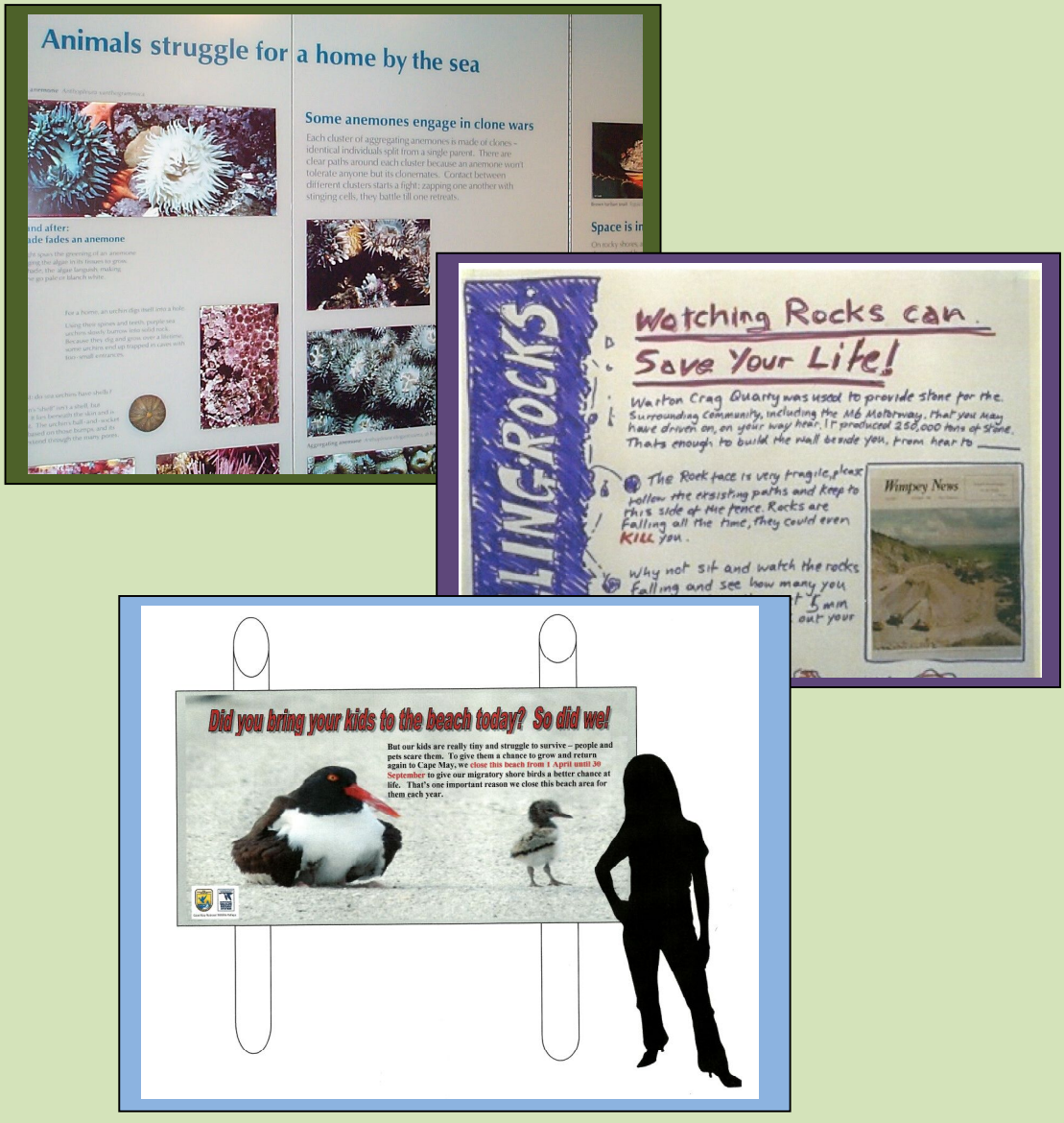
The Interpretive Writers Guidebook

How to Provoke, Relate and Reveal your messages and stories to your visitors in memorable ways.



John A. Veverka

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Interpretive Writing
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CERTIFIED INTERPRETIVE TRAINER

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Chapter 1

What is Interpretive Writing Anyway?

Many people have heard the word *interpretation*. Yet, this word may have a wide range of meanings for people based on their background, training, or experience in the interpretive profession. However, I feel that the best definition of interpretation is the one developed by a task force of ***Interpretation Canada*** which set out to develop the definition that would be used within Canada (1976). That definition has been picked up over the past 17 years by many other organizations, and is the one most often taught in university courses in interpretation. This definition is:

"Interpretation is a communication process, designed to reveal meanings and relationships of our cultural and natural heritage, to the public, through first hand involvement with objects, artifacts, landscapes and sites." - Interpretation Canada

It should be stressed that interpretive communications is not simply presenting information, but a specific communication strategy that is used to translate that information for people, ***from the technical language of the expert, to the everyday language of the every-day visitor.***

Where do the basic strategies, techniques and principles of interpretive communications for writing in an interpretive format come from?

It's important to remember that the communication process of interpretation did not spontaneously appear one day. Interpretation (the profession, and the techniques and approaches) are a wonderful mix from communication principles from many other professions including:

* Journalism
* Marketing
* Psychology
* Non-formal and adult education theory and presentations.
* Business management and finances.
* Recreation and tourism planning/principles
* Media planning/design principles.

In reality, we see the use of interpretive writing techniques and principles every time we see an advertisement in a magazine or on television.

Understanding the Audience

One of the key areas of knowledge that interpreters writers must have to be effective in their presentations is an understanding of how visitors learn and remember information in a recreational learning environment. A recreational learning experience is one where the person has self-selected to attend or participate in a program for "enjoyment". The "learning" that occurs is viewed as fun as well. Anyone that has a hobby, such as coin collecting, model making, studying aspects of history, bird watching, etc. is involved with recreational learning. We learn because we want to, and the process of learning and discovery gives us pleasure.

Interpretation is not topic or resource specific. The interpretive communication process can be used for interpreting anything, any subject. If the interpretive communication is effective, then "education" can occur about that subject. Interpretation is an objective driven, and market (audience) focused process that looks for results (the accomplishment of stated objectives). It uses marketing and advertising writing techniques, journalism strategies, and a host of other communication strategies to form our Interpretive Communications Strategy. Interpretation is also fun - a recreational learning experience. What is the interpretive communication process?

Tilden's Interpretive Principles - the foundations for interpretive writing.

The communication process used to "interpret" information is based on Tilden's Interpretive Principles (Tilden, 1954). Tilden's basic communication principles are also the ones you will find in every first year marketing or advertising text book on successful communication with your market (audience).

- First, the copy or writing piece must **Provoke curiosity, attention and interest** in the audience. If you can't get their attention, they won't even stop at an exhibit, want to attend a program, or pay attention during programs. In planning the strategy as to how to provoke attention, the interpreter has to consider the answer to the question: *Why would a visitor want to know this information*? The answer to that questions ends up being the text or exhibit/panel header, graphic, photo, or support copy that gets the audience's attention.

- Continuing with the answer to the question *why would a visitor want to know this?* the interpretation text/copy must find a way to **relate the message to the everyday life of the visitors**. In advertising, it's the answer to the question *"why do you need this product or service?"*. This part of the text/copy gives visitors reasons to continue

reading the text and interact with the exhibits, programs, or media - gives them a reason to pay attention and be motivated to learn more.

- The final part of the process is **revelation**. Tilden says that we should *reveal the ending or answer of the communication through a unique or unusual perspective or viewpoint*. Save the answer to last. The reveal tells the visitor why the message was important for them, or how they can benefit from the information that was interpreted to them.

- **Strive for message unity** is another principle for interpretation. It means that when we plan or design our program, service, or media, that we use the right colors, costumes, music, designs, etc. to support the presentation of the message. Think of message unity as the stage setting and props for a theatrical presentation. For an interpretive writer you need to consider such issues as font style, font color, point size of the text and design issues in the layout of the copy.

- **Address the whole**. This final principles means that all interpretation text and copy should address some main point or **theme** - "the big picture" of what's important about the park, historic site, tourism site, etc. that the visitor is at and reading about. The main theme is best illustrated by your answer to the question "if a visitor spends time going to programs, looking at exhibits, etc. while they are visiting my site, by the time they are ready to go back home if they only remember or learned one thing about why our site is so special, that one thing better be_____! The answer to this question is **"the whole."** An example of such a theme might be "We are using state of the art wildlife restoration techniques to improve this site for people and for wildlife." Then the text/copy for exhibits, outdoor panels, AV programs, etc. should be developed to help illustrate the main site interpretive theme.

In short hand, we can summarize the basic principles of interpretation and format for interpretive writing for interpretive media as:

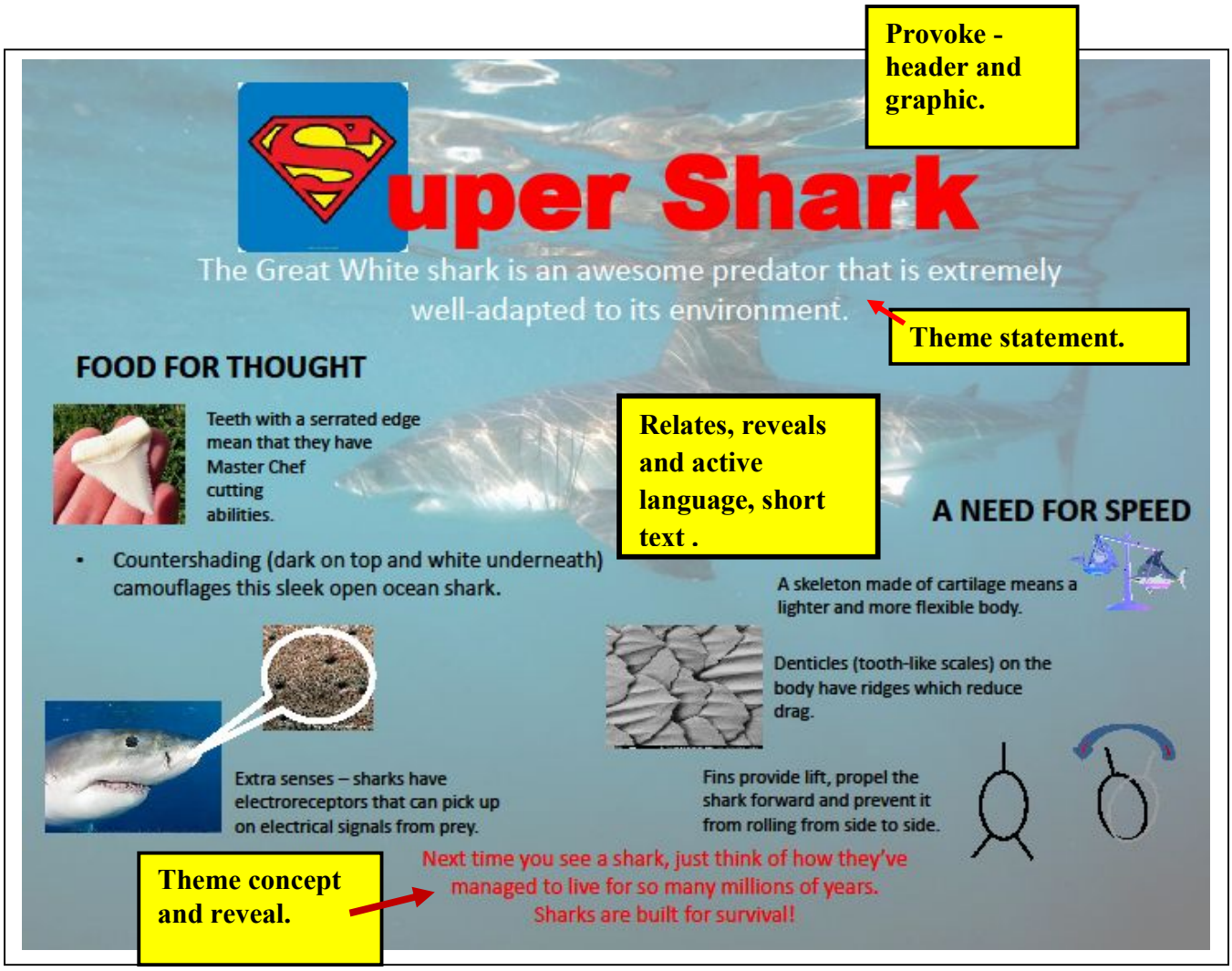
Provoke attention and curiosity (get visitors to WANT to read the copy).
Relate to the reader with analogies, or other writing technique.
Reveal the main point toward the end of the text.
Address the Whole - make sure the text works to illustrate the main theme.
Strive for Message Unity. Be sure you use the correct font, colors or other text physical designs to fit the story you are writing for.

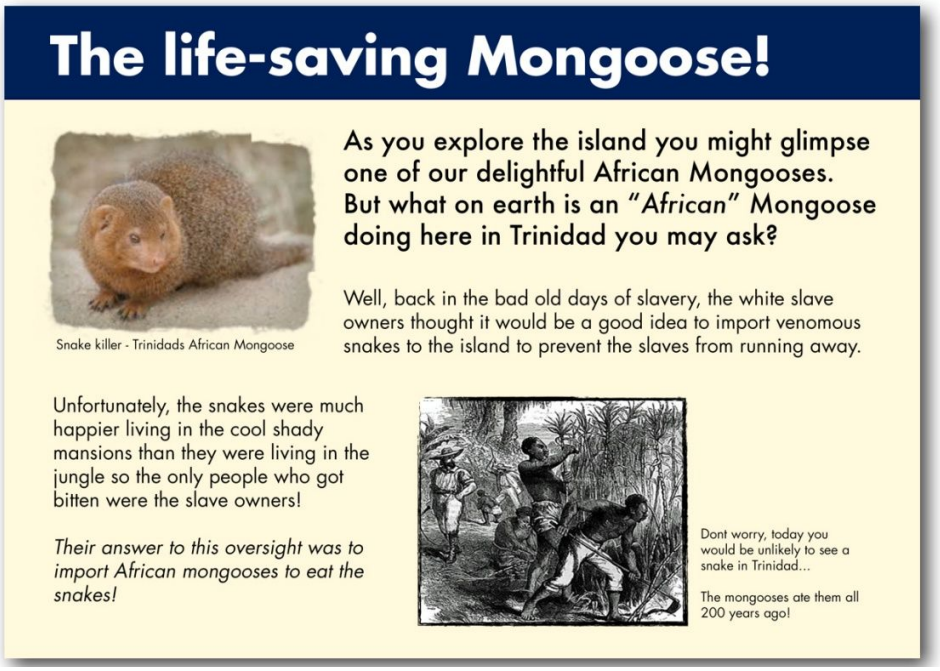
In addition, interpreters must ask two questions to help them plan and design their interpretive writing for program, media or services.

1. Why would the visitor want to know that? If you can't answer this question, you are going to have trouble writing compelling text for your programs or media. We don't want to be in the business of giving answers to questions no one is asking.

2. How do you want the visitor to use the information you are interpreting to them? If you don't want visitors to use the information you are interpreting, then why are you giving it to them? Will they read the text if "they don't have a reason too?"

There aren't any "right or wrong" answers to these questions. But it does help the interpreter focus on interpreting something relevant to the visitors and in selecting the best interpretive writing technique to relate to them. Here is an example of an interpretive panel using interpretive writing techniques, and another interpretive panel where you can look to find the interpretive principles within the text and graphics.





Can you find the "Provoke, Relate and Reveal text used in this interpretive panel? Designed by Christian Emberson.

How do we plan for our interpretation and our interpretive writing?

We follow the model of interpretation. There's a basic model of the total communication process (Figure 1) which we also follow for developing our interpretive writing "formula" or process.

The Model of Interpretation.

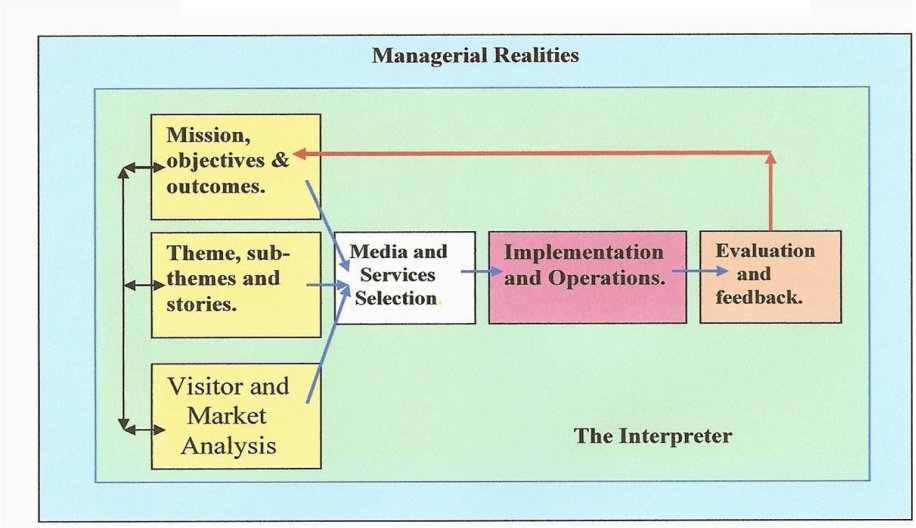


Figure 1 -- The model of the Interpretation Communication Process (modified from Cherem, 1976).

In this model of interpretive communications we can see several different components. First, we must have some message (WHAT) that we want to convey - what's the story that we want to tell and write about. Then we must have specific objectives that we want the message copy or text to accomplish. We have interpretive techniques that we can use to actually present the message (Tilden's principles), and services in which to use the techniques (self-guiding trail or auto tour, live program, exhibits, publications, etc.). We'll be writing text for all of these different media. We are writing our message for visitors, so we need to know as much as possible about them (**visitor analysis**). We will only know if our message as read was received and understood by the visitor if we evaluate our writing to see if our original objectives were accomplished. If not, we need to go back to make some adjustments to our text and related deign the text has to work with and illustrate. Note the **I&O** box. This is for Implementation and Operations considerations, such as costs, material needs, etc. to actually plan, and create our interpretive copy. This also includes planning time for research, developing draft copy, pre-testing text, and working on the exhibit or media copy/design relationship.

