PUBLIC WRITING FOR CULTURAL RESOURCES

TxDOT Historical Resources

September 13, 2017

Welcome and Introductions

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- {INSERT NAME OF REP FROM COMMUNICATIONS STAFF WHO'S DOING TALK ON SELECTING IMAGES}

Overview

This workshop is divided across two concurrent sessions.

<u>Part 1</u>

- Defining Interpretation and Its Importance
- Thematic Structures
  - Developing a Theme
  - How to Use a Theme

<u>Part 2</u>

- Storytelling
  - Why Are Stories So Powerful?
  - Elements of a Good Story
  - How to Use Stories to Interpret for the Public
- Selecting Images

What Is Interpretation?

According to Freeman Tilden:

Interpretation is “an educational activity which aims to reveal meanings and relationships through the use of original objects, by first-hand experience, and by illustrative media, rather than simply to communicate factual information.”

(from Freeman Tilden’s Interpreting Our Heritage)

Translation:

Interpretation goes beyond just the facts to reveal the meanings and relationships behind them.

What Is Interpretation?

National Park Service:

Interpretation is “a catalyst in creating opportunities for the audience to form their own intellectual and emotional connections with the meanings and significance inherent in the resource.”

Translation:

Interpretation creates opportunities for visitors to connect with the stories that objects and historic sites can tell us.

What Is Interpretation?

My Working Definition:

Interpretation goes beyond facts to reveal meanings and relationships, which helps visitors better engage with objects and places.

Why Be Interpretive?

The British Museum, London, England

Relevance and Universals

"Any interpretation that does not somehow relate what is being displayed or described to something within the personality or experience of the visitor will be sterile."

- Freeman Tilden, Interpreting Our Heritage

Relevance and Universals

Two ways to create relevance:

1. Connect to each visitor's individual experience (HARD!)
2. Connect to a common (universal) human experience (LESS HARD!)

Examples of universals:

- Birth
- Death
- Love
- Struggle
- Need for food, water, shelter
- Discovery
- Loss

Relevance and Universals

Ohio Street Bridge, Wichita Falls, TX

Relevance and Universals

Lutheran Hospital, Cuero, TX

Relevance and Universals

William Lich Ranch, Kerr County, TX

Themes: What They Are (and Aren't)

- Themes are:
  - Specific
  - A message
  - An argument

- Topics are:
  - Broad
  - Not a complete sentence
  - Could be a Wikipedia article title

Themes: What They Are (and Aren't)

- Topics
  - Settlement in Texas
  - Bridges of El Paso
  - The Bankhead Highway

- Themes
  - European and European-American settlement in Texas displaced American Indian populations.
  - Historically, the bridges of El Paso have connected families and communities across political and geographic boundaries.
  - The Bankhead Highway led to the development of businesses and attractions specifically catering to motorists along the transcontinental roadway.

Themes: Keep It Brief

- Research shows you have 45 seconds with a visitor – max.
- You could write a dissertation on any topic, so use your theme to limit the information you present.
- Being brief and clear helps you maximize your time with – and impact on – the visitor.

Themes: Writing a Theme in Three Easy Steps

1. Select your general topic and use it to complete the following sentence:

"Generally, my presentation (talk, exhibit, sign etc.) is about _____."

(put your general topic here)

2. State your topic in more specific terms and complete the following sentence:

"Specifically, I want to tell my audience about _____."

(put your specific topic here)

3. Now, express your theme by completing the following sentence: "After hearing my presentation (or reading my sign or brochure, etc.), I want my audience to understand that _____."

(put your theme here)

From Sam Ham, Environmental Interpretation.

Themes: Writing a Theme in Three Easy Steps

1. Select your general topic *(for example, "the Bankhead Highway")* and use it to complete the following sentence:

"Generally, my exhibit (sign, brochure etc.) is about *the Bankhead Highway*."

(put your general topic here)

2. State your topic in more specific terms and complete the following sentence:

"Specifically, I want to tell my audience about *the role of the Bankhead Highway in urban development*."

