

**TEL Broadcast – Effective Interpretive Writing
Interpretive Development Program
February 24, 2006 12:00-4:00 PM EST
Participant Materials**

(TEL POC's -- please make sure that participants at your site receive this information)

Contents of this packet:

I. Writing examples that will be used in the broadcast – please print these and have them with you on the day of the broadcast:

Example #1 – *An Ordinary Piece of Rock* (1 page)

Example #2 – *Seasons of the Dogsled* (1 page)

Example #3 – *Sea Turtles Data Sheet/The Last Hatchling* (2 pages)

Example #4 – *Spirit of a Nation* (1 page)

Example #5 – *Tradition and Transformation* (1 page)

Example #6 – *Comparative Writing Samples – Information to Interpretation* (1 page)

II. Links to pre-session reading assignments – we recommend that you review these materials prior to attending the broadcast:

The Interpretive Process Model

<http://www.nps.gov/idp/interp/101/ProcessMod.doc>

Opportunities for Intellectual and Emotional Connections

<http://www.nps.gov/idp/interp/101/ConnectionOps.doc>

Interpretive Themes

<http://www.nps.gov/idp/interp/101/themes.pdf>

III. Links to other useful references – explore on your own:

Handles – A Survey of Interpretive Techniques

<http://www.nps.gov/idp/interp/handlesupdate.pdf>

Interpretive Writing Developmental Worksheet

<http://www.nps.gov/idp/interp/230/230wrksheet.pdf>

NPS Editorial Style Guide

<http://www.nps.gov/hfc/pdf/nps-style-guide.pdf>

The Process Model Tutorial

<http://interp.eppley.org/>

NOTE: If you are not familiar with the foundational material in IDP Module 101, *Fulfilling the NPS Mission – The Process of Interpretation*, we recommend a review of the module outlines at the following web link: <http://www.nps.gov/idp/interp/101/module.htm>

Or you may wish to review this material in-depth in the workbook entitled “Meaningful Interpretation,” edited by David Larsen. Each park received a copy of this book in 2004. The following link contains information about purchasing additional copies: <http://www.easternnational.org/meaningful.htm>

An Ordinary Piece of Rock

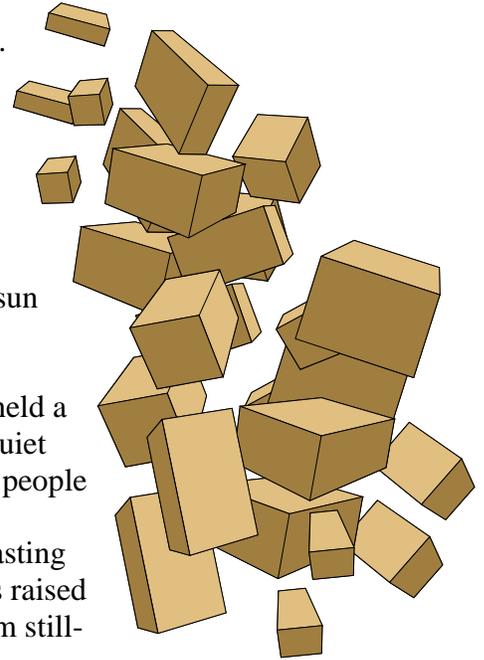
Frank Sierra, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

At first it looks like an ordinary piece of rock encrusted with mud. But expert hands remove the earth from its form and the archeologist sees this is not an everyday find. The ground releases a symbol of divinity from an age gone by.

After careful cleaning the carving placed on a table for study and analysis stands like a little green man from space, gazing coldly forward. It's been centuries since the light and the warmth of the sun has bathed his face.

Shaped of precious jade and only several inches high, he once beheld a glorious civilization. His expression is mute, but powerful. This quiet sentinel is as ancient as time itself—a survivor and testament to a people long past. What has he seen? What wonders of ancient Aztec civilization did he witness? Perhaps he smells maize or chilies roasting over charcoal embers or maybe he hears the throaty roar of voices raised in wild approval at the daily spectacle of human hearts ripped from still-breathing sacrifices to honor the sun god, Quetzocotal.

He has traveled through time, and now gazes serenely at us. Surely he'll spend years in a museum, but will his travels cease with our modern success? What if our ways change and our buildings tumble? Will another set of expert hands free him again as they wonder about what he saw in our times?