The box that surrounds the model called **"Interpreter"** is each individual interpretive writer. We each bring our own unique perspective to any project or program. We have our unique personality, background, and writing style. So each writing project or assignment will have the individual fingerprint of the interpreter who is writing for it.

The big box around everything is **managerial realities**. These are administrative issues that can/do influence programs or services. Some of these can include:

- Agency policies and goals for interpretation writing to accomplish.
- Program or services demands from the public.
- Management issues that interpretation writing needs to help with.
- Available budget for the writing services.
- Time constraints and project deadlines to complete writing assignments.
- Political pressures for certain presentation content for text.
- And more..... what are yours?

Summary

This chapter has focused on a discussion of just what is interpretive writing and its relationship to larger interpretive communications principles. Interpretive Communication principles have evolved from a variety of other communication professions. The basic principles of what makes a presentation interpretive vs. just informational is not so much on what you say, but rather how you say it. For the writing and messaging to be **interpretive**, it must Provoke, Relate, Reveal, Have Message Unity, and Address the Whole. The model of interpretation shows how the total

communication process works, and interpretive writing process as a part of it, and becomes the basis for developing a writing philosophy and strategy for interpretive writing projects.

References:

Lewis, William 1980. Interpreting For Park Visitors. Eastern Acorn Press.

Tilden, Freeman. 1957. Interpreting Our Heritage, The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill.

Veverka, John A. 2014. Interpretive Master Planning, Volume I and Volume II. MuseumEtc, Edinburgh, Scotland.

Chapter Two

Planning for Interpretive Writing Projects.

The Jackson Clubs Dark Secret.

In 1842, this was the location of the *Jackson Club*, a club, for **Men Only**! This was the place where the elite of Jackson came to do business, visit, and talk about the news of the times. And becoming a member wasn't easy – you had to be somebody important!
Mike Sommerville was somebody! Arriving in Jackson in 1843, he quickly developed a reputation as a powerful businessman, and was invited to become a member of the Jackson Club. Mike served two terms as club president, and even helped increase the membership of this Men's only organization. A proud member for 25 years, it wasn't until Mike's death in 1869 that it was discovered --------- that Mike was really … **Michelle – Yep! A Woman!**

Your next stop on the tour is just one block down this street on the right, a large white home, number 321. It looks like an ordinary home, but there's an extraordinary story buried in the garden. I'll meet you there with a shovel.

There's an old saying that "good things happen when planned, bad things happen on their own". The interpretive writing example above was written for a self-guiding community walking tour. When you're developing a tour, or any interpretive writing, you have to think not only about the writing itself, but all the other planning concerns involved with the total interpretive experience the copy must be a part of. So we think about:

The model of interpretation - planning for developing interpretive text/copy. We just went through our model in Chapter 1.

Writing to illustrate an interpretive theme. Developing and writing to accomplish interpretive objectives; Learning objectives, Behavioral objectives , Emotional Objectives. Let's take a closer look at writing for themes and objectives.

Perhaps two of the areas where there is often the most confusion in planning for interpretive writing projects is that of developing the interpretive themes and interpretive writing objectives. Here are a few ideas and examples that may help making this part of the interpretive writing process easier and more effective to think about, as you can't really develop great interpretive copy unless you know what it needs to help accomplish.

What is an Interpretive Theme?

A theme is the central or key idea of any written presentation. When communicating with your visitors, the audience should be able to summarize the main point of the exhibit or media in

one sentence. This sentence would be the theme. Development of a theme provides organizational structure and clarity of purpose of text or label development. Once the main interpretive or story line message theme has been decided, everything you do in developing the interpretive text for the audience falls into place. The main strategy then of the interpretive writing mission is to **illustrate the theme statement** that the exhibits, trail guides, panels, etc. are working to illustrate to the visitors.

Themes should:

- **Be stated as a short, simple, complete sentence.**
- **Contain one main idea if possible.**
- **Reveal the overall purpose of the program or activity.**
- **Be interestingly and motivationally worded when possible.**

Here are some examples of themes for an exhibit, self-guiding trail or interpretive panel.

- **Exploring caves is a sensual experience.**
- **We manage our habitats in three ways to benefit both people and wildlife.**
- **Backyard wildlife needs your help.**
- **Our forest has many plants that can harm or heal.**
- **Living in the Smith homestead was full of daily challenges.**
- **We need to preserve wetlands for five important reasons.**
- **Steam engines changed our lives in three ways.**

It's important not to confuse themes with topics. Examples of topics that might be mistaken for themes might be:

- Birds of the Park.
- Seasonal Wildflowers
- Bird migration.
- Cooking with native plants.

Be sure your themes are “complete sentences” – and meet the other criteria noted above.

Interpretive Objectives for effective label copy and text development.

Many interpretive media are planned without objectives or “real” outcomes. I find it hard to successfully plan any interpretive writing service or media development without clearly understanding just what it is the interpretive writing is supposed to accomplish.

Objectives vs. goals.

There is often some confusion between the two. I usually don’t use goals, as goals aren’t measurable, like “it is my goal to go to Florida someday”.

Objectives are outcome driven and measurable. For example if we had the interpretive theme: "*Wetlands benefit us in amazing ways."* then we need to develop interpretive objectives that would help illustrate that theme, such as: *At the completion of interacting with the exhibit, all participants can identify three ways that wetlands benefit us*..

This objective statement can be pre tested with visitors to see if they already know or can name three benefits, and then post tested after they viewed the exhibit or panel to see if they can name three benefits. If they can't – the exhibit didn't accomplish its objectives. You can't really evaluate the success of any interpretive writing and media without first understanding what the outcomes - objectives - of the writing and media were.

I use three kinds of objectives in interpretive writing projects planning:

Upon the completion of the program,

Learning objectives: The majority of visitors will be able to (name, list, describe) three reasons that wetlands should be protected.

Emotional objectives: The majority of visitors will FEEL good about the preservation work we are doing here to protect wetlands.

The majority of visitors will feel that protecting wetlands does indeed benefit them, their community and the environment.

Behavioral objectives: The majority of visitors will want to see the wetland exhibits in the Nature Center (if text on an outdoor interpretive panel).

The majority of visitors will consider contributing to our "preserve the wetlands" fund.

The majority of visitors will want to walk our wetlands trail looking for the wetland features from the program (text on an interior interpretive exhibits.

These Learn – Feel - and Do objectives are central to interpretive writing planning – particularly the Feel and Do objectives. You can have as few or as many objectives as you want. They are your guidepost to what is really important for the text and media to accomplish and how you want the text to affect your visitors. Two hints in making sure your objectives are marketable (people will want to come to the program). Ask yourself again:

1. Why would my visitors want to know this information?
2. How do I want my visitors to USE this information (from the exhibit/media)?

The answers to these questions may help guide your objective (media content and proposed outcomes) development for your exhibit, panel or other media you are writing for.

With your theme in hand, and your objectives in place, you're now ready to develop the interpretive writing to illustrate your theme, and then evaluate the effectiveness of your copy in association with the media it is working with.

Remember that the theme is the one thing that - by gosh if nothing else – the visitor remembers from reading the interpretive media you have written for. You begin the exhibits by stating the theme – and them summarize the theme at the end by again stating the theme "… so now you have seen three examples of how protecting wetlands benefits you" (the last exhibit or self-guiding trail panel/leaflet for example).

The objectives will focus the content of your writing, help you plan the total presentation, and will be used to evaluate the media to see if it was really successful – or just entertaining but quickly forgotten.

Now you know, and can hopefully describe why: Using interpretive themes and objectives will make your interpretive writing planning easier and more effective.

Who's your audience? Writing to connect with visitors different learning styles. The next step in planning for your writing assignment or project.

What we know from past studies about visitors and reading label copy.

A publication by Region 8 of the US Forest Service entitled "Being Up Front and Out Front... Communication through Interpretation" contains some exhibit survey results from the fall of 1987. The statistics were from two years of studies done by the USDA Design Division at nine different locations including the Adirondack NY Museum, the Smithsonian Air and Science Museums, the Begich-Boggs Visitor Center in Alaska; the Keowee-Toaway Energy Complex Visitor center in South Carolina; and the Williamsburg Visitor Center in Virginia.

Here are some of the more interesting results from their two-year study of exhibits regarding text.

1. Less than 1% of the people read the entire exhibit copy. Of this 1%, approximately 90%were either experts or researchers that already had a thorough knowledge of the subject matter.

2. The longer and more complex the written (or recorded) message, the shorter the viewing and listening time.

3. The average visitor spent only about 30% of the time actually needed to thoroughly view an exhibit and read the message.

Some of our basic understandings about visitors reading labels:

These are guidelines that we currently employ in all of our interpretive writing for museum exhibit labels:

- Labels that are over 50 words long probably won't be read. Most visitors won't read labels that are over 100 words (we usually do two 50 word paragraphs). So we keep text to about 50 words for each needed paragraph.

So with this research in mind, some of the considerations of just who will be reading our interpretive labels and copy you need to think about:

- Are they local visitors from the area or tourists. Locals will relate to the text and analogies and metaphors differently than tourists.

- Will the writing be for "general visitors". If so then you will need to write your copy at a 5th grade (about a 11-12 year old) vocabulary. That's the same reading level that most newspapers use. National Geographic Magazine write at a 13 year olds vocabulary, FYI.

- If you introduce new vocabulary into the copy, will you should also have a visual definition (a picture) that illustrates the new text. Will readers know what a **metamorphic rock** is without a picture of it? So as you develop your interpretive writing - think of the audience who will be reading it, and need to "relate" to what you are interpreting. Any issues with the text in the panel below?

- Remember, a picture can be worth 1000 words, but can also be the "wrong" 1000 words.

Check out the text on the exhibit panel on the following page. What do you like or not like about it? Any vocabulary words that might been help in illustrating or explaining?

Your next consideration as a writer. Where will the writing appear? (Interpretive Panels, Exhibits, leaflets, web sites?).

When you're planning for your interpretive writing assignment or project, we always have to think about just were our text and associated media will appear. In the example below, the text has a provocative header supported with the graphic, and visually supported by the actual geological feature you can see standing at this location. So this copy had to consider:

- Text advising the reader to LOOK at the feature the panel is interpreting.
- The point size and thus amount of text that will fit in the panel. For outdoor panels the minimum font point size is 36 point.
- The color background of the panel the text will be printed on to determine the color of the text.
- Text needed for the captions for the samples of rock on the panel (smaller point size).
- Try to keep the amount to text to under 100 words.

If you're writing copy for museum exhibits, then the rules change a bit.

In this exhibit from the Monterey Bay Aquarium, the considerations for "where will the writing be placed" changes, as do some of the rules for text in museum exhibit panels and displays.

- We need to use headlines in the copy (remember provoke, relate and reveal).
- Text needs to be printed with larger point size fonts (50 points size or larger).
- The larger point size also takes up more physical space in the exhibit, so less words.
- Keep text to about 50 word blocks.
- Think about the color background your text will appear on.
- Think about the color(s) of text to support the design of the exhibit.

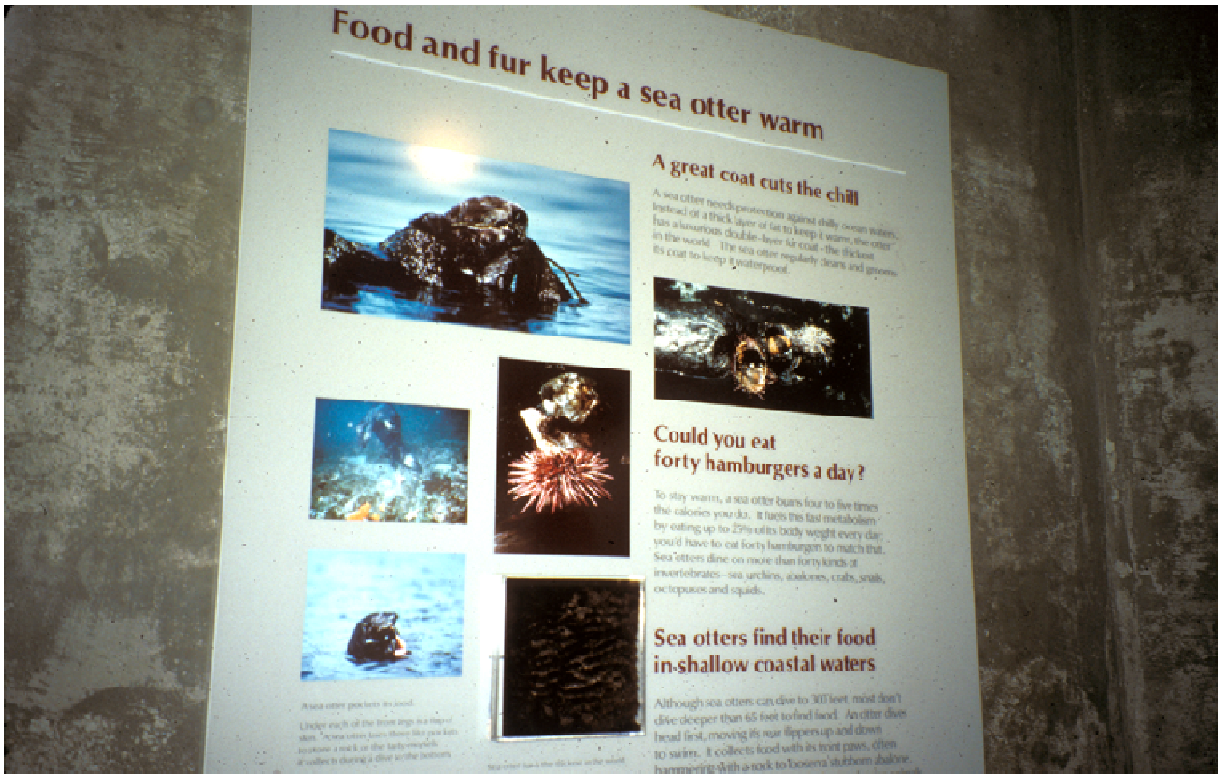


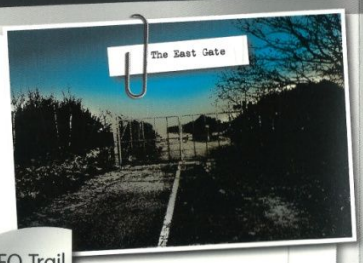
Exhibit from the Monterey Bay Aquarium, Sea Otter Exhibit. Note the main header, the sub headers, amount of copy per text box and then captions.

Now if your writing will be for a publication, such as a self-guiding trail guide, the considerations and rules change again.

Here is a section of the trail guide from the UFO trail in the UK. Some of the same considerations for writing for these:

- Use interpretive principles.
- Remember the size of the publications limits the number/amount of text.
- The text background - if on a glossy paper outdoors will be harder to read.
- Keep text at least 12 to 14 point size, about 50 words or less for each text box.

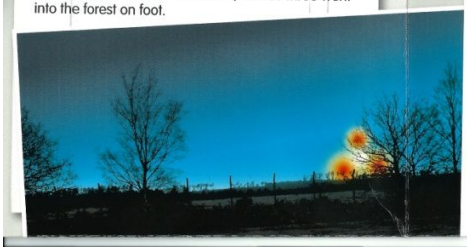
Read the story...



UFO Trail 1

The East Gate

Just after 2am on the morning of 27th December 1980, two USAF security police patrolmen saw unusual lights through the trees outside the East Gate to RAF Woodbridge Airfield. Could they have belonged to an aircraft from an unfriendly power? The patrolmen obtained permission from their on-duty flight chief to leave the airfield and investigate. They were joined by two further USAF personnel, but one was ordered to remain on patrol at the East Gate, and so three went into the forest on foot.



UFO Trail 2

As you cross the forest road, imagine the search

The first sightings from the air base had been of lights in the sky – a strange glow. As the men entered the forest, radio contact with the air base began to break down and so one of the search party remained on the edge of the forest to keep contact. Two men therefore continued deep into the forest until they approached the eastern edge. It was here they reported seeing a shape in a clearing! Walk on to Point 3 on the map.

UFO Trail 3

Imagine the sighting

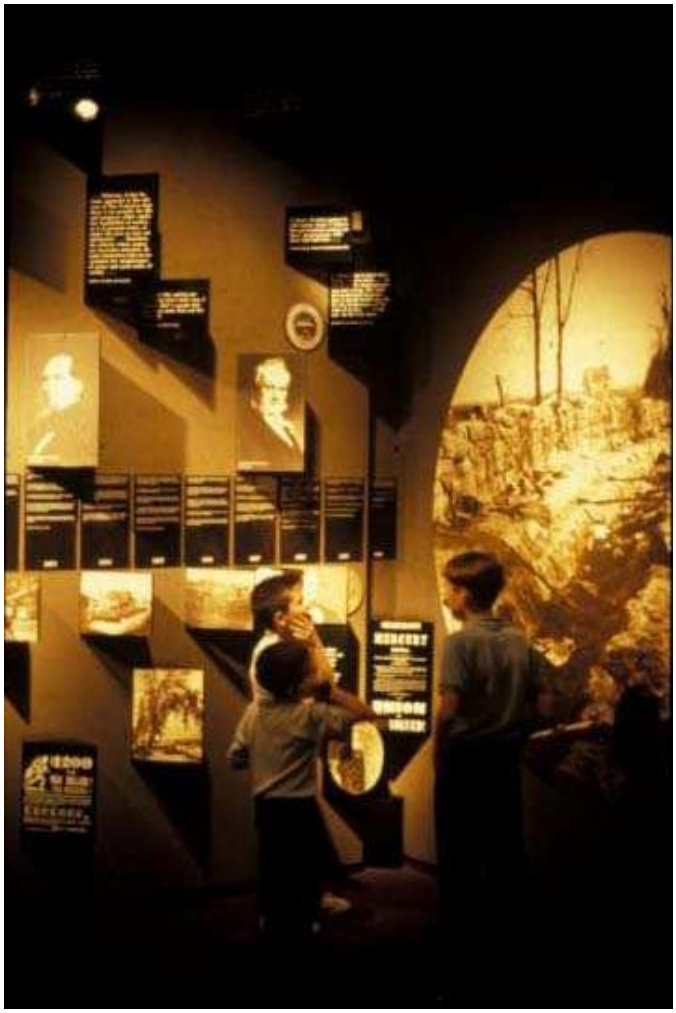
At the clearing towards the edge of the forest the patrol were to report that they had spotted a conical object about the size of a car, floating on beams of light just 12 inches above the ground.

