Exercise 1: Evaluate a story created with ArcGIS StoryMaps

How can I print an exercise to PDF format?

Software requirements

- ArcGIS Online (Creator or GIS Professional user type)

Technical note

When you are using ArcGIS StoryMaps, use the latest version of one of these browsers:

- Apple Safari
- Google Chrome
- Microsoft Edge
- Mozilla Firefox

This exercise was developed using Google Chrome. If you use a different web browser, your results might be slightly different from the results that are shown.

Introduction

An important step in spatial data science is communicating the results of your analysis. ArcGIS StoryMaps is one of the most powerful tools that you can use to share information and engage decision makers. It integrates text, images, maps, and other multimedia to help you visualize your story.

But how do you tell a good story? In this exercise, you will see a two-phase approach for effective storytelling. The first is preparation, where the focus is on identifying an audience and then using an outline to convey key takeaways and organize content. The second phase is the creation process, where you will evaluate a story built with ArcGIS StoryMaps that effectively used the preparation phase to translate information into a compelling story that uses text, images, maps, and more.

Scenario

An effective way to learn to tell better stories is to copy elements that you enjoy from other storytellers. You will examine a story from the elements of a previously published story, which documented the experiences of three National Geographic explorers who visited Guatemala. The purpose of their expedition was to learn more about the coexistence of volcanoes and communities. You will use this example to identify the characteristics of a good story.

For more information about ArcGIS StoryMaps, go to ArcGIS StoryMaps Overview.

Note: The exercises in this course include View Result links. Click these links to confirm that your results match what is expected.

Estimated completion time in minutes: Approximately 30 minutes

Expand all steps Collapse all steps

- Step 1: Identify the audience

The first step to crafting a compelling story is to start with an outline based on your audience. By working through foundational questions focused on your audience—what you want them to learn, how you can connect with them most effectively—you will not only save time later in the story creation phase, but also increase your likelihood of crafting something that resonates with them.

In this step, you will review an existing story. By reviewing it, you will identify the target audience and define the key takeaways that are outlined in the story.

a In a new web browser tab, open the story titled *In the Shadow of a Volcano* (https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/0af82ec0fe7f4421b3fe4bd72cfe2c73).

The story is about three National Geographic explorers who visited an active Guatemalan volcano to conduct research.

b Read the story and answer the following questions.

> Who do you think is the target audience for this story?
>
> - Answer
> The target audience could be anyone interested in what life is like living near an active volcano.

c Notice how the intended audience has an impact on the story's tone, vocabulary, emotional arc, and permissible level of detail.

Key takeaways are defined with the audience of the story in mind by determining what is the most important message they will remember, even if they recall only one or two things about the story. It is best practice to write down these key points for easy reference and to use them as a guide while you outline your story.

> What is a key takeaway for this story?
>
> - Answer
> Answers to this question will vary but can include the following takeaway: The story details the course of their expedition and the importance of the research that they conducted to help keep communities near active volcanoes safe.

Working through these foundational questions to define your audience and key takeaways will help you prepare an outline for an interesting and relevant story. The next step is to create an inventory of some of the content that you will include in your story.

d Leave the *In the Shadow of a Volcano* story open.

- Step 2: Create the content inventory

Before creating your story, it is a best practice to gather the materials that you will use to tell the story. Some of the materials that you can gather include an outline, photos, videos, web maps, and scenes.

The text and graphics for this story have been organized and made available for you to download.

In this step, you will review an example of a content inventory for the *In the Shadow of a Volcano* story.

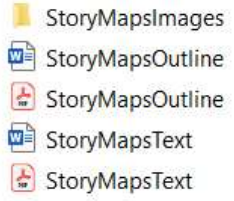
a Open a new web browser tab or window.

b Go to https://links.esri.com/Section06/Data and download the exercise data ZIP file.

Note: The complete URL to the exercise data file is https://www.arcgis.com/home/item.html?id=c7718e1003e84bb7ba0af3d33e8cdf82.

c Extract the files to the EsriTraining folder on your local computer.

d In File Explorer, open the StoryMaps folder.



*Step 2d***: Create the content inventory.*

The StoryMaps folder includes the documents and images necessary for a content inventory for the *In The Shadow of a Volcano* story.

