

Example A2

Audience A:

Who was your audience?

Subject matter experts—sixty museum professionals, most of whom were African-American, meeting at conference.

What were the interests and relevant characteristics of that audience and how did you find out? (Certifiers are looking for evidence you have researched the interests and characteristics of your audience. Do you have access to any formal studies on your audiences? Have you read about your audience? Have you researched subject matter that is relevant to your audience? Have you or your colleagues talked with representatives of your audiences? What did you learn and how did you document your understandings?)

I spent the day with this group listening to their questions, comments, and discussions in reaction to other speakers. The presentations and ensuing conversations took place on a sophisticated level in terms of content. The group was very knowledgeable about the institution of slavery as well as curatorial concerns. Much of the conversation, however, focussed on their audiences. Many in the room were angry about the institution of slavery and the legacy of racism it left. Some contended that interpretation should raise the consciousness of African-Americans and confront whites with that legacy. A few felt that African-Americans needed to feel angry and whites needed to feel guilt and shame. Others felt such an approach was counter-productive and that while those feelings were valid, their profession should be concerned with preservation and education.

I concluded there was a great deal of interest in strategies for interpreting the institution of slavery.

What was your interpretive product and what were its goals?

(What kinds of connections did you hope to provoke? What did you want the audience to know and or feel?)

I presented a 20-minute talk on John Brown's Raid as a model for interpreting slavery. A session leader facilitated the discussion after my presentation.

I hoped to provoke them to contemplate the complexity of the institution of slavery in both its intellectual and emotional aspects. I also hoped they would consider the necessity of meeting visitors where they are in order to provoke—that purposefully trying to shame is not likely to educate or promote stewardship. Finally, I wanted them to see the horrors of slavery can be more effectively described if visitors are not shamed.

What subject matter content did you use to meet the interests of your audience? How did you use that content to meet those interests? Please include references for the information you used specifically for that audience. (How did you attempt to establish relevance for the audience?

How did you attempt to provoke the audience into making their own intellectual and emotional connections to the meanings and significance inherent in the resource?)

I already knew the white responsibility for slavery was a relevant issue to this group. I knew there were a variety of opinions as to how whites and African-Americans should be interpreted within the context of slavery. This was a professional group exploring strategies so I decided that I did not need to try and make them comfortable.

I chose to address the issues raised in earlier sessions by asking the group to imagine themselves as slaveowners—a perspective some may not have previously considered. I asked them to be a woman in 1840, twenty-five years old, married to a factory worker, with three children. I described her tasks of boiling laundry on a hot July day. I then asked visitors to imagine themselves to be that woman's husband in 1860 with a wedding anniversary coming up. He had already purchased her a cast-iron stove and a share in a sewing machine. Those modern product made her life easier (Furnas, J.C. *The Americans: A Social History of the United States, 1587-1914*. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1969 pp. 426-429; Hindle, Brooke and Steven Lubar. *Engines of Change: The American Industrial Revolution, 1790-1860*. Washington D.C. and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1988 pp. 205-217). Yet this year he will buy her a slave woman.

I sensed, through body language, the audience's increasing tension at that moment. I challenged them to consider how the calluses would slip from her hands because she had been given another 24 hours in each day. She was given more control of her life because her husband purchased another life for her. That is a gift that says "I love you." I then pointed out that man or woman probably did not beat their enslaved person. They were not ogres or martians. In general, slaveowners were people who loved their families and, like us, celebrated births and weddings and went to funerals (Stampp, Genovese, Stevenson). I then suggested that is perhaps one of the most frightening aspects of slavery. It was perpetuated by people like us who convinced themselves it was all right for some people to own other people. At this point I hope the audience was relieved that I condemned the institution. I also hope they were provoked to view slavery in a more personal manner.

I then provided a basic description of enslaved and free African-American people in Harpers Ferry (see bibliography). I described how; the town was physically integrated, African-Americans and whites often lived in the same buildings, African-Americans played a critical role in the economy, and that African-Americans did not work in the gun factory except at menial tasks. Law and tradition forbade African-Americans access to weapons and jobs in the gun factory represented patronage and power to the political leaders of the town

(Shakel). I also described the town ordinances and the penalty of whipping when African-Americans broke curfew (By Laws and Ordinances of the Corporation of Harpers Ferry, *Virginia Free Press*, August 7, 1851).

I then told the story of John Brown using two symbols: 1) the pikes or spears he wanted to supply to enslaved people, and; 2) Dangerfield Newby, an ex enslaved person who failed in his attempt to purchase his wife and six children out of slavery and decided to fight with Brown. I asked the audience to put themselves in the position of a white citizen viewing these pikes in the hands of African-Americans. The weapons symbolize terror and violence and the fact Brown was willing to use both to destroy slavery. I also tell Newby's story—his attempts to purchase his family and his fate. He was killed in the fighting and angry whites mutilated his body. Newby represents the oppression and almost hopeless circumstances of most African-Americans as well as their acts of resistance (National Park Service. *John Brown's Raid*. 1973; Villard, Oswald Garrison. *John Brown 1800-1859: A Biography Fifty Years After*. Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1910).

When the audience began to discuss the program it was very intense. At first it centered on the subject matter. People seemed to need to express their pain and anger at the fate of Dangerfield Newby. They compared his experience to other historic and current events. The conversation eventually shifted to their discomfort at taking the role of slaveowner. No one expressed resentment at having taken the role. They seemed, rather, to have been provoked to look at another point of view. As more time went by, the group began to consider this strategy for interpreting slavery. By the end of the conversation there was still disagreement, but a deeper level of exploration had occurred.

I provided opportunities for intellectual connections to the resource by providing information on slavery in Harpers Ferry, illustrating the oppression of slavery as well as African-American resistance with Dangerfield Newby, and posing the possibility that slaveowners were people similar to us. I provided opportunities for emotional connections by placing the audience in the role of a slaveowner, by humanizing enslaved people with the specific illustration of Dangerfield Newby, and by illustrating the horrors of slavery.