There was a mist surrounding it and the craft appeared to be metallic with black markings on one side. They tried to approach the object – it was like walking in slow motion. Suddenly the craft rose rapidly in a flash of light and disappeared. Had the patrolmen been spotted?

The search party returned to base to report their observations. They wondered if the craft would return.

The next day air force personnel searched the area. Some of the trees surrounding the clearing had broken tops, and they found three small triangular depressions on the ground, 1.5 inches deep and 7 inches wide. Radiation levels were taken – they were 10 times the normal background level. What did all this mean?

In 1980 the trees around the clearing were tall and mature rather like the areas you have just walked through, since first crossing the forest road. The sector immediately in front of you has been replanted since the reported incidents. However, there are clearings within the recent planting where trees did not re-grow. Had the strange lights somehow contaminated the area?



What's wrong with this picture?

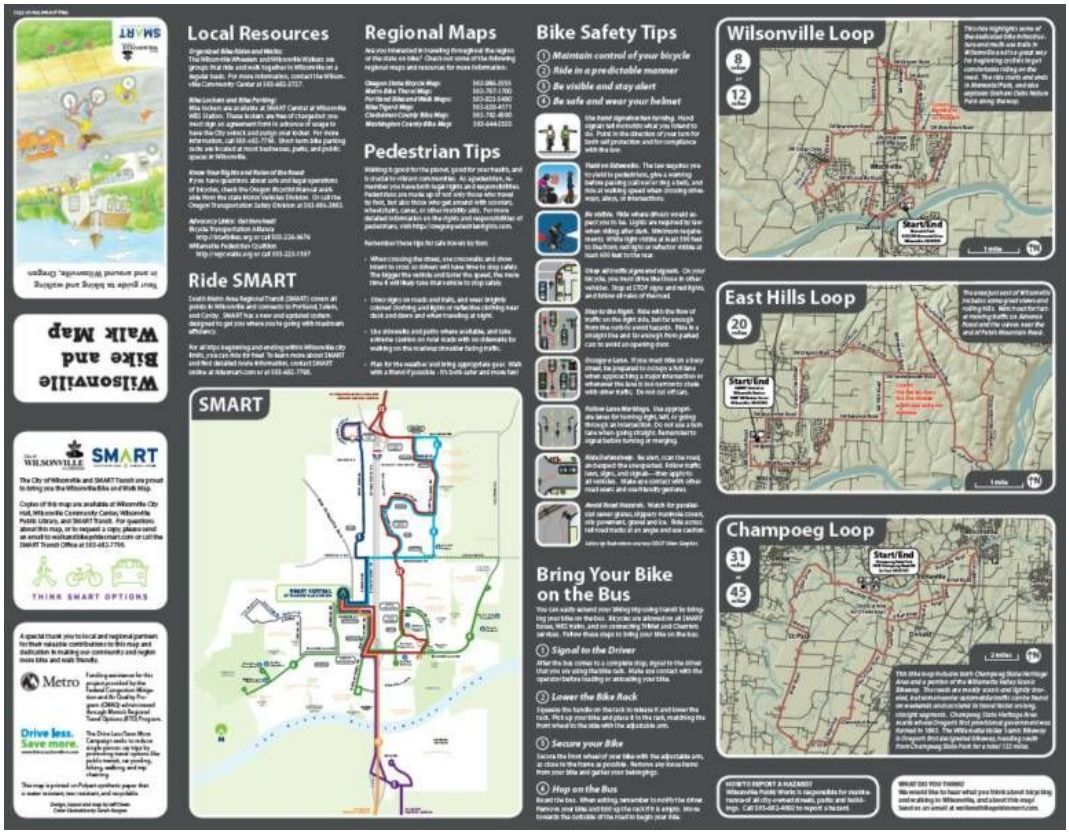
Here's an example of all the interpretive copy writing size and text placement gone wrong.

- Look at the text placement in regard to the high of the students.

- Look at the large amount of text, printed on opaque acrylic panels - not readable.

- Copy amount and point size in mid-exhibit area.

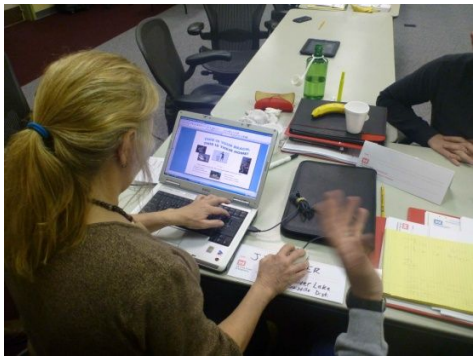
This is now NOT to present interpretive writing.



In this example the text has many faults. I'm sure that as a text writer you can see them all, but here are the main highlights.

- Too much text - nobody is going to read this.
- No use of interpretive principles.
- Text is too small, even for the larger size publication
- Color background - hard to read white text on black background.
- A sensory overload.
- Any other issues you can notice?

Time, energy and costs for writing interpretive text/copy.



Another part of the planning for interpretive writing though out the process is time and budget. Budget if you are a consultant contracted to do interpretive writing, and time if you are a staff member with lots of other "jobs" to do. **Let's look at steps that involve time:**

- Time for research for the copy - who's providing it or will you have to do the research yourself. Depending on the project, you might spend several days or even weeks looking for content research for the text you're developing.

- Time to create your first draft copy for review.

- Time to plan for the other text issues (what will your text be printed on, design of the font options, point size and space available for the text in the whole media design).

- Time for the reviews to take place.

- Time to proof read and do final edits for the final copy,

And then there's costs for doing the interpretive writing (and all the above tasks).

- Budgets vary for copy writers, especially if you're doing the research as well. So you have to cost out how much time and work will be need for each writing assignment. As an example, I may spend 4-5 hours on one interpretive panel - from research to drafts to final copy. The average writing cost for that one panel is $**400.00.** If you're doing a medium to large exhibit gallery project, I usually charge either a flat fee cost, based on **$100/hour** for finished copy, or a cost per assignment, based on the same rate (rates subject to change depending on who you're working for and any existing fee structures). Note that the fee includes 2 drafts of the copy. If we have to do more drafts, if a client changes their mind on what they want, then our $100/hour rule kicks in for additional drafts (change orders).

Implementation - getting ready for the final copy.

One of the best ways for new writers to get ready to get started and implement their writing projects is to develop and use a interpretive writers checklist. Here is a draft check list:

<u>Writing Checklist</u>

Part 1: Pre-Writing

- Identify audience
- Survey visitors/audience – market analysis
- Resource Inventory/identification
    - Historical research – what information/data survives? What are the narratives that emerge?
    - Identify artifacts (in collection or loans from others)
    - Identify images (in collection or request digital files from others)

- Interpretive plan
    - Develop theme(s)
    - Develop goals
    - Develop objectives
        - Learning
        - Emotional
        - Behavioral
    - Develop mission statement
    - **Develop planning timeline, budget, marketing plan, etc.**
- Share plan with designer

Part 2: Writing

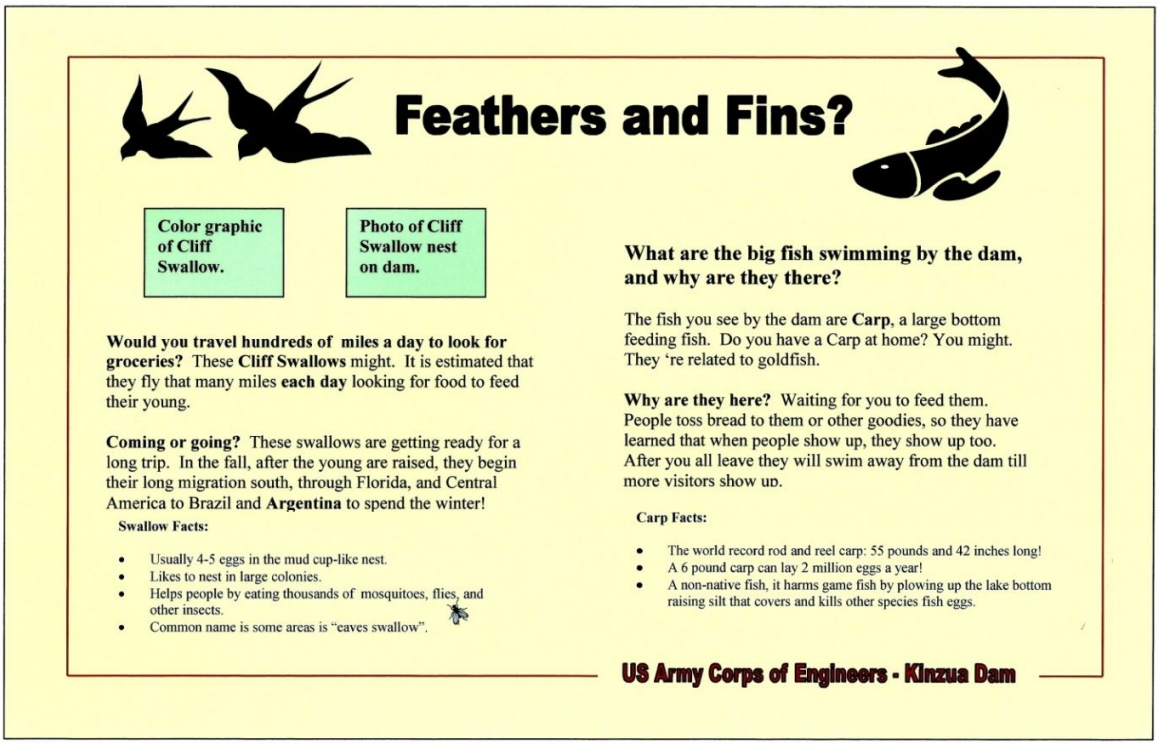
- Write outline/storyline
- Sketch layout
- Assign writing responsibilities to staff (or to yourself).
- Write rough draft of script
    - Review rough draft internally
    - Evaluate internally for alignment with themes, goals, objectives
    - Evaluate internally for interpretive effectiveness
    - Refine or re-write as necessary
- Relate artifacts/images to script, write captions
- Write working draft of script
- Review working draft of script
    - Fact checking: send to specialists
    - Copy editing: send to Marketing Dept. copy editor
    - Proof reading: send to Marketing Dept. and key volunteers
- Produce final draft of script

Part 3: Post-Writing

- Share script with designer for integration with final layout, graphic design, “look” of exhibit
- Test script on visitors
    - Evaluate goals
    - Evaluate objectives
- Post-analysis: after exhibit has been up for a while, are goals/objectives being met?

Evaluation and pre-testing your copy.

No matter how good a writer you think you are it's still a good idea to not only review your copy, but pre-test evaluate it with your intended visitors. It's amazing at how, after reviewing the copy several times, a typo or spelling error crops up. So let's evaluate our copy. Let's look at this draft interpretive panel developed for the US Army Corps of Engineers, Kiwana Dam. There's a visitor viewing area by the dam where visitors can see thousands of swallows that nest under the dams walkway structure in the summer months. They can also see hundreds of carp in the water's edge by the dam. The ranger stationed here goes nuts with the constant questions about the swallows and the fish (carp). He asked for an interpretive panel to address the visitors questions. Here is the draft of that panel we pretested with the visitors.



So here is the draft copy we pre-tested with visitors. In the surveys and interviews the one question we received is what state Argentina was in? We found many visitors had a poor sense of geography. So in the next draft we added a map. Any other text edits you might think of?

When you do your pre-test you are looking for a variety of potential problems:

- Text vocabulary words that the reader may not be familiar with.
- Text point size - is it easy to read, is it using 36 point size.
- Text using interpretive techniques.
- The objectives of the panel and text being accomplished at a 70% level or better.

Remember, you can have your draft panel printed in full size, pasted on foam board and take it to the location where the panel will be installed to test it.

The same rules for pre-testing interpretive copy for museum exhibits. Here are parts of a survey questionnaire for visitors to critique exhibits in a visitor center. Remember that the text and exhibit graphics and artifacts must work together.

Answer the following questions *after* you have had a chance to look at the exhibits.

16. In general, did you feel that the exhibits successfully communicated to visitors the main interpretive theme of the visitor center? Yes___ Somewhat____ No_____

17. In general, did you feel that the majority of the exhibits effectively illustrated the main mission, story or theme of this visitor center? Yes__ Somewhat____ No____ (feel free to comment on the back of this page).

18. In general, did you feel that the text or content level presentation of the exhibits were:

- **a. Written to simply or needed more information**
- **b. Written at the correct content level (5th grade vocabulary).**
- **c. Written at to technical off a content level**
- **d. Other: _____**

19. In general, did you feel that the point size of the main label text copy:

- **a. Was two small and hard to read.**
- **b. Was OK or about average**
- **c. Met professional museum standards of about 30 point size or larger.**

20. In general, how would you rate the Attraction Power of the exhibits (their ability to draw you to them and hold your attention).

- **a. Poor – most did not look interesting.**
- **b. About average – about ½ looked interesting.**
- **c. Excellent – most exhibits looked inviting**

21. Of all of the exhibits you looked at in this center, how many exhibits out of the total did you look at and read all the exhibit label copy**?**

- **a. Only a few of the exhibits.**
- **b. About ½ of the exhibits.**
- **c. Most of the exhibits.**

22. In general, what do you think the average time **you spent interacting with (reading the label copy, doing interactive activities) the exhibits in this exhibit room or gallery?**

- **a. Under 15 seconds per exhibit.**
- **b. Between 15 seconds and 1 minute per exhibit.**
- **c. Over 1 minute per exhibit.**

Here is another evaluation tool to have visitors or other critiques to review the exhibit and the relationship with the design and text.

***Individual* Interpretive Exhibit**
Design Critique

Instructions:

This evaluation form should be copied, with one form set being completed for each individual exhibit in your exhibit room.

Exhibit Name or Subject: _____

1. Does this exhibit have content and design objectives in writing? YES NO

If yes, use a copy of the original objectives as part of the exhibit critique.

1. This exhibit is a: Type 1____ Type 2a_____ Type 2b_____ Type 3_____.

2. From the exhibit design, are the *intended* objectives of this exhibit and text clear?

Learning Objective:

Behavioral Objective:

Emotional Objective:

4. Does the exhibit have a clear theme? YES NO

If yes, what is it? _____

4. Does the exhibit subject or presentation provide an example that clearly illustrates one of the total visitor centers sub-themes or illustrate the main interpretive theme? YES NO

6. Does the exhibit get its main point across in 15 seconds or less? YES NO

7. Does the exhibit use interpretive techniques in its design and copy?

What is the PROVOKE for this exhibit? _____

What is the RELATE used here? _____

What is the REVEAL? _____

Individual Interpretive Exhibit
Design and Label Critique

8. **On a scale of 1 to 5, how would you rate the use of Provocation in this exhibit:**

   No use of Provocation Some-what provocative Very provocative

   1----------2----------3----------4----------5

9. **On a scale of 1 to 5, how would you rate the use of "Relating to the everyday life of the visitor" in this exhibit?**

   No use of *Relate* technique Some use of *Relate* Very good use of *Relate*

   1----------2----------3----------4----------5

10. **On a scale of 1 to 5, how would you rate the use of the concept of "Reveal" in this exhibit?**

    No Revelation Some Revelation Very good use of Revelation

    1----------2---------3----------4----------5

11. **What is the required viewing/reading time for this exhibit? _____ minutes**

12. **What is the actual viewing time for this exhibit? _____ minutes.**

13. **When you look at this exhibit subject, topic or content, answer the question: *Why would a visitor want to know this?* If you find it difficult to answer this question it may explain why visitors might ignore this exhibit.**

_____
_____

14. **When looking at this exhibit, answer the question: *How do you want the visitor to USE the information this exhibit is giving them?* If visitors can't use the information, then why are you giving it to them?**

_____

_____

Individual Interpretive Exhibit
Design/Copy Critique

15. How would you rate the label copy for this exhibit?

Boring Some-what well written Very well written

1--------2----------3----------4----------5

16. How would you rate the selection of graphics or photos for this exhibit?

Visually boring Somewhat visually interesting Very visually interesting

1----------2----------3----------4----------5

17. How would you rate the amount of label copy for this exhibit?

Too much to read Some-what OK Just right

1----------2----------3----------4----------5

18. How would you rate the kinds of artifacts used in this exhibit or display?

Not interesting Some-what interesting Very interesting

1----------2----------3----------4----------5

Have a look at the exhibit on the following page and think about the evaluation criteria for the total quality of the text, (color size, etc.) and its relationship to the exhibit content. How would you evaluate it? Any suggestions for changes? Note - this is from Canada where all text has to be bilingual. It might be too small to read all the copy, but how about the "look"?

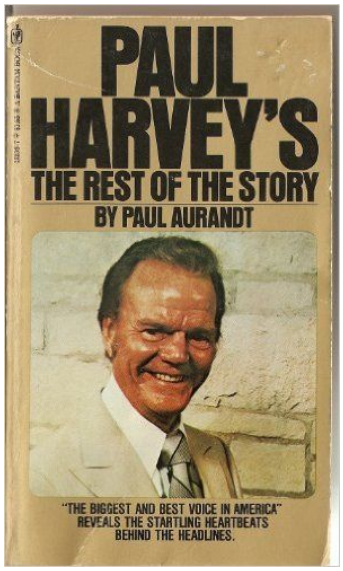
References:

Ham, Sam H. 1992, **Environmental Interpretation.** North American Press.
Veverka, John A.1994. **Interpretive Master Planning.** Acorn Naturalists.
Lewis, William J. 1988. **Interpretive for Park Visitors.** Eastern Acorn Press.

