

# Explain This!

Enterprise explanatory journalism

# AGENDA

- Definition
- How big is big?
- Many paths
- Going deep/not too deep

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# Defining enterprise explainers

- Flexible term
- Shorthand
- Not driven by news
- It's special

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**VERY IMPORTANT**

# What's big?

That is, big enough to be  
worth all this work!

- Complex
- Poorly known or understood
- Important to

The community  
Your readers  
Your editors  
You

— — —

## **David Barstow, Susanne Craig and Russ Buettner of The New York Times**

For an exhaustive 18-month investigation of President Donald Trump's finances that debunked his claims of self-made wealth and revealed a business empire riddled with tax dodges. (Moved by the Board from the Investigative Reporting category, where it was also entered.)

# The Most Expensive Mile of Subway Track on Earth

How excessive staffing, little competition, generous contracts and archaic rules dramatically inflate capital costs for transit in New York.

Workers in the East Side Access tunnel, which will connect Grand Central Terminal in Manhattan with the Long Island Rail Road. The project's costs have ballooned to nearly \$3.5 billion for each new mile of track. Todd Heisler/The New York Times



Give this article



469

By **Brian M. Rosenthal**

Dec. 28, 2017

16 MIN READ

An accountant discovered the discrepancy while reviewing the budget for new train platforms under Grand Central Terminal in





# Many paths

Can lead to an enterprise  
project

- Follow your nose
- Digging one deep hole
- Epic scale
- Experimental

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# Follow your nose

Letting coverage of a strong topic naturally develop into an enterprise project

By Zachary R. Mider

May 5, 2014 at 5:28 PM EDT

Randall Hogan chairs the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis. Sandy Cutler ran the Greater Cleveland Partnership. Tony Petrello donated \$5 million to the Texas Children's Hospital.

They're all chief executive officers who have given back to their communities. They oversee thousands of American workers. And they run companies that have opted out of the U.S. tax system.



731

icle



The only operetta ever written about Subpart F of the Internal Revenue Code made its debut on a rainy Sunday evening in May 1990, in a Fifth Avenue apartment overlooking Central Park. In bow ties and spring blazers, partners of the law firm of Davis Polk & Wardwell dined on lobster prepared by a Milanese chef. Then everyone gathered around a piano, and a pair of professional opera singers, joined by the few Davis Polk men who could carry a tune.

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# Digging deep

Identifying a single topic and exploring it thoroughly in a single piece



## The Webb Space Telescope Will Rewrite Cosmic History. If It Works.



The James Webb Space Telescope promises to revolutionize our understanding of distant planets and deep time.

*Editor's note: This article package was awarded the 2022 Pulitzer Prize in Explanatory Reporting.*



To look back in time at the cosmos's infancy and witness the first stars flicker on, you must first grind a mirror as big as a house. Its surface must be so smooth that, if the mirror were the scale of a continent, it would be smoother than a billiard ball. That's what you need to look