Example A1

Audience A:

Who was your audience?

This was a curriculum-based program and these were fifth graders from a local elementary school.

What were the interests and relevant characteristics of that audience and how did you find out? (Certifiers are looking for evidence you have researched the interests and characteristics of your audience. Do you have access to any formal studies on your audiences? Have you read about your audience? Have you researched subject matter that is relevant to your audience? Have you or your colleagues talked with representatives of your audiences? What did you learn and how did you document your understandings?)

I relied on my conversation with the teacher prior to their visit as well as my experience with other fifth graders and children of that age. The teacher said the students were studying West Virginia history and gave me several learning objectives regarding John Brown's Raid. Specific to the subject of slavery was the objective: Students will be able to explain why John Brown's Raid occurred. The kids may or may not actually have been interested in the institution of slavery but I needed to address the objective.

I often ask 9-12 year olds what they think about slavery. I do this for school groups as well as for general audiences when there are a lot of children present. I keep an informal log and note when new responses occur. Almost uniformly, this age is aware that slavery existed in the past and that it was "bad." I follow this question by asking them what made a slave a slave. They have more difficulty explaining that. Therefore, I invest time exploring how slavery worked and effected specific people—which helps them see in concrete ways how damaging the institution was. The subsequent dialogue and the high level of the kids' participation reveals their significant interest in the subject.

In terms of mental development, this age group is concerned with things more than ideas, has about a 20-minute attention span per activity, can manipulate concrete information internally, and is able to draw conclusions about that information.

I used the curriculum for Module 270: *Develop and Present a Curriculum-Based Education Program* and the resources suggested in the component, *Introduction to Learning and Development* (NPS <http://www.nps.gov/idp/interp/270/index.htm>) to research the characteristics of fifth graders. Several sources describe child development, ages 9-12. (Tevyaw, Kathy and Patti Reilly ed. *Programming for School Groups: An Interpreter's Guide* NPS, 1990, pp. 15-20, Ecroyd, Donald H. *Talking With Young Visitors in the Parks* NPS-Eastern Acorn Press, 1989, pp. 6-

10, Machlis, Gary and Maureen McDonough. *Children's Interpretation: A Discovery Book for Interpreters*, NPS, 1978 pp. 5, 9-12).

What was your interpretive product and what were its goals? (What kinds of connections did you hope to provoke? What did you want the audience to know and or feel?)

I gave a 90-minute tour with activities at each stop telling the story of John Brown's Raid at locations where those events occurred. The first four stops of the tour—each five to ten minutes, set the stage for Brown by dealing with the institution of slavery. In terms of slavery, my interpretive goals were to have the kids 1) understand slaves were people who dealt with difficult and painful circumstances, 2) understand slaves did the best they could to make their lives better, and 3) remember the stories of specific people who illustrate these points.

What subject matter content did you use to meet the interests of your audience? How did you use that content to meet those interests? Please include references for the information you used specifically for that audience. (How did you attempt to establish relevance for the audience? How did you attempt to provoke the audience into making their own intellectual and emotional connections to the meanings and significance inherent in the resource?)

My tour is designed specifically for fourth through sixth graders. I use stories and exercises about enslaved children and families to relate directly to this age group. These stories and activities provided concrete examples of the consequences of human beings as property and ways in which enslaved people asserted themselves.

At the first stop I asked the audience what they thought about slavery and several kids talked about how evil it was. Then I asked them what makes a slave a slave? One child responded, "It's when white people made black people work for them." I told her she was right, but then pointed to an African-American ranger across the street and asked, "That ranger is African-American and his boss is a white woman. Does that mean he is a slave?" The kids responded no and I prodded them for another definition. We went back and forth a few times, each round I affirmed their answer but then countered with a more specific question. In this way we eventually agreed that the institution of slavery was founded on the idea that some people—white people, could own other people—African-American people. We then talked about some of the things they own and the power that comes with ownership. Though we all agreed that parents have the final say, we also understood that when kids own something they pretty much control it. I then asked them to use their imaginations and described the town as a busy industrial place that had African-Americans living and working there as enslaved people and as free.

The second stop was at the backsteps of the home of Ann Stephenson, a prominent citizen before the Civil War. I passed around two child's dresses, one of lighter cotton and one of "negro cloth." I asked the kids to compare the two and we talked about their differences and who may have worn them. I then told them

how Ann Stephenson gave her granddaughter, Mary Ellen a four year old enslaved girl, Mary Jane as a present in 1856 (Jefferson County Court House, Deed Book 36, p. 330, copies at Harpers Ferry Historical Park library). I told the kids we will never know, but I wonder if Mary Ellen and Mary Jane were friends and may have played on these steps. We discussed this. I told them it was probable that Mary Jane and her mother Hannah already lived with or near the Stephensons so I didn't think Mary Ellen had been taken away from her mother. I asked them if they Mary Ellen and Mary Jane were friends as kids could they have always been friends?

The third stop was in a period exhibit—the Dry Goods Store. We talked about stores for a while as places where they can buy things. I then showed them a chart with a variety of 1860 products and their prices at that time. I told the kids they could spend \$1,400. They had a good time adding up their possible purchases and felt \$1,400 could go a long way—it could even buy a small house. Then I told them the story of Isaac Gilbert who was able to buy his own time from his owner, Susan Harding and subsequently wanted to purchase the freedom of his wife and children who were owned by Dr. Logie. Dr. Logie agreed to sell them to Isaac for \$1,400. However, an enslaved person could not purchase another enslaved person, so Isaac had to rely on the town's mayor, Fontaine Beckham to make the purchase for him and own his family until he, Isaac, could buy his own freedom. I pick the Isaac Gilbert story up later in the tour as Fontaine Beckham is killed by Brown's men and Isaac Gilbert's family is thus given their freedom (Jefferson County Court House, Jefferson County Will Book 16&17, p. 142; Stealey article; Freedman's Bureau Records; copies at Harpers Ferry National Historical Park library).

