



NATIONAL  
**WILDLIFE**  
REFUGE SYSTEM

# Module 3a

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*Interpretation Techniques & Leading Walks*

# USFWS Interpretation

The Refuge Manual provides the Service's policy governing the management of interpretive programs on units of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Read the Refuge Manual Interpretation Chapter [HERE](#)

Specifically, the chapter provides guidance on:

- Interpretation policy
- Guiding principles of the Refuge System's interpretive programs
- Interpretation as a Management Tool
- Why We Should Make Interpretation Accessible
- Delivery Methods for Effective Interpretation
- Evaluation of our Interpretive Program



PHOTO: USFWS  
BACK BAY NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

# Interpretation

## Definition

**Interpretation is the act of explaining, reframing, or otherwise showing your own understanding of something.**

**Stewards will explain to the public why the beach is closed, how disturbance affects shorebirds, etc.**



PHOTO: *Interpreting beach closure; USFWS*

# Foundation of Interpretation

## Reading List

Learn more about the foundations and techniques of interpretation by exploring:

The Gifts of Interpretation  
by Larry Beck and Ted T. Cable

Environmental Interpretation and Interpretation  
by Sam H. Ham

Meaningful Interpretation by David L. Larsen

Interpreting for Park Visitors by William J. Lewis

Interpreting Our Heritage by Freeman Tilden

*Freeman Tilden tried to define the craft of interpretation:  
"Heritage interpretation is an educational activity."*

*To help interpreters make those meanings,  
he defined six principles of interpretation.*

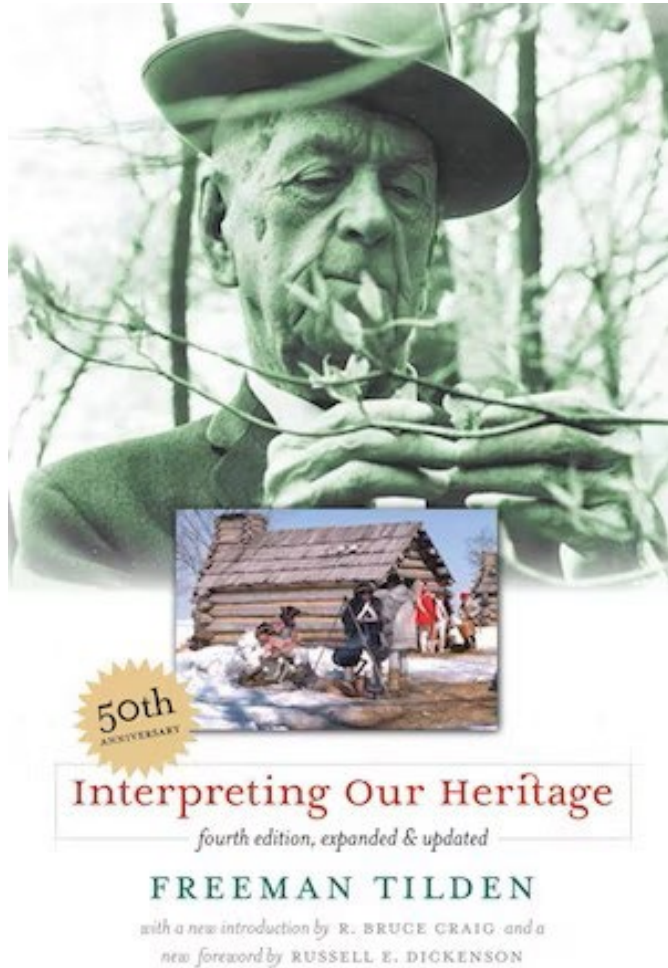


PHOTO: *Interpreting Our Heritage*/Freeman Tilden

# Foundation of Interpretation 2

## Tilden's Six Principles

1. Any interpretation that does not somehow **relate** what is being displayed or described to something within the personality or experience of the visitor will be sterile.

2. Information, as such, is not Interpretation. Interpretation is **revelation** based upon information but they are entirely different things. However all interpretation includes information.

3. Interpretation is an art, which combines many arts, whether the materials presented are scientific, historical or architectural. Any art is in some degree teachable.

4. The chief aim of Interpretation is not instruction, but **provocation**.

5. Interpretation should aim to present a whole rather than a part, and must address itself to the whole person rather than any phase.

6. Interpretation addressed to children should not be a dilution of the presentation to adults, but should follow a fundamentally different approach. To be at its best it will require a separate program.



# NPS Handles

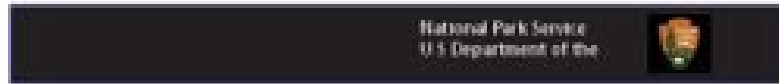
## Helping Visitors to Grasp Resource Meanings

This manual contains an overview of many techniques used by interpreters in and outside of the National Park Service.

Appropriate techniques provide the audience with opportunities to make their own intellectual and emotional connections to resource meaning.

The best writers, speakers, and communicators various, multiple, and often interwoven techniques to create interpretive opportunities.

Read the full document [HERE](#)



## Handles

Helping Visitors to Grasp Resource Meanings

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## A Survey of Interpretive Techniques

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Peggy Scheitbaum  
National Park Service  
Interpretive Development Program

PHOTO: NATIONAL PARK SERVICE



# Roving Interpretation

Roving interpretation is personalized, face-to-face communication where the audience has chosen the venue, the resource is the stage, and the audience is the catalyst for knowledge.

See “Bradley’s Seven Principles of Roving Interpretation” and brainstorming activity [HERE](#)

See the National Park Service’s Co-Creation Techniques for Audience Engagement [HERE](#)



PHOTO: USFWS  
CHINCOTEAGUE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

# Interpretation Courses

*proValens Learning: [HERE](#)*

“Foundations of Interpretation”

“Interpretation through Time”

“How To Prepare and Interpretive Program”

*Common Learning Portal NPS: [HERE](#)*

“Audience Centered Experience (ACE) Interpretation Workbook and additional interpretive sources” used to invite audiences to co-create an interpretive experience.



PHOTO: USFWS



# Interpretation Video Tips

The Be A Better Guide Project helps tour and activity entrepreneurs all over the world create their experiences and provides coaching on delivering extraordinary service.

Watch the videos below or click [HERE](#) to see more of their online video tutorials.



How to Get the Attention of a Group



Tips for Guiding Outside

# Interpretative Planning & How to Lead a Walk

Lincoln Park Conservancy's  
"Interpretation and Tips for Leading Tours"

Read the full document [HERE](#)

North Carolina's  
"Steps in Preparing & Leading Nature Hikes"

Read the full document [HERE](#)



PHOTO: USFWS  
PARKER RIVER NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

# Interpreter's Handbook Series

The Interpreter's Handbook Series is a collection of guidebooks developed for students and practitioners of interpretation.

- Chapter 3: Planning Thematic Programs
- Chapter 4: Keys to Interpretive Communication
- Chapter 5: Creative Interpretive Techniques
- Chapter 6: Interpretive Talks
- Chapter 7: Guide to Interpretive Walks and Tours Resources
- Chapter 8: Spontaneous Encounters

Check out online resources including, videos and worksheet [HERE](#)



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RHODE ISLAND NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE