

Interpretive Demonstrations

PURPOSE

The interpretive demonstration is a type of illustrated program which is fundamentally different from the formal interpretive talk. It relies on the successful integration of interpretive narrative and a specific demonstrated activity (by the interpreter, the audience, or both), for interpretive success. Effective use of objects, crafts, technical and scientific processes, recreation skills, living history, and others allow the interpreter to create opportunities for the audience to form intellectual and emotional connections with the resource. This component includes the essential skills required to integrate the demonstration and interpretive narrative. The component is strongly based on the concepts and philosophy learned in entry-level competencies.

OBJECTIVES

Upon completion the learner will be able to:

- explain how an interpretive demonstration is different from conducted activities or an interpretive talk;
- explain the rationale for selecting the interpretive demonstration as the appropriate technique for delivering a particular interpretive message;
- prepare and present an effective interpretive demonstration which integrates narrative and activity.

APPROACH

It is important that the learner understands the basic differences between components of interpretive demonstrations and the interpretive talk described in [Module 103 - Preparing and Presenting an Interpretive Talk](#). Interpretive demonstrations must integrate activities performed by the interpreter and/or the visitor to create the opportunity for an interpretive outcome.

In a demonstration, the interpreter is trying to create an interpretive opportunity for and with the visitor, not just show or perform a task. Demonstrations are based on the premises that audience understanding will be greatly enhanced, or that basic comprehension can only be gained through performing the task versus telling how it is done.

All demonstrations carry an obligation for the interpreter to be sensitive to and convey proper respect for cultures and alternate points of view. Interpreters using cultural demonstrations have an additional responsibility to make sure that the audience understands that it is never possible to completely and accurately portray another time, place, or person. The interpreter's job is not to presume that she/he can recreate a time, place, or person, but to use the tangible impression to reveal intangible meanings. Successful interpretation of time, place, or person is possible, if preparation and the highest standards are applied in developing and presenting the program.

This component should be viewed as a resource guide or idea bank for the creative interpreter,

and not as a comprehensive list of tricks of the trade. It provides the principles and a foundation on which demonstrations may be developed, regardless of location, mechanics, or activities used. To be successful, the interpreter will need to build upon this framework by acquiring the specific technical skills necessary for the demonstration chosen.

CONTENT OUTLINE:

I. Why choose an interpretive demonstration?

A. General attributes

1. Incorporates additional senses
2. Allows hands-on involvement with resources
3. Provides opportunity for multiple points of view
4. Accommodates a wide range of learning styles
5. Allows opportunity for audience participation
6. Reveals nuances which are not immediately apparent

B. Specific attributes

1. Recreational demonstrations

- a. Provides for visitor safety and protection of resources
- b. Improves range of opportunities for visitor enjoyment (i.e., canoeing/snowshoeing)
- c. Provides for emotional connections through physical involvement with resources
- d. Provides access for visitor immersion in resources

2. Cultural and natural processes, trades, crafts, and technology demonstrations (i.e., living history, bird calls, animal tracking and identification, domestic and agricultural arts)

- a. Graphically illustrates the intricacies of a process or period
- b. Helps preserve systems and processes
- c. Makes tangible connection to lifeways, attitudes, meanings, other intangibles

3. Applied physical science and social/historical study demonstrations (i.e., water sampling/analysis, archeology, animal behavior patterns, analysis of the written record, architectural analysis, curatorial methods)

- a. Allows comparative studies to see relationships and the complexity of preservation needs
- b. Directs hands-on involvement with resources to overcome misconceptions and provide a basis for understanding

c. Provides exposure to resource management issues and professional standards and knowledge

II. Decision to present

["The successful interpreter chooses and uses the appropriate vehicle based on professional judgement not personal preference." ([Module 101 component: Why We Do Interpretation](#))]

A. Interpretive demonstration has a direct tie to a specific park theme and identified outcomes

B. Interpreter abilities

1. special skill certifications required for the demonstration or activity
2. current proficiency and/or your aptitude in the skill area

C. Resources

1. Use of original vs. reproduction materials
2. Resource protection issues (potential impacts of consumptive use, damage to resources, specimen collection)
3. Possibility for hands-on involvement with the resource
4. Readily accessible resources

D. Group characteristics

1. Interests, motivations, and expectations
2. Age, intellectual abilities, motor skills, visual abilities

E. Interpretive opportunities

1. Meets interpretive goals
2. Enhances enjoyment
3. Balances with other programs offered
4. Addresses specific resource management issue at site
5. Addresses specific visitor or resource safety concern

F. Safety of group/individuals

III. Program development-Ensuring that the interpretive demonstration meets the objective of tying the tangible activity to its intangible meanings.

