StoryScapes101: Introduction to the StoryScapes platform

Module 2 - Composing StoryScapes 1.0

Document Version: 01/01/2019

Introduction

In this Module, students will learn the basics of using the StoryScapes composer. By the end of the Module students will have published a simple StoryScape using StoryLayers imported by others.

This module includes the following lessons:

- Lesson 1 – Setting Up a StoryScape
- Lesson 2 – Adding and Styling StoryLayers
- Lesson 3 – Adding StoryPins and StoryFrames

Each Lesson is planned to take about 30 minutes to complete. Combined, this module should take two hours to complete (assuming ten minute breaks between each Lesson).

Lesson 1: Setting Up a StoryScape

Objective

In this Lesson students will learn how to plan for and begin composing a StoryScape. ### Lecture ##### The Principles of a StoryScape A "StoryScape" is a specific type of story that seeks to explain phenomena as they occur over space and time.

Thus, like any form of storytelling, a StoryScape includes common elements, such as the following "4 P's". Every time you look at a StoryScape, you should be able to answer four questions:

- What are the *places* involved in this StoryScape?

- What is the *plot* of this StoryScape?
- Who or what are the *performers* in this StoryScape?
- What is the *point* of this StoryScape?

Let's look a bit closer and what we mean by place, polot, performer and point:

- **Place**: Traditional story definitions will refer instead of place to "setting", since a story obviously doesn't have to occur in geographic context. We spend most of our time in James Joyce's Ulysses exploring consciousness, for example. For a StoryScape, however, setting always refers to place in a literal sense. StoryScapes always occur *somewhere*.
- **Plot**: Plot refers to what happens in a story, and in what order. StoryScapes should always have a plot. They are not simply a graph or chart that presents data. They unfold over time in a sequence specifically designed to convey a particular perspective.
- **Performers**: For events to occur, there must be action. And for action to occur, there must be performers. In a StoryScape, performers could be humans or animals, or even plant life like an invasive species, or an environmental force like a hurricane.
- **Point** Every StoryScape has a point, or main theme.. Traditional story definitions often refer to a story's resolution, or main idea. Sometimes the StoryTeller makes this point very explicit. Othertimes, the StoryTeller may leave it to viewers to infer the main point implicitly conveyed in the StoryScape.

The Components of a StoryScape

All stories are made up of small components that combine into a coherent whole. For a StoryScape, these elements include styled StoryLayers, StoryPins, StoryFames, description and metadata. Below we provide a brief definition of each of these components. Later we will gain a better understanding of these componets by *putting them to use*.

- **StoryLayer**: A StoryLayer is a data file that is used to display geographic information with temporal attribute(s)
- **StoryPin**: A StoryPin is a single geographic feature that is added to a StoryScape to convey qualitative information at a specific point in time in a StoryScape.
- **StoryFrame**: A StoryFrame defines the geographic bounds and zoom level of the map canvas during a defined period of time in the StoryScape.
- **Description**: Every StoryScape has various types of description, such as a summary and individual chapter descriptions.
- **Metadata**: Every StoryScape has various types of metadata, such as a Title, Category, and Tags.

The Process of Making a StoryScape

First Steps

To get started making your own StoryScape, first launch the "StoryScapes Composer" from the top of your screen.