Season of the Dogsled

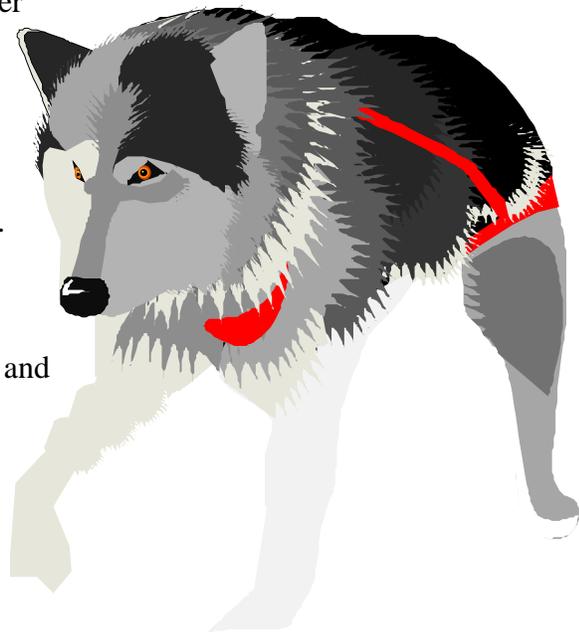
John Morris, National Park Service

Each year, as the dog mushing season comes to a close, thousands of enthusiasts celebrate the success of a true Alaska tradition. Certainly, as any Iditarod race veteran will tell you, there are no losers with dog teams. Just being in the race is a measure of success. Win or lose the dogsled and the team pulling it symbolize how simplicity and teamwork characterize life in the Alaskan wilderness.

Sliding across the frozen landscape behind a sled-dog team evokes a pristine image of life on the last frontier. This historic transport is simplicity in motion. Imagine living deep in the winter wilderness nestled in total freedom from the trappings of complicated technologies. Your vehicle, made from the natural materials around you, is easy to maintain and repair. Your canine partners don't require fossil fuels, just food and encouragement. Together with you, they travel along in peaceful quiet; nothing but their breathing and the padding of feet in snow disturb the air or mark your passing. They happily sustain you in a lifestyle rich in natural tradition.

Comfort is also afforded by the knowledge that each member of the team has a unique but interconnected role in your mutual survival. The wheel dogs, just in front of the sled, possess skill and strength, and control the team's collective power, keeping the team from jerking the sled out of control. The lead dogs keep the team fully extended, responding to your commands and assuring the team stays on the right trail. Every other dog in the team pulls in unison to maintain a smooth, harmonious rhythm. And the dogsled itself, in its simple craftsmanship is flexible, yet sturdy as it accommodates whatever trail conditions come along. Under your watchful eye, weariness, injuries, changes in weather, changes in direction are carefully managed to keep the group safe and well prepared for each new challenge. To be effective, each part of the team must cooperate. To be successful, they must be in tune.

Life in the Alaskan wilderness sings with the beauty of simplicity. Warmth, strength, health, and a significant place within the community make life succeed. The dogsled, together with the team that pulls it, is a reminder that when roles are honored, it won't matter if other teams are in front or behind. The race is won.



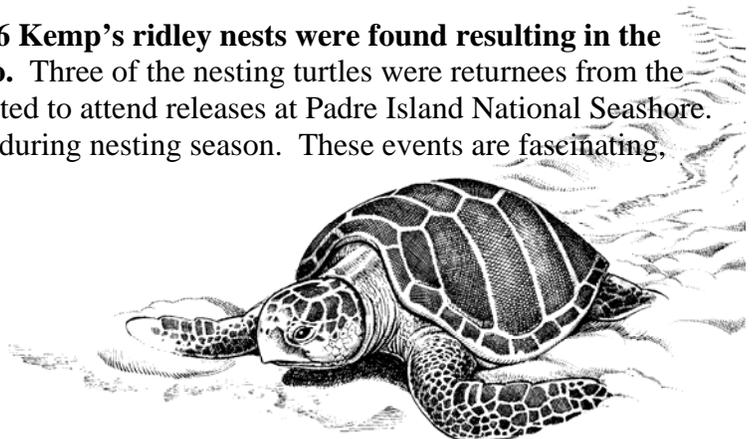
Kemp's Ridley Sea Turtle Program **Data Sheet**

The Kemp's ridley sea turtle, *Lepidochelys kempii*, is the smallest of the five species of sea turtles found in the Gulf of Mexico (others include loggerhead, green, hawksbill, and leatherback). It has an average length of 23 to 27.5 inches and average weight of 100 pounds. This sea turtle is the only one with an almost circular upper shell. The young are dark gray in color but change as they mature. Adults are olive green above and yellow below. Their diet consists mostly of crabs. The Kemp's ridley adult's range is chiefly in the Gulf of Mexico, but immature turtles, probably carried by the currents, often appear along the Atlantic coast as far north as New England and Nova Scotia. Their nests consist of 80-100 eggs with an average of around 100.