A. Developing a program that integrates narrative and supporting demonstration

1. Research
2. Goals, themes, and objectives

3. Accuracy and authenticity

4. Up-to-date, reputable scholarship/sources

B. Special considerations-narrative

1. Narration does not stand alone

2. Language appropriate to audience

3. Transitions

4. Technical terms, jargon, archaic language--explaining when necessary

5. Inflammatory or emotion-charged language

6. Silence as a tool

C. Special considerations-demonstration selection

1. Appropriate to audience

2. Bridges language gaps

3. Provides moments for self interpretation

4. Accommodates multiple learning styles

5. Engages variety of senses

6. Does require consumptive use of resources/objects/visuals

7. Considers audience reaction to demonstrations and activities, intense, either positive or negative

8. Varies the way visitors can get involved in program

9. Uses diversity of activities and objects

10. Uses authentic representations

11. Uses quality of objects and activities

12. Assures available and reliable equipment/supplies

13. Takes into account cost of start-up and maintenance of activities

D. Building a cohesive program-integrating the demonstration and the narrative

1. Program does not consist of simply naming tools used, identifying objects encountered, describing individual elements of a process; it ties the objects to larger intangibles to create linkages and meanings

2. Use of activity/object multiplies the number and variety of tangible/intangible links each individual makes because each reacts to the activity in addition to the narrative
3. Sequencing thoughts/ideas/demonstrations
 - a. Parallel construction of thoughts/demos
 - b. Intentional redundance between thoughts/demos
 - c. Divergent thoughts/demos
 - d. Juxtaposed thoughts/demos
 - e. Convergent thoughts/demos
4. Using storyboard techniques to visualize the program
5. Maintaining balance between narrative and demonstration
6. Presenting multiple points of view
 - a. Vary the demonstrations to appeal to differing interests in audiences
 - b. Examine the resource from different points of view.
 - c. Aware that some activities may be more effective in communicating certain viewpoints

IV. Considerations

A. General

1. Visitor participation
2. Adapting for different learning styles
3. Anticipating audience reaction
4. Accommodating special needs
5. Ability to be heard
6. Adequate numbers of supplies and opportunities to participate
7. Positioning objects for line of sight
8. Using descriptors from audience's physical perspective (mirror imaging: your right is their left)
9. Demonstration is clearly theme related
10. Not used merely for the sake of entertainment
11. Creating opportunities for visitor involvement throughout the program

12. Audience understands mechanical, scientific, archaic, and specialized terms
13. Alternative delivery plans (weather, materials, objects, etc)
14. Address real or perceived ethical inconsistencies in using original objects or items from the resource (i.e. bones, live animals, petrified wood, artifacts, fruits and nuts)

B. Specific

1. Recreation demonstrations

- a. Equipment is in safe operating condition and there are adequate supplies
- b. Skills and physical limitations of audience are known

2. Natural and cultural process demonstrations

- a. Accurate data, time period, context
- b. Respect and sensitivity when demonstrating (i.e., collecting samples from sacred places, speaking for others/cultural arrogance, assuming only one "truth" in history or science)
- c. Contemporary issues regarding environment or cultures
- d. Living history--first- or third-person

3. Applied physical science and social/historical study demonstrations

- a. Professionally approved methodologies
- b. Theme related
- c. Multiple points of view and differing opinions regarding resource issues (i.e. control of wildlife populations, military encounters, lifestyle and class differences, evolution/creation, traditional beliefs)

