

May 19, 2022

ArcGIS Story Map of *The Decameron*
“Giovanni Boccaccio’s One Hundred Tales”

Dr. Teresa Russo,
Material Culture and Semiotics
Victoria College,
University of Toronto

Sai Vipin Nikam,
Josefina Novoa Reátegui, and
Rion Levy

With Industry Partner,
Dr. Gianluca Agostinelli,
Niagara Catholic District School Board



Giovanni Boccaccio’s One Hundred Tales

The Decameron Story Map

Teresa Russo, Supervisor, 2021-2023

The project was initiated in the **MCS223 Signs Meaning and Culture** course.

Students had to apply a theory discussed in the course (narratology, gender performativity, rhetoric, feminism, Marxism, anagnorisis, and semiotics) to a tale in Boccaccio's *The Decameron*. The research was then organized into an ArcGIS story map designed by their professor, Dr. Teresa Russo.

Students used images and maps to discuss their tale and build a virtual museum of *The Decameron*.

Material Culture and Semiotics

A multidisciplinary approach to objects and signs from antiquity to the present at Victoria College.

A photograph of a Victoria College campus scene. In the foreground, a woman with long dark hair, wearing a grey coat and a blue backpack, walks towards the camera on a paved path. To her left, there are stone steps with a metal railing leading up a hillside. The background features a large, multi-story brick building with a Gothic-style stone tower on the right. Trees with vibrant autumn foliage in shades of yellow and orange are scattered throughout the scene. The sky is overcast.

VICTORIA COLLEGE

Meet Our Community Partner



FROM THE PREFACE OF THE ARCGIS:

“This project is an international effort, which draws attention to the uncertainties and nuances of the human condition. **Its contents are relatable, informative, and ready to be used by frontline teachers. . . .**

Most impressive for me, as a teacher, is the level of depth that Dr. Russo's students have achieved in their close readings of *The Decameron*. By examining the tales' various settings, events, artworks, and social, cultural, political, and religious milieus, students have demonstrated how to extend one's textual critique beyond mere plot summary to usher readers on a journey across time and space. In selecting suitable theoretical frameworks, literary elements, and research methods, students make meaning of each tale, thereby presenting teachers with a variety of rewarding perspectives via which they may enrich their lessons and activities.

The comprehensive, experiential learning component of the MCS224 course (Signs, Meaning, and Culture) ...shares meaningful, educational resources that high school teachers and students may access. Framed by comparisons between the bubonic plague (the Black Death) and the COVID-19 pandemic, **this community-oriented project gives teachers in all 70 Ontario school boards literary and visual learning tools to discuss complex periods of history.”**

Gianluca Agostinelli, M.A., M.Ed., Ph.D. (ABD), OCT
Niagara Catholic District School Board

WINNERS OF THE EWO WIL ONTARIO STUDENT OF THE YEAR AWARD

Clockwise from top left: Amrita Brar, Hannah Guiang, Mailey Horner, Rion Levy, Sai Vipin Nikam, Josefina Novoa Reátegui, Anita Jyothi Sritharan and Theodosiya Zyla.

Students in the MCS223 Signs Meaning and Culture course recently won an Experiential & Work-Integrated Learning Ontario Student of the Year Award. The award recognizes students who have shown a strong contribution to work-integrated learning — an experiential learning approach that combines academic studies with experience in the workplace or another practical setting.

MCS students hone their skills of oral and written communications, collaboration, project management and time management, and the skill to discuss an academic topic with a general audience, while they create an interactive, educational resource bank designed to help teachers in High schools across Ontario explore *The Decameron* and the Middle Ages in their classrooms.



Day III.8

The Tale of Ferondo

Josefina Novoa Reátegui considers the rhetorical device of irony in this tale.

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is situated in Tuscany, a
Italy whose ancient name is
Demhardt). The story takes
nowhere in this region, and
auretta does not specify
he does say it is in an isolated
occaccio 255). Perhaps, since
insist this is a real story,
may not have given the exact
of this tale to her peers to
sense of mystery, or to avoid
her story falsifiable.