Chapter three -

Finding the Rest of the Story

When I was younger (much younger) I remember listening to the radio and to Paul Harvey's Rest of the Story. It took me a few years to understand why I loved listening to it, and later reading, his "rest of the stories". It was interpretation before we knew what interpretation was. His writing followed all of the interpretive principles - Provoke, Relate and Reveal. His book



was so full of outstanding "interpretive writing" that when I was teaching interpretation at Michigan State University, this was one of my text books for teaching interpretive writing for my students doing interpretive exhibits, panels, self-guiding experiences or other interpretive writing options.

Paul Harvey was the most listened-to radio personality in America. Millions of loyal listeners tune in every week to hear his unique blend of news and views. In *Paul Harvey's The Rest Of The Story* you found eighty-two astonishing true stories of the famous and infamous, the outrageous and the unknown. Each unforgettable tale has for its startling punch line the wild and wonderful solution to a real-life mystery. The 1950's presidential candidate who killed a teenage girl. The governor of New York who dressed up like a woman--at taxpayer's expense. The queen whose secret photo collection--if exposed--would shock the world. The American founding father who kept his wife locked in the cellar. The best-selling mystery writer who tried to get away . . . with murder! From present-day shockers to historical puzzlers, *Paul Harvey's The Rest Of The Story* reveals the untold story behind some of history's strangest little-known facts.

It's the job of the interpretive writer to "find" or uncover the rest of the story associated with seemingly everyday objects or artifacts, historic events and personalities, artwork or other objects, landscapes or sits that have a story to be freed from its bonds and help the visitors/readers have a "wow" experience when the rest of the story is revealed to them. Here's an example I wrote for a self-guiding community walking tour using the "rest of the story" interpretive writing format.

The Jackson Clubs dark secret.

In 1842, this was the location of the Jackson Club, a club, for ***Men Only****! This was the place where the elite of Jackson came to do business, visit, and talk about the news of the times. And becoming a member was not easy – you had to be somebody important!*

*this Men's only organization. A proud member for 25 years, it wasn't until Mike's death in 1869 that it was discovered – that Mike was really … **Michelle** – **Yep! A Woman!***

(Directions to the next stop – use a different color or font to distinguish from text.)
Your next stop on the tour is just one block down this street on the right, a large white home, number 321. It looks like an ordinary home, but there's an extraordinary story buried in the garden. I'll meet you there with a shovel.

Could you find the Provoke, Relate and final Reveal in the writing? At the end of the stop for the Jackson Clubs dark secret, do you see how the writing then re-provoked for the next stop? Are you wishing you could learn the "reveal" when the writer meets you at the next stop with their shovel?

This is an important aspect of interpretive writing, so let's look at more examples of interpreting the "rest of the story" hidden in your artifacts.

Many years ago while working as an interpretive consultant in Canada I had the chance to meet an *Inuit* (a member of a group of native people of northern North America and Greenland) soapstone carver who just started working on a new project. Holding the large piece of raw soapstone in his hand I asked him what he was going to carve? He said the stone hadn't revealed that to him yet. He believed that the stone held a spirit within it and that as he began to carve away bits of the stone, the spirit would be freed, as a seal, bird, hunter, whatever image was waiting for him to release it from the stone.

Free at last from the stone it was sleeping in.

The job of the professional interpreter is to do just that - to release the sleeping story that's a part of each and every artifact, landscape, artwork, plant or item they interpret at every museum, park or organization they work for. Sadly, most museums are just as happy to have only a boring label telling you what the object is, but not any of the stories attached as the sole of it. I think most museums are really collections of stories, illustrated with artifacts - waiting patiently for an interpreter to free those stories from their bondage within each artifact they're a part of. Maybe someday, for museums and heritage sites, this will be the norm. A little less information and maybe a little more interpretive *inspiration* and *revelation?*

To release the story from the artifact you first have to "find" or learn the story the artifact is hiding or representing. This requires some research of course - but not just "curatorial" research but interpretive research. Remembering Tilden's principles of interpretive communication - provoke, relate, reveal, have a theme, think about tangibles and intangibles, using active language and adding a pinch of "inspiration" to the whole presentation. We do want visitors to remember something from their interpretive experience - and of course - the REVEAL.

Just for fun - here are some stories that were waiting within artifacts for their freedom. Can you find the Provoke, Relate, Reveal, etc.? How would you release the rest of the stories in your artifacts? There's always more than one right answer. Here's my best shot at interpreting a few of them for you.

Interpretive example 1 - The harpoon of death at a snail's pace.

These beautifully patterned Cone Shells are capable killing machines - killing a human in less than 30 minutes!

Instead of teeth these snails use a venomous harpoon for hunting food which is a hollow, barbed and very deadly tool ! Much like a doctors hypodermic needle - this needle injects death!

Cone shells feed on sea worms, fish and even other Cone shells. Because they are slow moving they use their harpoons to capture a faster moving prey. The harpoons have to be strong enough to penetrate the scales of fish, but they can also penetrate the gloves a human might be wearing searching the water for other "edibles". **Handling the live snail can have tragic consequences and be deadly to humans.**

The Geographic Cone shell is so poisonous that it has been called the ***cigarette snail*** **in the belief that the victim has only enough time left to smoke a cigarette before death.**

But the venom of the Magician Cone shell seems to be a non-addictive pain reliever **one thousand times more effective than morphine!** Research into this miracle drug is on-going. So now you know the rest of the story of life and death with cone snails.

Is there a relate and reveal here? Did the interpretation leave you asking for more?

Interpretive example 2 - Isaac's great idea!

Have a look at some of the change in your pocket and you'll see that most coins have ribbed edges as if they're scarred. Such textured surfaces can be observed in almost every coin of the world no matter where it came from. But such coins first appeared several centuries ago. **So why are so many coins ribbed? Here's the rest of the story.**

The story goes that once upon a time coins were evaluated by the amount of precious metal contained in each like these ancient Greek silver coins.

These are made of electrum which is a naturally occurring alloy of gold and silver. Not only are they of irregular shape, the edges are smooth with no marks or scratches on them. So, for example, a $10 coin contained the precise amount of gold or silver that was equal to $10 in gold or silver by weight. Cheaters used to cut the edges off coins to melt them down and make new coins for their own profit. Preventive measures had to be taken. This was quite a serious issue

since not every man could carry a pair of scales to check whether the coin was cut or had its proper weight.

To tackle the cheaters tricks, it was decided to gouge small lines on the coin edges. Due to this they became distinguishable enough to tell if the coin was tampered with. This extraordinary method was suggested by the very famous at that time and nowadays, physicist and Warden and Master of the British Royal Mint, Isaac Newton**.** The idea seemed to be simple and brilliant at the same time. Eventually, all coins were marked and swindles dropped to zero. And no wonder – when one came across coin with smooth edges, they knew at once it had been cut or tampered with and would not accept it.

According to the US Mint, there's a reason. or… there *was* a reason for US coins to be ribbed too. Originally, the quarter and dime – in addition to other "major" coins like the dollar and half-dollar – were made partially from precious metals like silver and gold. **The special edge (also known as a "reeded edge") served as protection against counterfeiting and, more importantly, fraudulent use.** These coins are still ***reeded*** today. Take the change out of your pocket and have a look at the coins rims! Now you know the rest of the story as to why they are reeded, and the rest of the story of the coins in your pocket.

Interpretive example 3 - How can such a small piece of concrete tell such a powerful story of life and death?

The Berlin Wall had stood since 1961, when it was erected by the Communist East German government to prevent residents of East Berlin from moving to West Berlin, an island of democracy in the center of East Germany.

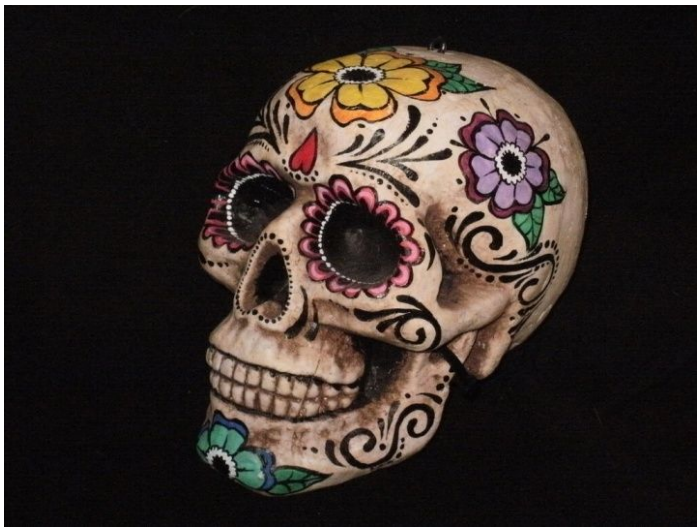
The 96-mile wall split families and friends, and became a symbol of the Cold War divisions between East and West, and communism and capitalism. East German guards were ordered to

shoot anybody who attempted to cross to West Berlin, and nearly 100 people died trying to escape and cross the wall - and this tiny piece of the wall is a part of that legacy and story.

Finally, in August 1990, East Germany voted to reunite with West Germany. On Oct. 3, 1990, East German states officially became part of the reunified Federal Republic of Germany, with Berlin as its capital - and the wall came down. Large sections of the wall were preserved and are found in museums around the world today and you're holding a small part of that story in your hand now.

This small piece of concrete is a part of that story, a smaller piece of a greater story - waiting decades to be released and decades into the future of stories yet to tell. And now you know the rest of its story.

Interpretive example 4 - When is a skull, more than a skull?



The Day of the Dead (*Día de los Muertos*) is celebrated in Mexico between October 31st and November 2nd. It's a holiday in which Mexicans remember and honor their deceased loved ones. Though it may sound gloomy or morbid, it's not. It's a festive and colorful holiday. Mexicans visit cemeteries, decorate the graves and spend time there, in the presence of their deceased friends and family members. They also make elaborately decorated altars (called *ofrendas*) in their homes to welcome the spirits.

Because of its importance as a defining aspect of Mexican culture and the unique aspects of the celebration which have been passed down through generations, Mexico's indigenous festivity dedicated to the dead was recognized by UNESCO as part of the intangible cultural heritage of humanity in 2008.

So when is a skull more than a skull? When it symbolizes so much more of a cultures intangible heritage like the example shown above and has generations of stories and family memories to reveal.

Interpretive example 5 - "Touch -me -Not" - unless you have an itch ! Want the rest of the story?

This was one of my favorite plants to interpret to visitors when I was leading interpretive hikes as a seasonal naturalist with Ohio State Parks back in my "youth".

Jewelweed or "Touch me not" (the two common plant names) usefulness arises from its long history and scientifically proven efficacy in treating all sorts of skin irritations, including poison ivy. It's especially valuable for anglers and anyone who regularly visits stream banks and moist woodland paths where stinging nettles are found. Should you brush your leg or hands/arms against the nettles (ouch!), crush up some of the Jewelweed plant stems - their very moist - and rub the juice on the itchy area. It does work to stop the itching. Now this is real, as I've done it and used it. But the plant has another surprise. When the flower has a small green bean looking seed pod (you can see it in the photo above) - the pod is spring loaded to "shoot" the Robins egg blue seeds out from the plant - quit a surprise. Thus the name "Touch me not". By the way, the seed tastes like almond.

Now you know the rest of the "Touch me Not" story I've been itching to tell you. :)

Are you ready for your "The Rest of the Story"?

My favorite interpretive writer, as you know from the start of this chapter, was Paul Harvey, who used these interpretive techniques in his remarkable story telling. All objects, artifacts, landscapes, people have a "rest of the story". It's our job as interpreters to do a little digging to find it and reveal it to our visitors. This is the same technique we use in developing museum exhibit label copy (often the most boring so-called "interpretive" writing the world has ever seen) to make it more provocative, and in writing for interpretive panels or media for self-guiding experiences to have visitors "remember" the interpretation.

Here's one more "rest of the story" written for an audio script in an art museum. Look for the Provoke, Relate and Reveal - guess what the objective for the piece were?

Willem's Passion

More than anything, Willem wanted to be an evangelist. He was only twenty-five, a century ago, but already he's been an art dealer, language teacher, bookseller... and unsuccessful in love.

But more than all the paintings and all the words and all the books and all the women, Willem wanted to devote himself to his fellow man, and the Word of God.

It was this passion that brought young Willem, in the spring of 1879, to the coal fields of southern Belgium. It was there, in a little mining town, that Willem outlined "the rest of the story" on the back of a faded envelope.

Perhaps it was the young minister's total selflessness that first captured the respect of the miners in that tiny Borinage community. In a mine disaster sores of the villagers were injured and no one fought harder to save them than he.

Every Sunday they overflowed Willem's services to hear this unassuming man preach the literal Word of God. And then lightning struck.

A visiting church official discovered Willem living in a simple hut, dressed in an old soldier's oat and trousers made of sacking. When he asked Willem what he had done with his salary, Willem answered simply that he'd given it to the miners.

The church official told Willem that he looked more miserable than the people he taught. Willem was dismissed from the service of the church that day. He was devastated. The career that had meant everything was suddenly gone. There followed weeks of despair.

Then one afternoon, Willem noticed an old miner. He was beneath the enormous weight of a full sack of coal. In that instant, Willem again felt the desperation of these people - and recognized that it would always be his own.

Fumbling through his pockets, the Dutchman pulled out a tattered envelope... and then a pencil... and began to sketch crude ones, but he tried over and over again.

Beginning that day Willem was to capture for the world the torment, triumph, and dignity of the people he loved.

If Willem had failed as a minister, there was now a new passion...a new purpose.

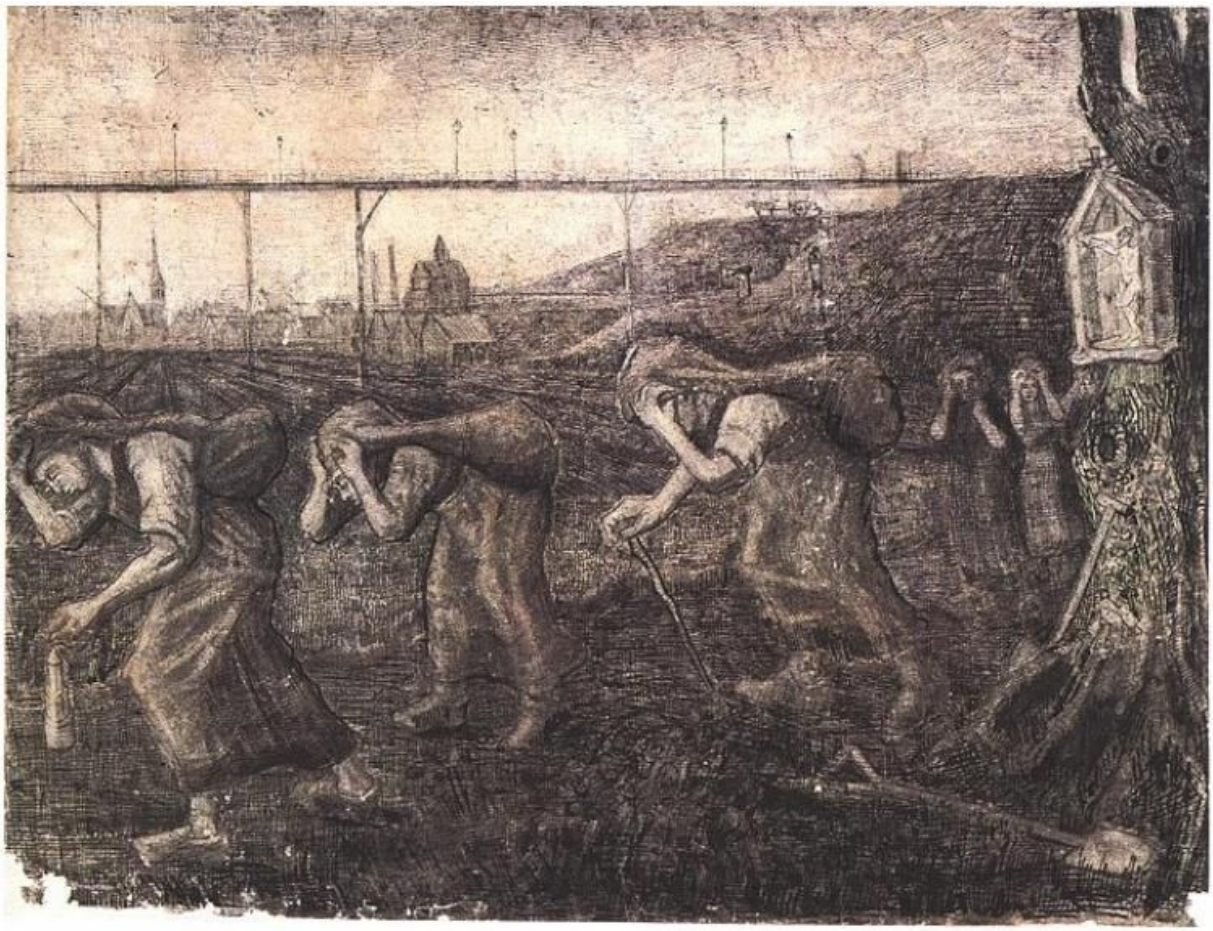
And the people he was not allowed to teach, he was able to reach through art. In the process he immortalized them...and they him.

For the end of Willem's career as a clergyman motivated a ministry more monumental than he had ever dreamed.

Because the preacher who wasn't to be, became the artist the world would know... as Vincent Willem van Gogh.

So now you know the "rest of the story" about this amazing artist.

(from example of artist interpretation from Paul Harvey's Rest of the Story).