(put your specific topic here)

3. Now, express your theme by completing the following sentence: "After reading my exhibit (sign, brochure, etc.), I want my audience to understand that *the Bankhead Highway led businesses and attractions specifically catering to motorists to emerge along the transcontinental roadway."*

(put your theme here)

Themes: Writing a Theme in Three Easy Steps

1. Select your general topic and use it to complete the following sentence:

"Generally, my presentation (talk, exhibit, sign etc.) is about _____."

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(put your theme here)

From Sam Ham, Environmental Interpretation.

Thematic Structures

Mustang Island State Park, Aransas Pass, TX

Overarching Theme: "Mustang Island has always been a place where people learned to adapt to the environment, and to adapt the environment to their needs."

Idea #1: The native people who lived here, the Karankawa, thrived in part because they adapted their diet to their coastal environment.

Idea #2: Anglo-American settlers made Corpus Christi a successful commercial hub by deepening Aransas Pass to accommodate deepwater ships.

Idea #3: Businessmen capitalized on Mustang Island's natural beauty and developed it into a tourist destination that still draws visitors today.

Thematic Structures

Martineztown Park

El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro
National Historic Trail

City of Albuquerque
Bureau of Land Management
National Park Service

A Community Spirit
El Espiritu de la Comunidad

A PLACE TO REST
Like the park today, early Martineztown was a resting place, or *paraje*. Weary travelers could relax, restock and regain their strength for the next leg of their journey. They left behind supplies and stories from their homelands.

UN LUGAR PARA DESCANSAR
Al igual que hoy el parque, a principios Martineztown era un lugar de descanso, o paraje. Cansados viajeros podían descansar, reponer y recuperar su fuerza para la próxima etapa de su viaje. Dejaron atrás los suministros e historias de su tierra natal.

South Martineztown. The Acequia Madre and El Camino Real are visible in the photo (ca. 1935). The Landfills are to the right in the photo. Photo by Hawks. From the Albuquerque Museum Photo Collections.

Martineztown Sur. La Acequia Madre y El Camino Real son visibles en el photo (ca. 1935). Los Rellenos están a la derecha en la foto. Foto por Hawks. De los Albuquerque Museo Colecciones de Foto.

Children play along acequia madre, around 1900.

Los niños juegan junto acequia madre, alrededor de 1900.

"The roads are watered by the said river (Río del Norte) through very wide, deep irrigation ditches, as much as that there are little bridges to cross them. The crops taken from them at harvest time are many and good and everything grows in them from fruit. There are also little orchards with vine stocks and small apricot, peach, apple, and melon are grown. (...) The citizens are of all classes and walks of life as in other places I have mentioned and they speak the local Spanish (...)"

Fray Francisco Atanasio Domínguez, 1776 (Adams and Chavez, The Missions of New Mexico, 1776, p. 191, 194)

South Martineztown, circa 1900. Notice the "Sand Hills" in the background.

Sur Martineztown, alrededor de 1900. Avise de las "Colinas de arena" en el fondo.

ROOTED IN HISTORY
Life in early Martineztown was not easy. Travel on El Camino Real was tough. Together, settlers and travelers helped each other survive. That spirit of unity exists today in Martineztown. More than just a place to live, this neighborhood reflects the blended culture, connection to the land, and community spirit upon which it was founded.

ARRAIGADA EN LA HISTORIA
La vida a principios de Martineztown no fue fácil. Viaje en El Camino Real fue duro. Juntos, los colonos y los viajeros se ayudaron mutuamente a sobrevivir. Ese espíritu de unidad existe hoy en Martineztown. Más que un lugar para vivir, este barrio refleja la cultura mezclada, conexión con la tierra, y el espíritu de la comunidad en la que se fundó.

Thematic Structures

CASA NAVARRO
state historic site

228 S. Laredo St. - San Antonio, TX 78207
210-226-4801
visitcasanavarro.com

Preserve the Future
Help the Texas Historical Commission preserve the past while touring this historic site. Please be mindful of fragile historic artifacts and respectful of the historic structures. We want to ensure their preservation for the enjoyment of future generations.

Friends of Casa Navarro
Join us in protecting this special place. Consider volunteering as a docent or becoming a member of the Friends of Casa Navarro. For more information, please contact 210-226-4801.