Renaissance map - The Decameron
in the period of transition before the
ce and this is a good map to
geographical location of the tale.
Demhardt, Imre Josef. "Maps in
Renaissance Frescoes Map of
International Journal of



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References

Boccaccio, Giovanni. The Decameron. Translated by G.H. McWilliam. 2nd ed. Penguin Books, 1995.

Cornelis van Dalen, the Younger. Giovanni Boccaccio. Unknown date. National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh. Nationalgalleries.org. <https://www.nationalgalleries.org/art-and-artists/25209/giovanni-boccaccio-1313-1375-italian-novelist-and-poet>

Demhardt, Imre Josef. "Maps in History: Renaissance Frescoed Map of Tuscany." International Journal of Cartography, vol. ahead-of-print. no. ahead-of-print. Taylor & Francis, pp. 1-2. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23729333.2021.190>




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Rhetorical Device of Irony

I will analyze this tale in terms of narratology, focusing on the meaning created by the rhetorical device of irony. This is very relevant to The Decameron, as it has a "highly ironic poetic attitude" (Pelen 2) in every tale. It is important to mention this is an embedded story, a narrative within a narrative, though one may argue against this, as Lauretta's narrative is at a higher level than Ferondo's (Genette 214). Since Lauretta is at a higher level of narration, this means she will not be in the story, therefore, she is a heterodiegetic narrator that can subtly



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Day III.8

Tale of Ferondo in Day 3 by Josefina Novoa Reátegui



Introduction

In the year 2020, the covid pandemic seemed never-ending, and with all our familiar restaurants and cafés closed, my girlfriends and I organized a picnic in a park, in which we told each other stories to amuse ourselves and distract us from our current situation. Unbeknownst to us, 700 years ago,