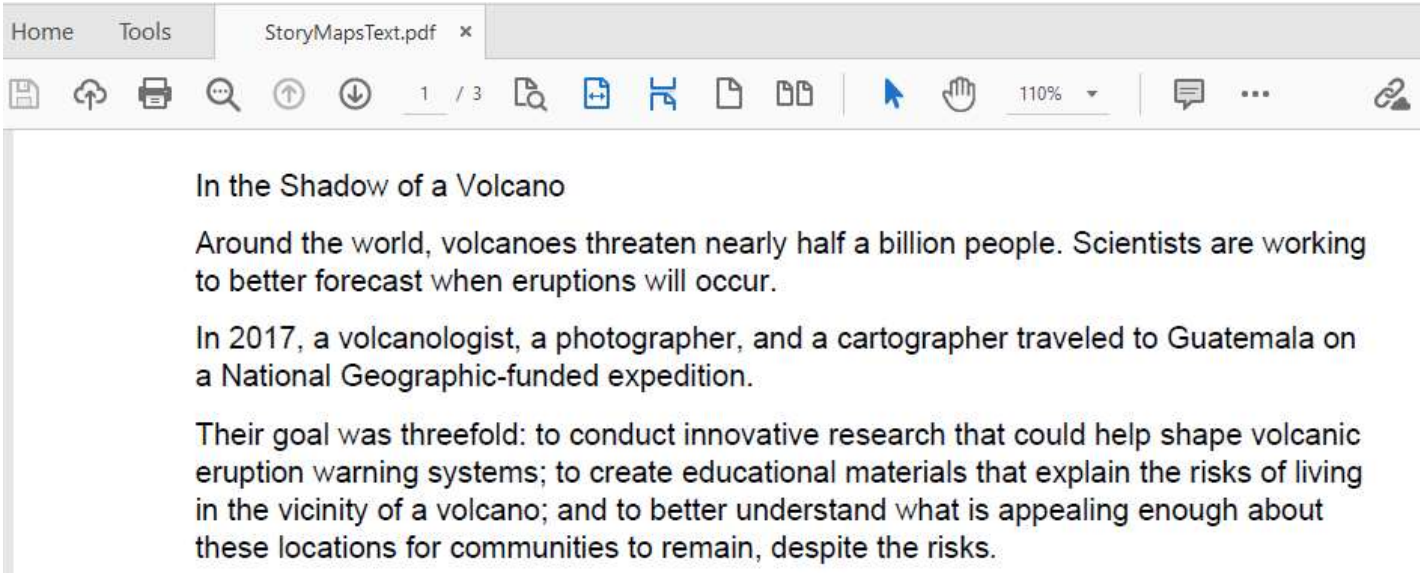
- Step 3: Organize content using an outline

The final step before creating a story is using an outline to organize the text and media in your content inventory.

In this step, you will review an outline that could have been used to create the *In the Shadow of the Volcano* story.

a In File Explorer, from the StoryMaps folder, open either StoryMapsText.pdf or StoryMapsText.docx.

Note: These documents are the same but are provided in two different file formats.



Note: The PDF file is shown in this graphic. If you cannot open the PDF or Microsoft Word document, you can review the text in the example story, In the Shadow of a Volcano.

b From the StoryMaps folder, open either StoryMapsOutline.pdf or StoryMapsOutline.docx.

Element type	Text
Title Your Story	In the Shadow of a Volcano
Start With A Short Introduction Or Subtitle	Around the world, volcanoes threaten nearly half a billion people. Scientists are working to better forecast when eruptions will occur.
Paragraph	In 2017, a volcanologist, a photographer, and a cartographer traveled to Guatemala on a National Geographic-funded expedition. Their goal was threefold: to conduct innovative research that could help shape volcanic eruption warning systems; to create educational materials that explain the risks of living in the vicinity of a volcano; and to better understand what is appealing enough about these locations for communities to remain, despite the risks.

Note: The PDF file is shown in this graphic.

c Review the StoryMapsOutline document and compare it with the StoryMapsText document.