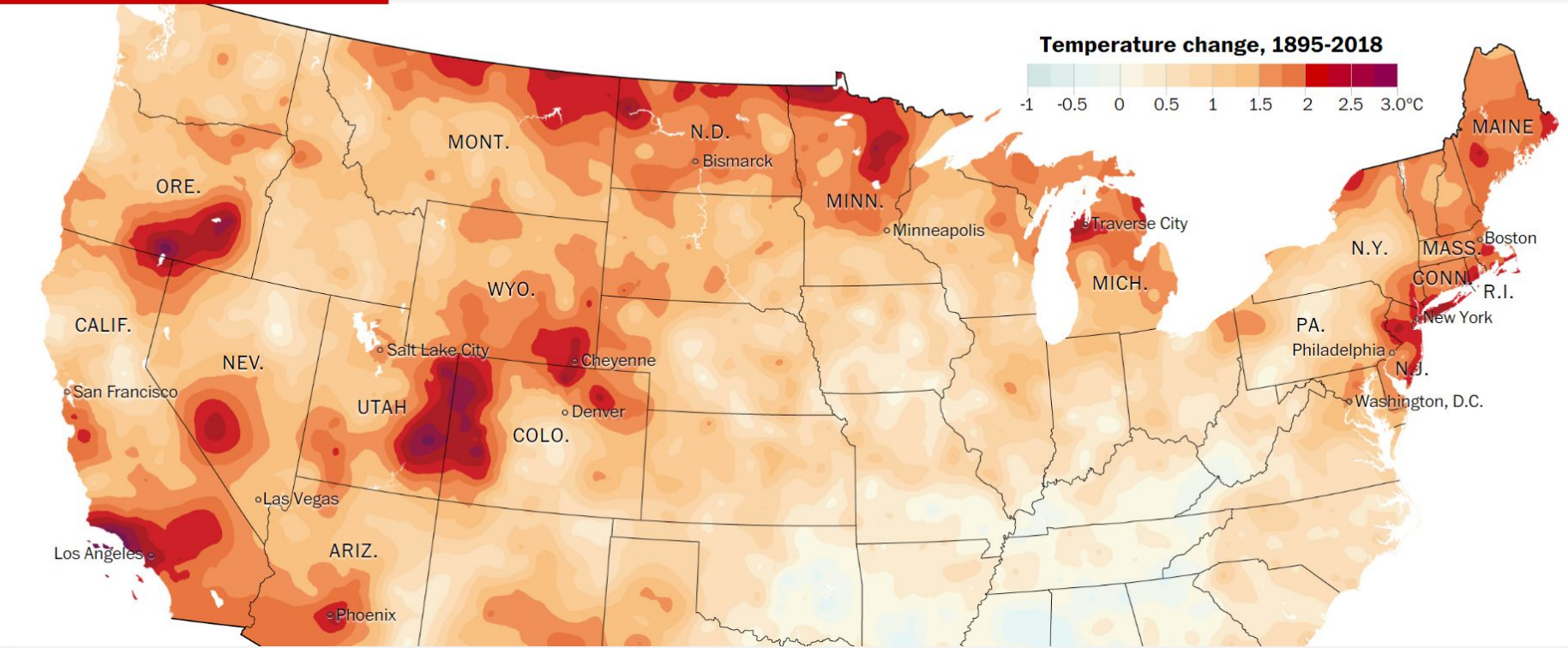
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# Epic scale

**Taking a vast subject and laying out its many aspects, mixing specifics and sweep**







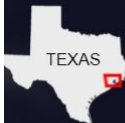
# Experimental

Trying new techniques, often involving data analysis and visualization and collaborations

# Hell and High Water

Houston is the fourth-largest city in the country. It's home to the nation's largest refining and petrochemical complex, where billions of gallons of oil and dangerous chemicals are stored. And it's a sitting duck for the next big hurricane. Learn why Texas isn't ready.

*by Neena Satija for The Texas Tribune and Reveal; Kiah Collier for The Texas Tribune; and Al Shaw and Jeff Larson for ProPublica,  
March 3, 2016*