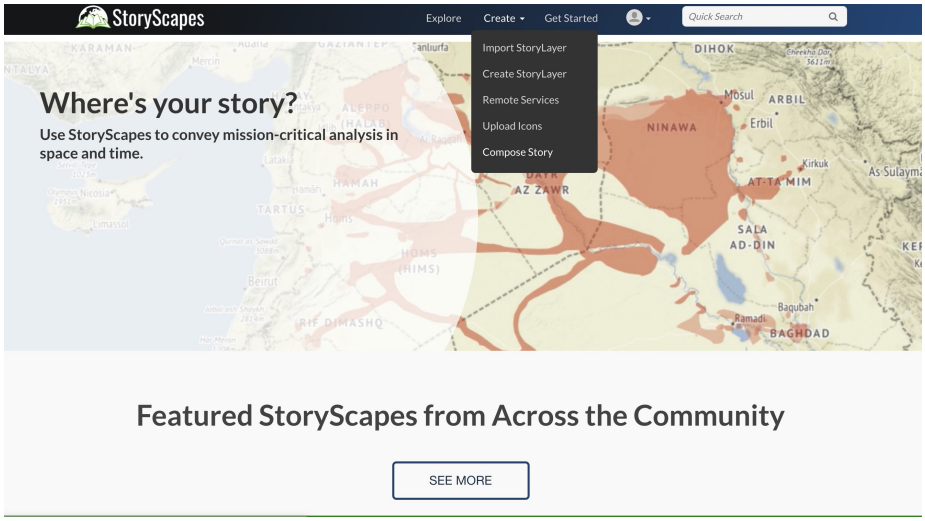

Figure 1: SCREENSHOT

You can also launch the StoryScape composer by going directly to a StoryLayer page and clicking "compose StoryScape". Using this link will launch the composer with that particular StoryLayer included in Chapter 1.

Once you enter the StoryScape composer, your first step is to give your StoryScape a title. A good StoryScape title is similar to a good book title. It should indicate what the StoryScape is about.

In addition to a Title, you'll need to give your StoryScape a Summary. The Summary serves a similar purpose as article abstract. It describes what the StoryScape is about and why it is significant.

Finally, assign your StoryScape to one of the fixed Categories that most applies.

Don't worry - you can change the Title, Summary and Category later.

Outlining Your StoryScape

Just like any piece of writing, it is a good idea to outline your StoryScape before proceeding too far. To outline your StoryScape consider the following:

- Has someone already published a StoryScape similar to the one you envision? If so, think about how your StoryScape will make a unique contribution.

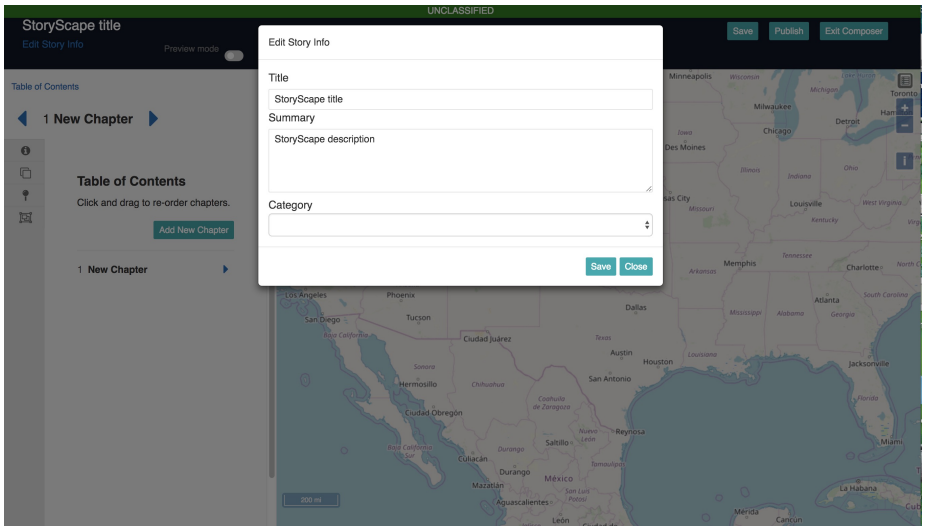

Figure 2: SCREENSHOT

- How many chapters will your StoryScape have? For example, a StoryScape about the American Civil War might have a chapters for each major battle - i.e. Bull Run, Gettysburg, Antietem).
- Each chapter will need a Description of its own. This should be a paragraph or two that describes the chapter and its significance.
- What StoryLayers will you use in each chapter? You'll need to search for StoryLayers to make sure they exist on the platform to use in your StoryScape. For example, a StoryScape about the American Civil War with chapters for different battles will need StoryLayers that depict aspects of these battles, such as the location of troop movements. If the StoryLayers you want for your StoryScape aren't already available, you'll need to import them yourself. We'll cover importing StoryLayers in Module 3.