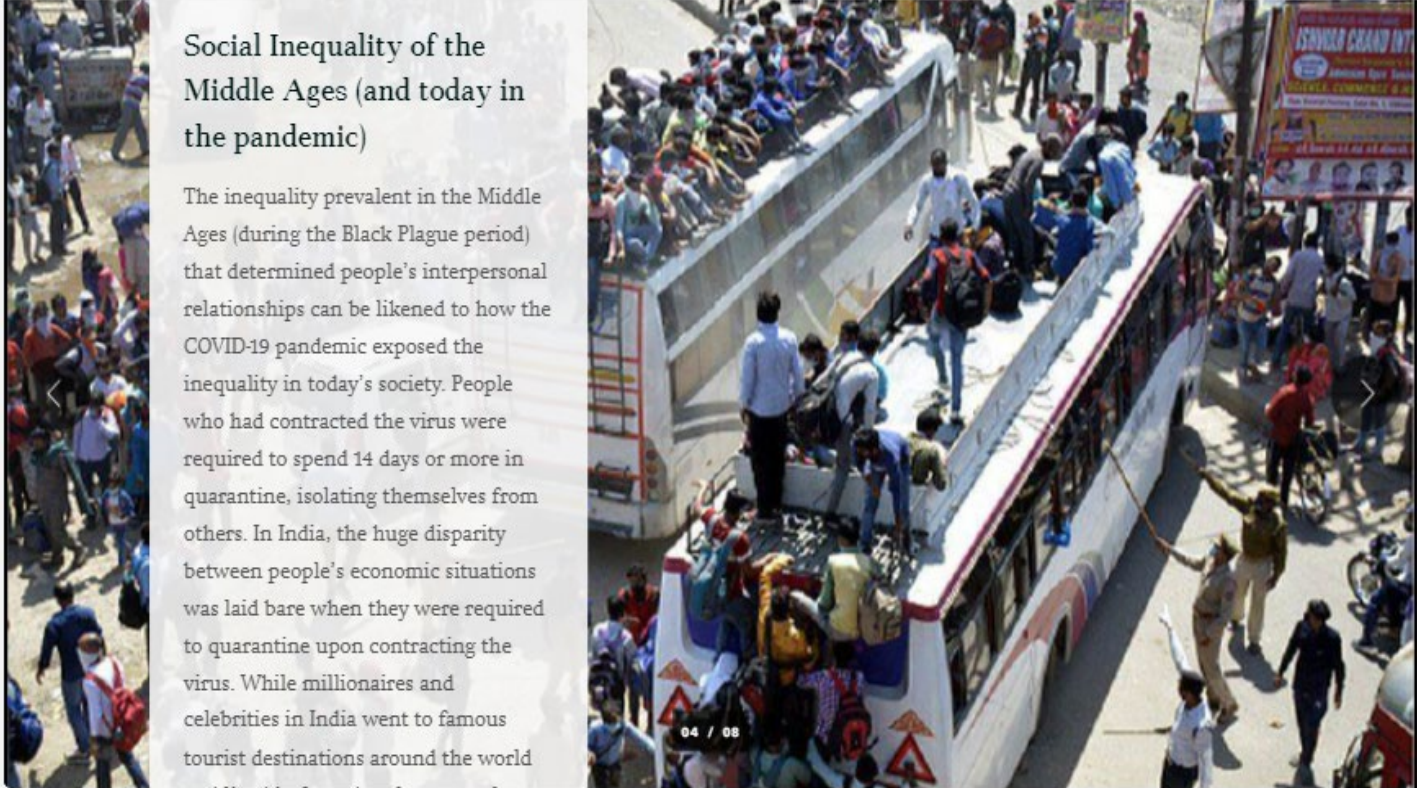
Day IV.1

The Tale of Tancredi and Ghismonda

Sai Vipin Nikam highlights the social inequalities then and now, while comparing Lady Fortune of the Middle Ages to Naseeb of Medieval India.

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Social Inequality of the Middle Ages (and today in the pandemic)

The inequality prevalent in the Middle Ages (during the Black Plague period) that determined people's interpersonal relationships can be likened to how the COVID-19 pandemic exposed the inequality in today's society. People who had contracted the virus were required to spend 14 days or more in quarantine, isolating themselves from others. In India, the huge disparity between people's economic situations was laid bare when they were required to quarantine upon contracting the virus. While millionaires and celebrities in India went to famous tourist destinations around the world


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Introduction

In the novel *The Decameron*, there are ten people who tell different stories over ten days to entertain themselves as they travel to the country from Florence to escape the Black Plague (the pandemic of the Middle Ages). The theme for the fourth day of the *Decameron* (set by the day's leader, Filostrato) is about lovers who eventually, owing to some or the other reason, die together. The first tale is told by Fiammetta and revolves around how the difference in two lovers' social ranking or status can hinder the blossoming of their relationship. Tancredi, the prince of Salerno, loved his daughter Ghismonda so much, that he refrained from marrying her for a long time. Eventually, she does get




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Retreating to gardens and villages during the Pandemic

This is a picture from my (the author's) ancestral town in India. Although I live in the city, I had retreated to my ancestral village during the COVID-19 pandemic to escape the risk and havoc in the city. The village and the countryside were comparatively less affected by the COVID-19 virus and had a much calmer atmosphere. This can be compared to how the storytellers of *The Decameron* travelled to the countryside to escape Florence during the Black Plague (the pandemic of the Middle Ages).




