

Prepare and Present an Effective Interpretive Talk (module 103)

*Defining Interpretive Success:
Assessment Rubric*



Prepare and Present an
Effective Interpretive Talk

Demonstrates certification standards: The interpretive presentation is . . .

1) successful as a catalyst in creating opportunities for the audience to form their own intellectual and emotional connections with meanings/significance inherent in the resource;
AND . . .

Demonstrates certification standards: The interpretive presentation is . . .

2) appropriate for the audience, and provides a clear focus for their connection with the resource(s) by demonstrating the cohesive development of a relevant idea or ideas, rather than relying primarily on a recital of a chronological narrative or a series of related facts.

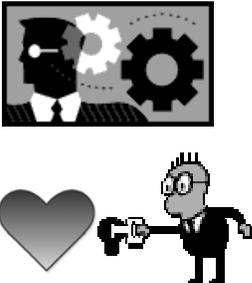


1) Successful as a **Catalyst ...**

Dictionary definition of catalyst: "One that precipitates a process or event . . ."



- 1) successful as a catalyst **in creating opportunities for the audience**



- 1) successful as a catalyst in creating opportunities for the audience **to form their own intellectual and emotional connections**

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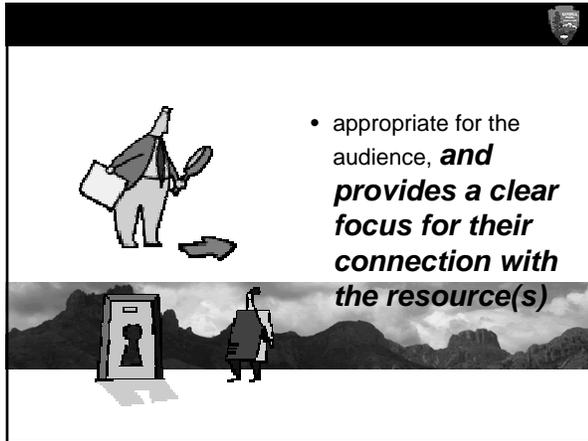
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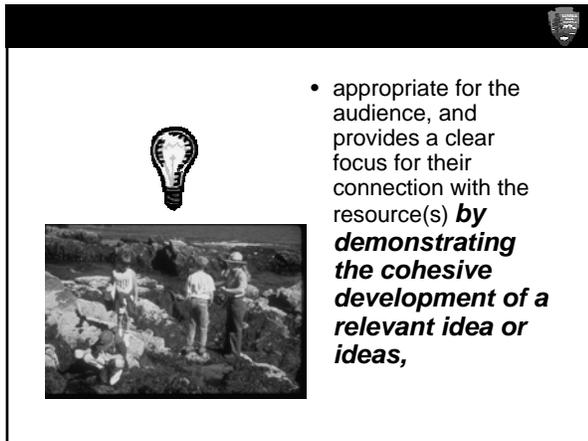
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• appropriate for the audience, **and provides a clear focus for their connection with the resource(s)**



• appropriate for the audience, and provides a clear focus for their connection with the resource(s) **by demonstrating the cohesive development of a relevant idea or ideas,**

Lyndon Baines Johnson was born on August 27, 1908, near Stonewall, Texas. His parents were Sam and Rebekah Johnson. When he was five years old, the family moved to Johnson City...



• appropriate for the audience, and provides a clear focus for their connection with the resource(s) by demonstrating the cohesive development of a relevant idea or ideas, **rather than relying primarily on a recital of a chronological narrative or a series of related facts.**

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1) successful as a catalyst in creating opportunities for the audience to form their own intellectual and emotional connections with meanings/significance inherent in the resource;

AND

2) appropriate for the audience, and provides a clear focus for their connection with the resource(s) by demonstrating the cohesive development of a relevant idea or ideas, rather than relying primarily on a recital of a chronological narrative or a series of related facts.

What Interpretation Is...

What does the National Park Service preserve?.....

