The Principles of Animation

Staging: Lesson 12

Understanding the Principle of Staging

The purpose of staging is to guide the audience's attention toward the main storyline of your animation so the message is kept clear. This principle helps the audience understand what is happening through the presentation of the elements in your animation. Staging uses a variety of tools to accomplish this including background elements, lighting, props, character placement, camera angles and contrasting actions.

When staging is done well, background elements direct the audience's attention toward the main actions, and actions successfully communicate the attitude, emotions and reactions of characters to help support the storyline. The main point of this principle is to keep the audience focused on what is relevant to the story and to leave out elements that might detract from this goal.

Related Project Files

The following related project files are located in the ASCurriculum-Lesson12.zip file that accompanies this course:

- **Tutorial 12.1.anme** - A final version of the project that you will complete in this lesson.

- **Tutorial 12.1 How To.mov** - A step-by-step video tutorial of the project that you will complete in this lesson.

Tools Used

- **Scale Layer** tool, **Translate Layer** tool, **Select Points** tool

Tutorial 12: Overview

In this tutorial you'll build a background scene with a number of different elements, setting the stage to bring attention to your main character. At the end you will add the caterpillar character you created in Lesson 9. During this process you'll learn how to arrange layers in the Layers window.

Tutorial 12: Step-by-Step

Step 1: Add a Forest

Start with a new project by clicking **File > Open** to open a new Anime Studio document. Choose **Window > Library** to open the **Content Library** window, and select the **Scenes > Backgrounds** category. Add the **Forest 1** scene to your project. Close the **Library** window before you continue.

Save your project at this point, naming it Lesson12_YourLastName.
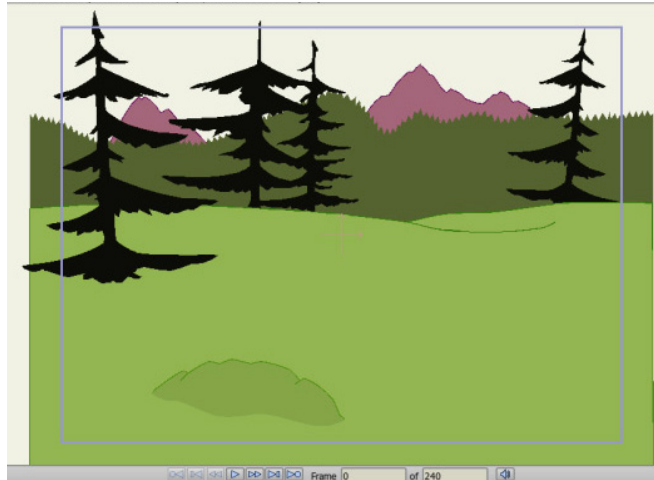
If you want to explore the contents in the scene to determine what elements are placed on each of the layers, simply expand the Forest 1 folder and each visibility icon in the layers palette to show and hide the contents of each of the layers in the forest scene. Make sure they are all visible before you move on to the next step.

Step 2: Deleting a Tree

 You can use the **Select Points** tool to remove objects from the scene while keeping others. When using the **Select Points** tool, you can select some of the points on the object that you want to remove, and then use the **Edit > Select Connected** command to select all of the points that are contained within the object or objects that the selected points are a part of.

With the **Foreground** layer selected in the **Layers** window, select some of the points in the tree on the left, and then choose the **Edit > Select Connected** command to select the remainder of them. Then press the **Delete** key to remove the tree from the layer.
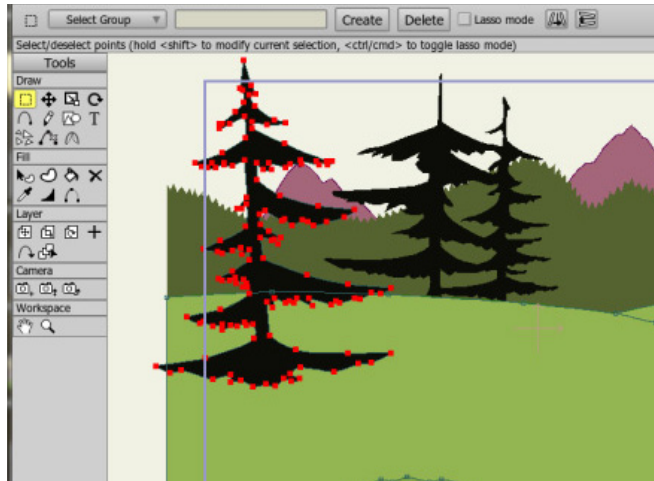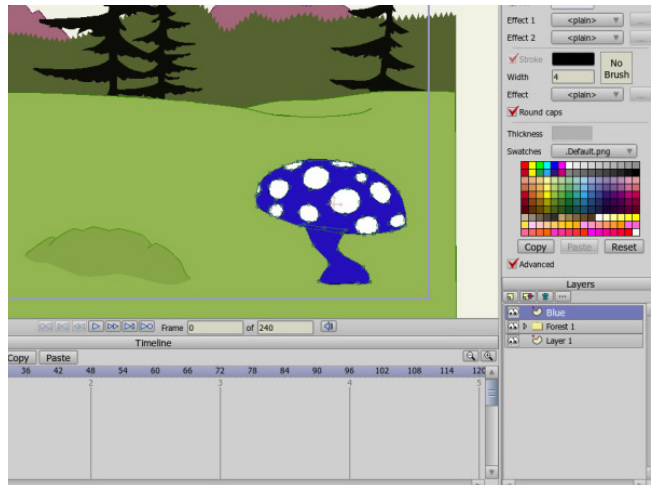
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Step 3:
Adding a Mushroom