See the Sites
From western forts and adobe structures to Victorian mansions and pivotal battlegrounds, the Texas Historical Commission's state historic sites exemplify a breadth of Texas history. Come explore the real stories at the real places.

Plan your next trip at
texashistoricsites.com

TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
real places telling real stories

thc.texas.gov

TEXAS HILL COUNTRY TRAIL

TEXAS INDEPENDENCE TRAIL

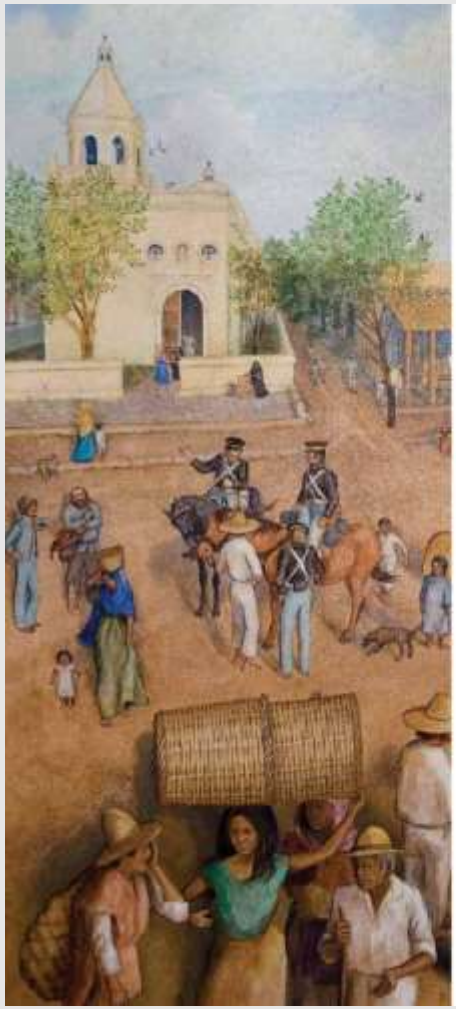
FSC MIX FSC® C004861

25K 06/17

Welcome to Casa Navarro State Historic Site. Visitors are encouraged to explore the timeless story behind José Antonio Navarro, a true Texas patriot who lived and worked in the heart of downtown San Antonio. A rancher, merchant, and signatory of the Texas Declaration of Independence, Navarro was a leading advocate for Tejano rights. In addition to learning about Navarro and his family, visitors will gain a better understanding about the once-thriving Tejano neighborhood of Laredito. This 1830s to 1850s adobe and limestone home is a historic oasis that provides visitors an opportunity to discover the fascinating life of one of Texas' greatest statesmen.

The well and cistern were critical to supplying the household with an adequate drinking supply in the sometimes arid climate of San Antonio.

Thematic Structures



Left: Mural depicts life in early San Antonio
Above: Navarro's home tells the real story of the Texas patriot and his family.

JOSÉ ANTONIO NAVARRO

José Antonio Navarro was a prominent politician and statesman during the early years of Texas' independence and statehood. His leadership and passionate quest for liberty significantly influenced the course of Texas history. Born in San Antonio in 1795, he was one of only two native-born Texans to sign the Texas Declaration of Independence and served on the committee that wrote the first Texas constitution in 1836. Navarro was the sole Tejano delegate to the Convention of 1845, where he supported the United States' annexation of Texas. That same year he protected the legal and voting rights of Tejanos by contributing to the state constitution. Navarro was elected to serve two terms in the state Senate, and retired from the Legislature in 1849. He continued to advocate for Tejano rights through writing historical and political articles for the *San Antonio Ledger* and publicly opposing the anti-Catholic "Know Nothing Party," officially known as the American Party that came to power in the 1850s. Navarro died in his San Antonio home on January 13, 1871.