One final example of interpretive writing. What if you were asked to write an "interpretive" label about a common every-day pen? What would you write about? Think about it. What can you say about a everyday pen.? Here is an interpretive writers answer based on one of my courses interpretive writing assignments

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- **Assignment** - Let' say you select a **pen** you want to interpret. Write the copy so that there's the **provocative header or sentence** to get our attention at the beginning, then use examples to **relate** to the average person about why pens are so cool or make our lives better and then the **reveal** where we go "oooh" or "Ah", so the message "connects" with the reader. Sometimes a "relate" and "reveal" can be the same thing. :) Here is an example of what I would like:

- ***It may not look like much but this simple object has been a part of events that changed our American history and maybe your life, forever!***

  We see its legacy in the strokes on the Declaration of Independence, for each signature on the bottom of the document. Each is unique - but world changing. It also played a role in freeing the enslaved people leading to the Civil War, and maybe you used it to tell a loved one how much you cared about them. This amazing tool has evolved throughout time, and some say has been replaced by computers. Yet most of us still carry one... just in case. What part of your history did you use a simple pen to change your world forever?

So now you know a little bit more about how to reveal and organize the rest of the story is your interpretive writing. The scary thing is that "everything" has a rest of the story. Good hunting.

Chapter four -

Tangibles, Intangibles and Universal Concepts.

This chapter will explore the use of tangibles, intangibles and universal concepts in your interpretive writing. I'll provide examples of each in this chapter. Using these concepts is how you'll really be able to connect with and relate to your audience.

When using Tilden's Principles for Interpretive writing we'll also need to use Tangibles, intangibles and universal concepts as part of the approach.

As part of the use of Tilden's principles for interpretive writing, we should also consider how we might use the strategies of "tangibles, intangibles, and universal concepts" as we develop our writing projects. David Larson in his book "Meaningful Interpretation" talks about these concepts and we should introduce them to you here is you are not familiar with them. They are key to effective interpretation, weather used in live programs or written text or scripts.

Tangibles in interpretation: Tangibles can be objects, places, people, events, landscapes or other related materials. So if you are writing the text for a self-guiding booklet on seasonal wildflowers, some of the tangibles might be:

- the species of flowers visitors will see.
- the insects that might be part of that flowers life cycle.
- the uses of those flowers in art, folk art, medicine or other uses.
- the ecological needs that those plants have for survival.
- threats that might occur to engender them.

Intangibles in interpretation: Intangibles are things that you might feel emotionally than feel physically. They can be ideas, memories, relationships, and values. So for our text for the self-guiding trail booklet, some of the intangibles could be:

- Happiness or relief a early settler might have had in finding a plant that could cure an illness.
- Remembering your parents gardens back home.
- Feeling relaxed when you walk through a garden.
- Marveling at the beauty of a flower.
- Remembering your mothers favorite flower and the joy it gave her.
- Smells that rekindle memories or feelings.

Universal Concepts: These are concepts that everyone can relate to. When I was taking my very first interpretation class at Ohio State University back in 1976 my interpretation professor Dr. Gabe Cherem called them "cross cultural puncture points". What goes around comes around under a new name. They are concepts that no matter who you are or where you are from you can relate to:

- Wedding ceremonies
- holiday celebrations
- the concept of "home"

- religion
- death and disasters
- Can you think of other examples?

Universal concepts are often hidden in, or a part of our intangible concepts. So for our text for the following self-guiding trail stop example, some of the Universal Concepts could include:

- Many of our medicines come from plants.
- Plants are an important part in funerals in many cultures.
- There are many reasons people brought plants to patients in hospitals and sick rooms.
- Plants have always been an important of everyone's diet.
- No matter what your favorite food is, there is probably a plant linked to its story.
- Some plants can save your life in unusual ways.

So now that you have the parts of the story, your job as a writer would be to link them together to provoke, relate and reveal, using tangible, intangible and universal concepts.

Let's look at another example of tangibles and intangibles.

A house is a "tangible", but a "home" is an intangible. What do you think the "universal concept is"?

Here's another example of interpretive writing using Tilden's principles, tangibles, intangibles and universal concepts on the following page.

The lights in lighthouses are magnified by a Fresnel lens.

Here are two ways to tell the story of a Fresnel lens….

The first way is descriptive.

You'll "learn" many details & facts about the lens.

The second is interpretive.

You'll learn more about the meaning of the lens and why it matters.

Interpreting an Object Using Tangibles and Universal Concepts: A Fresnel Lens from a Lighthouse.

Imagine you are an exhibit designer at a maritime museum. Someone donates an exquisite Fresnel lens. You are the one who will interpret it…. **reveal** its story to visitors.

There are many interesting facts about this **tangible** object.

There are also many powerful stories and universal concepts relating to its significance.

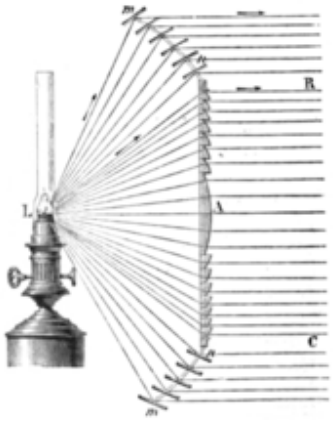
How will you explain this object to your visitors?

Approach # 1: Descriptive information: (Thanks Wikipedia)

FRESNEL LENS

This Fresnel lens was used for 50 years at the entrance to this harbor until the US Coast Guard replaced it in 1999. French physicist and engineer Augustin-Jean Fresnel is most often given credit for the development of the multi-part lens for use in lighthouses. According to Smithsonian magazine, the first Fresnel lens was used in 1823 in the Cordouan lighthouse at the mouth of the Gironde estuary; its light could be seen from more than 20 miles (32 km) out.[3] Scottish physicist Sir David Brewster is credited with convincing the United Kingdom to adopt these lenses in their lighthouses.

Description



How a Fresnel lens works

1: Cross section of a Fresnel lens
The Fresnel lens reduces the amount of material required compared to a conventional spherical lens by dividing the lens into a set of concentric annular sections known as "Fresnel zones", which are theoretically limitless.

In the first (and largest) variations of the lens, each zone was actually a separate prism. Though a Fresnel lens might appear like a single piece of glass, closer examination reveals that it is many small pieces. It was not until modern computer-controlled milling equipment (CNC) could turn out large complex pieces that these lenses were manufactured from single pieces of glass.

In each of these zones, the overall thickness of the lens is decreased, effectively dividing the continuous surface of a standard lens into a set of surfaces of the same curvature, with stepwise discontinuities between them. In fact a Fresnel lens can be regarded as an array of prisms arranged in a circular fashion, with steeper prisms on the edges and a nearly flat convex center.

Approach # 2: Interpretive Communication (Provoke, Relate, Reveal).

The Light that Guided Sailors Home (provocative header).

Imagine being in a ship during a storm at sea. You know you are nearing shore. You also know you are nearing deadly rocks that could tear your ship to pieces.

There it is! Suddenly you see the familiar light from the Superior Point Lighthouse. Even though you are still miles away from the light and the harbor entrance you feel relief because now you know you are going to make it home safely. After many days at sea you will be home safe with your family tonight.

This Fresnel lens guided sailors to Superior Harbor for many years until a powerful electric light replaced it. Using 716 glass facets to magnify the light of a relatively small bulb it brought sighs of relief to many sailors on stormy nights.

The point of this comparison is to use writing that combine tangible objects with universal concepts. The second approach links the tangible object (the lens) to a universal concept (home and safety) to create an interpretive theme**, "Light from this Fresnel lens guided sailors home safely."** Tilden's principles make the story or interpretation "come to life" in the mind and imagination of the visitors.

People forget the facts but remember the ideas and feelings.

Another version using first person:

It was a dark and stormy night and we had been at sea for two full days. I just stepped out on deck for a breath of cool air; it was so hot below. As I drew in a crisp breath, I noticed the first sure sign of home, Superior Point Light. Its massive lens appeared to blink on and off as it rotated. You can see the light for more than 25 miles, but we are much closer than that to the

deadly rocks below it. We will pass safely into port despite the wind and waves and soon to be home.

I met the light keeper many years ago just after the light was converted to electricity. The magnificent Fresnel lens is so large the keeper can stand up inside it. Surrounding him are 716 individual glass prisms which bend and reflect the light from a small bulb into an intense beam finally focused by the bull's-eye lens in the flash panels. It requires a gentle, though frequent touch, to keep clean and in top working order.

Remember provoke, relate and reveal… Tilden's principles are all embedded in the writing. Remember, before this copy was written several things had to happen:

- The theme had to be developed.
- Learn, Feel, and Do objectives written as to what this text, with the artifact/graphic was to accomplish.
- Use Provoke, Relate, Reveal in the writing.
- Use Tangibles, Intangibles and Universal Concepts.
- Do the research to be able to write the text with authenticity.

(Thank to Pat Barry - Certified Interpretive Trainer for this example).

More examples.

Let's look at the copy for one stop on a self-guiding plant tour for a natural area. The more examples you see the easier it is to understand the writing techniques. This is one stop on a 12 stop self-guiding trail brochure.

Cat got your tongue? Well, this cat could save your life!

At least its *tail* could. You probably know this plant as a **cattail**. If you were a muskrat, cattails would be used to make a nice lunch and a cattail constructed home – built just a little different from your home probably but for the same reasons. You can see their homes in the marsh here looking like small beaver lodges.

How can they save my life? In a survival situation (they taught me this in the Army), you can make a pancake type of batter from the cattail head pollen, eat the cattail roots (taste like cucumber), use the fluff in the autumn to start fires from sparks, and weave the leaves to make mats to sit on. Not too bad for one plant. So you see, ***here's another example of how our lives can be connected to plants in some amazing ways.***

Can you find the elements of Tilden's TIP's and the tangible, intangible and universal concept?

- One tangible is the cattail itself, another is the muskrat lodge.
- One intangible is the concept of home, another is "life saving."
- Universal concepts – home, and plants can save lives.

Provoke: This cat could save your life:
Relate: muskrat homes are different from yours but use for the same reasons.
Reveal: How this plant can be used in a survival situation.
Address the Whole: Theme of the self-guided walk – ***All of our lives can be connected to plants in some amazing ways.***
Message Unity: graphic/photos and play on words.

As part of the planning for your text you must also consider:

- **Who i**s your audience? Will your examples, vocabulary, intangibles, etc. be able to relate to them?
- **Identify your theme**. In our example above, the theme for the total self-guided brochure was: ***All of our lives can be connected to plants in some amazing ways.*** This theme would be re-stated again at each stop in the guide to reinforce the concept.

OK - that should do it. You should have a good idea of how to use and develop the use of tangibles and intangibles and university concepts with your writing, but remember that these can also be used via a graphic, photograph, art work, music, etc. Feel free to think outside of the box and be interpretive.

Chapter Five

Writing with feeling and imagination.

Writing for feeling and imagination – the power of words.

Now that we have had a good review of interpretation and the structure that your writing needs to follow to be "interpretive", let's start to tease apart interpretive writing into its potential parts. Of course interpretive writing needs to provoke, relate and reveal, have message unity and address a main theme. Here are some techniques to do just that to make your active language more memorable and powerful.

Active Verbs. In developing text, active verbs can make your text more powerful. Here are some examples.

a. The lizard *crept* up the leaf.
b. He *cringed* when he saw it.
c. The snail *munched* on the leaf.
d. The bird *soared* to the heavens.

Colorful Nouns. These are people, places or things. Here are some examples of nouns.

Aunt, uncle, grandfather, grandmother
Brother, sister, boy, girl.
Bedroom, bathroom, kitchen, living room.
Broom, mop, vacuum, waste basket; faucet, hairdryer, toilet, toilet paper; toothbrush and paste, towel, pillow, mirror.
Cup and saucer, dishwasher, paper towels, refrigerator.

Personal words. We try to use these in interpretive writing. We want to have our writing be a conversation with the visitor, rather than talking at the visitors. Personal words include:
You, us, she, you guys, we, all of us, together,

Powerful adjectives:

An **adjective** modifies a noun or a pronoun by describing, identifying, or quantifying words. An adjective often precedes the noun or the pronoun which it modifies. In the following examples, the **highlighted** words are adjectives:

The **car-shaped** balloon floated over the treetops.
Mrs. Smith papered her **living room** walls with **hideous** wall paper.
The **large** boat foundered on the **wine dark** sea.
The **coal** mines are **dark** and **dank**.
Many stores have already begun to play **irritating Christmas** music.
A **battered music** box sat on the **mahogany** sideboard.
The back room was filled with **large**, **green rain boots.**

Remember that “interpretation” means translation. In interpretation we translate from the language of the expert to the language of every day visitors. Some of the best ways for this translation and understanding of the concept or idea being interpreted is the use of **Metaphors, analogies, and similes** in our written and verbal interpretation. Here are some examples. **Metaphor**. A figure of speech in which an implied comparison is made between two unlike things that actually have something in common.

Some people think of metaphors as nothing more than the sweet stuff of songs and poems--Love is a jewel*, or* a rose*, or* a butterfly*. But in fact all of us speak and write and think in metaphors every day. They can't be avoided: metaphors are built right into our language.*

Some metaphors are so common that we may not even notice that they *are* metaphors. Take the familiar metaphor of life as a journey, for example. We find it in advertising slogans:

☐ "Life is a journey, travel it well."
(United Airlines)
☐ "Life is a journey. Enjoy the Ride."
(Nissan)
☐ "Life is a journey. Enjoy the ride with a GM reward card."
(General Motors)

We use metaphors in poetry all the time – remember Robert Frost’s -

Two roads diverged in a wood, and I--
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference
("The Road Not Taken")

And a few more just for fun:
☐ "Love is the wild card of existence."
(Rita Mae Brown, *In Her Day*)
☐ "Love is a homeless guy searching for treasure in the middle of the rain and finding a bag of gold coins and slowly finding out they're all filled with chocolate and even though he's heart-broken, he can't complain because he was hungry in the first place."
(Bo Burnham, "Love Is")
☐ "Before I met my husband, I'd never fallen in love. I'd stepped in it a few times."
(Rita Rudner)

You may not know it but metaphors are a common part of our language that we use every day. In interpretive writing, we try to use it on purpose because it is the right example to express the concept we are presenting and hoping to have visitors understand and remember.

Analogy. An analogy is "reasoning or explaining from parallel cases." Put another way, an analogy is a comparison between two different things in order to highlight some point of similarity. As Freud suggested, an analogy won't settle an argument, but a good one may help to clarify the issues. Here are some examples.

"Pupils are more like oysters than sausages. The job of teaching is not to stuff them and then seal them up, but to help them open and reveal the riches within. There are pearls in each of us, if only we knew how to cultivate them with ardor and persistence."(Sydney J. Harris, "What True Education Should Do," 1964).

"Do you ever feel that getting up in the morning is like pulling yourself out of quicksand? . . ." (Jean Betschart, *In Control*, 2001).

"Ants are so much like human beings as to be an embarrassment. They farm fungi, raise aphids as livestock, launch armies into wars, use chemical sprays to alarm and confuse enemies, capture slaves. . . ." (Lewis Thomas, "On Societies as Organisms," 1971).

In interpretation we often say that an ecosystem is like your own community, different kinds of houses and building, edge effects (building codes), and all inter-related. A habitat is analogous to your own home – you need shelter, food, water to survive too, just like the plants and animals that live in this habitat.

And finally the use of Similes. We use the terms *like* or *as in* similes. Here are some examples.

as alike as two peas in a pod
as bald as a coot
as big as a bus
as big as an elephant
as black as a sweep
as black as coal
as black as pitch
as blind as a bat
as blind as a mole
as bold as brass
as brave as a lion
as bright as a button
as bright as a new pin
as busy as a beaver Try your hand: As useful as _____ !
as busy as a bee
as busy as a cat on a hot tin roof

How many of these have you used recently? Look at interpretive writing, text for interpretive panels, exhibit labels, or scripts for other printed or spoken narratives. They can make the concept presentation more interesting and fun. Now let's see how **active language** might be used in an interpretive text. See if you can spot any of these active languages in the following copy as well as Tilden's principles of Provoke, Relate, Reveal, Address the Whole, Message Unity.

This copy was written by J. Veverka as part of audio interpretation for **Red-winged blackbird** interpretation for the Red-winged blackbirds that were nesting in a local wetland. The audio included Red-winged blackbird "songs" in the background – sounds of wind, etc. as part of the message unity.

Auditioning for a legacy.

It's mid-May and spring has finally returned to the marsh. It has been a long journey and they're weary - waiting for the electrified air that will once again signal the start of what has occurred here thousands of times before. As a poet waiting for inspiration – they too wait. But their play will begin soon.

Finally the curtain rises, the centuries old rites of courtship begins and males fight for territory with their songs and displays, auditioning for their potential drab mates. Their new domains will be defended like a knight protecting their castle, except their castles are made of cattails and reeds. The time for renewing the flock has arrived.

But the months soon quickly pass and are forgotten like our morning dreams and the skies begin to darken early. Leafs take on a new personality and the winds reveal their true nature as the chill of October engulfs the once friendly marsh.

The young are grown and gone from the nests now and once prized battle grounds are suddenly left abandoned. Soon the sky will be briefly filled with their legions, like winged clouds heading for warmer lands. But lingering within each will be the map and desire to return home where the cattails and reeds of a spring marsh once again await their arrival and their ageless play to be auditioned and presented for a new audience - the legacy of the Red-winged blackbirds renewed once again.

See if you can identify the different uses and types of "active language" used in this copy.

Chapter Six

Writing for Museum Exhibits and Labels.

Label copy has been studied and research for years, yet we keep getting it wrong - wrong being that visitors seem to have no interest in reading it. In some museums it's a text book on the wall, with too much text, presented in too small a point size type, and written by experts who are out to impress other experts. During one evaluation project an evaluator told me that the only people reading the label copy at a history museum **were experts looking for errors**!

Review from past studies:

As we presented earlier, a 1989 publication by Region 8 of the US Forest Service entitled "Being Up Front and OutFront... Communication through Interpretation" contains some "exhibit survey results the fall of 1987 Let's review again some of their key findings for exhibits and exhibit labels.