Demonstration

Now that you have an understanding about the what's involved in setting up a StoryScape, let's watch someone begin a new StoryScape:

Watch this video. VIDEO.

Tasks

Now it's your turn! Your task is to start a new StoryScape:

1. Start a new StoryScape and give it a Title, Summary and Category

2. Create chapters and give each chapter a Summary
3. Save your StoryScape as a draft

Lesson 2: Adding and Styling StoryLayers

Objective

In this lesson students will learn how to add StoryLayers to a StoryScape, and to apply Simple and Unique styles to StoryLayers.

Lecture

Adding StoryLayers to a chapter

StoryLayers form the foundation of your Chapters. If a StoryScape is like a pizza, then the StoryLayers are like the crust. Everything else in a StoryScape (i.e. StoryPins and StoryFrames) sits on top of the StoryLayers. To add StoryLayers to your Chapter, click "Add StoryLayers". A window will pop up where you can input StoryLayer titles. Click "use" to add the StoryLayer to your chapter.

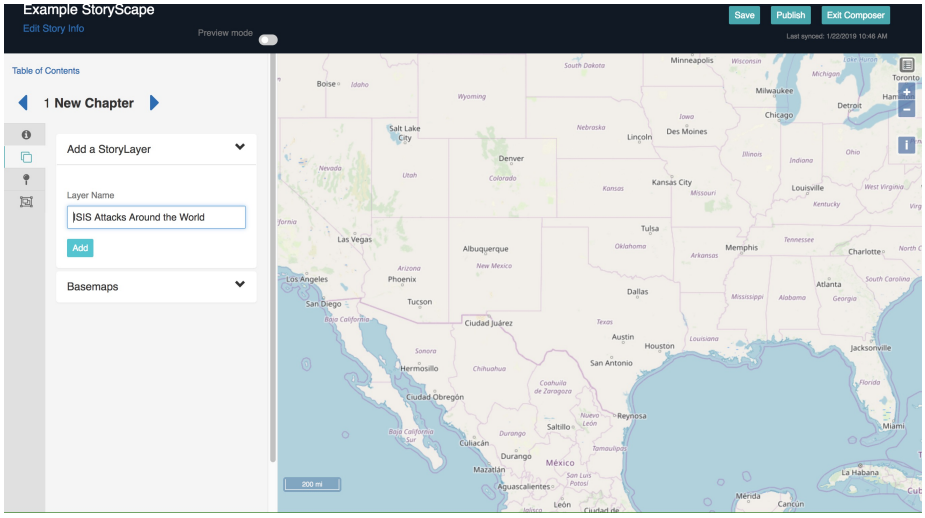

Figure 3: SCREENSHOT

You can add multiple StoryLayers to each chapter. Once added, you can click and drag the StoryLayers to change which one is sent to back or front.

Once a StoryLayer is added, you can control its visual appearance with styling. A Style refers to the color, hue and size associated with features in a StoryLayer. Each StoryLayer in StoryScapes has a default style applied to it to start (orange). Once you create and save your own style, that style will appear on your

StoryScape when it is published. StoryScapes supports four types of styling: - Simple - Unique - Choropleth - Graduated

In this Module we will cover Simple and Unique styling only. In Module 5 we will cover Choropleth and Graduated styling.

Apply a Simple style to a StoryLayer

With a Simple style, all aspects (color, hue and size) are uniform on all features of the StoryLayer. This style is often used if features don't need to be differentiated from one another. In the example below, a Simple blue style is used to show the total land controlled by ISIS.