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- Resources (mountains, bison, Liberty Bell, Civil War artifacts, etc.) and all of their associated meanings (beauty, survival, history, bravery, etc.)

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- Resources (mountains, bison, Liberty Bell, Civil War artifacts, etc.) and all of their associated meanings (beauty, survival, history, bravery, etc.)
- Resources possess *meanings and have relevance.*

Why do visitors come to parks?.....

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- Recreation, education, tradition, refuge, research, fun, etc.

Why do visitors come to parks?.....

- Recreation, education, tradition, refuge, research, fun, etc.
- To find *something of value to themselves*.

What is the job of interpreters? Of interpretation?

What is the job of interpreters? Of interpretation?

➤ Facilitate a connection between the *interests of the visitors* and the *meanings of the resource*.

Knowledge of Resource (KR)

- Do your homework. Know information, facts, statistics, etc. (tangibles).
- Understanding of resource meanings and significance (intangibles).

 Evaluating Types of Sources:
What information sources are at your park?

- **Primary** – Original, first-hand accounts.
What are primary sources at your park?
- **Secondary** – A step removed from, and usually based on, primary sources. Subject matter experts.
- **Tertiary** – “Hand-me-down” Information (a.k.a. “ranger lore”).

Knowledge of Resource (KR)
Evaluating Information Sources

Is it accepted – Would other professionals value this source?

Accurate – Is the information accurate?

Current – Is the information STILL accurate?

Thorough – Is important information left out?

Objective – Does the information convey opinion?

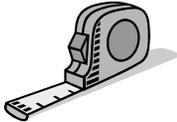
Important Site Specific Sources

- **Enabling legislation**

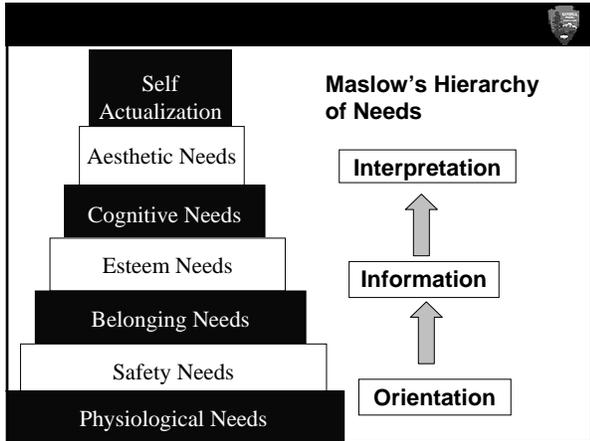
NPS Publications:

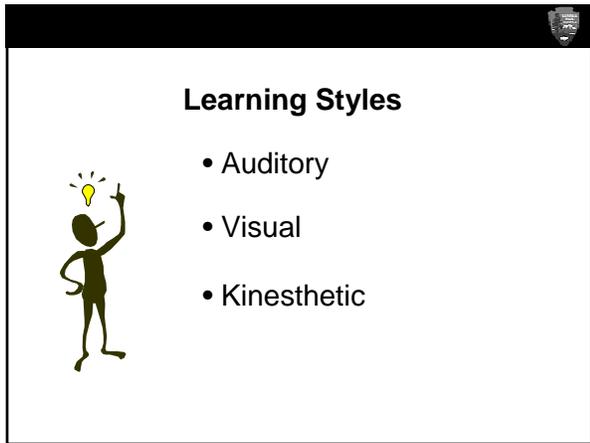
- **Park brochures**
- **General Management Plans**
- **Long Range Interpretive Plans**
- **Comprehensive Interpretive Plans**
- **Historic Resource Studies**
- **Cultural Landscape Reports**

Knowledge of the Audience



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“Know thyself”then let it go.

"Know thyself"....then let it go.

- Be aware that most people are NOT like you.
- People have different values, personality, perspective or experiences.
- These influence not only the meanings and significance they ascribe to resources, but also how they relate to the flow of the program and the techniques used.