The statistics were from two years of studies done by the USDA Design Division at nine different locations including the Adirondack NY Museum, the Smithsonian Air and Science Museums, the Begich-Boggs Visitor Center in Alaska; the Keowee-Toaway Energy Complex Visitor center in South Carolina; and the Williamsburg Visitor Center in Virginia. Here are some of the more interesting results from their two-year study of exhibits regarding text.

1. Less than 1% of the people read the entire exhibit copy. Of this 1%, approximately 90%were either experts or researchers that already had a thorough knowledge of the subject matter.

2. The longer and more complex the written (or recorded) message, the shorter the viewing and listening time.

3. The average visitor spent only about 30% of the time actually needed to thoroughly view an exhibit and read the message.

4. Thirty-five percent of the visitors viewed a three-dimensional topo map of the area. The retention of information present by the text was almost zero.

Some of our basic understandings about museum labels:

These are guidelines that we employ in all of our interpretive writing for museum exhibit labels:
- Labels that are over 50 words long probably won't be read. Most visitors won't read labels that are over 100 words (we usually do two 50 word paragraphs). So we keep text to about 50 words.

- If you can't get the point (theme, main concept) communicated in about 15 seconds, you probably won't get it across at all.

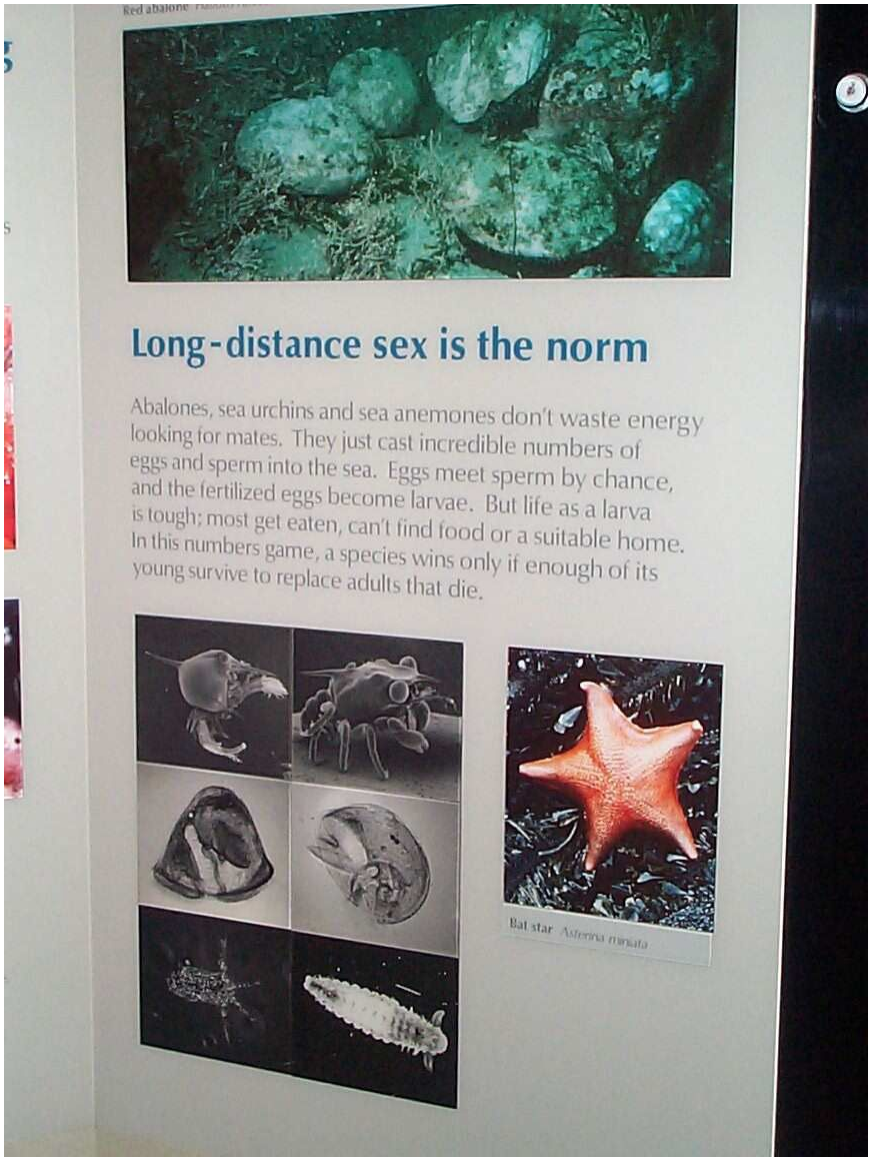
- Most museum's exhibit copy are text books glued to the wall giving lots of answers to questions that no one is asking. Interpretive labels create a focused story that all labels would connect to, but this concept is not often used, and increased the chance of visitors reading it.

- We find that almost none of the museum labels we reviewed was "interpretive" - it was rather more technical, scientific or written by an expert in the subject.

So what makes the museum label copy "interpretive" and thus more likely to be read by your visitors? First the copy needs to use Tilden's interpretive principles. Here's a quick review from previous chapters just in case you forgot any of them.

- Use provocative interpretive headers and sub-headers is the text layout.
- Use vocabulary that relates to the everyday life of the visitors.
- Address the whole - have a theme or main concept to reveal.
- Consider who your audience(s) are who will be reading this.
- Ask the question - why would visitor want to read this?
- Have revelation (a "oh my" affect ... "that's neat").

Here is an example good text copy from an exhibit at the Monterey Bay Aquarium.



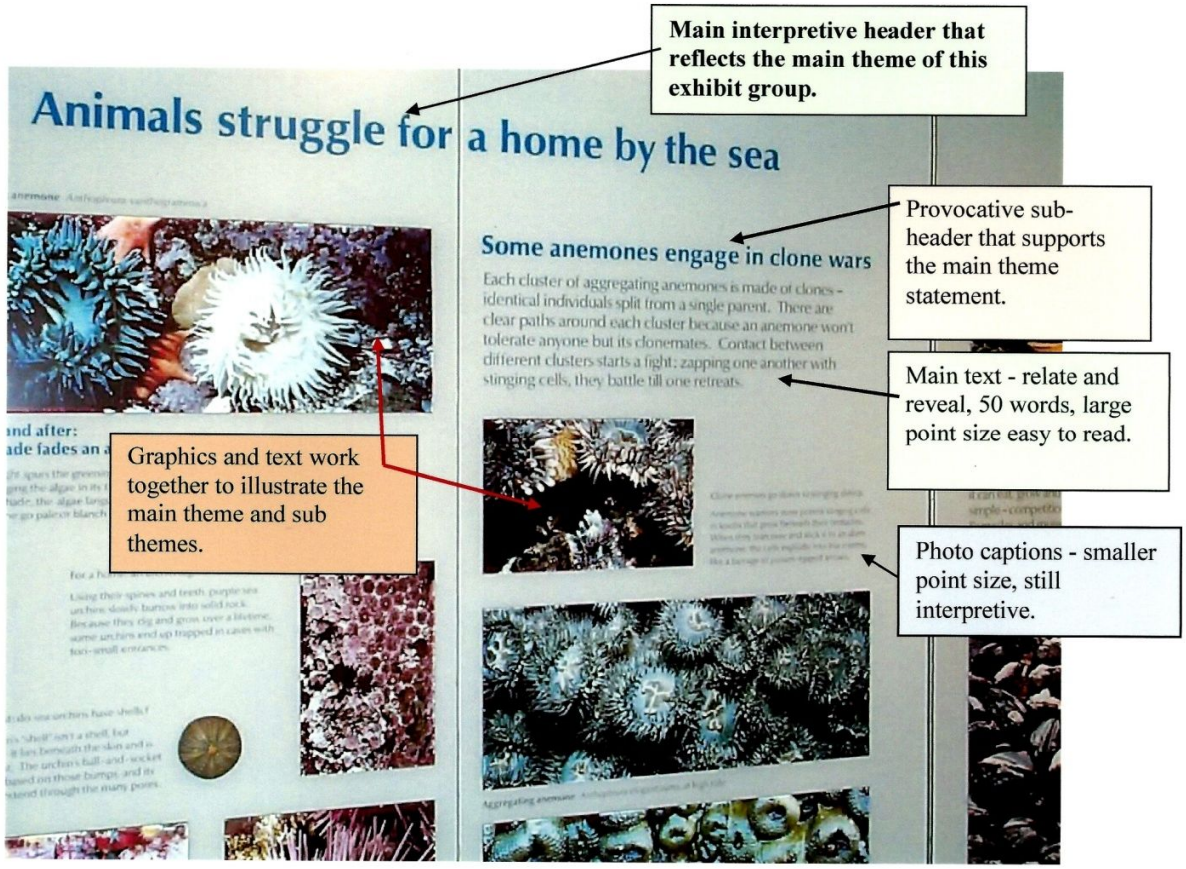
Of course, when writing interpretive label copy you have to be mindful to the graphics or artifacts that the copy will be a part of. When viewing an exhibit the visitors eyes go to the graphics (or header) first - or to the artifact(s) being interpreted. Reading the label, if done at all, is last in the sequence. The better written the text, and large enough to easily read and short enough to not be "intimidating" , the better the chance it will be; 1) read and; 2) understood and; 3) the main point actually remembered.

The importance of exhibit label copy in the *big picture* of the exhibit.

When we create interpretive label copy we have to look at the relationship of the label copy to the graphics and the objectives of the exhibit. In this regard we have to develop:

- The main interpretive exhibit label header.
- The sub-header text.
- The main bodies of text.
- Photo or artifact captions.

This is the concept of exhibit label headlining. Let's look at the following photo which illustrates these points and the headline concept.



Another text writing/design concept is to make the main point that the label is presenting in a **bold font**, and sub or secondary information in a lighter font as illustrated in this exhibit panel (in the shop for pre-testing). So we have the main header, main text body, support text body.

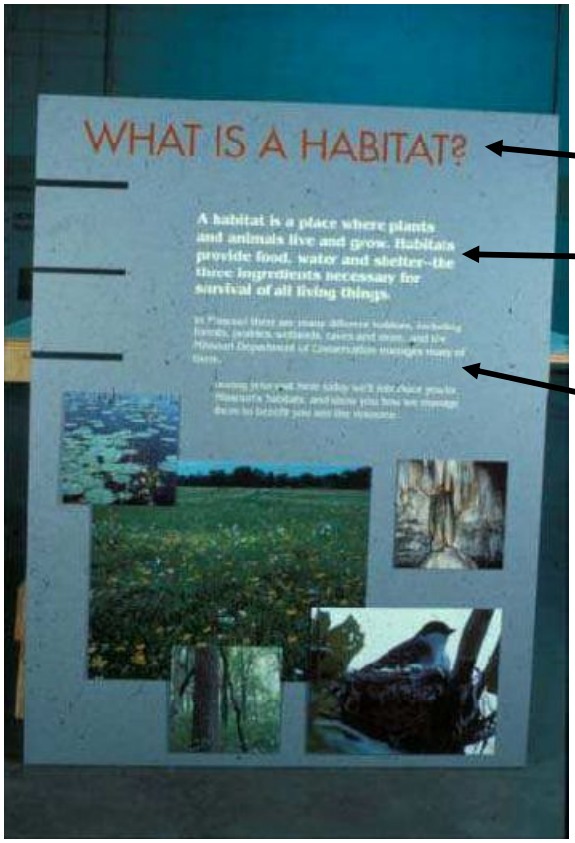
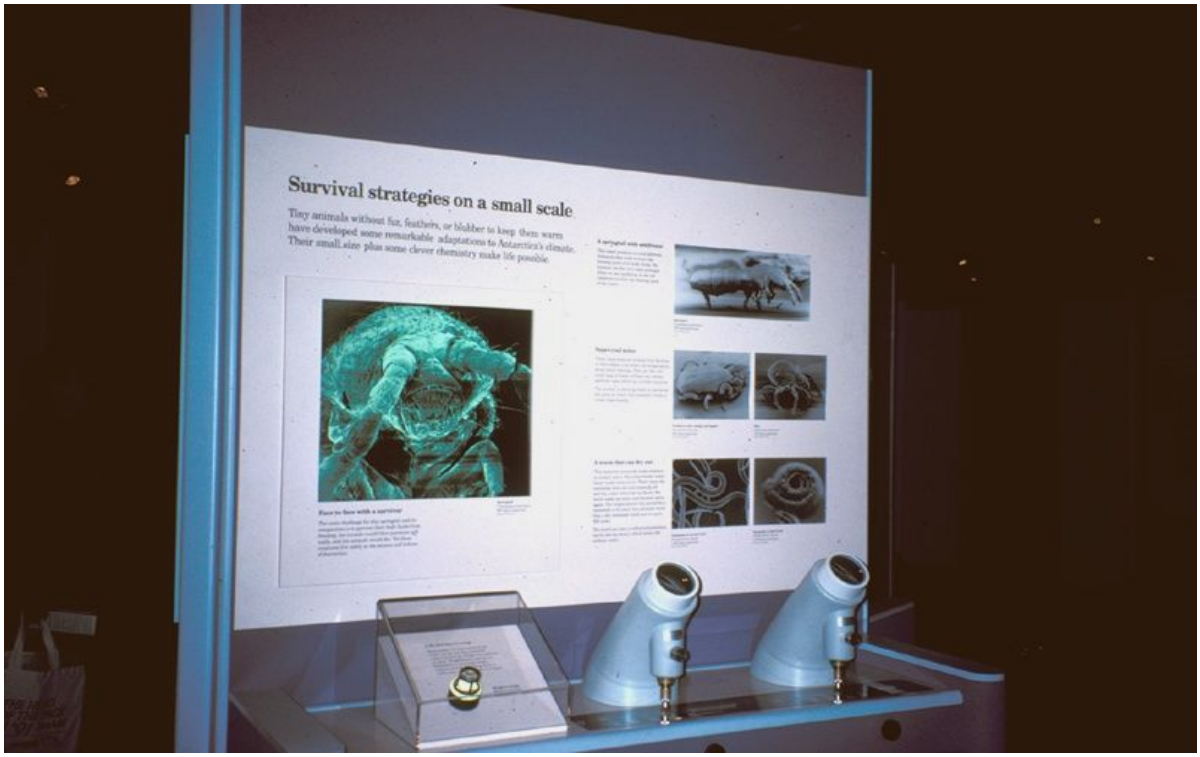


Exhibit panel headline.

Main text body, under 50 words in bold.

Secondary level copy for those readers who want a bit more information - non bold font.

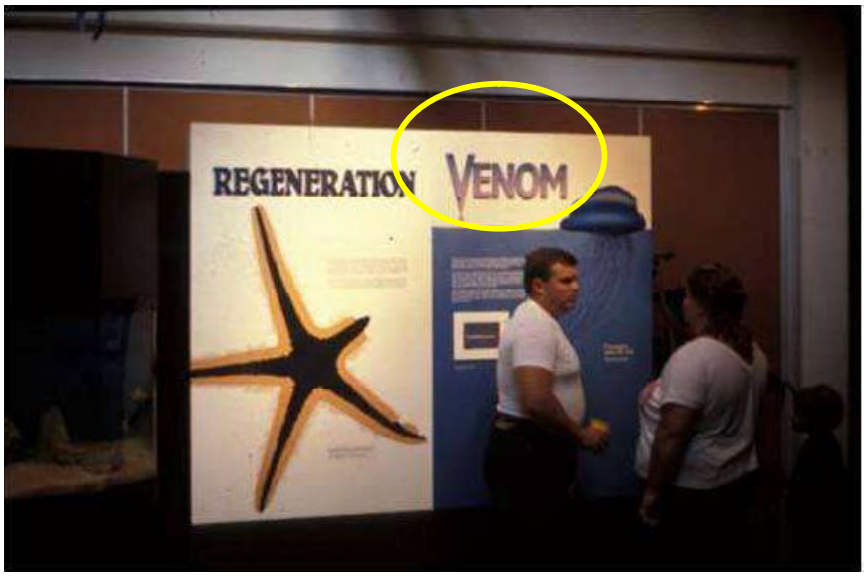
Remember that most of the time interpretive text is part of the total exhibit design, and may include instructions for using the exhibit if it is interactive like this example. Note the large font size and layering as well.



Here's another good example of the main header, secondary label, third layer labels and then photo captions. The label for instructions for using the view scopes is on the left. Note the third layer copy bocks are about 50 words at about 36 point size.

When is a word a picture?

As interpretive writers we also look at the word design themselves, how to connect them and empower them to do more than just be a word. But how words look can be an important part of interpretive writing. Let's look at some examples of text using words themselves as part of our interpretive message unity. Remember, words in our interpretive text can have different shapes, have different colors and be part of the message unite of the exhibits presentation.



Look at the word ***Venom*** in the exhibit above. Note how the planner had the "word" venom, **look like** venom. It even drips!

Here are more examples of how you can use different fonts to have your words be more than words and be part of the message unity for the total presentation

These are just more tools for the creativity chest of the interpretive writer - when a picture can be 1000 words, or even just three.

Planning for and preparing to do your exhibit label writing - a few key steps.

- Remember the main interpretive theme of the total exhibition that the label has to represent within the label text.

- Remember the relationship between the label and the graphics. Will the label:
  * reflect and direct the reader to all or part of a graphic or artifact?
  * give the reader directions as to how to use the exhibit?
  * provide additional information related to other copy, captions and text?
  * be independent and supplemental.

- Review the objectives (learn, feel and do) of the exhibit that the label has to reflect or help accomplish.

- Remember the text has to be interpretive (provoke, relate, reveal, support the theme and have message unity).

- Keep it under 50 words if possible, remember headlining and use of bold in the first sentence or paragraph to help draw attention to key elements of the text.

- Remember you need to write text that would fit about 50 point size or larger for museum labels, and minimum 30 point for outdoor exhibit panels.

- Review your research to be sure dates and facts are correct. Check for typo's.