The species' primary nesting ground is on the beach near Rancho Nuevo, Tamaulipas, Mexico. To help insure their survival in the event of a disaster effecting the beach, the governments of the US and Mexico joined together to establish a second nesting beach at Padre Island National Seashore. Kemp's were known to nest on the island sporadically. During each summer from 1978 to 1988 approximately 2,000 Kemp's ridley eggs were transported from Rancho Nuevo to the National Seashore. Here they were incubated and the hatchlings were temporarily released into the water. They were then recaptured and transported to a facility near Galveston, Texas. The young turtles were raised until they were a year old. This effort was called the "head start" program. This program enhanced their survival rate by releasing young turtles that were too big for most predators to eat as opposed to the natural process in which only one out of every one hundred hatchlings survive to maturity. Hopes were high that because the Kemp's ridley always returns to the beach of its birth for its own nesting, that the turtles would return to Padre Island National Seashore as adults. This is where the hatchlings were first released into the water and "imprinted" with a memory of the island. Of the 22,507 eggs received, 17,358 (77.1%) hatched and 13,454 turtles were released into the Gulf of Mexico after 9 to 11 months of head starting. From 1979 to 1996, seventeen Kemp's ridley nests were documented along the Texas coast, most of which were found at the National Seashore. Two of the nests found in 1996 were from turtles that had "living tags" and had been incubated at the National Seashore. In 1997 nine Kemp's ridley nests were located on the Texas coast. Seven of these were found on North Padre Island (including the National Seashore), one on Mustang Island, and one on South Padre Island. Visitors to the island located five of the nests, while National Seashore employees were able to examine only three nesting turtles. None of the turtles in 1997 had any tags or markings linking them to the program. In 1998, 13 Kemp's ridley nests were located and 800 hatchlings released. Three had living tags identifying them as "head start" turtles released over 10 years ago.

During the nesting season of 1999, a total of 16 Kemp's ridley nests were found resulting in the release of 1,237 turtles into the Gulf of Mexico. Three of the nesting turtles were returnees from the original "head start" program. The public is invited to attend releases at Padre Island National Seashore. Most releases occur between March and August during nesting season. These events are fascinating, educational, and entertaining for all ages.

The Hatchling Hotline
(361) 949-7163



The Last Hatchling

The moment at a sea turtle release when the last Kemp's ridley hatchling of a clutch makes its first contact with the Gulf is exhilarating. The crowd cheers and bursts out in applause as they watch the surf snatch the infant from the security of the release and into its new world. For an hour or more dozens of people have lined the shore, fascinated by the trials of maybe a hundred two-inch long turtles struggling over fifty feet of sand and seaweed, desperately trying to reach the water before being whisked away by a hungry gull. The disappearance of the last hatchling into the turbulent surf signals another chance that the species will survive. If all 100 hatchlings were to survive to adulthood, the entire adult population of the species (estimated at 7,500 turtles) would increase by about 1.5%. Unfortunately, out of the hundred released maybe five will make it to maturity.

It is ironic that for a quiet, innocuous sea turtle, life is a constant solitary battle against the world. From the moment of birth sea turtles are on their own. The mother turtle comes ashore long enough to dig a nest, lay her eggs, and cover them up. She then goes immediately back into the water. Because she is facing away from the nest as she lays the eggs and buries them with her rear flippers, the mother never sees her own young. For the next 45-60 days the eggs lay waiting either to hatch or to be discovered by a coyote, raccoon, or other opportunistic predator. Once hatched, the infants must dig their way through about a foot of sand to reach the surface and crawl up to a hundred feet to reach the Gulf. Some are not strong enough to reach the surface and die in the nest. The ones that do reach the surface must now, if there are no coyotes or raccoons present, face other predators: gulls and crabs. A flock of gulls could decimate a sea turtle clutch in a few minutes. Crabs will either drag a hatchling into their burrows or go about snipping the tendons in the front flippers of several hatchlings leaving them immobile until the crab can return and feed at leisure. It is believed that once in the water, the survivors strike out for the floating mats of seaweed in the Gulf. Along the way, many will be lost to marine predators. Once in the mats they will hide and feed on the small animal life they find until about a year old and too big for most predators to eat. Then they leave the seaweed to forage around the Gulf and (sometimes) the Atlantic, for the rest of their lives.