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Fortune in Medieval Europe and Naseeb in Medieval India

In conclusion, we can observe that difference in status has a major impact on people's relationships with each other and on their mental and physical well-being. In the text of the tale, Ghismonda often makes a reference to Love and Fortune, who are personifications of the concepts of love and destiny/fate. As Kiefer puts it, Love and Fortune are "participants – indeed machinators – in the story" (37). According to Ghismonda, Love equips her with ideas of how she can meet with her lover, and Fortune is the one who actively shapes the blossoming of



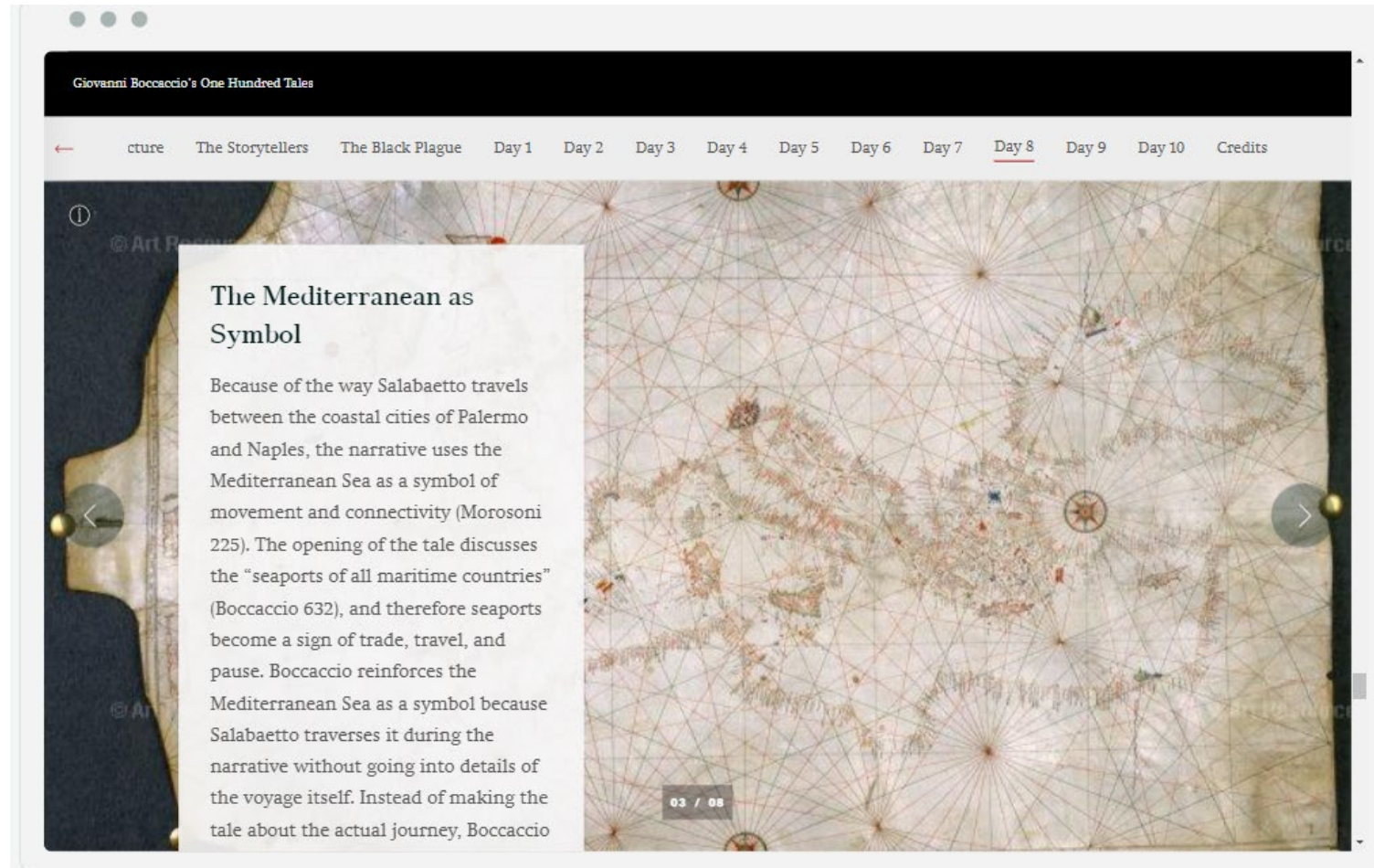
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Web Store

Day VIII.10

Tale of Salabaetto and Iancofiore

Rion Levy discusses how the narrative uses the Mediterranean Sea as a symbol of movement and connectivity.