In the **Layers** window, collapse the **Forest 1** layer and keep the folder selected so that the mushrooms that you add will appear above it in the foreground. Open the **Library** window. Choose the **Library > Props > Scenery** category and click the Mushrooms icon. Add the Blue mushroom to your scene.

Use the **Scale Layer** tool to scale it down to a more acceptable size and position it at the right side of your scene with the **Translate Layer** tool.

Step 4:
Add More Mushrooms

Then add the **Classic** mushrooms, scaling and positioning them near the blue mushroom.
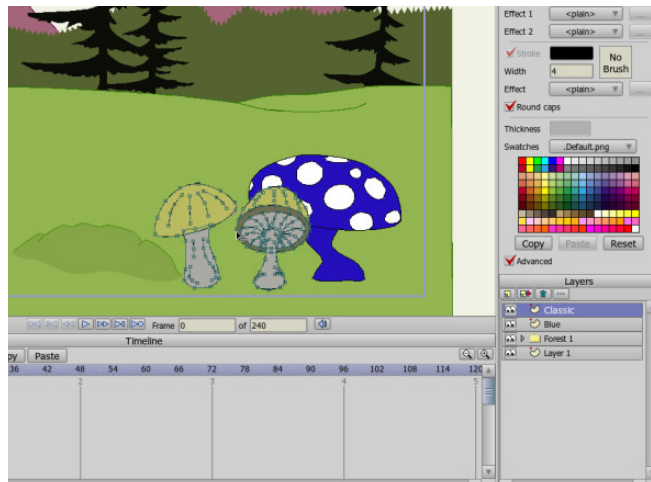
Step 5: Add and Rearrange Layers

You can also rearrange the items in the **Layers** window after you add them to the scene. With the mushroom that you added in the previous step still highlighted in the **Layers** list, click the **Clouds** icon in the **Library > Props** category in the **Library** window. Add the **Sky** to the scene. When you first add the sky, it completely covers all of the other elements in the scene. Drag the **Sky** layer from the top of the **Layers** window to the bottom of the stack (below **Layer 1**). The sky is now behind the mountains.

Keep in mind while you are adding objects from the library that the objects you select from the library will always be added immediately above the layer that is selected in the Layers window.

For further information on the **Scale Layer** tool, refer to the Anime Studio Debut Users Manual.

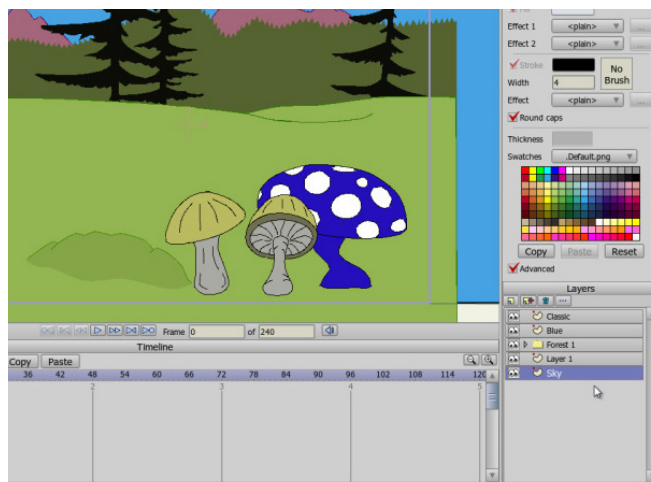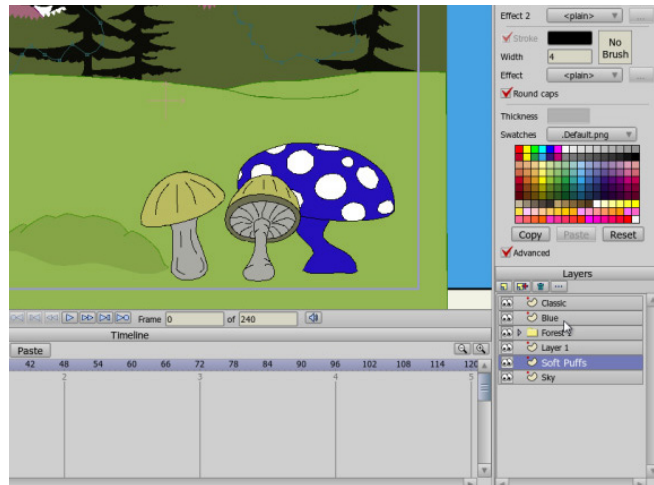For further information on the **Translate Layer** tool, refer to the Anime Studio Debut Users Manual.