- PRE-TEST evaluation. Have guests, visitors read and critique draft texts to make sure that it's visitor friendly and accomplishes your objectives.

- Be wary of vocabulary words that visitors wouldn't understand. If you do use technical terms be sure to explain them in "visitor terms".

- Make sure to have some "reveal" at the end of the text.

- Make sure it is fun-interesting- memorable. If visitors find the text interesting they are often motivated to read the text of other exhibits.

Hopefully these hints will help you avoid exhibit labels like these - which you have be really tall, in some cases, to read, if you like reading, which most people don't.

This overview of concepts and ideas for developing really good, interesting and memorable label copy was just designed as a sampler for interpretive writing.

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Chapter 7

Writing for interpretive panels and wayside exhibits.

Writing interpretive copy for outdoor interpretive panels follows all of the rules and guidelines we have discussed in relationship to interpretive writing techniques and writing for interpretive exhibits (interior). An interpretive panel "is" an exhibit, just a smaller one. Remember some of our guidelines for panels from earlier chapters:

- Try to keep panel total text (not including the header) under 100 words.
- Main point size for main body text should be around 36 point size.
- The text has to work with and be a part of the total panel design.

Here is one way I think about developing text for outdoor panels.

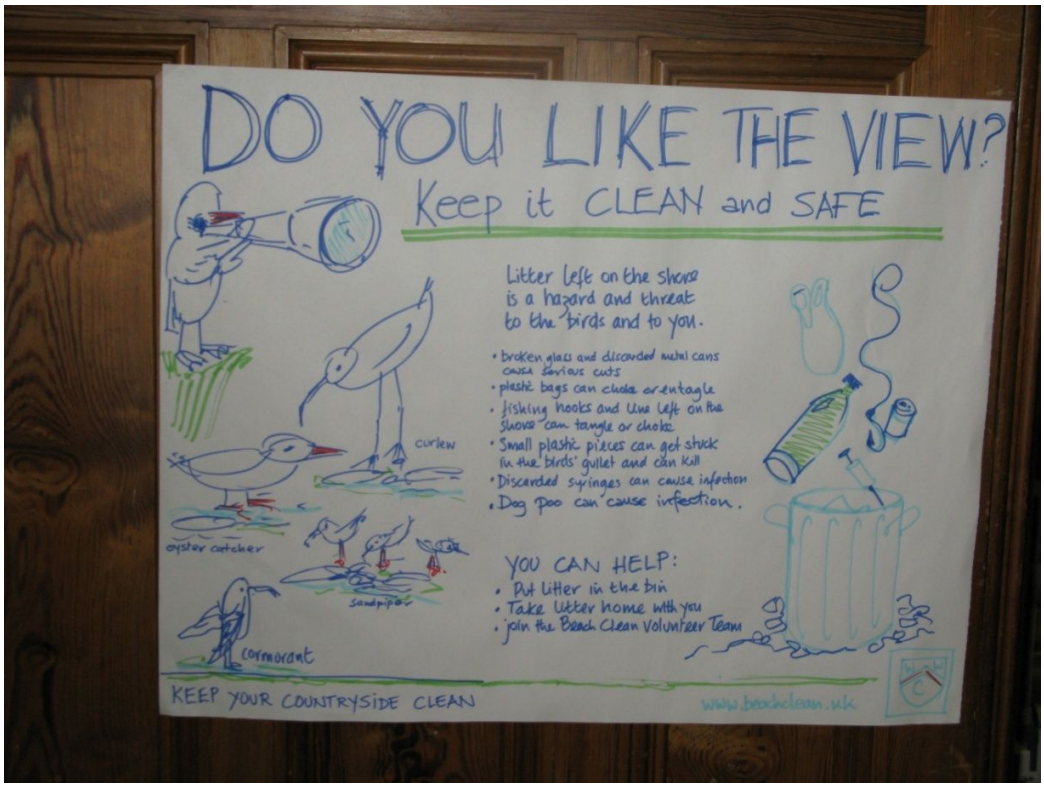
First I might develop (or ask the graphic designer) to do a hand drawn mock-up panel.

- I have the **theme** the panel is to illustrate.
- I have the **objectives** (learn, feel, do) that I want the panel to accomplish.
- I think about the **audience** so I know what analogies, similes, etc. to use.
- I think about **provoke, relate and reveal** for both the graphics and text.
- I think about the variety of final "looks" the panel might take including using different text fonts, colors or other font design elements.

- ***Then I mock up a draft to begin to play with like the one below - where will copy go, how much room will the copy take, point size and text design options, etc.***

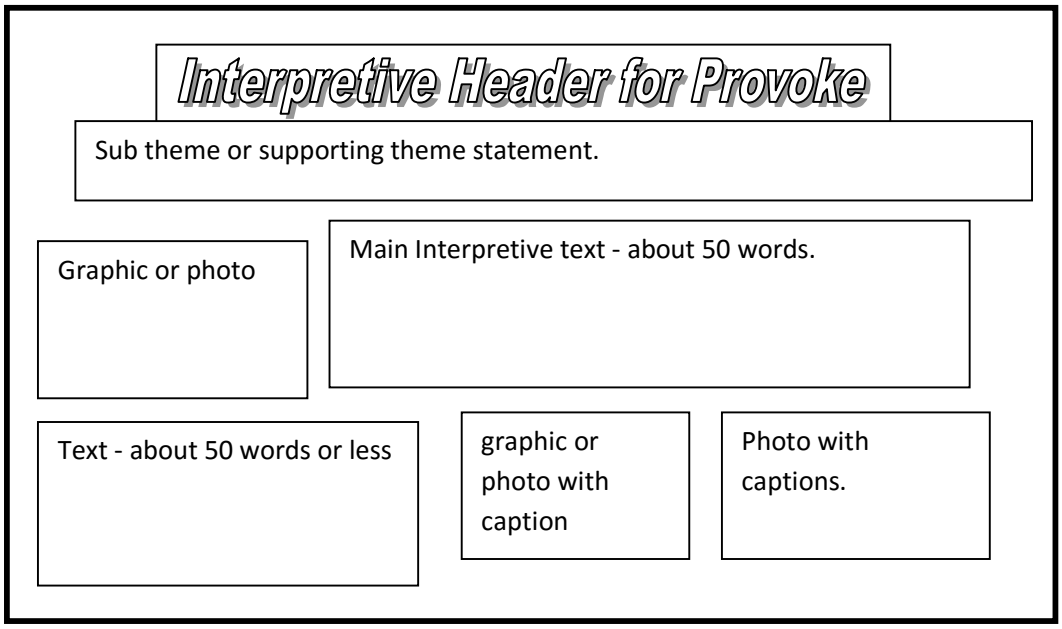
I also use this approach to make it simpler for new interpreters who are not designers, to do a mock-up to be **SENT to a designer to clean up and finalize the layout.**

The final draft panel should be pre-tested with visitors to make sure it accomplishes meaningful objectives and not just "look nice".



This is a mock up from a panel writing and development class to stop/reduce beach littering and its impact.

After I do the mock up panel I then use Microsoft word and text boxes to clean up my ideas. These are all text boxes.



There is no right layout - with this approach you can move things around and edit as needed.

Here are two panel examples using this "text box" approach. Check out the label copy as well - short and fun. Can you guess what the objectives, tangibles and intangibles might be?

In this example:

- The header is a text box.
- Each eye is a jpeg places into a text box.
- Main copy block is a text box.
- The photo is a jpeg (taken at the location/viewing platform the panel will be placed).
- The key at the bottom right is a text box.

This makes it easy to develop initial label copy, space the location of the text, make any edits of the text or associated graphics, and do pre-tests of the draft panel.

There is not a "right" or wrong design, just "successful" ones where the visitors actually remember something from the panel experience and the **objectives** of the panel are accomplished at least at a 70% level. Can you guess the objectives of this panel?

Panel Draft #2.

Here is another draft interpretive panel - this was the "first" draft. All of the graphics and text was placed using text boxes as was the first panel you saw. Now this panel has some edits to some of the text boxes that will need to be made for the next draft - some vocabulary words that not all visitors now what the word meant. Can you spot those, and as an interpretive writer, edit and "fix" them?

Who do you think the audience is that the panel is being designed for? That consideration will help you critique the text writing level and analogies too.

I'm a pollinator.

Flowers Are Natural Grocery Stores... and pollinators help stock them!

Natures grocery story may just look like a beautiful meadow of flowers, but it's breakfast, lunch and dinner for a huge number of shoppers every day called *pollinators*, and you probably know most of them.

So feel free to take pictures but please don't pick the *grocery store shelves* leaving the flowers here so that the *pollinators* might have a store like us for their daily grocery shopping trips and help the flowers reproduce too.

Ruby-throated Hummingbird

This bird's diet consists of nectar from bright tubular flowers, as well as insects. They will help with keeping your flower garden pest free!

Monarch Butterfly

The monarch larvae's favorite plant to consume is milkweed. Did you know that the high dextrose content of milkweed was used by Native Americans as a sweetener?

Honey Bee

Did you know that honey bees pollinate clover which is commonly used to make honey from?

All these fruits and vegetables started off as a flowering plant in need of pollination.

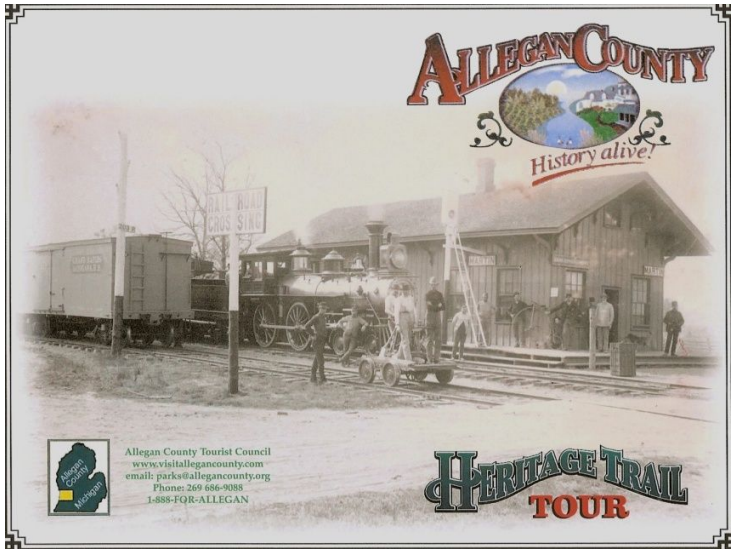
Panel physical design and placement may impact on your interpretive copy writing and technical issues.

As we have said, there is more to interpretive writing than words - we also have to consider what our writing will be placed on, how large or small a space we have to work with, number of words, text font, colors, shapes, etc. Have a look at some panel physical designs that the interpretive writer may have to work within.

Notice the amount of label copy that appears on these panels - all following the basic interpretive writing guidelines of text amount, layout, headers, etc. You will need to know the panel placement if your copy has directions to engage the visitors at each location, such as: look for the...; can you find/see the....; go ahead and touch the..., etc. Of course, these are the behavioral objectives of both the panel and text to be presented on the panel.

Chapter 8

Writing for self-guiding trail or tour leaflets.



Site # 18

Welcome to Saugatuck

What's in a name? William Butler was the first settler here in 1830. Early maps of the town show it being called Kalamazoo. But the legislature gave that name to another town, so the town was then called Newark. However, the postmaster had been calling the town Saugatuck since the post office opened in 1835! That was the name of his hometown in Connecticut, which happened to be appropriate because it's an Indian word meaning "mouth of the river". When the town was incorporated in 1868, the name Saugatuck became official.

Like many Michigan towns, Saugatuck started life based largely on the stands of virgin white pine, which covered the landscape. By the late 1860s, 8 lumber mills were going full-blast shipping lumber to Chicago and other cities around the Great Lakes. Saugatuck lumber helped rebuild Chicago after the Great Fire of 1871. But by 1880, round-the-clock clearcutting had finished off the area's white pines. Fruit growing then replaced lumber as the area's main resource. By 1884, it was a major producer of peaches, with many of them being traded and shipped through the Fruit Exchange in Saugatuck.

Site # 8

DNR State Game Area Office

You are now at the center of the Allegan State Game Area, an incredibly beautiful, rich and varied area in which to both observe nature as well as hunt and fish (in season). The area is criss-crossed with marked hiking trails, snowmobile trails, and cross country skiing trails. It's a great place to get out of the car and stretch your legs, or make a note to come back here another time for an extended hike.

True of False? Much of the Allegan State Game Area was once at the bottom of Lake Michigan. ***TRUE!*** During the last glacial period, about 13,000 years ago, lake levels were about 80 feet higher than they are today. The sandy soils you'll find here are the result of lake deposits left during this period of higher lake levels.

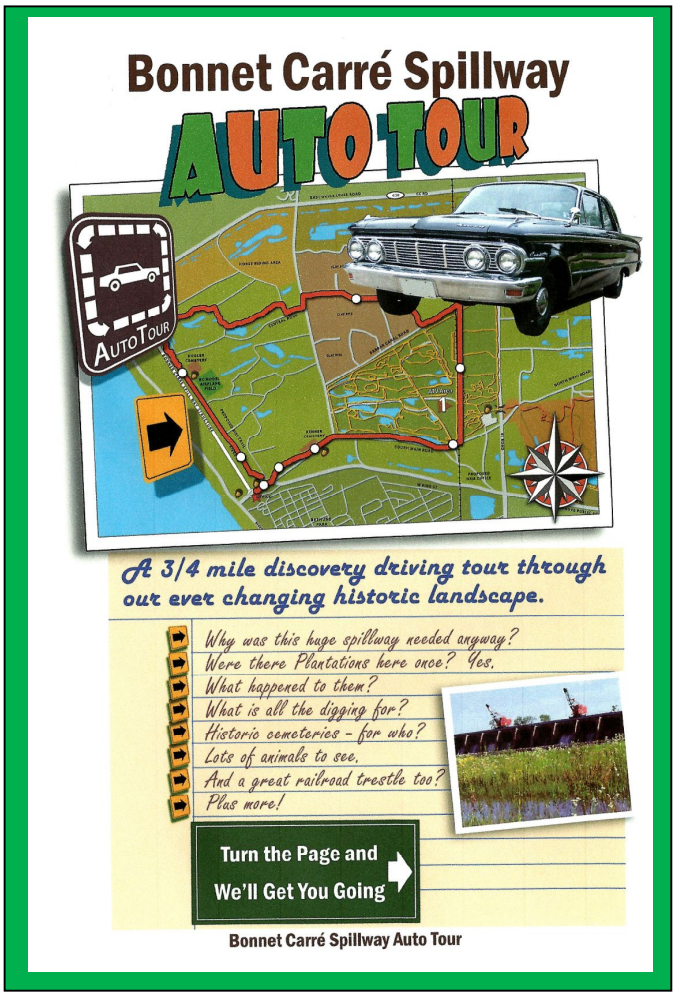
If you have any questions about recreational activities here, stop in the main office. They will be happy to answer your questions and point you in the right direction.

The next most common interpretive writing assignment is for self-guiding media. That could be for printed brochures and trail guides, or for cell phone and audio scripts. I like to think of interpretive writing for self-guiding media as writing for a collection of very small interpretive panels. In general, interpretive writing for self-guiding media includes:

- Having one interpretive theme that all the stops illustrate.
- Each stop's copy usually has one (may be two) photos or graphics.
- Has about 50- 100 words of interpretive copy.
- Write using about 12 to 14 point font size.
- Have to consider the format of the media.
- Use interpretive techniques (Provoke, Relate, Reveal).
- Write using tangibles and intangibles.

The sample above is a self-guiding auto tour, that include a route map for tour participants to use. Sometimes you have to write more than you'd like, most the stops on the tour are a photo and less than 100 words. The best way to illustrate this chapter is with actual examples of self-guiding media.

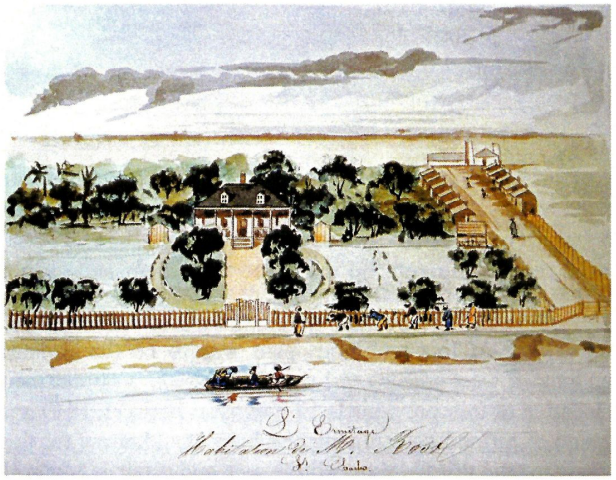
Here's an example of a SGT auto tour guide developed for the US Army Corps of Engineers, Bonnet Carrie Spillway. The self-guiding brochure was part of a larger interpretive media mix (interpretive panels, viewing decks, visitor center exhibits, interpretive kiosks and a birding trail guide.



Design by Kaser Design.

STOP 2 Sugar Cane and Plantations

During the plantation era, the Bonnet Carré Spillway was the site of plantations growing sugar cane. Where this tour stop is now would have been in the middle of vast fields of sugar cane, 150 years ago.



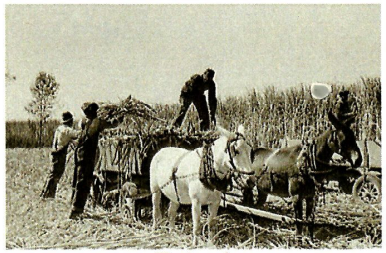
This is a watercolor painting of one of the plantations that was located where the Spillway is today. It was painted about 1859 by Father Joseph Paret, pastor at the Little Red Church in Destrehan. In the upper right is the sugarhouse, where the cane was crushed in a mill and the syrup boiled until crystallized sugar was formed. The sugar house was on this side of the Spillway and the remainder of the buildings sat between the location of the Spillway and the River. - Hermitage Plantation ca. 1859

When the U.S. government acquired this land to build the Spillway in 1928, all of the plantation buildings and other features were removed, with the exception of two key sites—the cemeteries of the African-Americans who had lived and worked on the plantations. We will learn more about the plantations at the next stop.