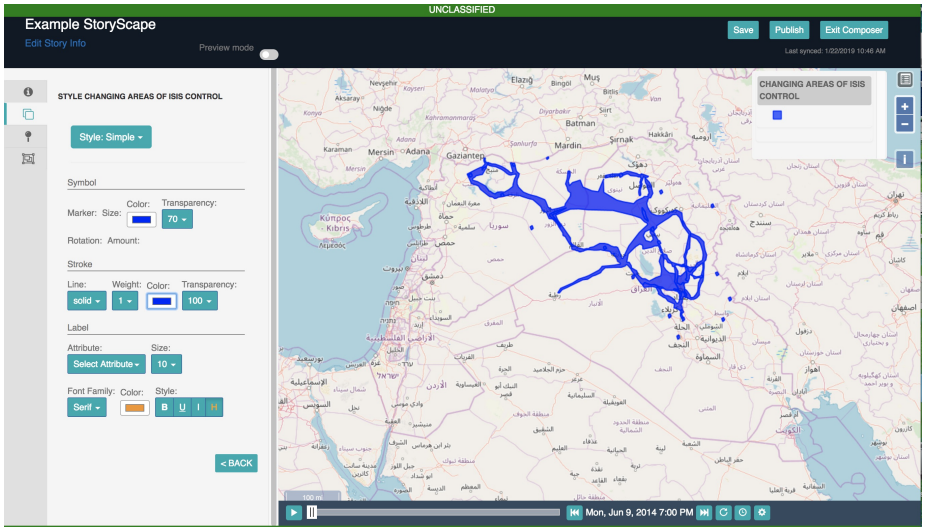

Figure 4: SCREENSHOT

Apply a Unique style to a StoryLayer

A Unique style allows you to represent features with different color based on a category that the feature falls into. For example, perhaps your StoryLayer depicts cutting down of trees, and you have an attribute for "Tree Type". With Unique styling, you could present each Tree Type with its own color.

In the example below, we use Unique styling to differentiate between areas that ISIS counts as territory (blue) versus areas under attack by ISIS (orange)

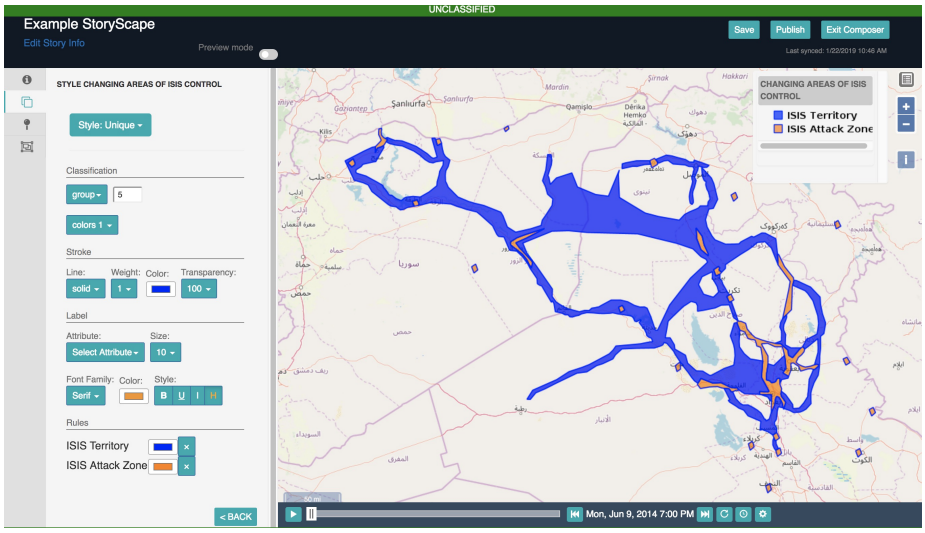

Figure 5: SCREENSHOT

Demonstration

Now that you have an understanding about the what's involved in adding StoryLayers to a chapter and applying Simple and Unique styles to StoryLayers, let's watch someone build a new StoryScape.

Watch this video. VIDEO.