Of course, humans may interrupt this cycle anywhere along the way for either good or bad. For the most part, humans have interrupted to the sea turtle's detriment. In some countries, people may rob nests in order to sell the eggs at market. However, a primary cause of unnatural death among Kemp's ridleys is believed to be drowning in shrimping nets. Sea turtles are reptiles and must breathe air. If they are entangled in a net for too long, they drown. Humans may also bring about the death of Kemp's ridley and other sea turtles by other means, including dumping garbage into the Gulf of Mexico or into rivers and streams that flow to the Gulf. If sea turtles become entangled in discarded nets or six-pack rings or if they mistake enough garbage for prey, they may die.

But people may also help the Kemp's ridley to survive. Governmental and private organizations have sprung up to help sea turtles survive in the modern world. At Padre Island National Seashore, the National Park Service has teamed up with another federal agency, the U.S. Geological Survey, and private companies to study and help restore the Kemp's ridley to the Gulf. During the sea turtle nesting season, which runs from late March through August, volunteers and staff biological technicians patrol the shoreline searching for sea turtle nests. The eggs are incubated at the seashore and the hatchlings released. If we are lucky enough to find a nesting mother, she is examined, tagged, and released the same day. Different types of tags may be used, but if the budget permits, a radio transmitter will be placed on her back so that her travels around the Gulf may be studied via satellite relay.

Kemp's ridley sea turtles are only one of the five Gulf of Mexico sea turtle species and 491 other animals on the federal Endangered Species list as of May 31, 2000. Therefore, the disappearance of the last hatchling into the surf signals something else as well: another chance for the vanishing wildlife of North America to survive.

Park Newspaper Article – North Cascades National Park

Spirit of a Nation

The images we link to the bald eagle are wild and sacred ones. Soaring birds ride the air currents swift as thought and graceful as a breeze. As our national symbol the bald eagle embodies much that we hold to be good and admirable in ourselves. It is a bird full of power and beauty. Its scavenger habits make it a proud survivor. The freedom expressed by a bald eagle on the wing is envied and admired by all.

It is no surprise then that these birds attract a lot of human attention whenever they visit an area in large numbers. The Skagit River is one of these places, attracting one of the largest winter gatherings of bald eagles in the contiguous United States. They travel here from places such as British Columbia and Alaska to take advantage of the late run of fall chum salmon. The spawned-out salmon carcasses are a desired commodity for bald eagles trying to eat enough food to sustain themselves through the winter. The bald eagles in turn provide a much needed service, cleansing the river of decaying remains, and returning the nutrients stored in the fish to the land.

The United States is not the first nation to hold the bald eagle in high regard. Many nations of Native American people viewed this awe inspiring raptor as a sacred being, and a much loved teacher of the lessons of life. When a bald eagle was seen flying at great heights it seemed at times to disappear into the sun, to “touch the heavens.” Hence the belief prevailed that they could provide a connection for the earthbound people to the spirit realms. The possession of a sacred bald eagle feather is considered a privilege, and perhaps even a mark of courage and honor. *Note: a permit is required for possession of feathers of any bird of prey, including bald eagles.*

There is much to admire about the bald eagle. The Skagit River is fortunate indeed to host this splendid bird in such large numbers every winter. It does not bring just its physical presence to this already rich and diverse area. It also bears the spirit of many nations.

Tradition and Transformation

Michele Simmons, National Park Service

Though change is a constant part of the human experience, we rarely embrace it. Change can often be uncomfortable or even frightening, whether it is personal as in the aging process, or cultural as when two or more age-old civilizations suddenly interact for the first time. Southeast Alaska native peoples have dealt with many changes both before and after foreigners first entered their lands. Though the Southeast cultures value long-established tradition and highly formalized protocol, some cultural elements provide insight into the nature of change in all life. In fact, the totem poles displayed in Sitka National Historical Park, well-known symbols of Southeast Alaska Indian culture, speak of rebirth following change.



