

Prior experience with interpretation? How would you know?

## **Goals for Today**

**Introduce you to the history of interpretation**

**Identify interpretive principles, qualities and goals**

**Give you ideas for effective interpretation**

This is a condensed 32-hour course.

# Recent History



**National Park Service  
Formed in 1917  
Interpretive Development Program**



**Freeman Tilden  
Six Principles**



**Sam Ham  
EROT (IC)**

NPS- Was a leader in forming professional interpretation formed in 1917 its main goals were to preserve wild places and to give access to the public

IDP- Interpretive Development Program. Helping to standardize interpretation.

Freeman Tilden put substance to interpretation through the writings of Interpreting our Heritage and his 6 principles of interpretation

Sam Ham among others in the 80's-90's kept pushing with formalization of interpretation

## Definitions

"The aim is to illuminate and reveal the alluring world."

Enos Mills, 1920

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

Freeman Tilden c. 1950

"Interpretation is a communication process that forges emotional and intellectual connections between the interests of the audience and the inherent meanings of the resource."

NAI, 2000

Three evolving definitions of interpretation.

Define who each was, and what the essence of the definition is.

Define what NAI is.

# Principles of Interpretation

## Capture The Attention of Your Audience



### Make a Point

Any point of contact in our facility can be interpretive  
Please make a point when you talk to people.

# Principles of Interpretation

1. 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.
2. Information, as such, is not Interpretation. Interpretation is revelation based upon information. But they are entirely different things. However, all interpretation includes information.
3. Interpretation is an art, which combines many arts, whether the materials presented are scientific, historical, or architectural. Any art is in some degree teachable.
4. The chief aim of Interpretation is not instruction, but provocation.
5. Interpretation should aim to present a whole rather than a part, and must address itself to the whole man rather than any phase.
6. Interpretation addressed to children (say, up to the age of twelve) should not be a dilution of the presentation to adults, but should follow a fundamentally different approach. To be at its best it will require a separate program.

Have participants read principles out loud.

Do group activity relating to Six Principles (see handout #1)

## Qualities of Interpretation

You will ensure a quality interpretive program if you can make it

# EROTIC

Enjoyable Relevant Organized Thematic Intriguing Correct

Sam Ham outlines good interpretation as two-thirds “Erotic”  
We will add in the last third to make it fully erotic.

# Qualities of Interpretation

## Make it Enjoyable



**For You**



**For our Visitors**

For you (from us) comfortable environment, know your stuff, know where to find it  
Things you can do-smile, use your tools.  
Make it personal, focus on individual

For our visitor-what experiences have you had at a museum that was enjoyable.  
Any not so enjoyable? What made it so?

What are some things we (including the facility can do to make our visitors comfortable)

Describe Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

Do group activity.

# Qualities of Interpretation

## Make it Relevant

### Make it Meaningful

**Examples**-Refer to things that are like, or represent, the kind of thing you are talking about.

**Analogies**-Show similarities of the thing you're talking about to some other thing that is highly familiar to your visitors

**Compare/Contrast**-Show similarities or differences between the thing and something related to the the thing.

### Make it Personal

**Self Referencing**-Use "you" a lot!

**Universal Relations**-What are some things we can all relate to?

Have pairs go out into the Aquarium to record 3 analogies and 3 compare/contrasts

## Qualities of Interpretation

Make it Organized

A school of sharks swimming in blue water. A central white text box with a grid pattern contains the text: 

Keep your  
thoughts to 4  
or fewer

How are presentations normally organized?

Organized activity.

# Qualities of Interpretation

## Make it Thematic

### What does it mean to have a THEME?

Tilden said:

Interpretation should aim to present a whole rather than a part, and must address itself to the whole man rather than any phase.

Sam Ham said:

The theme is the thing! The theme is the big stinking deal!

NPS Knows from Studies:

People forget facts, they remember themes.

Trust me:

It makes your job easier!

You can remember it as EROTIC, but the “T” is the most important part.

But what is a theme? (punch line, main point-not topic, answers the question so what, moral of the story)

# Qualities of Interpretation

## Make it Thematic

Themes are **NOT** Topics

### TOPICS

Adaptations

Fish

Whales

Pollution

Sharks

El Nino

Kelp Forests

Tidepools

### THEMES

Adaptations for survival in the marine environment can be seen by observing the ABC's, actions, bodies, and colors.

It's no day at the beach for plants and animals in the tidepools

A kelp forest is much like an apartment building, with tenants on every floor.

Gray whales are gentle giants

Themes are whole ideas expressed in complete sentences and answer the question **SO WHAT!**

# Qualities of Interpretation

## Make it Thematic

Writing a theme is easy!