A Great Statesman

A lifelong patriot, José Antonio Navarro supported many independence movements for Texas, including Mexico's independence from Spain and the Texas Revolution against Mexico. He served in Texas legislatures under Mexico, the Republic of Texas, and the State of Texas. In 1841, Texas President Mirabeau B. Lamar convinced him to participate in the ill-fated Santa Fe Expedition that was intended to incorporate eastern New Mexico into the Republic of Texas. Navarro and the other members of the expedition were taken as prisoners by the Mexican authorities. Navarro underwent intense interrogations when imprisoned, but he steadfastly refused to betray his homeland or his allegiance to Texas. After spending 14 months at the infamous San Juan de Ulúa, the most dreaded prison in Mexico, Navarro managed to escape in early 1845.

Over the next 26 years until his death in 1871, Navarro remained an influential figure in Texas and San Antonio, serving in the state legislature and on the San Antonio City Council. He continued to protect and advance the rights of Tejanos as a writer for the *San Antonio Ledger*. In 1846, the Texas Legislature named the newly established Navarro County in recognition of his contributions to Texas. The county seat was then designated Corsicana, in honor of his father's birthplace. Numerous schools and streets have also been named after the family.

José Antonio Navarro

Supporting a Family

Although he was a well-known and influential leader, Navarro did not begin his professional life as a politician. As a young man he learned the merchant trade, the occupation of his father. Factories in the United States and Europe sent ships loaded with merchandise to New Orleans, where Navarro arranged to import books, cloth, clothing, wine, sugar, rice, and coffee. He also invested in real estate. During the 1830s, Navarro served as land commissioner for the Green DeWitt Colony and privately purchased more than 50,000 acres of ranch land at a price of pennies per acre. Because thousands of people were immigrating to Texas, the demand for land increased. Navarro sold portions of his land holdings for up to three dollars per acre, and his San Antonio rental properties also produced income. His wife Margarita de la Garza was also a native of San Antonio. The couple had seven children: four sons and three daughters. Numerous descendants still live in and around San Antonio, with many more scattered throughout the country.

Navarro's Home

The Mercantile Building housed Navarro's office on the second floor.

In addition to his rental properties, Navarro made his home in San Antonio. In 1832, Navarro bought this 1.5 acre property on the corner of Laredo and Nueva streets. The site already had a one-room adobe cottage, or *jacal*, that Navarro expanded in 1854 or 1855. At this time he also built the main house, a fine example of early-statehood domestic architecture, and the two-story commercial building on the corner. Navarro rented the first floor of this building to a local merchant and used the second floor as his office. Navarro's youngest daughter, Josefa Navarro de Tobin, inherited the site along with its furnishings after Navarro's death.

10 MINUTE BREAK

Overview

Part 2

- Storytelling
  - Why Are Stories So Powerful?
  - Elements of a Good Story
  - How to Use Stories to Interpret for the Public
- Selecting Images

The Power of Stories: The Brain

"The brain, it seems, does not make much of a distinction between reading about an experience and encountering it in real life; in each case, the same neurological regions are stimulated."

