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GEO 478/678 Spatial Storytelling
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Map Two Reflection

The goal of this map, my second submission to GEO 478/678 Spatial Storytelling located

at https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/13e81b6c8b8949cea8b8fee4cbeffe5f/, is designed to not

only address the weaknesses detailed in my first map submission, but to more effectively define

each of Benedict Arnold's battles and creatively detail his decision to leave the American Army,

commit treason, and become a general in the British Army.[1]

Documentation of the Mapping Process

The creative and mapping process for this submission was easier, as compared to my first

map, because it was constructed within one program: ArcGIS. I began researching Arnold's

battles by first consulting with several Arnold monographs that included, but were not limited to:

- Paine, Lauran. *Benedict Arnold, Hero and Traitor*. London: R. Hale, 1965.,

- Philbrick, Nathaniel. *Valiant Ambition: George Washington, Benedict Arnold, and the Fate of the American Revolution*. New York, New York: Viking, 2016.,

- Ronald, D. A. B. *The Life of John André: The Redcoat Who Turned Benedict Arnold*. 1st ed. Philadelphia, PA: Casemate, 2019., and

- Wilson, Barry, 1948. 2001. *Benedict Arnold: A Traitor in our Midst*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001.

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[1] I believe that I saved this Story Map in our class's shared site, but if you are unable to view it, please let me know so we can make alternative arrangements.

After completing the aforementioned research, I tried to find visual elements for each of the battles. Www.battlefields.org/ proved to be a fruitful source for visual elements as well as additional contextual information.[2] After thinking about the cartographic concerns I noted in my first map submission, and realizing that there was a "blind spot" in the continuity of my original narrative, I felt that it was necessary to add in information about the site of Arnold's treason. So, I made the banner image for the Story Map and added a window about West Point into the project.[3]

I did feel limited by the Story Map infrastructure and its templates. One way I tried to show Arnold's changing allegiance was to color code the battle site titles blue for when he fought for the Colonial Army and red for when he fought for the British Army. (I wanted to do so much more with the map's symbology, but the visual options and templates were somewhat restraining.) This map is a generation better than my first map because it offers a clearer view of the entire project as well as a more effective presentation of the selected battles within a 2024 geography.

<u>Engagement with Core Storytelling Concepts</u>

Sage Brice's *Critical Observational Drawing in Geography: Towards a Methodology for 'Vulnerable' Research* challenges cartographers to use drawing and cartography to produce creative geographies. My second map is not creative. Cindi Katz's *Playing with Fieldwork* is an exciting approach to not just documenting field work, emotion, interactivity, and place like a graphic novel, but as a way to creatively present complex, engaging narratives. Since my second

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[2] Each of the windows on the lefthand side of the Story Map has its own citation information. By "window" I mean the images relating to each of the battlefield points on the Story Map.
[3] being discovered at West Point by George Washington, Arnold fled to British lines.

map offers its viewers the ability to engage in a geographic space by moving them from battle site to battle site, it is technically engaging, but it is not an example of fieldwork or emotion. And Dr. Meghan Kelly in *CV-33 - Narrative and Storytelling* says that "[s]tory and narrative are transdisciplinary terms that move across various fields (e.g., humanities, social sciences, sciences) beyond cartography. Geography, often home to GIScience and cartography, has routinely turned to stories to examine the production of power and, more recently, as modes of alternative knowledge production (Moore 2017; Bley et al. 2021)." I completely agree with this statement, but once again, I think I have failed to meet this standard, or any of the other of the challenges posed by the reading's core storytelling approaches, for this mapping exercise.

<u>Evaluation of the Mapping Technique</u>

Overall, this map is far more polished and clear when compared to my first map. Despite the limitations presented by ArcGIS (e.g., symbology, lack of creative templates, a traditional approach to cartography, etc.) I do feel that this submission is an improvement. I recognize that there were many other techniques and tools I could have used from the program, but I felt that leveraging them was an effort to "show off" that I could learn the program, and not strategic choices that would do justice to the class's core readings. It also would not enhance my ability to break the power structures inherent in the Arnold story or remove myself from the mapping process.

<u>Power and Position</u>

I, once again, recognize that map creation presents ongoing technical challenges, but this project was comparatively less difficult. The ArcGIS Story Map tool is intuitive, but Arnold and

his battles remain, I believe to my detriment, subjects primarily centered in military power, conquest, and colonialism. As I reflect on my second map's power and position, I am struck by the fact that I am approaching my mapping activities as if this was a cartography class on military history; something I want to avoid at all costs. Again, I cannot seem to find a way to fully utilize the new mapping activities we are exploring in class while transitioning away from traditional power structures in order to eliminate my position in the mapping and storytelling process.

In addition to the above concerns about power and position, I am supremely concerned that I am unable to, as I noted in my first reflection, read against the historical grain so I can elevate secondary voices and non-military figures – especially enslaved, indigenous, and female figures – into my future maps. So, because of this challenge, I am perpetuating my position of being a white, male historian with institutional power. I also seem not to be able to remove my bias, the very thing I am trying to avoid because I cannot find secondary figures to elevate, from my cartography. At this point in the class, I feel I need to pause, contemplate, and speak to Dr. Kelly to work through these concerns. Is it time to change to a new theme and subject that will allow me to avoid perpetuating the "the great man" myth, find a more applicable methodology and set of sources, and highlight geographies unrelated to Arnold's battles? I hope to have that answer soon.