V. Program delivery

A. Site considerations

1. Organizing materials and activities to involve all
 - a. Sight lines
 - b. Access to materials
 - c. Sufficient supplies
 - d. Weather/elements which may affect demo

2. Safety

B. Accommodating special needs

C. Sequencing the activity/demonstration

1. Create an interpretive foundation to establish relevance of demonstration and potential intangible linkages
2. Explain what the audience will see or do in the demonstration in clear language, including audience safety and other potential concerns
3. Use mirror imaging when explaining or performing a demonstration
4. Allow audience involvement (depending on "type" of demo--participatory or passive)
 - a. Interpreter conducts entire demonstration while audience observes
 - b. Interpreter describes the demo and audience does
 - c. Interpreter and audience participate in all or part of demonstration
5. Check audience understanding and involvement and assure that intangible connections are made throughout
 - a. Review audience products and performance
 - b. Review audience understanding of interpretive message through questioning strategies (process? application?)
 - c. Repeat elements of the interpretive message or demonstration if needed
6. Assess remedial needs; be sensitive to audience anxiety or failure
7. Close the demonstration by connecting to interpretive intent/opportunities

D. Common pitfalls

1. Demonstration fails to link to intangible meanings and concentrates primarily on the "stuff"
2. Interpreter pretends to have all the answers; draws unsubstantiated conclusions
3. Interpreter does not allow time for audience to successfully participate in the activity
4. Interpreter uses unclear directions or descriptions of the mechanics or process

VI. Evaluating program outcomes - See Module 103--Preparing and Presenting the Interpretive Talk; Developing an Interpretive Talk and Assessing Its Interpretive Value

- A. Qualitative assessments
- B. Quantitative assessments
- C. Visitor feedback and evaluation

RESOURCES

Considerations for Interpretive Demonstrations and Living History, Stuckey, Michael, Sunset Crater Volcano National Monument, 1997.

Interpretation for the 21st Century: Fifteen Guiding Principles for Interpreting Nature and Culture, Larry Beck and Ted Cable, Sagamore Publishing, 1998.

Interpretation of Cultural and Natural Resources, Knudson, Douglas M., et al, Venture Publishing, State College, PA, 1995, Chapter 12, pp. 303-328.

Interpretive Skills Lesson Plan, "[Demonstrations](#)," Larsen, David, 1992.

The Interpreter's Guidebook: Techniques for Programs and Presentations, Regnier, Kathleen, et al, UW-SP Foundation Press, Stevens Point, WI, 1992, pp. 28-29, Chapter 5, pp. 45-64.

The Interpreter's Handbook, Grater, Russell K., Southwest Parks and Monuments Association, 1976, Chapter 8, pp. 93-102.

Interpreting for Park Visitors, Lewis, William J., Eastern Acorn Press, 1980, pp. 79-80, p. 88.

Interpreting the Environment, Sharpe, Grant W., John Wiley and Sons, New York, 1982, Chapters 17 and 23.

SUGGESTED DEVELOPMENTAL ACTIVITIES

1. Compare an interpretive talk to a demonstration with similar desired interpretive outcomes. Apply an assessment tool in your analysis. Which interpretive technique proved to be the most effective in achieving the desired outcome? Discuss your findings with your interpretive supervisor or manager.
2. Create a graph to show the tangible or intangible links in your demonstration. Match each pair to the cohesive idea (theme) of your program. Try changing the tangible/intangible link or the activity/demonstration if either does not support the cohesive idea. Does the demonstration flow smoothly? If necessary, adjust your cohesive idea or the demonstration.
3. Create a list of the objects, and equipment you will need for your demonstration, and analyze how each will enhance the tangible and intangible/universal concepts.
4. Prepare and present a short demonstration for adults. Prepare a second program with a similar theme, but not using the demonstration. Which worked better? Why? Analyze what these differences mean to your ability to effectively create intangible meanings.
5. Describe and demonstrate a process using primarily technical terms. Try the same activity using non-technical terms. Now use a blend of technical and non-technical descriptors. Try each version on a friend, relative, or co-worker and discuss with them the strengths and weaknesses of each version. Which would you choose for which kind of public audience?