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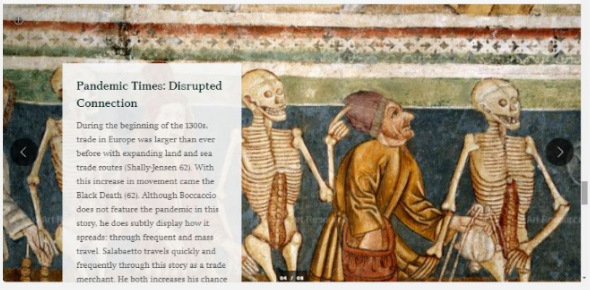
The Mediterranean as Symbol

Because of the way Salabaetto travels between the coastal cities of Palermo and Naples, the narrative uses the Mediterranean Sea as a symbol of movement and connectivity (Morosoni 225). The opening of the tale discusses the "seaports of all maritime countries" (Boccaccio 632), and therefore seaports become a sign of trade, travel, and pause. Boccaccio reinforces the Mediterranean Sea as a symbol because Salabaetto traverses it during the narrative without going into details of the voyage itself. Instead of making the tale about the actual journey, Boccaccio

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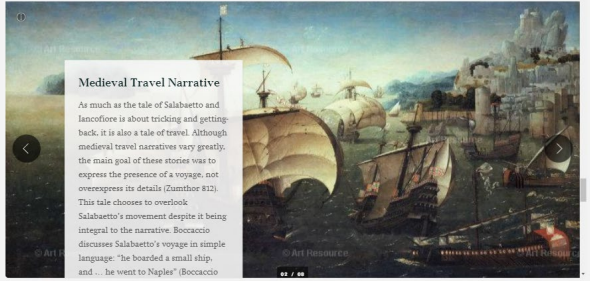


Pandemic Times: Disrupted Connection

During the beginning of the 1300s, trade in Europe was larger than ever before with expanding land and sea trade routes (Shally Jensen 62). With this increase in movement came the Black Death (62). Although Boccaccio does not feature the pandemic in this story, he does subtly display how it spreads: through frequent and mass travel. Salabatto travels quickly and frequently through this story as a trade merchant. He both increases his chance

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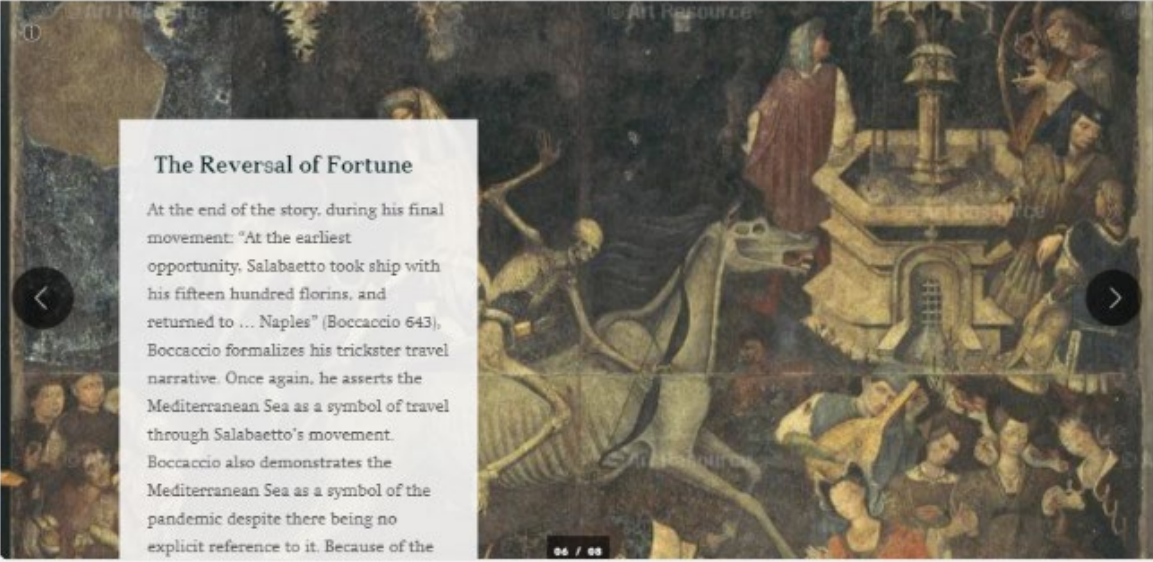