"Visitors' Bill of Rights"

Visitors have a right to:

- Have their privacy and independence respected.
- Retain and express their own values.
- Be treated with courtesy and consideration.
- Receive accurate and balanced information.

Techniques Well Suited for Interpretive Talks

Techniques Well Suited for Interpretive Talks:

- Those that involve voice/speech characteristics: tone, volume, rate of speech, voice variation, silence, etc.
- Those that involve language skills: analogy, metaphor, simile, testimony, description, irony, humor, examples, word play, story, rhyme, etc.

Techniques Well Suited for Interpretive Talks:

- Those that involve passive group participation: song, photographs, props, questioning, etc.

Techniques Not So Well Suited for Interpretive Talks

Techniques *Not So Well Suited* for Interpretive Talks:

- Those that involve active group participation: role playing, activity, games, etc.
- Depends on the situation!

Intellectual Opportunities provoke or inspire... *learning, insight, discovery, revelation, understanding, relationships, cause & effect, wisdom, reasoning, perceptiveness, comprehension, cognition, awareness, knowledge, recognition, enlightenment, comprehension, mindfulness...*

Emotional Opportunities provoke or inspire... *awe, wonder, sympathy, admiration, sorrow, curiosity, amazement, empathy, fright, regret, grief, anger, horror, surprise, respect, frustration, apprehension, rage, reverence, joy, satisfaction, comfort, pride, gratitude, concern, envy, delight...*



Cotton Shirt Talk

Opportunities for ***Intellectual Connections*** to meanings of cotton shirt. The talk may have provided opportunities for:

- insight into the “unholy alliance” between northern mill owners (“Lords of the loom”) and southern plantation owners (“Lords of the lash”).
- understanding of the cause and effect regarding how improved technology—primarily the cotton gin—created an increased demand for cotton and for slavery.



Cotton Shirt Talk

Opportunities for ***Intellectual Connections*** to meanings of cotton shirt. The talk may have provided opportunities for:

- discovery of how important and extensive cotton production and textile mill manufacturing were to the American economy of 1860.
- provocation to think about the relationship between the shirt on an audience member’s back to the workers that made the shirt and how similar or different it is today than in ante-bellum America.



Cotton Shirt Talk

Opportunities for ***Emotional Connections*** to meanings of cotton shirt. The talk may have provided opportunities to feel:

- compassion for the anguish and pain that slaves must have felt while working in the cotton fields.
- empathy for factory workers who make clothing today.
- shame and remorse over the exploitation of slaves in mid-nineteenth century industrial America.



Relevant Ideas

- Relevant to the **meanings and significance of the resource**—related to why the park (or other tangible resource) is special and important.
- Relevant to the **life experience of the visitor** (universal concepts are the best at fostering connections for audiences).



Relevance and Lyndon B. Johnson's Reconstructed Birthplace

- **Relevance to national significance:**
The LBJ Ranch was the “homeplace” of President Johnson. There, he was born, lived first years and last years, worked as president, died, and was buried. His sense of identity was closely linked to his “homeplace” in the Texas Hill Country. Symbolically, LBJ rebuilt his birthplace house.



Relevance and Lyndon B. Johnson's Reconstructed Birthplace

- **Relevance to audience:**
Everyone is influenced by their childhood “homeplaces.” By learning about and gaining a feeling for LBJ’s homeplace and its importance to our understanding of him, hopefully visitors will be provoked to ponder their own intellectual and emotional connections to their childhood homeplaces.

Cohesive development?

How are the opportunities arranged, ordered or sequenced?

Do all the opportunities support or contribute to the development of the central idea?





Interpretive Theme Statement:

LBJ's reconstructed birthplace symbolizes the important role that "homeplaces" have in establishing and maintaining a person's sense of identity.



Interpretive Theme Statement as described by a reviewer:

LBJ's homeplace played a major role in shaping his sense of identity.