The fourth stop was in front of the building in which the family described in the story lived. I told them about John Douglas whom was a free African-American living with a prominent citizen of the town, Philip Coons. Douglas was married to enslaved women, Fanny. They had a son, John. Philip Coons owned both Fanny and the child. Coons needed money in 1855 and offered to sell Fanny and her son to John Douglas for \$1,000. Douglas was able to make the purchase with the help of Coons who secured a loan for Douglas for \$600. Douglas had to put Fanny and his son up as collateral to secure the loan. Douglas was able to pay the debt and free his wife and child within a year (Jefferson County Court House, Jefferson County Deed Book 35, p.128-129; Jefferson County Deed Book 36 p. 216-217). I then discussed the concept of collateral with the fifth graders.

The fifth stop moved transitioned to the John Brown story through Dangerfield Newby, one of Brown's raiders and an ex-enslaved person who attempted to buy his family's freedom but ended up fighting in Brown's raid.

I provided intellectual opportunities through my descriptions of the institution of slavery as a function of human property. I provided more specific opportunities for intellectual connections by illustrating enslaved people as gifts, articles of an

estate, and as collateral. I made each of these concepts concrete with specific stories, activities like “what can \$1,400 buy,” and examples like the dresses. Further, I established that enslaved people took action to get out of slavery. The help of the white mayor, Fontaine Beckham provided an opportunity to see that some whites treated some African-Americans in a benevolent manner. I also encouraged the fifth graders to react to and discuss these events as well as ask me questions.

I used those three stories because they involve children. I hope this established relevance for and helped to provoke the fifth graders about how bad slavery was as well as how enslaved people struggled against it. With the Gilbert and Douglas stories, I attempted to provoke emotional connections by using and illustrating universal concepts such as family and loss or separation. With the story of the young girls, I also used the universal concept of friendship. I took the fifth graders, for the Stephenson and Douglas stories, to the place where those people had been in order to provide an opportunity to feel the immediacy of and a connection to the past.

I also hope the overall effect of the information and stories tied an intellectual understanding of the institution to a deeper feeling of injustice—concrete reasons why slavery “was a bad thing.”

Audience B1

Audience B:

Who was your audience?

A general audience—the exhibit is for anyone who might visit the park.

What were the interests and relevant characteristics of that audience and how did you find out? (Certifiers are looking for evidence you have researched the interests and characteristics of your audience. Do you have access to any formal studies on your audiences? Have you read about your audience? Have you researched subject matter that is relevant to your audience? Have you or your colleagues talked with representatives of your audiences? What did you learn and how did you document your understandings?)

There is no current demographic statistics or formal studies or descriptions of visitors to Harpers Ferry National Historical Park.

In 1985—Machlis stuff

Harpers Ferry is within sixty miles of both Baltimore, Maryland and Washington D.C. Many of the park's visitors come to Harpers Ferry on day trips from those locations. Many come as repeat visitors, exploring Harpers Ferry's numerous historical, natural, shopping, and recreational opportunities and/or bringing out-of-town family or friends with them. Spring sees a large influx of organized school groups, some of whom participate in the park's formal educational programs and many that do not. Some students come from local counties, others from Baltimore and Washington D.C., and still others on busses traveling to or from Washington D.C. Summer brings family groups that are often vacationing. In the fall, seniors travelling on busses follow the fall colors. Perhaps 5% of the visitation is African-American. Likely less than that are international visitors. The majority of visitors seem to be white, middle class, and suburban.

I often ask visitors before programs or during conversations in exhibits what brought them to Harpers Ferry, what the place provides for them, and what the place means to them. From this informal survey, I believe most visitors want some sort of pleasurable experience. No visitor has ever expressed a desire to feel uncomfortable. The specific responses vary but generally can be categorized. Many say they enjoy the natural beauty, some visitors want a break from their regular lives, many want a social experience with their families or friends, some hope to provide an educational experience for their children, and others are seeking fun in some recreational venue. Many express a desire to experience their heritage. These people connect to Harpers Ferry through a wide variety of historical subjects.

The subject of slavery can evoke, among others, feelings of anger, shame, and embarrassment. The subject often makes people uncomfortable. It can also bring

out subtle and not-so-subtle expressions of racism. Harpers Ferry National Historical Park has advertised programs and tours with a title that announces the subject matter of slavery or African-American history. Usually, those programs are poorly attended. This is not to say the subject matter is not relevant to visitors. On the contrary, the very same material can be presented to large groups on a “general history” tour, a Civil War tour, or even an industry tour and successfully provoke the audience into making their own intellectual and emotional connections to the meanings and significance inherent in the resource. Even when these connections are made, I often find myself involved in conversations where the visitor maintained “of course slavery was bad and its good it’s gone, but slavery wasn’t really *that* bad.” I never had a visitor approach me to say “slavery was an abomination and the nation should be ashamed.” I conclude the general audience at Harpers Ferry carries varieties of “baggage” or biases toward the subject but may connect with the material when presented meaningful interpretive opportunities.

In May 2000, Dr. Theresa Wang and graduate assistant Jasmine Chen of West Virginia University conducted three focus groups of visitors who had attended short programs that dealt with slavery (Unpublished transcripts, Dr. Theresa Wang). The comments of participating visitors support my observations that many know little about slavery other than it was “bad.” These audiences, however, can be provoked to make their own intellectual and emotional connections to the resource if they are presented quality interpretive opportunities that illuminate the complexities and workings of enslaved people, their owners, and their relationships to each other.

In general, audience members commented that they were aware before the program that slavery was an “awful” thing, but the program helped them come to understand how it was awful. Many of their comments to questions like “What stood out in the program?” “Did this experience change the way you think about the past?” and “What is the one word or thought you would like to keep with you?” revealed intellectual and emotional connections about slavery they had not previously held. The courage and bravery of enslaved people who tried to escape inspired one child. A woman spoke of how the program illuminated numerous facets of slavery she had not considered. Another said, “I knew slavery was bad, but now I know it was even worse because I know what they went through.” Others expressed their dismay over the institution but were intrigued by how complicated the issues and functions of slavery could be. One man after expressing his disapproval of the institution was further provoked by its ironies and inconsistencies. He commented on the story of a woman who owned slaves yet encouraged an enslaved man she rented from another owner to escape, “She was a good person even though she owned slaves.”