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Step 6: Adding Layers in the Middle of the List

With the sky still selected, add and position the **Soft Puffs** clouds to the scene as well. This time the clouds automatically appear behind the mountains because you selected the bottom-most layer first.

Step 7: Adding Layers in the Middle of the List (continued)

Assuming that you want to keep the two mushrooms in the foreground of the scene, you can add other elements between the background forest and the mushrooms. Select the **Forest 1** layer to highlight it, and click the Jungle Tree icon in the **Library > Props** category. Add the Jungle Tree selection at the top to your scene. Remember to scale the layer proportionately. Grab any one of the corners of the bounding box that appears on the screen when you select the **Scale Layer** tool.
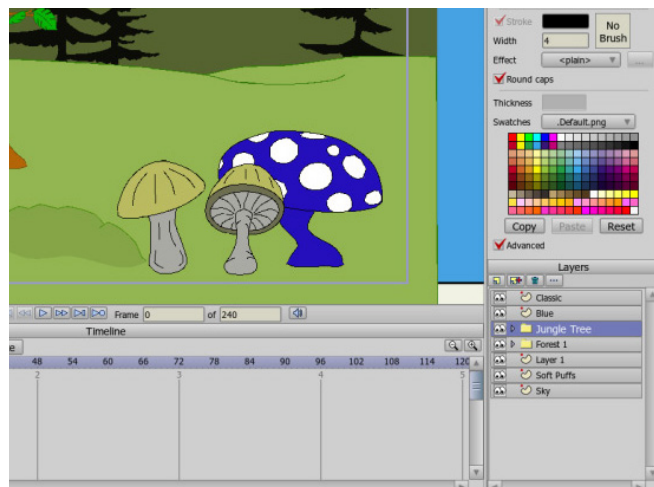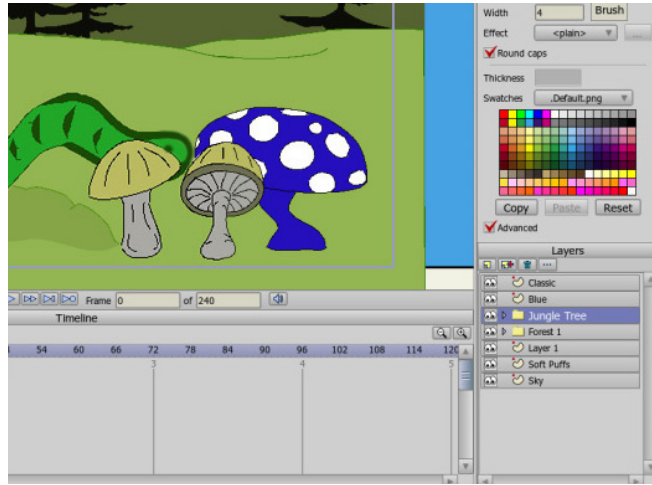
Use the **Scale Layer** and **Translate Layer** tools to position and size the tree to your liking, placing the tree on the left side of the scene. Close the **Library** window so that you can view your scene.

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Step 8: Adding Layers in the Middle of the List (continued)

Now that we've set the stage, we'll bring in a caterpillar and have him crawl from left to right. Let's have him crawl in front of the Jungle Tree but behind the mushrooms. Select the item that you want the caterpillar to move in front of (the Jungle Tree). Choose **File > Import > Anime Studio Object** and load the inchworm completed in Lesson 9. This positions the layer between the tree and the mushrooms. Notice how well the background elements enhance the scene and how this scene's staging draws attention to the main action.

Step 9: Try More!

You can continue to build upon the scene as much as you like. Draw some flowers, add birds flying in the background or add a sun peeking behind the clouds. Remember that you can load or reposition layers in the Layers window to make items appear in front of or behind other elements in the scene. After you are satisfied with your scene, save the project and render your animation.

You can also find a version of the completed Lesson 9 inchworm in the files that accompany these tutorials. Choose the Lesson 9.1.anme file included with teh Lesson 9.1 files if you cannot find your completed version.