The life of a totem pole begins with a particularly difficult form of change – death. In order to carve a pole a tree, usually cedar, must be felled. Southeast cultures hold that objects in the natural world have a life and spirit of their own. Consequently, the taking of the life of the tree must be accomplished with utmost respect. Ceremonial protocol is followed before the tree is cut. Songs are sung with dignity and speeches are made praising and thanking the tree for its sacrifice. Only then is the tree cut.

The death of the tree, while it may seem final, is really just the beginning of a dramatic transformation. Day by day, a master carver wielding an adze will carefully remove chips of wood to coax from the log images of animals, people, and legendary creatures. For his skill the carver will be highly paid and greatly honored. After several months the change will be nearly complete. A finely crafted totem pole will be ready for placement.

The raising and dedication of a new totem pole occasions another dramatic change. A community comes together with fanfare, ceremony, and protocol to install the pole in its place. During the ceremony a transformation is effected. Once the pole is dedicated it becomes more than just an expensive, commissioned object. Tradition holds that it is a living being, infused with its own spirit, sometimes represented by a spirit face included in the design. When asked how much a particular totem pole was worth, one modern Tlingit responded, “How can you put a price on a life? It is priceless.”

Like the cedar tree, the Southeast Alaska Indian culture has seen times of change that sometimes appeared dismal. Not long ago, the practice of totem pole carving was in danger of being lost as master carvers passed away without opportunity to pass on their skills. Recently however, there has been a rebirth of the art of totem pole carving as well as many other aspects of Southeast culture. The Southeast Alaska Indian Cultural Center is one organization that is fostering native arts and providing a place where master craftspeople can teach their skills to the next generation of artisans. Located in the Visitor Center of Sitka NHP, the cultural center also provides an opportunity for visitors to watch, interact with, and be inspired by these local artists. There master carver Tommy Joseph still passes on the craft of totem pole carving, creating new poles that remind us that change, even frightening change, can be transforming.

COMPARATIVE WRITING SAMPLES – Information to Interpretation

Intended Audience: NPS employees attending a training session at Mather Training Center

This building, Anthony Hall, was re-built to its present edifice in 1881 from an old federal armory quarters. It became the main structure on the campus of Storer College, one of the first institutions of higher learning for African Americans established at the close of the Civil War. As primarily a “normal school,” or teachers’ college, Storer College operated until 1955. In 1962, the National Park Service acquired the campus and its remaining structures as the site of a new training facility for park rangers. Anthony Hall, re-named Wirth Hall, underwent extensive remodeling to become the main building of the Stephen T. Mather Training Center.

This building, Anthony Hall, represents the freedom to learn. Re-built in 1881 to its present edifice from an old federal armory quarters, it became the main structure on the campus of Storer College, one of the first institutions of higher learning established for African Americans at the close of the Civil War. As the years went by, Storer College served primarily as a teacher’s college for those to whom the freedom to learn had once been denied. Following the closure of Storer College in 1955, Anthony Hall stood vacant for only a few years before its legacy as a place of learning was restored. In 1962 the National Park Service acquired the campus and buildings as the site of a new training facility for park rangers. Since its establishment, Mather Training Center has provided learning opportunities for many Park Service employees from every career field.

Welcome to Anthony Hall, a symbol of the freedom to learn! Re-built in 1881 to its present edifice from an old federal armory quarters, it became the main structure on the campus of Storer College, one of the first institutions of higher learning established for African Americans at the close of the Civil War. Imagine not being allowed to learn to read or write, or even own a book! This was the lot of most enslaved people prior to the war. For these people, to whom the freedom to learn had once been denied, Storer College became a place of hope and opportunity. So it seems appropriate that as the years went by, Storer remained primarily a teacher’s college. Storer graduates could freely choose to take from this place what they had learned and share it with others – to bring the freedom to learn to others.

Following many years of service, Storer College finally closed in 1955 due to financial needs. However, Anthony Hall stood vacant for only a few years before its legacy as a place of learning was restored. In 1962, the National Park Service acquired the campus and buildings as the site of a new training facility for park rangers. Since its establishment, Mather Training Center has provided learning opportunities for many Park Service employees from every career field. They have left this place with an opportunity to use and share what they have learned in support of the NPS mission to preserve and protect other special places like Anthony Hall for the benefit of future generations.

By your attendance at a training course here, you become a part of the legacy of old Anthony Hall. Like your student counterparts from post-Civil War years, you also have the freedom to choose what you will do with what you learn here. How will you carry forward the tradition of “higher learning” from this place?