16 Hours before  
Landfall

Flood Level

Storm makes landfall

## Storm Scenarios

## Proposed Solutions

See flood levels for a location in Houston

Ex: 2101 NASA Road 1, Houston, TX

Search



Intro



Ike



P7



P7+15



36



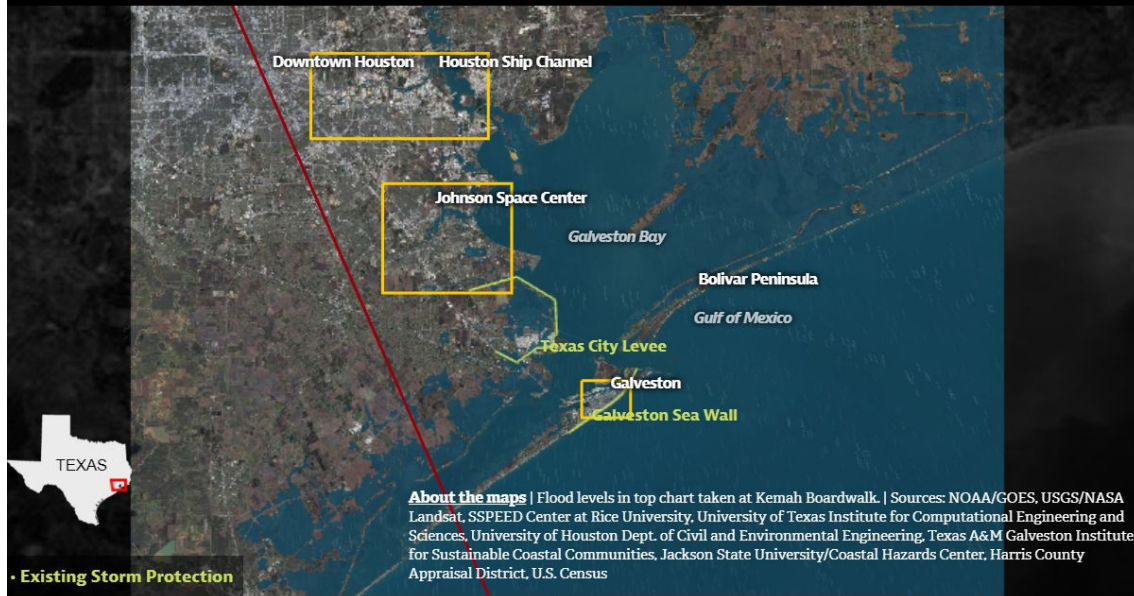
Mid-Bay



Spine 1



Spine 2



## It is not if, but when Houston's perfect storm will hit...

They called Ike "the monster hurricane."

Hundreds of miles wide. Winds at more than 100 mph. And — deadliest of all — the power to push a massive wall of water into the upper Texas coast, killing thousands and shutting down a major international port and industrial hub.

That was what scientists, public officials, economists and weather forecasters thought they were dealing with on Sept. 11, 2008, as Hurricane Ike barreled toward Houston, the fourth-largest city in the United States and home to its largest refining and petrochemical complex. And so at 8:19 p.m., the National Weather Service issued an unusually dire warning.

**"ALL NEIGHBORHOODS, AND POSSIBLY ENTIRE COASTAL COMMUNITIES, WILL BE**

*We would like to extend our thanks to the teams at Rice, UT-Austin, Texas A&M Galveston and Jackson State University for helping us understand and present this data, especially Jennifer Proft at UT and Bruce Ebersole at Jackson State University, who have spent many hours patiently guiding us through the intricacies of storm data.*





# Diving deep

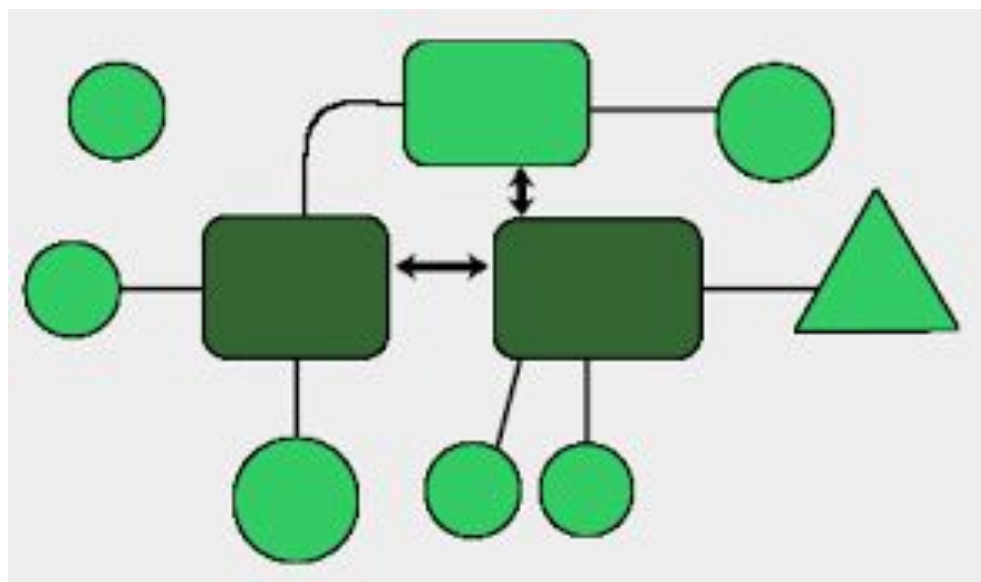
While avoiding the weeds

- Set limits
- Remember your audience
- Outline/Focus
- Remember the point

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# CONCLUSION

Enterprise explainers are

- More than just big explainers
- There are lots of ways to do them
- Same basics apply:  
Know your audience  
Know your subject
- More important to:  
Outline and plan  
Keep things clear

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