

Streakers, Strollers and Students Getting EROTic with Interpretation

.... or everything you wanted to know about interpretation but were afraid to ask

Weeks 2 & 3 aims and outcomes

From topic description

This topic aims to:

- provide a practical understanding of the skills, knowledge and attributes required by a tour guide
- examine and evaluate tour guiding site interpretation techniques for cultural and environmental sites

On completion of this topic students will be able to demonstrate:

- skills and knowledge required for tour guiding in a practical setting
- an understanding of the principles of interpretation
- an awareness of the principles of tour planning

Weeks 2 & 3 aims and outcomes

Other aims of these lectures

- Improve written and verbal communication
- Organisation and planning skills
- Practice public speaking
- Reflect on positive, and negative, personal experiences in tourism

‘... interpretation is about how to make people love what you love.’

Sam Ham (2003)

‘Interpretation makes boring things interesting.’

Elaine Jones
Churchill Scholar
Interpretation Manager
Pembroke Coastal Park, Wales, UK
(2007)

‘A learning experience which seeks to enrich the meaningful relationships we hold with our world, and to foster and build a set of values which supports these relationships.’

John Pastorelli (2003)
An Interpretive Approach to Tour Guiding – Enriching the Experience

Why bother?

- Connects visitors/audience
- Makes visitors/audience understand and remember their experience
- Gives meaning
- Answers the question 'so what?'

What does interpretation look like?

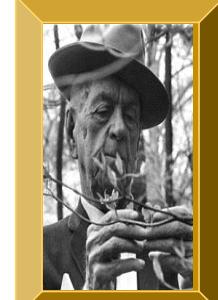
Who are interpreters?

- Tour Guides
- Museum Curators
- Park Rangers
- Consultants
- Designers
- Archaeologists/Cultural Heritage Managers
- Writers/Creative Artists
- Demonstrators
- Any one who wants to communicate an idea

Enos Mills
1870-1922



Freeman Tilden
1883-1980



Freeman Tilden

Interpretation is 'an educational activity which aims to reveal meanings and relationships through the use of original objects, by first hand experience and by illustrative media, rather than simply to communicate factual information'.



Freeman Tilden (1957) *Interpreting Our Heritage*, p. 8

Freeman Tilden

Interpretation is 'an educational activity which aims to **reveal meanings** and relationships through the use of original objects, by first hand **experience** and by illustrative media, **rather than simply to communicate factual information**'.

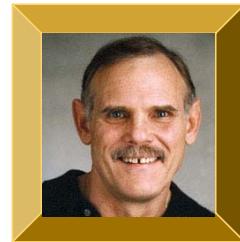
Freeman Tilden (1957) *Interpreting Our Heritage*, p. 8

Tilden's 6 principles

1. Must connect with the visitor
2. Information is not Interpretation
3. Anyone can learn the principles of interpretation
4. Interpretation should not instruct, but provoke
5. Interpretation should connect with the visitor beyond the visit
6. Children need a different interpretation programme to adults

The Rise of Cognitive Psychology

Sam Ham



Sam Ham

- Ham, S. (1992)
Interpretation A Practical Guide for People with Big Ideas and Small Budgets



Source: University of Idaho

“Interpretation is simply an approach to communication”

“No topic is inherently boring or interesting – there are only people who make them that way”

You can interpret:

Cultural Heritage

- a building or town
- an aspect of cultural life
- an object, or a collection of objects
- an industry
- an historical event or period
- an activity or event