Battle of Gettysburg Talk
Possible Relevant Ideas:

- Gettysburg was the scene of bravery, devotion, suffering, and sacrifice.
- A famous phrase from an oft-repeated speech can mean something powerful.
- **The stories of a Union and a Confederate soldier at Gettysburg represent the tragic meaning of the phrase “the last full measure of devotion.”**

Program Goals & Objectives:

Foundation on which an Interpretive Program is built.



What is your topic?

- Subject of your talk.
- Usually one or two words.

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Topic:

- Horseshoe crabs

What are the goal(s) of your talk?

- What do you hope to accomplish?
- What change(s) do you hope will occur in audience members' minds (opinion, philosophy)?
- Broad concepts, using general terms.
- Not necessarily communicated directly to the audience.

Goals:

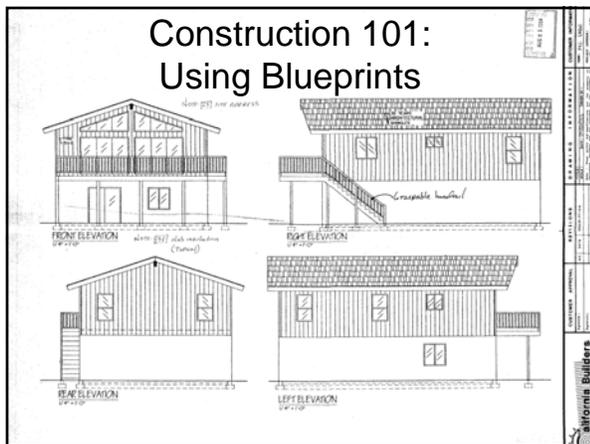
- To inspire a sense of wonder or awe regarding a creature that has been on the earth since the age of the dinosaur.
- To enlighten audience members regarding the multiple roles or uses of the HSC.
- To encourage a sense of stewardship toward HSCs.

What are the objective(s) of your talk?

- Specific, measurable statement(s) of what audience members should be able to do after attending your program.
- Statement(s) that measures whether you are helping to move audience members toward your goal(s).

Objectives:

- Audience members will be able to describe the length of geologic time that HSCs have been a known species.
- Audience members will be able to list three "roles" or "uses" of HSCs.
- Audience members will be able to describe one thing that they can do to help in HSC conservation.





Sarah L. Winchester
(1837–1922)

- Widow of William Winchester and heir to the Winchester Repeating Arms Company fortune
- Began construction at Winchester House in 1884
- Construction continued 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year until September 5, 1922



Photo courtesy Winchester Mystery House, San Jose, CA.

Interesting Features

- 160 Rooms
- Bedrooms: 40
- Fireplaces: 47
- Chimneys: 17 (with evidence of 2 others)
- Windows: frames 1,257, approx. 10,000; including a window in the floor



Photo courtesy Winchester Mystery House, San Jose, CA.

More Interesting Features

- Number of staircases: 40,
- Doorways 467 approx., 950 doors not including cabinet doors.
- Gallons of paint required for entire home: over 20,000
- Blueprints available: None.



Photo courtesy Winchester Mystery House, San Jose, CA.

Mrs. Winchester never had a master set of blueprints, but did sketch out individual rooms on paper and even tablecloths!

The Result



Photo courtesy Winchester Mystery House, San Jose, CA.

Blueprints for Interpretive Programs

Why do we organize?

Building a well designed interpretive program requires planning and vision of the end product, just like building a well designed house requires blueprints.

Results of Poorly Organized Talks:

- Audiences probably won't learn as much
- Too little organization can diminish the interpretive impact
- Audience can become confused and uncomfortable with a program that opens doors that lead nowhere and closes windows that would provide enlightenment.

Results of Poorly Organized Talks:

- Too complex of an organization can be hard for the audience to follow
- Audience probably won't make intellectual or emotional connections to the meanings and significance of the resource

A Well Organized Talk

What's in it for me?

