

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Fort Vancouver National Historic Site
Northwest Cultural Resource Institute



What is Interpretation?

HST 409/509

Spring Quarter 2009

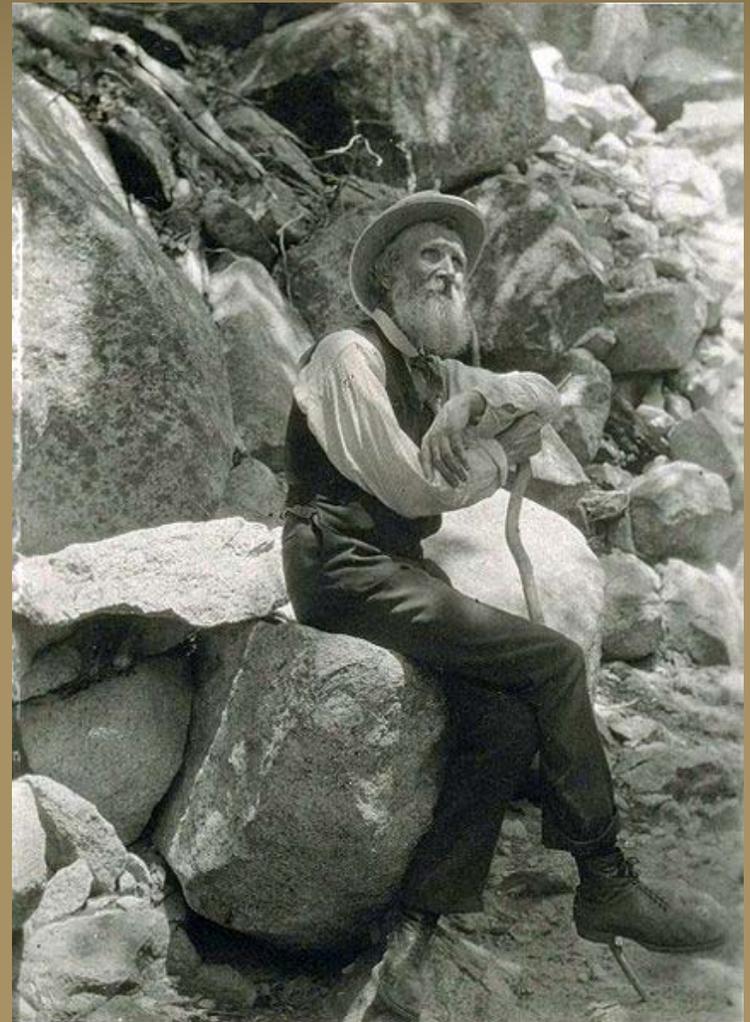
Portland State University

Greg Shine, Instructor

What is Interpretation?

I'll interpret the rocks, learn the language of flood, storm and the avalanche. I'll acquaint myself with the glaciers and wild gardens, and get as near the heart of the world as I can.

John Muir, 1896



EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA

What is Interpretation?

- Interpretation is “an educational activity which aims to reveal meaning and relationships through the use of original objects, by firsthand experience, and by illustrative media, rather than simply to communicate factual information,” (Freeman Tilden, 1957).
- Interpretation is “an educational activity that aims to reveal meanings about our cultural and natural resources. Through various media—including talks, guided tours, and exhibits—interpretation enhances our understanding, appreciation, and, therefore, protection of historic sites and natural wonders,” (Beck & Cable, 1998).

What is Interpretation?

- Interpretation is "a catalyst in creating an opportunity for the audience to form their own intellectual and emotional connections with the meanings and significance inherent in the resource" (National Park Service, 1996).
- Interpretation is a "mission based communication process that forges emotional and intellectual connections between the interests of the audience and the meanings inherent in the resource" (National Association of Interpretation [NAI], 2006).

Making Connections

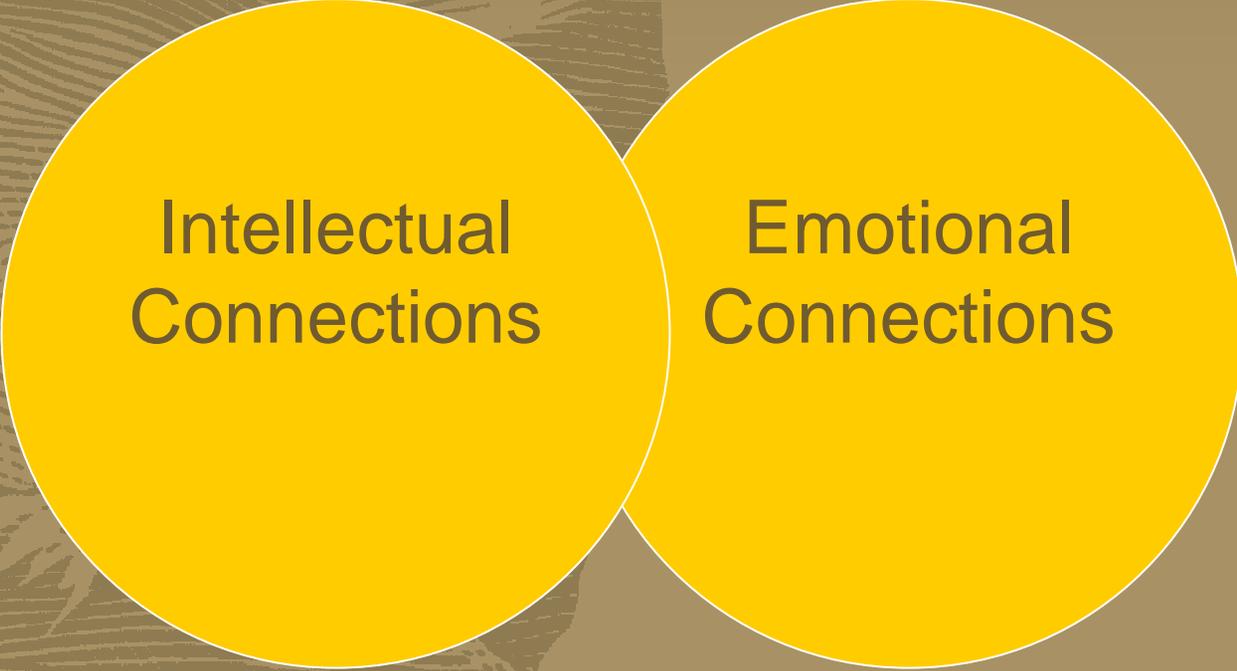


Making Connections

Truly meaningful interpretation answers the question

"Why should I care?"

Types of Connections



Intellectual
Connections

Emotional
Connections

Making Connections

Universal
Concepts

Tangibles

Intangibles

Making Connections

Connecting a site's tangible resources to their intangible meanings makes the resources more personally relevant and valuable to visitors.



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