- "Your Brain on Fiction" by Annie Murphy Hall, *The New York Times,* 3/17/2012

The Power of Stories: Universality

Panther Cave, Amistad National Recreation Area, Del Rio, TX

The Power of Stories: Personal

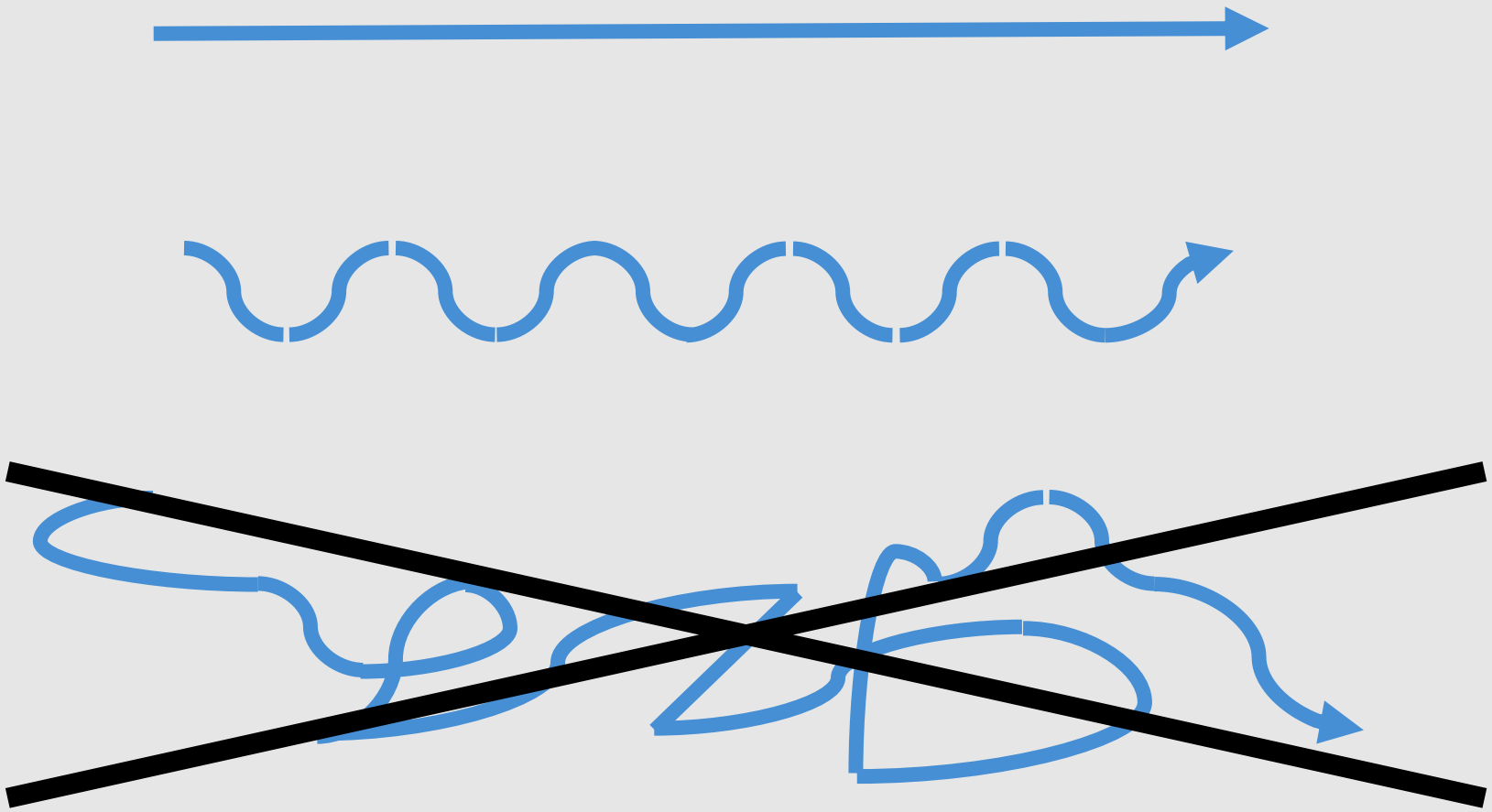
"Histories tend to generalize events… Stories, on the other hand, begin on an **intimate, personal** level. Stories tend to **heighten the unique traits** and foibles of each character and, more often than histories, they get expressed in the **first and second voice**. This intimate view proves very accessible to those who otherwise claim to have little interest in history. **Empathy** is naturally felt by one person for another…"

- from "A Practical Guide to Personal Connectivity" by Daniel Spock

The Power of Stories: Personal

History	Story
"In the early twentieth century, when Italian immigrants first came to the United States, the jobs available to them were menial, low wage, and often dangerous."	***"On Thanksgiving night there was a real bad storm… [Uncle Filomeno] was called to go to work… I begged him 'Don't go tonight.' … Well he insisted. He thought he had to go when he was called to go. And he went… Before you knew it… [my aunt] came up and said, 'Something's happened to Filomeno' and that night he was sideswiped by a train. That's the kind of work that they did, they had to go do this work."***

