



Example

Resource Meanings for Informal Interpretation

Put together a notebook of these reference pages, completing one page for each park resource that visitors often ask about in informal contacts, or those resources that would make good conversation starters to address resource meanings when appropriate.

KR (KNOWLEDGE OF THE RESOURCE)

- **What is the resource/tangible:** *Palmer-Epard Homestead Cabin*
(Restored 1860's one-room log homesteader's cabin at Homestead National Monument of America in Nebraska)
- **List the intangible meanings (events, processes, ideas, values) associated with this resource/tangible:**
Home, family, shelter, safety, comfort/discomfort, materialism, survival on the prairie
Construction techniques, technology, use of natural resources, man vs. nature, "progress"
Nostalgia/romance of the pioneer days
Time, weathering, preservation
- **Which of the above intangibles are also universal concepts (concepts that most everyone can relate to, but no two people will see exactly the same way):**
The most useful and provocative ones would probably be: home, family, shelter, comfort/discomfort, "progress", and survival
- **List reference sources for information about this resource:**
Historic Structures Report
Historic Furnishings Study
The Sod House Frontier by Everett Dick
Foxfire 9

KA (KNOWLEDGE OF THE AUDIENCE)

- **List the multiple perspectives/issues/ "truths" visitors may associate with this resource:**
Nostalgia for the homesteading era and the "good old days"
All homesteaders lived in soddies, not log cabins
Preservation of historic structures is too costly
Assumption that this structure was the Freeman's first cabin
The cabin represents the "civilizing" or "taming" of the Great West
Before the homesteaders came, the prairie was unpopulated
- **List the most frequently asked questions about this resource – what visitors most want to know:**
How old is it? Who built it? Is this its original location? How many people lived in it? What kind of wood is it?
Where did the logs come from? Why is there a picture of Abe Lincoln on the wall? Where did they get their water? Where is the bathroom? Where did everybody sleep?

Example

AT (APPROPRIATE TECHNIQUES)

- **What techniques might be effective for interpreting the meanings of this resource in informal contacts (i.e. props, stories, quotes, demonstration, illustrations, maps, exhibits, games, etc.):**

Quotations about log cabin life from "Boy's Life on the Prairie" and "Sod House Frontier" to illustrate difficulties of homestead life, comparisons to modern life

Copy of a homestead deed to talk about the meaning of owning your own home and the fulfilling of the "Great American Dream" to be property owners

Photo of the Epard or Freeman family to illustrate how cramped the living conditions would have been with such large families, and what a typical homesteader family looked like

Recording of a song about homestead life to open/stimulate discussion about the romance and nostalgia of the homesteading era, and multiple perspectives about "civilizing" the "Great West"

Replica tools used in building a log cabin for discussion of construction methods

Illustrations of the types of trees used in cabin building on the prairie to open discussion about the scarcity of timber, use of prairie resources (then and now), leading to discussion of sustainability

- **List several possible introductory questions, or follow-ups to visitor questions, that you could use to link an intangible meaning of the resource to the lives/experiences of the visitors:**

To children: (family, comfort) There were nine people in the Epard family who lived together in this cabin. How many people are in your family? Do you each have your own bedroom? How would you like to sleep in the same bed with your brothers and sisters? Do you think family members were closer to each other in the days of the homesteaders? Would you be anxious to grow up and move out on your own?

To adults: (use of resources, materialism, necessity, survival) How does the size of this house compare to yours? What do you think the homesteaders would have thought about the size and contents of our modern houses? How much timber or other natural resources did a log cabin use compared to one of our modern houses? In order to survive, the homesteaders had a philosophy of "waste not, want not" -- do you think they would have thought we were wasteful or extravagant with our homes today?

To anyone: ("good old days", nostalgia, romance) Read quote about log cabin life, then ask "Why do you suppose we think of the pioneer era with so much nostalgia and romance? If you could go back in a time machine to live with the Epards in this cabin for one week, would you want to do it? Why or why not?"

To adults: (ownership) Do you own your own home (condo, townhouse, etc) or do you rent? What does (or would) it mean to you to be homeowners? What do you think it meant to the homesteaders? Why do you think owning your own home/land was so important to Euro-American settlers?

To anyone: (settlement, perceptions of the pioneer era, multiple perspectives) Is this cabin the earliest type of human dwelling that was constructed on the prairie? Were the homesteaders the first inhabitants of the prairie? Who lived on this land before the pioneers?

NOTE: See Module 101 of the Interpretive Development Curriculum (www.nps.gov/idp/interp) for definition and explanation of terms: tangible, intangible, universal concept, elements of the Interpretive Equation (KR + KA x AT = IO), multiple perspectives