- Helps me stay on track.
- Helps get me back on track.
- Provide the interpreter with confidence (when you know *where* you're going and *how* you're going to get there, you can reach your destination)

A Well Organized Talk

What's in it for audience members?

- Helps them follow your train of thought, thus enhancing the development of a relevant idea.
- Maximizes interpretive opportunities for audience members to make intellectual and emotional connections to the meanings and significance of the resource
- The audience is likely to remember the main idea(s) of a well organized talk versus a poorly organized talk

Organizational Methods

- Traditional outline – I. A. 1. a.
I. I. Main Idea.
 - A. Supporting Idea
 - B. Supporting Idea, etc.
- Graphing outline – Tangible/Intangible using x and y axis
- Mind mapping – “circles and arrows” on a sheet of paper

Organizational Methods

- Block Outline – with index cards
- Circle of Development – Consider the program as the outline of a clock face with interpretive opportunities developed at different times around it with the central theme as interior circle.
- Interpretive Process Model

Every Program Needs...

- Introduction
 - It is the foundation upon which the program is built (foundation).
- Body
 - Offers support and gives structure to the program (walls).
- Conclusion
 - Tops off the program and ties everything together (roof).

Every Program Needs...

- Tangible/Intangible Links developed into Interpretive Opportunities
- Transitions
- Cohesive Development of Relevant Idea or Ideas

Every Interpretive Program Needs...

Opportunities for visitors to form their own intellectual and emotional connections to the resource.

Interpretive opportunities are like doors and windows in a house, they don't just happen. You must plan for them in the design stage.

Introductions have three purposes:

1. to create a favorable atmosphere for the talk
2. to stimulate interest in the subject – A “pow” to capture the audience’s interest
3. to establish the relevant idea or ideas

Introduction

- Introduce Yourself
- State name of park or agency as appropriate
- Safety Hazards (if any)
- Announcements – e.g. How long the talk will be
- Introduce the Relevant Idea or Ideas

How to establish interest and introduce your relevant idea?

- Asking a stimulating question
- Asking a series of questions
- Beginning with an unusual statement
- Beginning with an illustration or narrative
- Beginning with humor (if related to talk)
- Beginning with a provocative quotation
- Relating a pertinent personal experience
- Referring to a problem
- Referring to the occasion

Body of the Talk is developed by:

- supporting the relevant idea or ideas with explanation, reasoning, evidence, analogy, etc.
- dividing the relevant idea or ideas into main and subordinate headings and arranging them into an organized pattern
- building toward a disclosure of the relevant idea

Interpretive Talk can be arranged by:

- Simple-to-complex
- Specific to broad; broad to specific
- Problem solution
- Chronological sequence (Time-order)
- Logical (step-by-step) order
- Location-order
- Cause-to-effect and effect-to-cause
- Familiar-to-unfamiliar
- Predict outline
- And others!

Body of Talk

- **REMEMBER:** The body of the talk should develop the relevant idea or ideas and be organized around a **few main points** (and keep in mind your previously identified program objectives).

Using Presentation Techniques to Keep the Audience's Interest

Forecasting, Trip-hammers,
Juxtaposition, U-Turn,
Descriptive Words, Gestures,
Recapitulate, Quotations, Pictures,
Primary documents, Questioning

Transitions

- Establish the relationship between the preceding idea with the following idea
- Provide a smooth flow to the presentation

Conclusion

- summarizes or ends with a relevant idea
- gives you a target to aim for as you speak
- helps you maintain self-confidence
- makes the final impression on your audience
- may indicate a course of desired action
- clearly ends the talk
- may include a preservation or conservation message
- may include a quotation or other dramatic ending

“Measure Twice, Cut Once”

Some things to think about:

- What do I know about my topic/relevant idea(s)?
- What do visitors know?
- What do I think visitors should know/ understand/connect to in this talk?
- What can I reasonably accomplish in a talk?
- What supporting ideas further develop the talk’s relevant idea(s)?