Tasks

Now it's your turn! Return to the draft StoryScape you started building in Lesson 1. You should be able to find the saved draft by going to your Profile.

Now, add at least one StoryLayer to a chapter in your StoryScape. Change the color of all features in the StoryLayer by using Simple styling. Then, change the color of features based on an Attribute in the StoryLayer using the Unqiue Styling. Save your draft StoryScape.

Lesson 3: Adding StoryPins and StoryFrames

Objective

In this lesson students will learn how to add basic Storypins and StoryFrames to their StoryScape in order to deepen their narrative.

Lecture

StoryPins and StoryFrames are tools to help your StoryScape more clearly convey its plot and point. If a StoryScape is like a pizza, and StoryLayers are like the crust, we might say that StoryPins and StoryFrames are like the sauce and toppings.

Many beginning users of the StoryScapes platform have difficulty understanding the difference between a StoryLayer and a StoryScape. While they are similar, there are key differences between them. These differences start to become clear with the creation of StoryPins and StoryFrames. StoryLayers are just spatitemporal data. StoryFrames and StoryPins add narrative richness to these data so a real *story* emerges.

Adding simple Storypins

StoryPins let you add more qualitative information that doesn't quite make sense as part of the StoryLayer data. For example, perhaps you want a pin with a newspaper article that was important, or you want to pin a video that helps explain what the viewer is seeing in your StoryScape. Or, maybe you just want to add some clarifying text that helps a viewer understand more about something at a specific moment in time.

In this lesson we will build StoryPins that only have text. In Module 5 we will build StoryPins with embedded media, like images and videos.

To create a StoryPin, navigate to the StoryPins tab in composer. This will open up a form for creating your StoryPins.

There are two ways to create StoryPins: 1. one at a time 2. uploading several all at once with "bulk upload"

Adding StoryPins one at a time

To add StoryPins one at a time, just give your StoryPin a title and description and add it to the map. Once it's added to the map, define a start and end time.

In the example below, we've created a StoryPin to highlight the time and place where ISIS formally declared its Caliphate.

Creating lots of StoryPins at once

To add lots of StoryPins at once, you will click `Import` to download a blank .CSV file with pre-set column headers for the information you need to have for each StoryPin.

Once you've populated the CSV with your StoryPin information, return to the composer and upload your StoryPins. All of your StoryPins will then appear