Elements of a Good Story: Keep It Simple

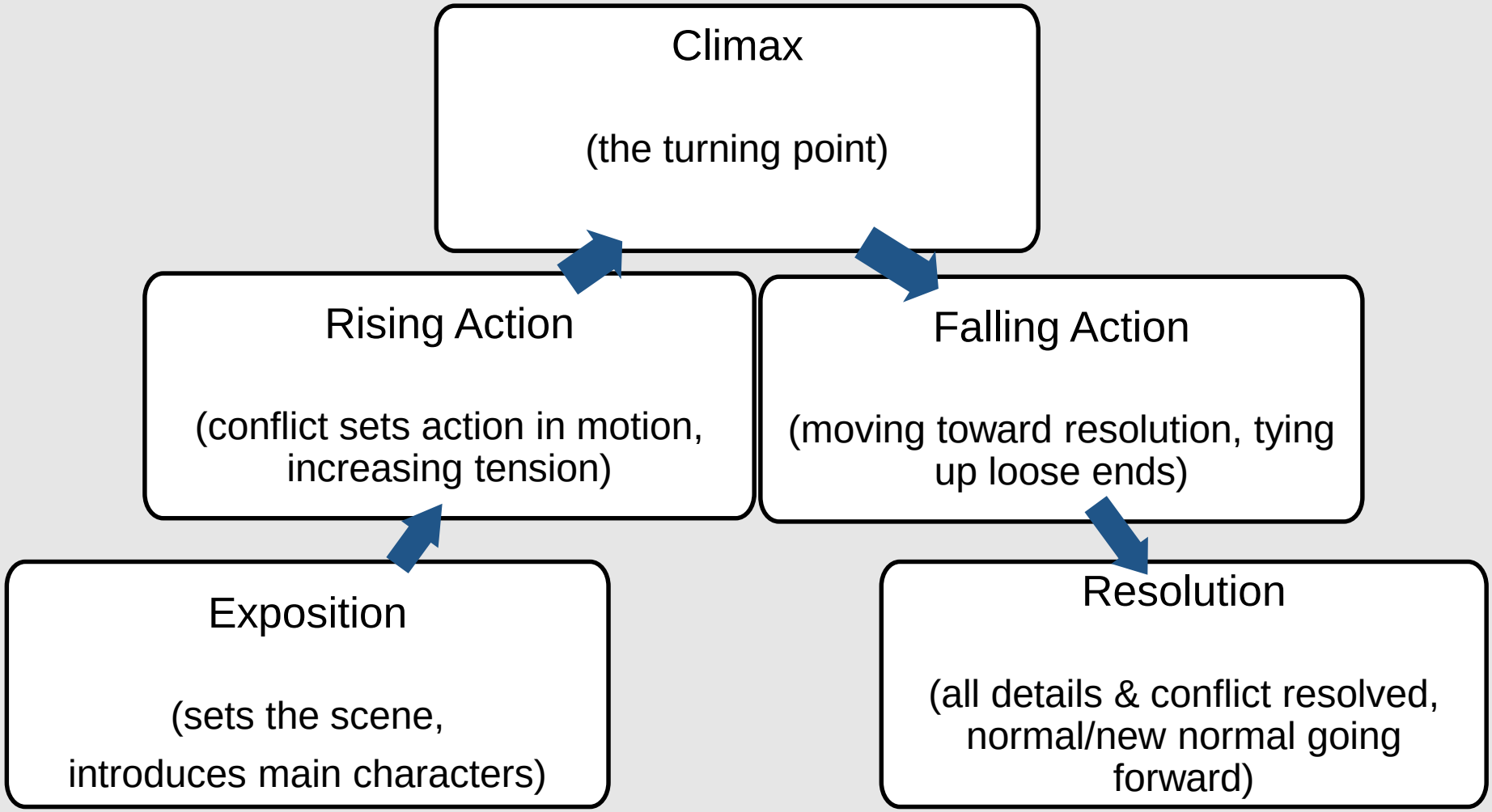


Elements of a Good Story: Know Your Audience

Who am I trying to reach?