Medieval Travel Narrative

As much as the tale of Salabatto and Iacoforo is about tricking and getting back, it is also a tale of travel. Although medieval travel narratives vary greatly, the main goal of these stories was to express the presence of a voyage, not overexpress its details (Zunthor 812). This tale chooses to overlook Salabatto's movement despite it being integral to the narrative. Boccaccio discusses Salabatto's voyage in simple language: "he boarded a small ship, and ... he went to Naples" (Boccaccio

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The Reversal of Fortune

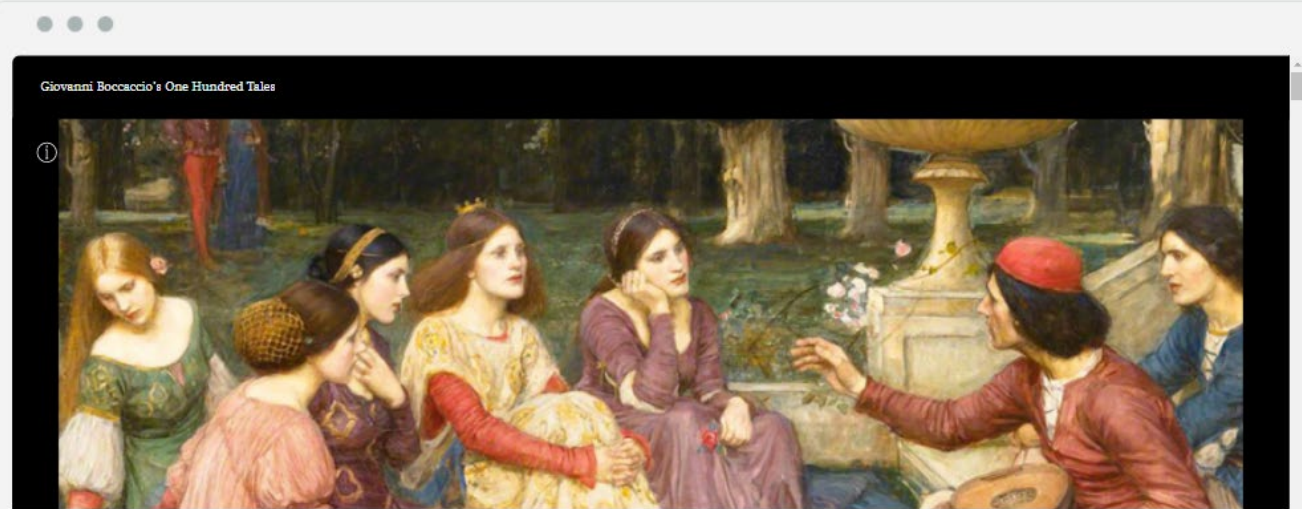
At the end of the story, during his final movement: "At the earliest opportunity, Salabatto took ship with his fifteen hundred florins, and returned to ... Naples" (Boccaccio 643). Boccaccio formalizes his trickster travel narrative. Once again, he asserts the Mediterranean Sea as a symbol of travel through Salabatto's movement. Boccaccio also demonstrates the Mediterranean Sea as a symbol of the pandemic despite there being no explicit reference to it. Because of the

Students are grateful to the Map and Data Library for supporting our platform.

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Map and Data Library
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<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/a592420100444771a9789b2ecab0ae5d/edit>