



Co-creation Techniques for Audience Engagement

The techniques and strategies that will be most effective for interpreting with 21st century audiences are those in which audience members are included as co-creators of their interpretive experiences, with opportunities to reflect, express, participate and contribute. Here are some ideas:

- Turn information or chronology into a short story; then let the audience share their own stories
- Use quotes; invite the audience to read the quotes, rephrase a quote in their own words, or share a favorite quote of their own
- Provide an idea as “food for thought” and give the audience time to “chew and digest” (reflect)
- Provide a time and materials for journaling thoughts, feelings and ideas
- Invite imagination (picturing alternative scenarios, changes, what ifs) and sharing
- Invite a brainstorm list (written or verbal; if written, could be anonymous)
- Use a variety of strategically placed and well-crafted questions (yes/no, open ended, rhetorical)
- Provide moments of silence – from short pauses for audiences to process or consider a response, to longer opportunities for personal reflection
- Ask questions or pose imagination suggestions as transitions on walks and tours (e.g., “As we walk the next section of the trail, imagine how some of the changes we just discussed will affect the fragile plants around us.”)
- Compare and contrast (e.g., “Picture this same scene with five more feet of water, 5 more degrees F, etc.”) and share thoughts
- Request visitors to reflect on issues as both an individual and as a community member
- Use “fill in the blank” statements as invitations for reflection or expression (e.g., Today I hope to...; In ten years I hope to...; I was surprised to discover that...; What scares me most is...; What I am most hopeful about is...)
- Encourage visitors to place themselves in the shoes of others
- Provide opportunities for visitors to draw or write short poetry/prose as a reflection exercise, possibly followed by a time to share with the group, post in a visitor contact station, or post electronically in an online gallery of community response to critical issues.
- Develop techniques to “leave it hanging” – help the audience ponder questions that don’t have concrete or “right” answers; develop unanswered questions that challenge people of all persuasions/values/beliefs to think critically about why they think the way they do.