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Illustrated Programs

PURPOSE

The illustrated program is fundamentally different from the formal interpretive talk. It relies on the successful integration of narrative and media for interpretive success. This component is strongly based on the concepts and philosophy learned in entry-level competencies. Effective use of media, objects, illustrations, and demonstrations lets the interpreter maximize her/his chance to create an opportunity for the audience to form intellectual and emotional connections with the resource. This component includes the essential skills required to integrate the medium and narrative.

OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this component the learner will be able to:

- explain how the illustrated program is different from conducted activities or an interpretive talk;
- explain the rationale for selecting the illustrated program as the appropriate technique for delivering a particular interpretive message;
- prepare and present an effective illustrated program demonstrating the integration of narrative and media.

APPROACH

This component should be viewed as a resource guide or idea bank for the creative interpreter, and is not meant as a comprehensive list of tricks of the trade. It provides the principles and a foundation on which all illustrated programs are built, regardless of location, mechanics, or media. To be successful, the interpreter will need to build upon this framework by acquiring the specific technical skills necessary for the chosen illustrated approach (i.e. map programs, slide talks,). Illustrated programs can include enhanced video presentations and demonstrations using objects and props. Specific guidance is provided in the Module 220 component for demonstrations. In every instance, however, the goal of an effective illustrated program is to integrate visual or other aids into an interpretive narrative which heightens the opportunity to reach broader audiences with a wider range of connective links, resulting in greater opportunities for visitors to create and retain their own meanings and values.

This component builds upon the components in [Modules 101 -- Fulfilling the NPS Mission: The Process of Interpretation](#) and [103 -- Preparing and Presenting an Interpretive Talk](#). It is recommended that the learner be knowledgeable about all aspects of the entry-level modules before moving on to more advanced techniques in this module.

CONTENT OUTLINE:

I. Why choose an illustrated program?

- A. Accommodates wide range of learning styles/levels
- B. Incorporates additional senses
- C. Engages visitors through vivid images and hands-on activities
- D. Provides a substitute for resource when it is not readily at hand
- E. Includes more tangibles and intangibles (through senses) in program
- F. Creates interpretive opportunities not possible through other delivery techniques
- G. Gives opportunity for multiple points of view on a topic

II. Decision to present

["The successful interpreter chooses and uses the appropriate vehicle based on professional judgement not personal preference." ([Module 101 component: Why We Do Interpretation](#))]

A. Interpreter abilities

1. determine special skill certifications required for the demonstration or activity
2. assess current proficiency, your aptitude in the skill area, or both

B. Resources

1. inaccessible or unavailable
2. need protection
3. need "distant" or indirect viewing
4. gives possibility for hands-on involvement with the resource
5. reveals nuances not immediately apparent

C. Group characteristics

1. interests, motivations, and expectations
2. age, intellectual abilities, motor skills, visual abilities

D. Interpretive opportunities

1. meets interpretive goals
2. enhances enjoyment

III. Program development [Use the Interpretive Equation as you build your program. What are the tangibles? What are the intangibles? Will they connect to a universal concept? Are the transitions from tangible to intangible to universal concept the best that can be made? ([Module 101 - component: How Interpretation Works](#))]

A. Developing the narrative and selecting supporting media [see [Module 103 component: Presentation Techniques](#)]

1. research
2. goals, themes, and objectives
3. accuracy and authenticity
4. up-to-date, reputable scholarship/sources

B. Special considerations-narrative

1. Narration does not stand alone
2. Language appropriate to audience
3. Transitions
4. Technical terms, jargon, archaic language--explanation when necessary
5. Inflammatory or emotion-charged language

6. Silence as a tool

C. Special considerations-media selection

1. Appropriate to audience
 2. Bridges language gaps
 3. Provides moments for self interpretation
 4. Accommodates multiple learning styles
 5. Engages a variety of senses
 6. Requires consumptive use of resources/objects/visuals
 7. Considers audience reactions to visuals/objects intense, either positive or negative
 8. Varies ways images/objects are seen in space, time, perspective
 9. Uses diversity of images/objects
 10. Uses authentic representations
 11. Uses quality of visuals/objects
 12. Uses available and reliable equipment/supplies
 13. Possibly incorporates music, song, dance, and drama as illustrations
- D. Building a cohesive program--integrating the illustrations/demonstration and the narrative

