are left behind.** Once all the materials are buried, it's time to bring the students back to the site. **Last note: remember to include a similar amount Roman Coins in each team's grid squares. This will be discussed later.**

Student Project - "Let's Dig!"

Inform the students as to which squares are assumed to be at which depth, then assign each student team to their grid squares, reminding them to present each find to their team leader. The team leader's responsibility is to carefully note down the assumed depth of their grid squares, and which artifacts were found in their assigned squares. Once all the artifacts are discovered, it's time to return to the classroom for complete cataloguing and further discussion.

Teacher's Note: Although you have been provided with enough Roman coins for each student to take one home, the Byzantine/Greek coins and other artifacts should be set aside for further use in any following "digs".

Cataloguing the Coins and Artifacts

Student Project:

Once back in the classroom/lab, allow the students to examine their finds while still in their respective plastic bags. Each team leader will then, with the aid of their teammates, make a comprehensive catalogue of their discoveries, again recording in which grid square each object was found. Once concluded, the team leaders will create a complete assessment of how many of each item was found at which depth.

At this time, it is suggested that the students be allowed to open the bags containing the Byzantine/Greek coins and artifacts and examine them individually; after all, this is "Hands on History", isn't it? Discuss the different objects and their uses with the students.

Once all the Byzantine/Greek coins and various artifacts have been perused, have them all returned to you for further use and safe-keeping.

Now's the time for the students to remove their Roman coins from their bags! Be sure to tell them that they will each receive one coin for them to keep for their own.

Cleaning and Attributing Roman Coins

Student Project :

Find the find the plastic bag filled with Gringgott's Wizard Mix #2* and, under the teacher's supervision, allow the students to follow the instructions included with the mix. (You should have plenty for 12 or more applications.)

*Your students may want to know that chemist Bruce Nessett, an ancient coin-cleaning enthusiast who created the mix in order to allow the removal of dirt and grime deposits from ancient coins, developed "Gringgott's Wizard Mix". It was so named because the results work like magic!

For best results, allow the coins to steep in the GG's #2 for at least 24 hours. Remove them from the bath, brush them with the included toothbrushes, under running water, if possible. If running water is not available, a small bucket of water will work fine.

Allow the students to examine them with the enclosed magnifying glass. If any appear to be clean or nearly clean, set them aside. Return the remaining coins into the GG's #2 bath for further soaking.

Teacher's Note: GG's #2 is a fairly harmless solution that will not harm your student's skin, but it should not be taken internally and be sure to keep it out of your student's eyes. Should this occur, simply flush with tap water and all will be well.

When the coins have been thoroughly cleaned and dried out, its time for the students to begin the process of trying to identify them. A great internet resource is located on the web at **www.wildwinds.com**. While students can browse through portraits of the emperors, the best way to attempt an attribution is by using the two search engines on this page. Use the "Main Search Engine" if entire words can be isolated on the coin, this will provide the best results. If only a portion of the inscription can be made out enter it into the "Partial Inscription Search" feature.

Both of these search engines display lengthy lists of coins which may be a match. Browse through the descriptions to see which might describe best the coin in question. Most descriptions have an accompanying image of the coin.

When the student has taken his or her attribution as far as they can, have them write it out on the card that comes with the "flip" included in your package. Make sure the students use pencil to label their "flips", attribution can sometimes be a lengthy process and the students may want to go back and try to refine their findings.

Additional Resources on the Web

Two additional resources on the web which may be of use are:

- 1) (<http://dougsmith.ancients.info/>): A disorganized and not always intuitive site but buried away in here is a wealth of information and background material on ancient coinage
- 2) ...and of course the discussion forum at nobleromancoins.com (<http://nobleromancoins.com/phpBB2/>). Questions about cleaning and attributing coins posted here will be answered by helpful, knowledgeable collectors with a wealth of experience.