For these reasons I believe visitors are generally interested in the subject of slavery as long as the subject is not presented in a threatening manner that makes them feel uncomfortable.

I also attended and hosted several meetings with the local African-American community through the NAACP, churches, and word of mouth. This group was aware of the project, provided input and donated photographs, and was updated regularly during the exhibit's evolution. It was important to them the exhibit portray enslaved people as people and included not just the horrors of slavery, but the efforts of enslaved people to do the best they could in oppressive circumstances.

What was your interpretive product and what were its goals?

I led a team that researched and planned a permanent exhibit on African-American history at Harpers Ferry. We want all types of people to make personal connections to: the ways in which the institution of slavery operated; the circumstances of free African-Americans; ways in which African-Americans asserted their humanity through culture, subversion, and resistance; and the integrated presence of enslaved and free African-Americans in the social, economic, and political existence of the town.

What subject matter content did you use to meet the interests of your audience? How did you use that content to meet those interests? Please include references for the information you used specifically for that audience. (How did you attempt to establish relevance for the audience? How did you attempt to provoke the audience into making their own intellectual and emotional connections to the meanings and significance inherent in the resource?)

We planned the exhibit to avoid stereotypes and perhaps “step around” the “baggage” that audiences bring with them about slavery. We created a warm, inviting, and comfortable atmosphere that encourages reflection. The first impression is that of a fireplace mantel filled with the family photographs of the Spriggs—a local African-American family with enslaved ancestors who lived in Harpers Ferry before the Civil War. We hope visitors will recognize similar scenes in their own lives.

The “Property” section is a good example of how the entire exhibit operates. There are three more sections that also deal with slavery, one on free African-Americans, one of the resistance of enslaved people to the institution, and an electric map that illustrates the demographics and physically integrated aspects of the town. The “Property” section concentrates on the operational elements of the institution. This area exhibits photographs and transcripts of several deeds of trust in which enslaved people were used as security for loans (Jefferson County Court House, Jefferson County Deed Book 27 p. 11, p. 389; Jefferson County Deed Book 25 p. 334). It provides national context with a graphic of Dred Scott and his wife as well as a description of their circumstances as enslaved people living in a free state. Their suit for freedom resulted in a decision by the United States Supreme Court that re-affirmed all slaves were property and that no state

could ban slavery (McPhearson, James M. *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 198 pp. 170-176). The exhibit illustrates the practice of hiring or renting enslaved people as well as selling them with reproduced advertisements from the newspaper, “A Wet Nurse Wanted” (*Virginia Free Press*, March 19, 1857), and “Valuable Negro Man at Public Sale” (*Virginia Free Press*, February 7, 1856,). There is also a touchable set of reproduction clothing and the hiring contract that described the clothing for “Slave Ann,” rented by Dr. Nicholas Marmion in 1851 (Marmion papers? Check reference). The exhibit offers more insight into the operation of the institution of slavery with the display of a certificate insuring an enslaved person as property (Document in possession of Charles Town Museum).

The exhibit provides illustration of the violent elements of slavery with a description of a whipping at a nearby farm (Jefferson County Court House, Chancery Records, Divorce Proceedings of Hannah Lee Alexander, October 25, 1854). The description is accompanied by a reproduction of a slave whip as described by Frederick Douglass (Find reference in Douglass autobiography) and a modern photograph of the location at which the whipping occurred.

There is also an audio station that tells the story of Isaac Gilbert and his family. Isaac was able to buy his own time from his owner, Susan Harding and subsequently wanted to purchase the freedom of his wife and children who were owned by Dr. Logie. Dr. Logie agreed to sell them to Isaac for \$1,400. However, an enslaved person could not purchase another enslaved person, so Isaac had to rely on the town’s mayor, Fontaine Beckham to make the purchase for him and own his family until he, Isaac, could buy his own freedom. Fontaine Beckham was killed in John Brown’s Raid and Isaac’s wife and children were freed by Beckham’s will. Gilbert worked for the Union Army during the Civil War and he and his family lived in Harpers Ferry in 1870 (Jefferson County Court House, Jefferson County Will Book 16&17, p. 142; Stealey article; Freedman’s Bureau Records; copies at Harpers Ferry National Historical Park library; United States Census, 1870). Accompanying the audio is a three dimensional reproduction of \$1,400 in gold and a graphic describing what could be purchased with that amount in the 1850’s (check source).

The exhibit attempts to provide multiple opportunities for diverse audiences to make their own connections. It does this by providing multiple graphics, 3-dimensional reproductions that can be touched, audio-programs, videos, and an interactive map. The interpretive text is also multi-layered layered so that visitors can read short pieces of text, more detailed explanations, and even original documents. No single person is expected to interact with the entire exhibit. Rather, we hope that each individual will connect to and be provoked by that which is relevant to them. We also used alternative words for the titles of the various sub-exhibits, for example “Property” instead of “Slavery,” “Half-Free” instead of “Free African-Americans,” and “Choices” instead of “Resistance.” We

hope, with this approach, to avoid people's pre-judgements and perhaps provoke them to take a deeper look at the material.

The exhibit provides numerous opportunities for intellectual connections by illustrating the workings of the institution of slavery. The interpretive text does not appeal to emotions. The exhibit is planned and designed to illustrate with primary sources, stories, and reproductions the human reality of slavery. The many examples of this strategy provide multiple opportunities for emotional connections to the meanings of the resource.

Audience B2

Audience B:

Who was your audience?

A general audience on a summer industry tour. There were about a hundred people in family groups, couples, and friends. There was one African-American family.