1. using media multiplies the number and variety of tangible/intangible links each individual makes because each reacts to the media in addition to the narrative

2. sequencing thoughts/ideas/visuals/activities

a. parallel construction of thoughts/media

b. intentional redundance between thoughts/media

c. divergent thoughts/media

d. juxtaposed thoughts/media

e. convergent thoughts/media

3. using storyboard techniques to visualize the program

4. avoiding calling attention to the images/objects (ex: "This is a cow..."); speak about the subject or content.

5. maintaining balance between narrative and visuals/objects

6. presenting multiple points of view

a. differing media appeal to different audiences

b. media provide opportunity to examine the resource from different points of view.

c. some media are more effective in communicating certain viewpoints

d. active engagement in an illustrated program or demonstration by the audience provides opportunity for multiple linkages or opinions/meanings about the resource to be formed

IV. Special considerations - presentation

A. Group dynamics

1. Visitor participation

2. Different learning styles

3. Anticipating audience reaction

B. Accommodating special needs

C. Tips and pitfalls

1. Make sure dark conditions do not diminish effectiveness of gestures, body language, and facial expressions

2. Assure ability to be heard

3. Assure adequate numbers of supplies and opportunities to participate

4. Use vocal gestures for emphasis and emotional content
 5. Position objects for line of sight
 6. Use mirror imaging ylreporp
 7. Make sure media do not dominate the visitor experience
 8. Avoid using merely for the sake of entertainment
- V. Evaluating program outcomes - See Module 103 components: Preparing and Presenting the Interpretive Talk; [Delivering an Interpretive Talk and Assessing Its Interpretive Value](#)
1. Qualitative assessments
 2. Quantitative assessments
 3. Visitor feedback and evaluation

RESOURCES

Environmental Interpretation, A Practical Guide for People with Big Ideas and Small Budgets, Ham, Sam H., North American Press, Golden, CO, 1992, Chapter 4, pp. 77-127; Chapter 10, pp. 349-379.

The Good Guide, A Sourcebook for Interpreters, Docents and Tour Guides, Grinder, Alison L. and E. Sue McCoy, Ironwood Publishing, Scottsdale, AZ, 1985, pp. 46-47; pp. 74-75; p. 80.

Interpretation for the 21st Century: Fifteen Guiding Principles for Interpreting Nature and Culture, Larry Beck and Ted Cable, Sagamore Publishing, 1998.

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Interpretive Slide Programs Lesson Plan, Roney, Bob, Yosemite National Park.

Interpretive Skills Lesson Plan, ["Preparing and Presenting an Illustrated Talk,"](#) rev., K. Cook, 1992.

SUGGESTED DEVELOPMENTAL ACTIVITIES

1. Watch four illustrated programs and list all the media/objects/demonstrations you observed. Was the integration of narrative and media evident? Describe the strengths and weaknesses of each illustrative element. Explain how the tools used in each instance either enhanced or detracted from the overall presentation. Was the illustrated program the best interpretive method in each situation? Why or why not?
2. Create a storyboard that will use at least three different illustrations/media/objects/demonstrations. Ask your supervisor for feedback. Present the program. Make notes concerning audience feedback and reaction. What would you change next time?
3. Write a beginning and ending statement for a slide or media presentation that allows the visuals to tell the bulk of the story. Show the program to peers. What story did each one discern? Was it the same for each viewer? Why or why not? What insights on tangible/intangible linkages did you gain using media in this exercise?
4. Plan and produce a single-thought slide talk. Show it to a peer audience for feedback. Were they able to find and understand the same single message? What changes would you make?
5. Attend a program using music, song, dance, or drama as the illustrative media. Evaluate how the selected media enhanced the message and audience understanding of the resource.
6. Make a list of tangible resources at your site. Identify several media options such as maps, slides, objects, or illustrations, and see how many intangible connections can be made through each one. Consider using your findings to develop an illustrated program with integrated media and narrative.

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