Elements of a Good Story: Show, Don’t Tell

Elements of a Good Story: Structure



Identifying Strong Stories

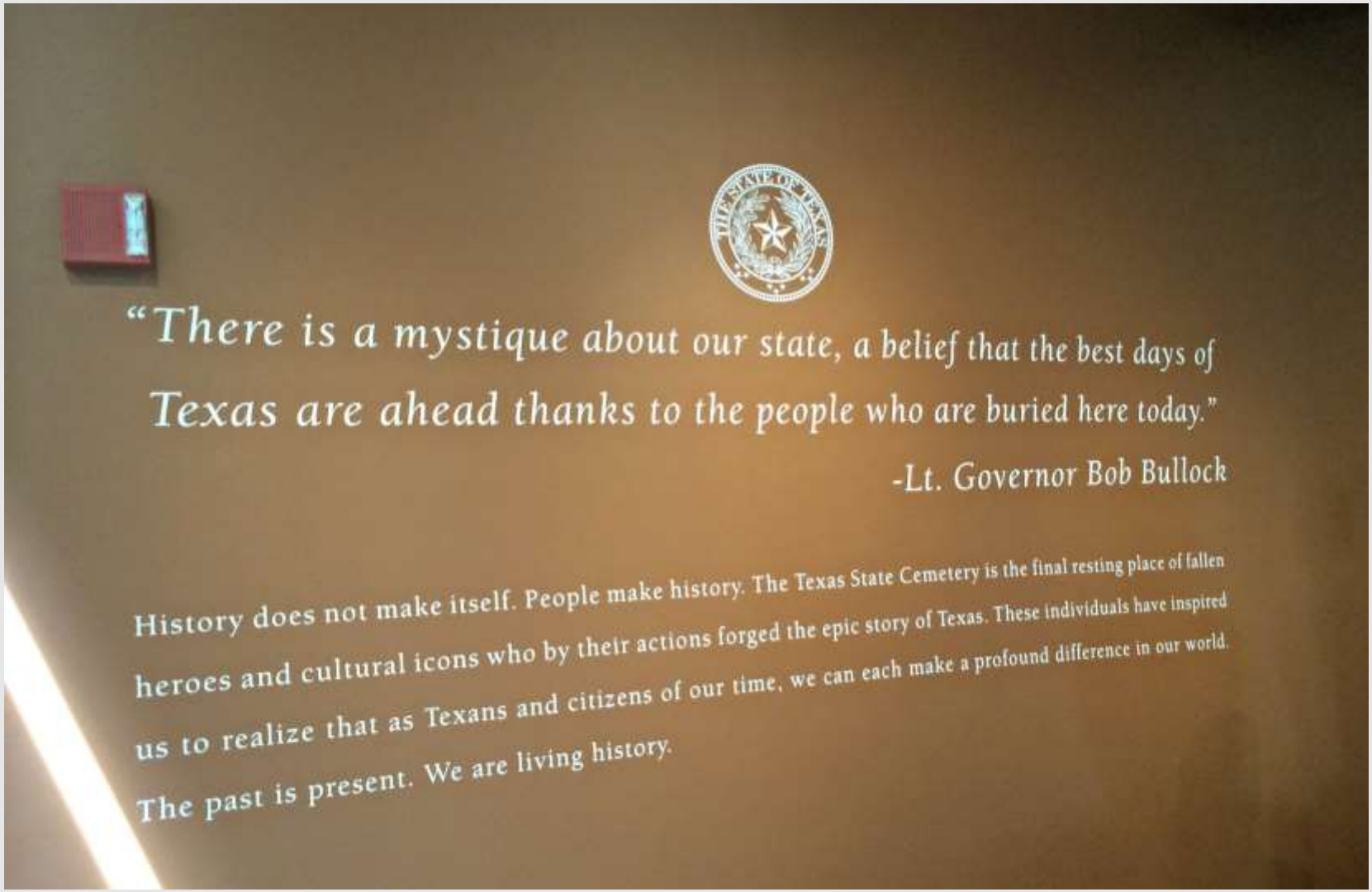
- Individually, read your story to yourself.
- As a group, identify 3 to 5 elements that make it an example of strong storytelling.
- As a group, identify 1 to 2 ways in which the story could be made stronger.