What were the interests and relevant characteristics of that audience and how did you find out? (Certifiers are looking for evidence you have researched the interests and characteristics of your audience. Do you have access to any formal studies on your audiences? Have you read about your audience? Have you researched subject matter that is relevant to your audience? Have you or your colleagues talked with representatives of your audiences? What did you learn and how did you document your understandings?)

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I must assume that, because this was advertised as a tour about the industrial revolution, that at least some of the visitors had a specific interest in the subject. Others, certainly, were attracted by the weapons demonstration or were accompanying someone who had that interest.

I often ask visitors before programs or during conversations in exhibits what brought them to Harpers Ferry, what the place provides for them, and what the place means to them. From this informal survey, I believe most visitors want some sort of pleasurable experience. No visitor has ever expressed a desire to feel uncomfortable. The specific responses vary but generally can be categorized. Many say they enjoy the natural beauty, some visitors want a break from their regular lives, many want a social experience with their families or

friends, some hope to provide an educational experience for their children, and others are seeking fun in some recreational venue. Many express a desire to experience their heritage. These people connect to Harpers Ferry through a wide variety of historical subjects.

The subject of slavery can evoke, among others, feelings of anger, shame, and embarrassment. The subject often makes people uncomfortable. It can also bring out subtle and not-so-subtle expressions of racism. Harpers Ferry National Historical Park has advertised programs and tours with a title that announces the subject matter of slavery or African-American history. Usually, those programs are poorly attended. This is not to say the subject matter is not relevant to visitors. On the contrary, the very same material can be presented to large groups on a “general history” tour, a Civil War tour, or even an industry tour and successfully provoke the audience into making their own intellectual and emotional connections to the meanings and significance inherent in the resource. Even when these connections are made, I often find myself involved in conversations where the visitor maintained “of course slavery was bad and its good it’s gone, but slavery wasn’t really *that* bad.” I never had a visitor approach me to say “slavery was an abomination and the nation should be ashamed.” I conclude the general audience at Harpers Ferry carries varieties of “baggage” or biases toward the subject but may connect with the material when presented meaningful interpretive opportunities.

In May 2000, Dr. Theresa Wang and graduate assistant Jasmine Chen of West Virginia University conducted three focus groups of visitors who had attended short programs that dealt with slavery (Unpublished transcripts, Dr. Theresa Wang). The comments of participating visitors support my observations that many know little about slavery other than it was “bad.” These audiences, however, can be provoked to make their own intellectual and emotional connections to the resource if they are presented quality interpretive opportunities that illuminate the complexities and workings of enslaved people, their owners, and their relationships to each other.

In general, audience members commented that they were aware before the program that slavery was an “awful” thing, but the program helped them come to understand how it was awful. Many of their comments to questions like “What stood out in the program?” “Did this experience change the way you think about the past?” and “What is the one word or thought you would like to keep with you?” revealed intellectual and emotional connections about slavery they had not previously held. The courage and bravery of enslaved people who tried to escape inspired one child. A woman spoke of how the program illuminated numerous facets of slavery she had not considered. Another said, “I knew slavery was bad, but now I know it was even worse because I know what they went through.” Others expressed their dismay over the institution but were intrigued by how complicated the issues and functions of slavery could be. One man after expressing his disapproval of the institution was further provoked by its

ironies and inconsistencies. He commented on the story of a woman who owned slaves yet encouraged an enslaved man she rented from another owner to escape, “She was a good person even though she owned slaves.”

For these reasons I believe visitors are generally interested in the subject of slavery as long as the subject is not presented in a threatening manner that makes them feel uncomfortable.

I have often been concerned about embarrassing African-Americans when I interpret the subject of slavery because many white visitors turn to look at their reactions. Occasionally I ask both African-Americans and whites if, in those circumstances, I should leave the material out. Everyone acknowledges it is an unfortunate situation, but most encourage me to keep interpreting slavery as it is an important subject that most people need to think more about. Still, I believe there have been instances when African-Americans have left because of the unwanted attention.

What was your interpretive product and what were its goals? (What kinds of connections did you hope to provoke? What did you want the audience to know and or feel?)

The product was a tour that described the industry of Harpers Ferry as well as the technological and social change brought about by the industrial revolution. I demonstrated reproductions of blackpowder weapons made in the United States Armory. I devoted a stop to enslaved and free African-Americans because they were an important part of the story. I wanted visitors to see the irony of the “modern” functioning beside the “archaic.” I wanted visitors to understand that slavery was an integrated part of Harpers Ferry. I also wanted visitors to comprehend the human aspects of slavery and imagine themselves in that context.

What subject matter content did you use to meet the interests of your audience? How did you use that content to meet those interests? Please include references for the information you used specifically for that audience. (How did you attempt to establish relevance for the audience? How did you attempt to provoke the audience into making their own intellectual and emotional connections to the meanings and significance inherent in the resource?)

Previous to this stop, I described technological advancements and how they displaced some but provided wonderful convenience and opportunity for others. I fired and compared reproductions of both handcrafted weapons and machine-made weapons. I sensed that very few of the visitors expected a discussion of slavery at that point in the tour.

I wanted help visitors relate to the owners of enslaved people as well as be provoked by the harsh realities of the institution. I wanted to both comfort and well as challenge. I asked visitors to imagine themselves to be a woman, twenty-

five years old, married to a factory worker, and having three children in 1840. I described her tasks of boiling laundry on a hot July day. I then asked visitors to imagine themselves to be that woman's husband in 1860 with a wedding anniversary coming up. He has already purchased her a cast-iron stove and a share in a sewing machine. They have made her life easier (Furnas, J.C. *The Americans: A Social History of the United States, 1587-1914*. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1969 pp. 426-429; Hindle, Brooke and Steven Lubar. *Engines of Change: The American Industrial Revolution, 1790-1860*. Washington D.C. and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1988 pp. 205-217). Yet this year he will buy her a slave woman.

