Teacher Answer Key

Case Study

1. The mask is a 'beautiful lie' because it has no provenience — no record of where it was originally found, what soil layer it came from, or what objects were near it. Its provenance (ownership history) only goes back to a European collection, but that tells nothing about its original archaeological context or cultural meaning.

2. Answers will vary. Students should argue that purchasing undocumented artifacts fuels looting by creating market demand, and that without context, the mask cannot contribute to scientific knowledge about the culture that created it. Alternatively, some students may argue for acquisition to prevent the mask from disappearing into a private collection.

Multiple Choice

1. A

2. B

3. D

Matching

1-E, 2-C, 3-B, 4-A, 5-D

Fill-in-the-Blank

1) provenience, 2) in situ, 3) looting

Short Answer (Sample Responses)

Q1: Without context, a gold coin cannot tell scientists when it was used, who used it, or what economic system it belonged to. Its location, depth, and associated objects would reveal trade routes, time periods, and social conditions — all information that is lost when the coin is removed without documentation.

Q2: The burial contained a skeleton, ceramic vessel, bronze bracelets, and seeds that together told a complete story about the individual's status, diet, health, and time of death. Removing even one object, like the bracelets, destroys the relationships between all the items, making it impossible to interpret the burial as a whole.

Q3: Archaeologists work slowly because every centimeter of soil contains potential contextual information. They are trying to preserve not just objects but the relationships between objects — their exact positions, associations, and

stratigraphic layers. These relationships are the actual data of archaeology, and once disturbed, they cannot be recovered.