This outline document shows the structure that was used to create the example story in ArcGIS StoryMaps. The outline includes the following types of details:

- **Who:** Establishes who is venturing out into the world and explains why they embarked on this journey
- **Where:** Locates the place or places traveled and re-creates the feeling of being there for the reader
- **When:** Clearly communicates the chronological order of the events that occurred on the expedition, even if the story does not follow a linear timeline
- **What:** Includes elements that evoke tension or uncertainty in the reader's mind, keeping the reader invested in finding out what happens next
- **Why:** Explains the key takeaways from the expedition when it has ended, helping the reader understand why these takeaways are significant

For future stories that you create, ensure that you record similar details in any draft outline and think about how you would arrange those details in the story structure.

Note: If you plan to work with a group to create a story, you would review the outline with collaborators and colleagues to ensure that structural changes are made before you start assembling the story in ArcGIS StoryMaps.

d When you are finished, close File Explorer and any open Word or PDF documents.

- Step 4: Examine a story

Stories built with ArcGIS StoryMaps are assembled from a selection of content blocks. Content blocks are selected from the block palette and can be used to add narrative text, media, maps, and immersive experiences to a story.

In this step, you will examine a story to identify the different types of content blocks used to build the *In the Shadow of the Volcano* story.

a Navigate to the In the Shadow of a Volcano story.

*Step 4a***: Examine a story.*

The story cover appears at the start of the story and includes a title, a byline, and the date of when the story was created or last updated. Following the story cover is a text block with information that concisely introduces the topic of the story.

b Scroll through the story until you see the map of Guatemala.

*Step 4b***: Examine a story.*

The story builder for ArcGIS StoryMaps allows you to add maps to your story using a map content block. With the map content block, you can add a web map, web scene, or express map.

The setting for the story is the location of the volcano in the country of Guatemala. The author of the story used an express map to create a simple map that is effective in providing geographic context to the story. Express maps are simple, lightweight maps that you create directly in the story builder.

c Scroll through the story until you reach the heading that says "Why do people live so close to active volcanoes?"

*Step 4c***: Examine a story.*

Up to this point of the story, you have seen a map content block, text blocks that narrate the volcano expedition team's visit to Guatemala, and several media blocks, or images, that have been incorporated in the story to supplement the text.

? What do you see in the images that you have encountered within the media blocks?

- Answer
The images show the expedition team's research tools, 3D imagery of the Santiaguito Dome Complex, and a diagram of a magma chamber of a volcano.

You will now explore an immersive block called a sidecar. In addition to text and media, adding an immersive block provides an interactive experience for a story's audience. Different types of immersive blocks include slideshows, sidecars, and map tours. Immersive blocks are made up of slides. Each slide has its own stationary media panel and a scrolling narrative panel with content such as text, media, and maps.

d Scroll down in the story to view the sidecar.

*Step 4d***: Examine a story.*

? How many slides does the sidecar include?

- Answer
There are three slides in the sidecar.

? Why is adding an immersive block effective at this point in the story?

- Answer

The focus of the story changes at this point to explain why people are living at the base of an active volcano. Three reasons are provided for why people live close to the volcano: agriculture, tourism, and spiritual beliefs. Instead of listing the reasons, the author of the story used a sidecar to showcase the reasons with a gallery of images. The immersive block helps break up the story and makes it more visually interesting for the audience.

e Scroll to the Santa María expedition route.

Santa María expedition route.

*Step 4e***: Examine a story.*

You can add web maps and 3D web scenes to your story that the audience can interact with. The Santa María expedition route was created by adding a web scene using a map block. You can add maps and scenes to a story from your content, your organization's content, or any publicly shared maps or scenes in ArcGIS Online.

f Use the tools at the bottom right of the map block to explore the 3D web scene.

? How do the tools in the web scene allow you to interact with the map block?

- Answer

Using the tools, you can navigate around the 3D web scene, zoom in and zoom out, and reset the 3D web scene to its original extent.

g Continue to read through the story and answer the following questions.

? Who created the story?

- Answer

The story was created by Gabby Salazar, Ross Donihue, and Dr. Stephanie Grocke, Esri.

? Did the story have a beginning, middle, and end?

- Answer

Yes. The story began with introducing the reason for the expedition. Then the authors explained how they completed their research during the expedition, and the story ended with the findings from their research.

? Do you think this story was effective at getting information to the intended audience?

- Answer

Answers will vary.

h Close the *In the Shadow of the Volcano* story.

You examined the *In the Shadow of the Volcano* story to identify the different types of content blocks used to build the story.