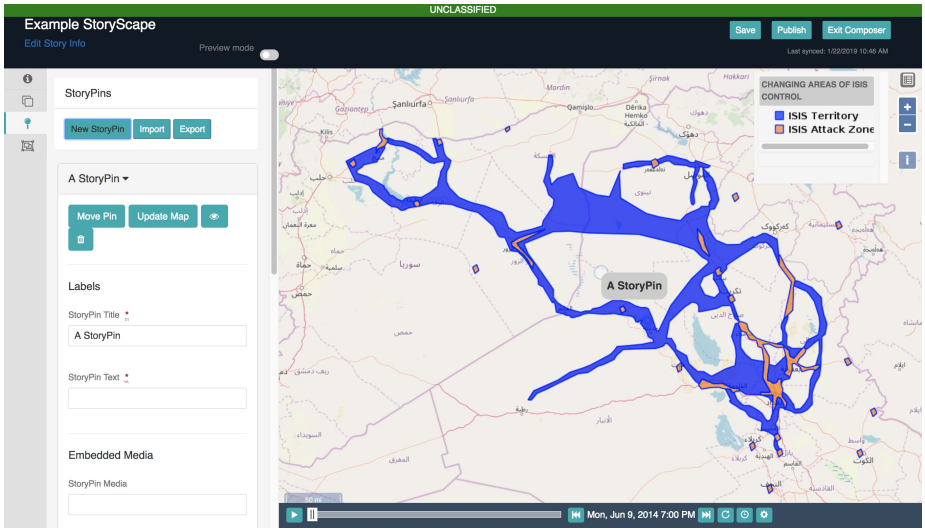

Figure 6: SCREENSHOT

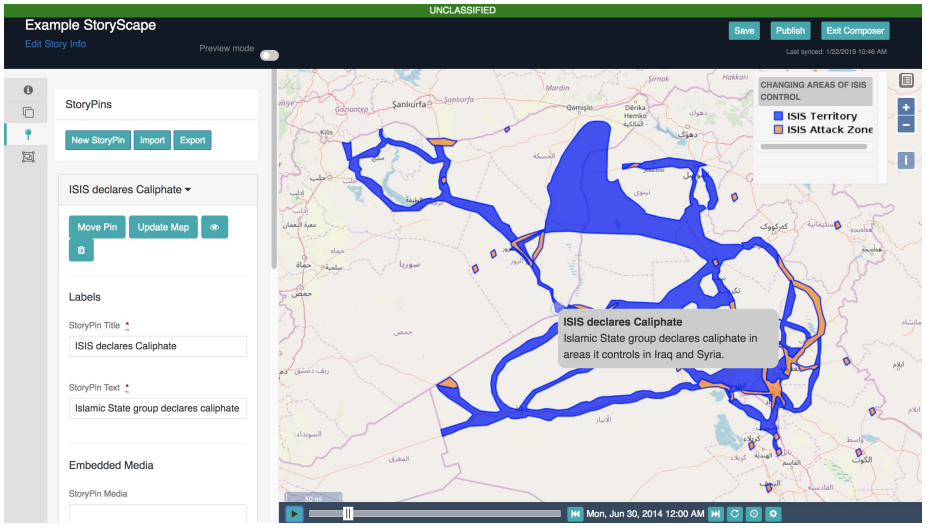

Figure 7: SCREENSHOT

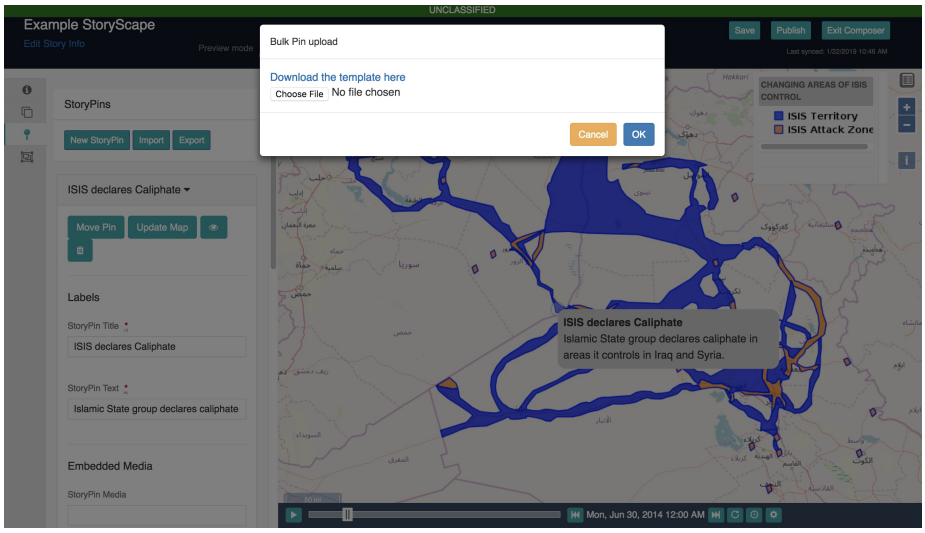

Figure 8: SCREENSHOT

individually in the StoryPin sidebar so that you can further customize them individually.

Adding StoryFrames

StoryFrames give you an ability to control the geographic extent and zoom level on the map at various points in time in a chapter. For example, at the start of your chapter you may want a zoom level that shows the whole world. But part way through your chapter you may want the map to zoom in closer to a specific country, town or even an individual block. Every chapter can have as many StoryFrames as you want, although remember that too much zooming around on the map might make it hard for the viewer of your StoryScape to make sense of your StoryScape!