I sensed, through body language, the audience's anxiety at that moment. I challenged them to consider how the calluses will slip from her hands because she now has another 24 hours in each day. She has her life because her husband purchased another life for her. That is a gift that says "I love you." I then point out that they will likely not beat their enslaved person. They are not ogres or martians. Slaveowners were people who loved their families and, like us, celebrated birth and weddings and went to funerals (Stampp, Genovese, Stevenson). I then suggested that fact is perhaps one of the most frightening aspects of slavery. It was perpetuated by people like us who convinced themselves it was all right for some people to own other people. At this point I sensed the visitors relax because, I believe, they were relieved that I condemned the institution. I hope they were also provoked to view slavery in a more personal manner.

I then provided the basic description of enslaved and free African-American people in Harpers Ferry. I described how; the town was physically integrated, African-Americans and whites often lived in the same buildings, African-Americans played a critical role in the economy, and that African-Americans did not work in the gun factory except at menial tasks. Law and tradition forbade African-Americans access to weapons and jobs in the gun factory represented patronage and power to the political leaders of the town (Shakel). I then told the story of an out-of-town white contractor named Collins who used free African-Americans as his labor force. Six of the free African-Americans working for him were driven out of Harpers Ferry and one was whipped for allegedly breaking curfew. Evidence suggests these actions were taken by the people in the town because they resented Collins' taking their jobs away (Shakel).

I finished the stop by pointing out that no matter how "modern" technology had made Harpers Ferry, the people of the town, enslaved and free, were still tied to a past that oppressed them all.

I provided opportunities for intellectual connections by describing the role of African-Americans in the town's economy as well as by juxtaposing modern technology with the institution of slavery. I provided opportunities for emotional

connections by asking the visitors to imagine themselves as slaveowners and by describing the experiences of the free African-Americans who worked for Collins.

Audience C1

Audience C

Who was your audience?

An “advocate” of the perspective the Confederacy was fighting a just cause that had little to do with slavery.

What were the interests and relevant characteristics of that audience and how did you find out? (Certifiers are looking for evidence you have researched the interests and characteristics of your audience. Do you have access to any formal studies on your audiences? Have you read about your audience? Have you researched subject matter that is relevant to your audience? Have you or your colleagues talked with representatives of your audiences? What did you learn and how did you document your understandings?)

This white male, probably in his fifties, approached me at the end of a tour on industry in which I had pointed out the irony of cutting edge technical advancements existing side-by-side with the institution of slavery in pre-Civil War Harpers Ferry. I also presented basic information describing the existence of enslaved people and free African-Americans in pre-Civil War Harpers Ferry. He was very pleasant and insisted that slavery was a terrible thing but that it was not the cause of the Civil War. I made eye contact with him and felt he wanted me to respond.

This perspective is widely held and often stated. I have researched a broad range of ideologies, evidence, and historiography that support this view. Slavery, after the American Revolution and up to the 1830s or so was viewed by many in the South as a necessary evil—a labor system inherited from their ancestors that was inefficient (Stampp, Chapter 1; Elkins, p. 206-222; and Frederickson, George M., “Slavery and Race: The Southern Dilemma,” in *American Negro Slavery: A Modern Reader*. Allen Weinstein, Frank Otto Gatell and David Sarasohn, eds. New York: Oxford University Press, 1979, pp. 34-58). However, few Americans North or South viewed African-Americans as equal to whites and many southerners believed enslaved people needed to be taken care of and were best off in the institution of slavery. Many hoped slavery would naturally die. The diaries of Mary Boykin Chesnut (Woodward, C. Vann ed. *Mary Chesnut’s Civil War* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981) and the memoirs of John S. Wise (Wise, John S. *The End of an Era*. Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1899) are descriptive of the conflicted manner in which some southerners viewed the institution of slavery. In 1918, Ulrich Phillips released *American Negro Slavery* which described slavery as a benign institution in which slaves did not suffer or resist, it was typical of the perspective that slavery was a civilizing institution necessary because of the inferiority of African-Americans. However, this work and others represent the perspective taught and accepted by historians, textbooks, and much of American society until the 1950’s.

Even before the Civil War, however, there were other views regarding slavery held by the white South. By the 1830s for a variety of reasons, much of the southern leadership came to view slavery as a “positive good.” In this way of thinking, Africans were literally saved from a “heathen” continent and were provided Christianity and a happier way of life by white owners. This perspective held that both races benefited from the relationship (Stampp, Chapter 1; Elkins, p. 206-222; and Frederickson, George M., “Slavery and Race: The Southern Dilemma,” in *American Negro Slavery: A Modern Reader*. Allen Weinstein, Frank Otto Gatell and David Sarason, eds. New York: Oxford University Press, 1979, pp. 34-58). **Edmund Ruffin**, (Scarborough, William Kauffman ed. *The Diary of Edmund Ruffin*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1972), **George Fitzhugh**, *Sociology for the South* Richmond, 1854 and *Cannibals All! Or Slave Without Masters*, Richmond, 1857) and **Robert Dabney** (*A Defense of Virginia and Through Her, a Defense of the South*. E.J. Hale and Sons, 1867) each were influential in articulating and spreading this argument and description of the South and slavery.

I have read many of the texts that focus on Southern Civil War actions, bravery, military prowess, tradition, and culture. One of recent note that is quite controversial and quickly dismissed by most “mainstream” historians is *Forgotten Confederates: An Anthology About Black Southerners*. Charles Kelly Barrow, J.H. Segars, and R.B. Rosenburg eds. Atlanta: Southern Heritage Press, 1995. This book is a compilation of primary sources and interpretation that describes the participation of African-Americans in the Confederate military. I also have visited numerous “Southern Heritage” websites (<http://www.hpa.org/main.html>, <http://www.southernmessenger.org/>, <http://jayrandolph.com/southern-heritage/>). In general, these pages make many of the same points and arguments about regarding tariffs, states rights, the war as a “second war of independence” for the South, and the benign nature of slavery as those sources described above. They hope to educate the reader as to the true history of the war and slavery as they see it and promote the preservation of symbols and culture.