Natural Heritage

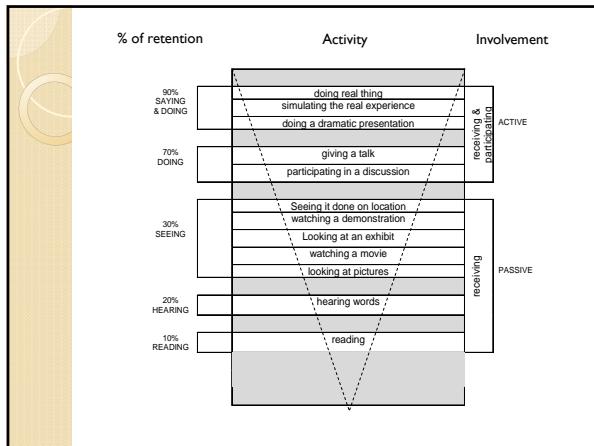
- a place
- a plant or animal
- a natural/geological occurrence

What is NOT interpretation

- Information
- Lecturing
- Marketing

Planning Interpretation

- Why you want to communicate with visitors
- Who your visitors are
- What your place is like, and what it has to offer
- What else is happening around you
- What you want to say about your place
- How, and where, you are going to say it



Who is it for?

- Who are your visitors?
- What are they expecting?
- What do they already know about your place?
- How long will they stay?
- Who do they come with?
- Where will they go after your place?
- Or where would you like them to go?

Streakers - Read or listen to less than 10 words
 Strollers - Read or listen to 20-30 words
 Students - Read or listen to everything

John Falk, visitor motivations

- Explorer
- Facilitator
- Experience seeker
- Professional/Hobbyist
- Recharger
- Serendipitous

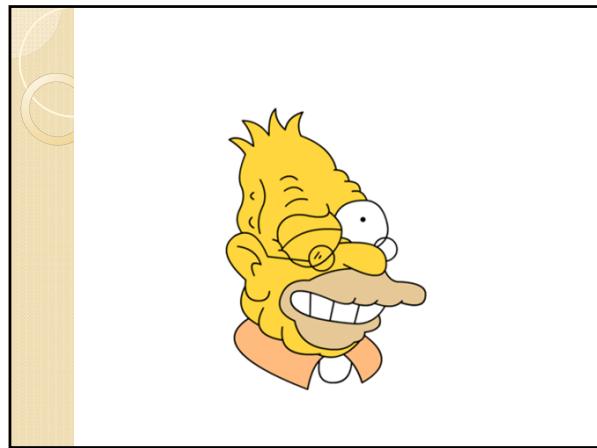
Falk, J. (2009). *Identity and the Museum Visitor Experience*. Left Coast Press: California

Thematic Interpretation, EROTic

- Enjoyable, (or entertaining or engaging)
- Relevant
- Organised
- Has a Theme

EROT (or more recently **TORE**)

Enjoyable/Engaging



Story-telling

- Is powerful
- Is the key to most successful interpretation
- Separates interpretation from information

Relevant

both meaningful and personal (schemata)

MTT: Mental Time Travel

linked to something that visitors are familiar with (unfamiliar becomes familiar)

What is relevant?

Cultural translation and language translation

See for example:

Siapradist, A., and Staiff, R. (2008). Crossing the Cultural Divide: Western Visitors and Interpretation at Ayutthaya World Heritage Site, Thailand. *Journal of Heritage Tourism*. 2(3). 211-244



注册的福
历史，乃福
世纪由邱肇
（邱肇邦获
）（目前为
及合围的九
7年暴乱事
暴力冲突期
以《母体
其四个兄弟
和社以及福

temple devoted to the worship of Tiar Peh Kong (Da Biegong).

Historically the origin of Hock Teik Cheng Sin Temple can be traced back to early 19th Century while Khoo Tean Ping was the founding head of Kean Teik Tong which was formed in 1844. The land of 14,865 sq.ft. of Lot 10 (1) (now known as Lot 446), section 21 was granted to Khoo Tean Ping in 1850. The temple building and nine shophouses could have been built between 1850 and 1867. In 1867, the Penang Riots took place between the two feuding parties, which were Kean Teik Tong and Ghee Hin Secret Society.