Putting Stories to Work

Putting Stories to Work: One Big Story

Texas State Cemetery Visitor Center & Gallery, Austin, TX

Putting Stories to Work: One Big Story



Texas State Cemetery Visitor Center & Gallery, Austin, TX

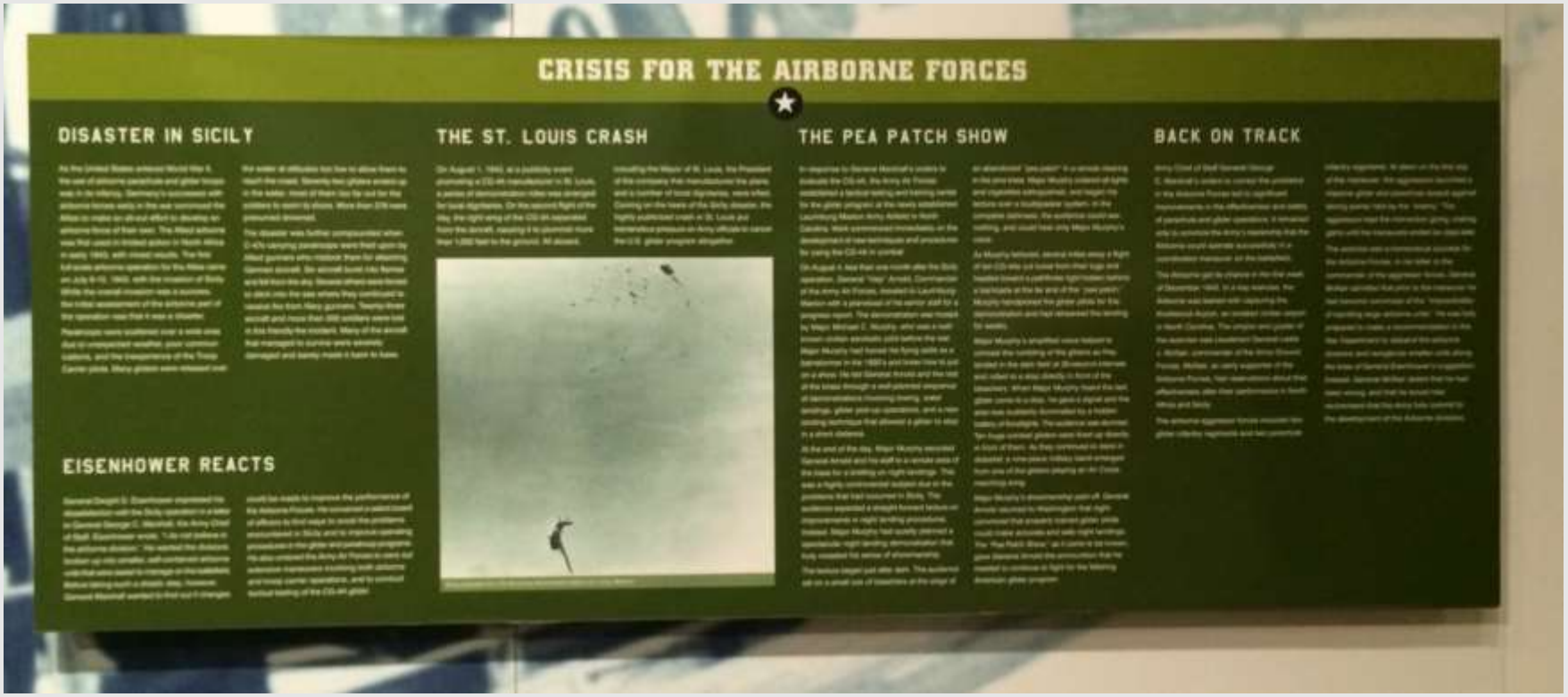
Putting Stories to Work: One Big Story

Texas State Cemetery Visitor Center & Gallery, Austin, TX

Putting Stories to Work: One Big Story

Texas State Cemetery Visitor Center & Gallery, Austin, TX

Putting Stories to Work: Stand-Alone Stories



Additional Information

Access this presentation on Slideshare

<INSERT URL HERE>

Additional Resources

Beverly Serrell, *Exhibit Labels: An Interpretive Approach*

Sam Ham, *Environmental Interpretation*

Freeman Tilden, *Interpreting Our Heritage*

Contact

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