To create a StoryFrame, open up the StoryFrame form. Give your StoryFrame a brief title and description, just to help you remember the purpose of creating the StoryFrame. Your StoryFrame title and description won't show up on your published StoryScape. Next, set your StoryFrame zoom level, and give it a start and end date.

In the example below, we've created a StoryFrame that better focuses on a location where ISIS declared a Caliphate, a point also highlighted with a StoryPin.

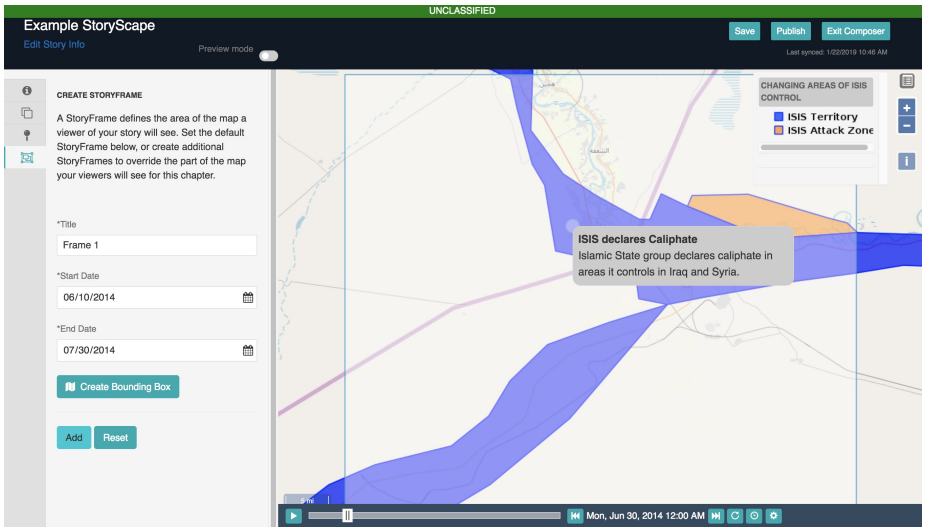

Figure 9: SCREENSHOT

Demonstration

Now that you have an understanding about the what's involved in adding StoryPins and StoryFrames to a StoryScape, let's watch someone go through this process:

Watch this video. VIDEO.

Tasks

Now it's your turn! Return to the draft StoryScape you've worked on in earlier lessons. Remember, you can access this draft StoryScape from your Profile. Add at least one StoryPin and one StoryFrame to a chapter. Save your draft StoryScape. Then hit "Publish" and watch your published StoryScape. Share the StoryScape link with a colleague so they can view it too. Ask them to confirm that your StoryScape includes the following elements:

- At least one Storylayer with a Simple or Unique style
- At least one StoryPin with text
- At least one storyFrame

Conclusion

In this Module you have learned to how to set up a new StoryScape, add and style StoryLayers with Simple and Unique styling, and add simple text based

StoryPins and StoryFrames.

With these skills, you can quickly and easily compose and publish a StoryScape that utilizes StoryLayers already imported to the StoryScapes platform. And, using the skills you built in Module 1, you can share your published StoryScape with colleagues and use it to strengthen your briefings and presentations.

In future Modules we will cover more advanced features in the StoryScapes composer, such as using complex styles on StoryLayers and adding media to StoryPins.

Discussion Questions

Before moving on to the next Module, take fifteen minutes to reflect independently or in a group on the following questions: 1. In this Module you started building a StoryScape of your own. Why did you pick the topic you did to practice with? 2. Now that you have a better understanding of how the StoryScapes composer works, what is a StoryScape you'd like to try and work on in the future? 3. Can you think of other types of features that StoryScapes should work to incorporate that would help you compose the StoryScape you envision? 3. Can you think of topics that cannot be explained within a spatio-temporal framework like StoryScapes? If so, what other types of methods might you use to convey those topics? 5. What other comments, questions or concerns do you have about this Module?