The organisational structure of the Hock Teik Cheng Sin Temple is as follows:

Khoo Kongsi Clan House, Penang, Malaysia

Relevant

- Messages with personal content – ‘you’, ‘us’
- Better ‘near’ and ‘far’ learning transfer

Van Winkle, C., & Backman, K. (2011) Designing interpretive audio tours to enhance meaningful learning transfer at a historic site. *Journal of Heritage Tourism*. 6:1. 29-43

Organised

- easy to follow
- beginning and an end
- reader can find way through story

Organised

- it is introduced in a way that makes it clear to the visitor what to expect in terms of overall content or topic
- the information that is presented during the interpretation is linked and flows

The audience is likely to remember categories later, but not all the information contained in them.

If ideas are organised around things that the audience already can relate to, the presentation (interpretation) will be much easier for them to follow.

4 ideas or fewer

People cope with 6 new ideas +/- 2 at any one time.

- $6 - 2 = 4$ (streaker)
- 6 (stroller)
- $6 + 2 = 8$ (student)

Topics and Themes

Topic = subject matter

Theme = specific message (the answer to ‘so what’)

Topics and Themes

- A topic is the subject area
- A topic can have many themes
- You can develop many themes around any topic
- Need to know theme before starting research
 - It defines what to include / what not to include
 - It also defines when you are done

Themes

- Are full sentences, and whole ideas
- Themes, while you're learning, should be developed by using the formula:

What I want people to know about my topic is that.....

Why use themes

- Narrows breadth (but not depth) of presentation
- What's in, what's out
- Focuses presenter and visitor
- People remember themes but forget facts
- Are beliefs – building blocks of attitudes and behaviours

Themes as messages

- the moral to the story
- the “Big Picture”
- answers the question “So What?”
- answers the question “Big Deal?”

So What?

Anyone can write a good theme, but sometimes it takes practice

Remember Tilden's 3rd principle

Themes express whole ideas

- Topic: Australian Social History
- Theme: Tasmanian social history was founded on convict incarceration.
- Better Theme: Van Diemen's land was one of cold, hunger and harsh punishment. Convicts sent to Port Arthur had little hope of a better life, yet they helped found an island State.

- Topic: Evolution of the Australian Continent
- Theme: Mega-fauna history in South Australia goes back half a million years
- Better Theme: The limestone cave formations around Naracoorte are part of the landscape evolution that produced sink holes, underground caverns and slippery slopes!

Sub-themes

- Are the 'because' to the 'that'

Introductions have a purpose

- orientation to the theme and the site/place
- attract attention, create interest
- set the stage for what you are going to do & how you will conclude

Bodies have a purpose

- develop the theme and deliver it using sub-themes

Conclusions have a purpose

- reinforce the theme
- suggest a 'bigger picture' context

2, 3, 1 rule

- Concentrate on the body *first*
- Concentrate on the conclusion *second*
- Concentrate on the introduction *third*

Anyone can writing interesting themes

- make them personal
- 'you'
- link to things your audience knows and cares about

Example

"Six different kinds of snakes live around here."

Example

"Six different kinds of snakes live around here."

"Six different kinds of snakes live here, and knowing which is which could be very useful, especially when you are walking."

Analogy

i.e. something 'is like'

Example:

"The plumbing system of an active volcano contains both heat and gas pressure."

"To understand what goes on in an active volcano's plumbing system, think about what happens when you shake a can of Coke."

Metaphor

i.e. a descriptive word from a different but familiar context

Example:

"Nirvana did a lot to progress rock music"

"Nirvana were the godfathers of grunge."

- Starting with a strong global theme and interesting sub-themes almost guarantees an interesting presentation.
- It's easy to write a boring theme. But writing a strong theme takes time and practice. Still, anyone can do it with a little practice.
- The group can put magic in the message! Involve others in your thematic thinking.

In short

Who is your audience?

What is the message you want to convey?

Delivery techniques/methods

Evaluate

- The programme
- Yourself
- How often?