I have had many hundreds of similar conversations. Many believe the current historic perspectives are flawed and are even the result of conspiracy. Many were educated at a time when these interpretations were regarded as the “truth.” A great number of these visitors are not aware of the scholarship and thinking that has gone on since the 1950s. The majority who are less extreme may or may not accept the more recent interpretations, but are generally provoked by and are interested in the information.

I believe that many visitors approach me about slavery because they don’t want me to cast blame on their ancestors or their perceptions of history. I think many want me to take away their discomfort. I have tested this assumption by spending time accurately describing northern racism before I talk about the institution of slavery. I find that by pointing out the humanity of slaveowners (perhaps the

“scariest” aspect of the institution was that people who were very much like us benefited from and supported it) and the culpability of both the North and the South, the “defensiveness” and much of the anxiety disappears and attention can be focussed on the resource. We can then discuss the horrors and ramifications of the institution.

What was your interpretive product and what were its goals? (What kinds of connections did you hope to provoke? What did you want the audience to know and or feel?)

This was an informal contact precipitated by a stop on a formal tour. I hoped to have a conversation in which I could acknowledge and show respect for his perspective. I wanted to provide him with additional information that was relevant to his position. But I also wanted to provoke him to consider other perspectives on the role of slavery in bringing about the Civil War.

What subject matter content did you use to meet the interests of your audience? How did you use that content to meet those interests? Please include references for the information you used specifically for that audience. (How did you attempt to establish relevance for the audience?)

How did you attempt to provoke the audience into making their own intellectual and emotional connections to the meanings and significance inherent in the resource?)

I asked him to explain why he did not think the war was fought over slavery. He responded the South was fighting for their way of life and freedom as they defined it. He was not angry, but was earnest. I felt he respected me and wanted to have an honest exchange. I quickly agreed and told him I thought, and that most historians would agree, that the war was not a case of good fighting evil or white hats against black hats. The war was fought over many issues and was quite complicated.

He talked about how trapped slaveowners must have been. They had invested so much in human property and the economic system was set so that those who did not feel right about owning slaves really did not have much choice. I agreed that tradition, societal pressure, and economic systems are powerful and that I doubted I would have been able to step outside the norm. I told him that there was ample evidence to support his view. I told him about Mary Chesnut and how she represented many in the South. I told him this was especially true prior to the 1830s, but became less so as time went on as the South became more defensive about slavery in reaction to the attacks of northern abolitionists. He pointed out that a minority of whites in the South owned slaves. I agreed and told him that only one in four white southerners owned enslaved people and that a minority of those owned more than a few (Stamp, pp. 29-30). He then talked about how many people cared for their slaves both out of economic and humanitarian interests. He was quite reasonable, he was not trying to justify slavery, I think, as much as humanize the slaveowner. Again, I agreed and shared with him the story of John Wise’s mother who personally nursed her sick slaves at great expense and effort to herself (Wise, p. 35). I also mentioned that many slaves in their narratives (Perdue) mentioned what appears to be genuine

affection and care for those who owned them. But, I added, most of those people also stated their pleasure in freedom. He readily agreed and said that all of history and life is full of such ironies, paradoxes, and complexities.

I took the opportunity to come back to our original point about the causes of the war. I re-affirmed that all we had said was true, and, what is more, the north had many racists as well. I told him of the thesis I had written on Ohio soldiers and their attitudes toward blacks (unpublished manuscript in my possession) in which there were as many who despised African-Americans as who supported emancipation. But, many of those soldiers stated in their letters and diaries that they blamed the war on slavery. I let the man know that I was not as familiar with Confederate troops, but that I was struck by how many northerners recognized how much slavery had to do with the war. I moved on and said they agreed with Lincoln in his second inaugural address when he pointed to slavery as the chief cause (Fehrenbacher, Don E. ed. *Abraham Lincoln: Speeches and Writings 1859-1865*. New York: Literary Classics of America, 1989). He said he had not considered that. I told him I'd like to make a study of it someday—all the primary sources that link slavery to the war. I told him that Alexander Stephens, the Vice President of the Confederacy in his famous *Cornerstone Speech* in 1861 had done the same by describing their "revolution" a result of their rights to own enslaved people (<http://www.stcloudstate.edu/~brixr01/Stevenscornerstonespeech.html>).

I was not trying to force him to agree, so I re-stated that the causes of the war were complicated but that I found it provoking that so many primary sources identified the connection between slavery and the war. He nodded and told me that as complicated as it was, it is difficult to separate slavery from most of the issues and that slavery certainly played a significant role. I told him that's why I thought it is so important to tell the stories of enslaved people and white people in Harpers Ferry. We shook hands and went about our ways.

I believe I provided opportunities for him to make intellectual connections with the information I provided that both affirmed his thinking as well as introduced new concepts. I also believe I provided him opportunities to make emotional connections to Harpers Ferry by allowing him to humanize slaveowners and still acknowledge the oppression of slavery.

Audience C2

Audience C:

Who was your audience?

An ethnic or cultural group—the Storer College Alumni Association. This audience is made up of Storer College graduates, their families, and friends. The group is primarily African-American.

What were the interests and relevant characteristics of that audience and how did you find out? (Certifiers are looking for evidence you have researched the interests and characteristics of your audience. Do you have access to any formal studies on your audiences? Have you read about your audience? Have you researched subject matter that is relevant to your audience? Have you or your colleagues talked with representatives of your audiences? What did you learn and how did you document your understandings?)

I have met several times with the members of the Storer College Alumni Association, have spoken with many Storer graduates, and have attended several of their programs. When I was assigned to present a program to them I contacted their program chair for more details. They wanted the program to be about John Brown and his legacy. I asked if that included material about Harpers Ferry before the Civil War and the ways in which slavery provoked John Brown to take his action. There was some hesitancy in the response. She said a description of the town was fine but that I should avoid the “painful and unpleasant” elements of slavery. I then asked her if I could include inspirational stories of enslaved people who tried to better their circumstances. She told me I could, but I still sensed a certain amount of caution.