Complete the following sentences:

1. General Topic: Generally, I want to tell my audience about \_\_\_\_\_
2. Specific Topic: At its most specific level, however, I want to tell my audience about \_\_\_\_\_
3. THEME: After talking with me I want my audience to KNOW that \_\_\_\_\_

OR

Complete the following sentence in as many ways as you can:

When it comes to my topics, I think it is really, really, **really** important for the audience to understand that \_\_\_\_\_

Creating an interesting theme:

Make Them Personal

Use Universal Relations

Incorporate Analogies, Similes and Metaphors

Use Active Verbs/Voice

Create a theme for ordinary objects

# Qualities of Interpretation

## Make it Intriguing

Tilden Said:

The chief aim of Interpretation is not instruction, but provocation

**START THE CRITICAL THINKING PROCESS**

## Make it Correct

Remember we represent Scripps Institution of Oceanography

Check your Facts

I Don't Know is OK, (but I'll find out!)

Avoid always & never statements

# Creating Connections



BIRCH  
AQUARIUM  
AT SCRIPPS

Brad Krey

# Creating Connections

## *Interpretation should:*

- Create Connections
- Foster Relationships
- Spark the Critical Thinking Process

## Definition of Interpretation

"Interpretation is a communication process that forges emotional and intellectual connections between the interests of the audience and the inherent meanings of the resource."

NAI, 2000

# Creating Connections

What does the shark mean to you?



Everything has **MANY** meanings.

# Creating Connections

One word to describe the dice.



The Stuff is not the Story

# Creating Connections

## Universal Concepts



Anyone can relate!

# Creating Connections

## The Resource

What do we have?



## Our Goals

What are we doing?



You create the connections!

# How to create the connection

## Group Activity:

1. Brainstorm meanings (intangibles)
2. Identify 5 connections (at least 2 should be universal concepts)
3. Choose someone to present your ideas



How I got into this kind of work.

Even the mightiest oak tree was once a tiny acorn

# Learning Style Quiz

Take a few moments to fill out the quiz.

## Learning Style Quiz Scoring

Count the number of times you have checked off an (A), (V) or (T).  
These are listed to the right of each question.

Number of A's \_\_\_\_ (Auditory Learner)

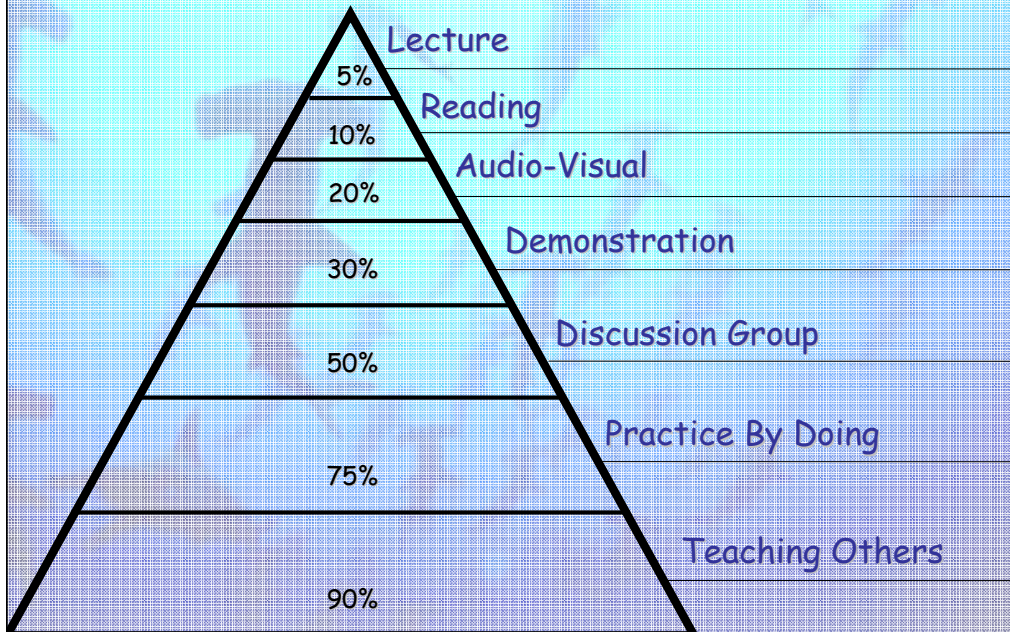
Number of V's \_\_\_\_ (Visual Learner)

Number of T's \_\_\_\_ (Tactile Learner)

Your highest score identifies your preferred learning style.  
If your scores are tied, then you prefer more than one style.

# The Learning Pyramid

How well do people learn?



## Visitors with Disabilities

Remember:

**ALL VISITORS ARE WELCOME**



Have participants role play visitors with disabilities.

## **I hope you've learned**

- 1. Basic interpretation should capture peoples attention and make a point.**
- 2. There is a method to effective interpretation.**
- 3. Interpretation should be fun and relevant for you and the visitor.**
- 4. How to develop a theme and why it is important to use it.**