The Interpretive Process Model

1. Select a tangible place, object, person, or event that you want the audience to care about.



The Interpretive Process Model

2. Identify intangible meanings.

birth, death, genetics,
food, hope, forest,
growth, time, evolution,
mountain culture,
habitat, foraging, etc.

The Interpretive Process Model

3. Identify universal concepts.

birth, death, food,
growth, time, evolution

The Interpretive Process Model

4. Identify audience.



The Interpretive Process Model

5. Write a theme statement—include a universal concept.

Each acorn represents the very breadth of time.

The Interpretive Process Model

6. Use interpretive methods to develop links into opportunities for connections to meanings. Illustrate the theme statement.

Opportunity #1 from link: acorn-time, the present.

Acorns represent the present.

Anecdote and mental imagery.

The Interpretive Process Model

6. Use interpretive methods to develop links into opportunities for connections to meanings. Illustrate the theme statement.

Opportunity # 2 from link: acorn-time, the past;

Acorns represent the past.

Reflection, speculation, questions.

The Interpretive Process Model

6. Use interpretive methods to develop links into opportunities for connections to meanings. Illustrate the theme statement.

Opportunity #3 from link: acorn-time, the future;
Acorns represent the future.
Comparison-contrast, imagery, reflection.

The Interpretive Process Model

6. Use interpretive methods to develop links into opportunities for connections to meanings. Illustrate the theme statement.

Opportunity #4 from link: acorn-time;
Acorns represent the breadth of time.
Description, simile, quotation.

The Interpretive Process Model

6. Use interpretive methods to develop links into opportunities for connections to meanings. Illustrate the theme statement.

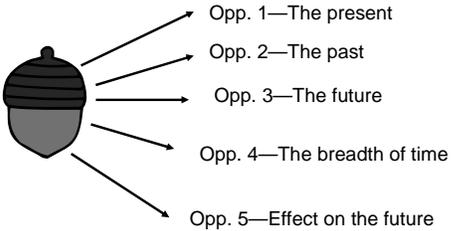
Opportunity # 5 from link: acorn-time, the future.
Acorns affect the future.
Reflection, questioning.

The Interpretive Process Model

7. Use theme statement to organize opportunities for connections and cohesively develop an idea or ideas.

Each acorn represents the very breadth of time.

The Interpretive Process Model



Opp. 1—The present
Opp. 2—The past
Opp. 3—The future
Opp. 4—The breadth of time
Opp. 5—Effect on the future

Using Questions

Questions serve several purposes:

- They stimulate interest.
- They help organize a program.
- They encourage creative thinking.
- They emphasize important points.
- They offer visitors a chance to share their thoughts and feelings.

Source: *The Interpreter's Guidebook*, p. 31.
Interpreter's Handbook Series

Using Questions

Levels of Questions

1. Recall/focus
2. Process
3. Application/Evaluative

Using Questions

1. Recall/focus questions: Basic, seeking specific information. Designed to draw information from visitors based on their experiences and observations. These questions ask visitors to count, list, describe, recall, observe, select. They often begin with “who, what, or where.”

Example: “How many different trees can you see from here?”

Using Questions

2. Process questions: wider in scope, requires integration of information. Designed to draw comparisons or describe relationships based on processing information. These questions ask visitors to compare, explain, infer, classify, and sequence.

Example: “What similarities do you see among the trees here?”

Using Questions

3. Application/evaluative questions: higher level, requires judgment. Designed to help visitors use creative thinking to draw new conclusions, going beyond information or observations at hand. These questions ask visitors to predict, evaluate, generalize, hypothesize, or apply a principle.

Example: "Why do you think conifers are so common in the Northwest?"

Tips for Questioning:

- Direct most questions to the entire group rather than a single individual. We want everyone to think.
- Ask only one question at a time and allow time for an answer.
- Pace questions to the ability of the group.
- Develop ideas and concepts through a series of questions.
- Accept answers to questions gracefully, even if the answers are wrong.

Source: The Interpreter's Guidebook, p. 32. Interpreter's Handbook Series