Storer College ceased operations in 1954 so the majority of the Association’s leadership have become elderly. I have read some histories of Storer College (cite Stealey articles, Toogood, and Quarles), listened to a number of oral histories (cite specifics), and have informally talked to many alumni. They continually emphasize the positive contributions they and the college made to the “advancement” of the African-American community. I am quite curious about segregation in 20th Century Harpers Ferry as well as the oppressive circumstances faced by African-Americans. It is quite difficult to get most of the alumni to discuss this material.

I have had similar experiences at meetings with the local NAACP, ad hoc community, and local African-American churches. In general, these groups and the individual members do not want African-Americans portrayed as victims or to be made uncomfortable by graphic descriptions of whips, chains, and the break up of families.

Further, Storer College preserved the building in which John Brown was captured and hosted meetings honoring John Brown. In general, while many alumni would

not endorse violence, the majority of Storer College alumni see John Brown as a hero—a pioneer in the violence that would continue with the Civil War and would see 200,000 African-American soldiers fighting for the Union (cite Quarles). Most of the audience is also generally familiar with the narrative of events composing John Brown's Raid.

What was your interpretive product and what were its goals? (What kinds of connections did you hope to provoke? What did you want the audience to know and or feel?)

I gave a talk on the Storer College grounds on John Brown and his legacy. The group was not easily mobile, so we stayed in a single location. I hoped to place John Brown in the context of the cause of his actions so the audience could make both intellectual and emotional connections to Brown's violence and nobility. I also wanted to provoke an understanding that the story of the institution of slavery is not a shameful one for African-Americans. Rather it is a story of enslaved people struggling to improve their circumstances in the face of oppression, and, despite great hardships create a rich and vibrant culture. I wanted to accomplish this by stressing those accomplishments but also by acknowledging the hardships.

What subject matter content did you use to meet the interests of your audience? How did you use that content to meet those interests? Please include references for the information you used specifically for that audience. (How did you attempt to establish relevance for the audience?

How did you attempt to provoke the audience into making their own intellectual and emotional connections to the meanings and significance inherent in the resource?)
Knowing this audience desired inspiration, I told stories that illustrated triumph and victory over slavery. These stories potentially provoked greater understandings of the horrors of slavery as well. I also included references to Storer College and the very location in which my talk was being conducted. I also acknowledged their legacy and inspiration to me.

I began the talk by thanking them for the opportunity to speak to them. I mentioned the numerous times audience members had told me stories about their experiences and how inspiring those stories were. I specifically referred to one of their members telling me about often seeing W.E.B. Dubois walking down the street over there—and I actually pointed to the spot. I then expressed my awe at those present having had such an experience.

I began the content of the talk by pointing out the controversial nature of John Brown and the fact that many of his biographers, both proponents and detractors spend little time discussing the subject that most obsessed Brown himself—slavery. I suggested that Harpers Ferry is an appropriate place to address that subject. I then described the standard demographics and participation of enslaved and free African-Americans in the economic and social life of the town before the Civil War. I continued to say there is more to the story than the

general descriptions—real people were enslaved and real free African-Americans were involved in the struggle.

Then I tell them the story of Isaac Gilbert who was able to buy his own time from his owner, Susan Harding and subsequently wanted to purchase the freedom of his wife and children who were owned by Dr. Logie. Dr. Logie agreed to sell them to Isaac for \$1,400. However, an enslaved person could not purchase another enslaved person, so Isaac had to rely on the town's mayor, Fontaine Beckham to make the purchase for him and own his family until he, Isaac, could buy his own freedom. The Isaac Gilbert story picks up again later in the program as Fontaine Beckham is killed by Brown's men and Isaac Gilbert's family is thus given their freedom, Isaac worked for the Union Army during the Civil War and he and his family lived in Harpers Ferry in 1870 (Jefferson County Court House, Jefferson County Will Book 16&17, p. 142; Stealey article; Freedman's Bureau Records; copies at Harpers Ferry National Historical Park library; United States Census, 1870).

I also tell the story of John Douglas whom was a free African-American living with a prominent citizen of the town, Philip Coons. Douglas was married to enslaved women, Fanny. They had a son, John. Philip Coons owned both Fanny and the child. Coons needed money in 1855 and offered to sell Fanny and her son to John Douglas for \$1,000. Douglas was able to make the purchase with the help of Coons who secured a loan for Douglas for \$600. Douglas had to put Fanny and his son up as collateral to secure the loan. Douglas was able to pay the debt and free his wife and child within a year (Jefferson County Court House, Jefferson County Deed Book 35, p.128-129; Jefferson County Deed Book 36 p. 216-217).

Then I move on to John Brown through the story of one of his men, Dangerfield Newby. Newby was an ex-enslaved person in his forties who attempted to purchase the freedom of his wife and six children. His wife's owner changed the price at the last minute. Newby had tried to work within the system and failed. As a result, he chose to fight with John Brown against the institution. I use his story as a centerpiece for a brief narration of the Raid. Newby was killed in the fighting and angry whites mutilated his body. With this audience, I am not as graphic in my descriptions of the mutilation. With primarily white audiences I am more graphic and tell those audiences so in order to demonstrate the passion and fear of the white citizens of the town.

I ended the program by describing and quoting a speech of Frederick Douglass's to Storer College in 1881. My program took place at the same location as Douglass's speech and, of course, I referred to that. Douglass eloquently described John Brown's actions as starting the Civil War and leading to the destruction of slavery.

I provided opportunities for intellectual connections by illustrating the resistance of enslaved people to the institution with specific humanizing stories. I hope those stories provoked an understanding of how the stories of oppression and hopelessness are important to remember and provide greater power to stories of endurance, resistance, and victory. I provided opportunities for emotional connections by appealing to nostalgia, referring inspirational figures like Frederick Douglass, conjuring a connection with our physical space and the past, and with the hope and pain exemplified by the stories of enslaved and free African-Americans.