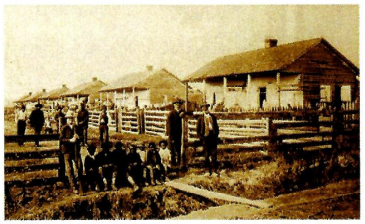
AUTOTOUR

Stop # 3 is just a short drive down this road on the left. Look for the Auto Tour marker and the number 3

STOP 3 Roseland Plantation & Kenner Cemetery



Workers harvest sugar cane

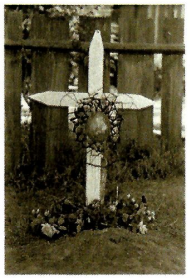


Louisiana cane plantation quarters

Early in the antebellum period, the land here was consolidated by James Brown, and acquired by Martha Kenner and her husband Charles Oxley. Oxley named the plantation "Roseland." The Oxley and Kenner families held the property until the 1890s.

In 1860, 155 enslaved persons resided on the plantation in 34 quarters houses. After emancipation, this remained a sugar plantation with a number of laborer's quarter houses. Sugar magnate Leon Godchaux acquired the plantation in the early-twentieth century but stopped growing sugar cane here about 1920. The cemetery was established for enslaved workers before the Civil War.

Grave markers for the in-ground burials at this cemetery were usually wood or iron crosses. The African-American plantation residents living here and in nearby communities continued to use the cemetery until the U.S. government acquired the land for Spillway construction in 1929. About 150 graves exist in this cemetery. The Kenner Cemetery is on the National Register of Historic Places.



AUTOTOUR

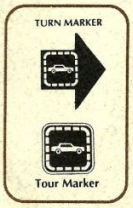
To keep us on "track" let's move on to see on of the most photographed trestles in the state. Keep driving down this road and stop 4 will be right in front of you.

An older example of a self-guiding driving guide. These are now in-house published so they can be changed and updated anytime. While this was developed some years ago, as of this date it is still in use as the "history hasn't changed much". This copy was also used in the narration script for an audio cassette tape trail guide.

Welcome to the Wayne National Forest, Covered Bridge Scenic Byway!

Do you know what Mail Pouch Tobacco, oil wells, and covered bridges all have in common? They are part of the history of Southeast Ohio, and things you can see and discover along the Covered Bridge Scenic Byway.

To guide you along the self-guiding tour, look for the symbols/tour markers that will lead you to each stop. The tour route map will show you the approximate location of each stop along the road as well.



How Long? The tour will take you from between one to two hours, depending on how long you wish to spend at each stop.

To Begin. Our tour begins at the Hills Covered Bridge, a few miles north of Marietta, just off Route 26. Look for the Tour Stop Directional Markers, and Tour Stop Marker #1 on the right hand side of the highway.

STOP #1

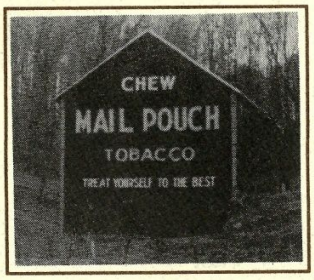
Covered Bridges. . .Ohio once had more of these than any other state. We had over 2000 of them! The national leader today is Pennsylvania. You'll be able to see and visit four covered bridges along this byway.

This one is called Hills Covered Bridge, and was built in 1878 by Hocking Valley Bridge Works. It features a Howe truss. To learn more about what a "truss" is, take a look at the interpretive exhibit panel located near the parking area. Take a few minutes here to look around. When you're ready to move on, we will give you some directions for finding the next stop.

Your next stop will lead you past some of Harley Warrick's National Treasures, just about 4 miles north on Rt. 26. This stop will give you something to chew on! Watch for tour stop marker #2.

STOP #2

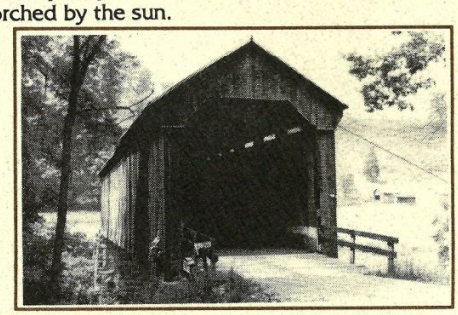
It all started for Harley Warrick back in 1946 when he was discharged from the Army at the end of World War II. Mail Pouch Tobacco barn painters came to paint the barn on his family's farm, and they had an opening on one of their teams. $28.00 a week base pay plus 1 $^{1}/_{2}$ cents a square foot production incentive. His take home pay could be as much as $32.00 a week! Two to three barns a day, six days a week. That was his pace for the first twenty years. Today, the Barn Paintings are considered "landmark signs", of historic or artistic significance. You will probably see several Mail Pouch Signs as you drive this byway.



Our next stop on the tour will be a visit to another covered bridge. Watch for tour marker number three. The bridge will be on the right side of the road. Turn right, down the gravel road, to the US Forest Service parking area.

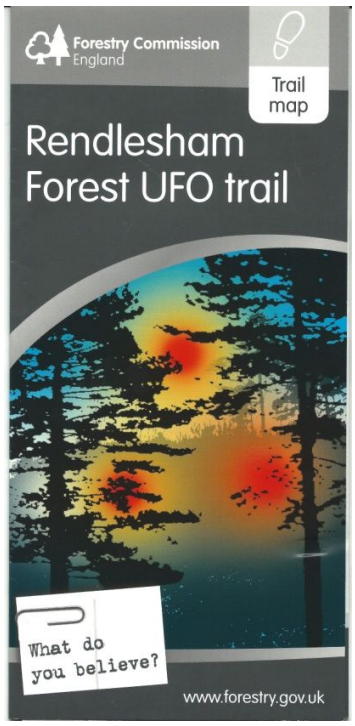
STOP #3

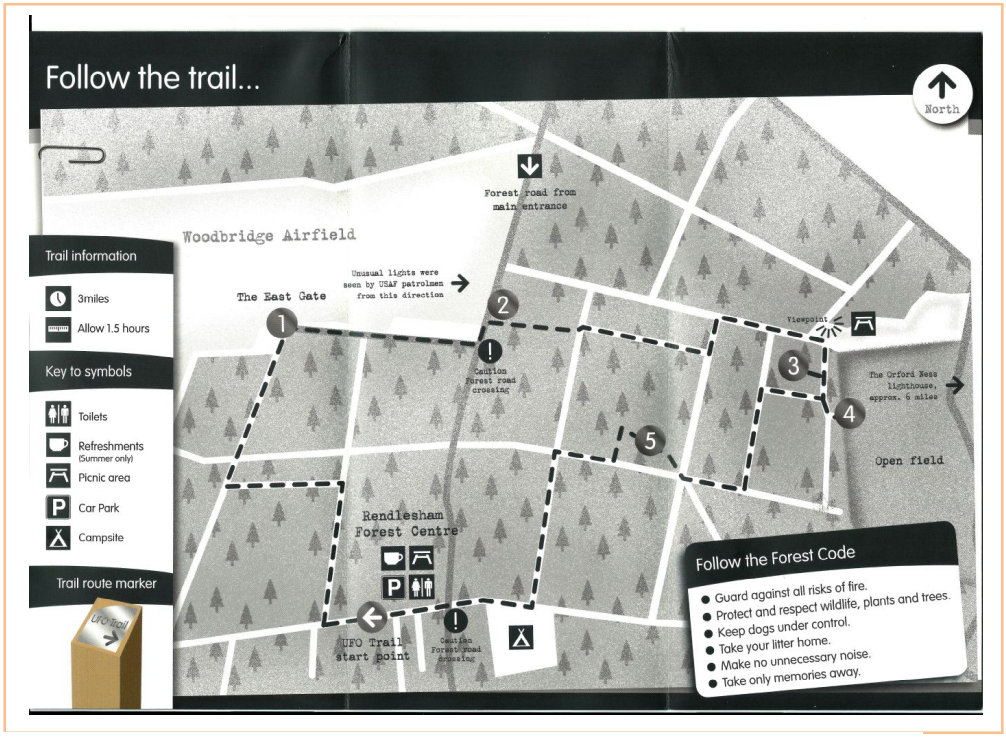
Do you know why covered bridges were covered? To keep the rain or snow off of the travelers? Or perhaps to protect the plank roadways of the bridges? No...roofs were put on the bridges to keep the main structural timbers dry. Solid as they might look, they would quickly rot if left exposed to rains, and then scorched by the sun.



This is the Hune Covered Bridge, built in 1879, with a 12 panel Long Truss. Take some time to look around. Your next stop (Stop #4) is the Oil Pump located here in the parking area. After you visit the bridge, take a few minutes to learn about our oil and gas history.

Now let's have a look at interpretive writing for a natural area self-guiding trail guide for a site with a "unique" story to tell.. Look for all the usual writing points, interpretive principles, theme, et





As you review these various publications I hope you are thinking about the relatioships between the interpretive text, the point size, and the layout that the text will be placed in. Interpretive writing has to have a lot of thought into it's total presentation, but as you can see from these examples, it should also be fun and interesting. Provoke, Relate and Reveal.

Chapter 9

Writing to accomplish management objectives and interpreting critical issues

The interpretive writers key role in public safety, public relations and as an agent of change in visitors attitudes and reactions to natural or human induced dramatic or dangerous events.

Interpretative communications has been gaining in use by agencies and managers for interpreting management issues and for a variety of public relations functions. We know that interpretation is the most powerful communication process we have available to us to use to communicate to our visitors with. Interpretive communications thus becomes a first line of communication with visitors about "critical management issues" that may arise for any resource management agency.

What is a "critical issue or management issue"?

For the purpose of this chapter, "critical issues" are defined as topics that deal with management problems and their need for solutions that relate to the safety or concerns of the visitor at parks, forests, heritage sites, or relate to resource protection and management issues that the public needs to be aware of. As examples, "critical issues or management issues" may include, but not be limited to:

- Water safety issues (boating, swimming, etc.).
- Resource management/protection of endangered species or habitats.
- Closure of areas due to migratory bird nesting.
- Resource management of fragile resource sites (sand dunes, bogs, etc.).
- Site damage due to severe weather (tornados, hurricanes, etc.).
- Resource protection issues for cultural or heritage sites.
- Visitor safety issues related to wildlife encounters.
- Fire prevention, post fire effects on landscape and wildlife.
- Visitor safety for extended back country or wilderness hiking.
- Mountain Lion sightings within a park or forest.
- Interacting with bears or other park/forest dangerous wildlife.

- Public relations issues (trail or site closings, upcoming management programs such as timber harvests, prescribed burns, etc.).

For an interpretive writer planning to develop text to address any of the above, here is a list of planning issues for you to think about.

1. What is a critical issue exactly that you have to write about?

2. The analysis of the critical issue or management issue - critical for who? Who is the audience your interpretive writing, and related media, will be directed to/for.

3. Why is this management issue critical for the organization or agency? What exactly is the problem that the panel, exhibit, news release, etc. has to confront.

4. Will this be a short term, long term or seasonal management issue to interpret to the visitors/public?

5. What are the individual parts of management issue (psychological, physical, public relations, visitor action or non-action, etc.) you will have to write for. Who will you be getting the "official status or viewpoint" from?

6. What will you need to do to develop a change/public relations Strategy via your writing.

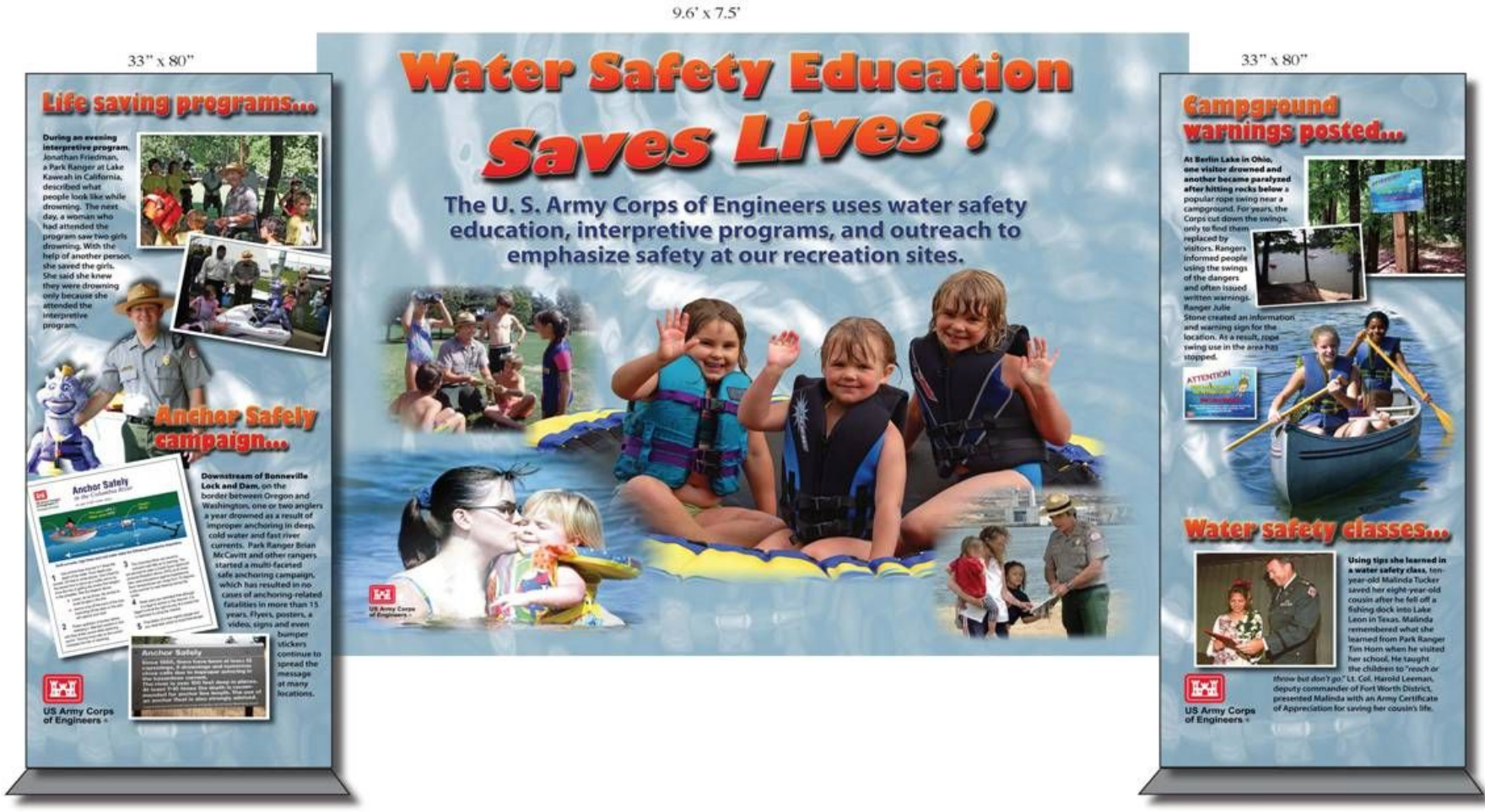
7. What do you/your agency want to happen - and by when? What are the objectives you have been given for your interpretive writing to help accomplish?

8. How will you need to relate your writing to different target market groups?

9. Create a time line/priority check list of the order in which you want to implement your management issue interpretive campaign. Will this be a one-time event such as interpreting a forest fire or vandalism issue, or a longer term management issue like writing for a variety of media on water safety issues?

10. Identify the interpretive media you will need to write for and put in place to address your management issue public awareness program.

Let's look at some real examples of interpretive writing to address a variety of management issues or critical issues from different organizations using both exhibits and outdoor p



This exhibit developed by the US Army Corps of Engineers is designed for County Fairs or other venues to make people who visit COE lakes to be aware of water safety issues - an on-going interpretive program and services planning and writing project.

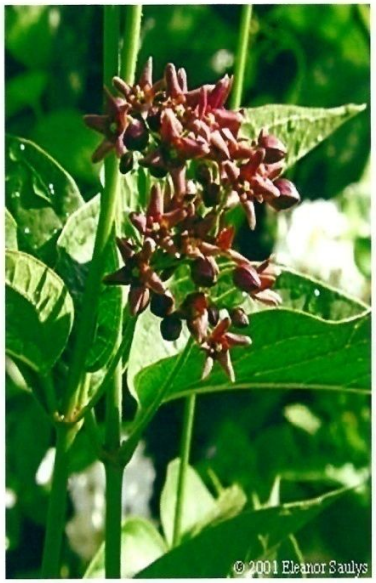
This panel is a common one in many backcountry hiking areas. Another task for the interpretive writer addressing management issues is to motivate visitors to be aware of their surroundings and know "what to do" in some situations.

This creative interpretive panel address litter and garbage on the beach - a good example of using interpretation and interpretive writing to address management issues.

Here is a common simple management issue that the interpreter can help with.

Help us give Swallow-wort the BOOT - a seedless one!

Pale Swallow-wort is a REAL problem – this non-native invasive plant (it came from Europe) can destroy habitats for our native plants and animals. We are working to contain the plant and keep it from spreading to other parks, communities or even your own backyard. The seeds can be easily stuck to your boots, shoes, clothing – even pet fur if your dog walks the trails with you. Learn to recognize the Swallow-wort plant and its seeds. Be sure to CHECK YOUR BOOTS and shoes for seeds before you leave and please use our boot and shoe cleaning stations in the parking lots. Help us give swallow-wort the boot – *a seedless one!*



The Swallow-wart in Spring and Summer – it can grow up to 6 feet a year and produces a soil chemical that kills other plants around it!

You are part of the solution to keep Swallow-wort from spreading to other locations. A few quick scrapes will do the trick. Look for seeds on your clothing and pets too. Thanks for helping to be part of our team.

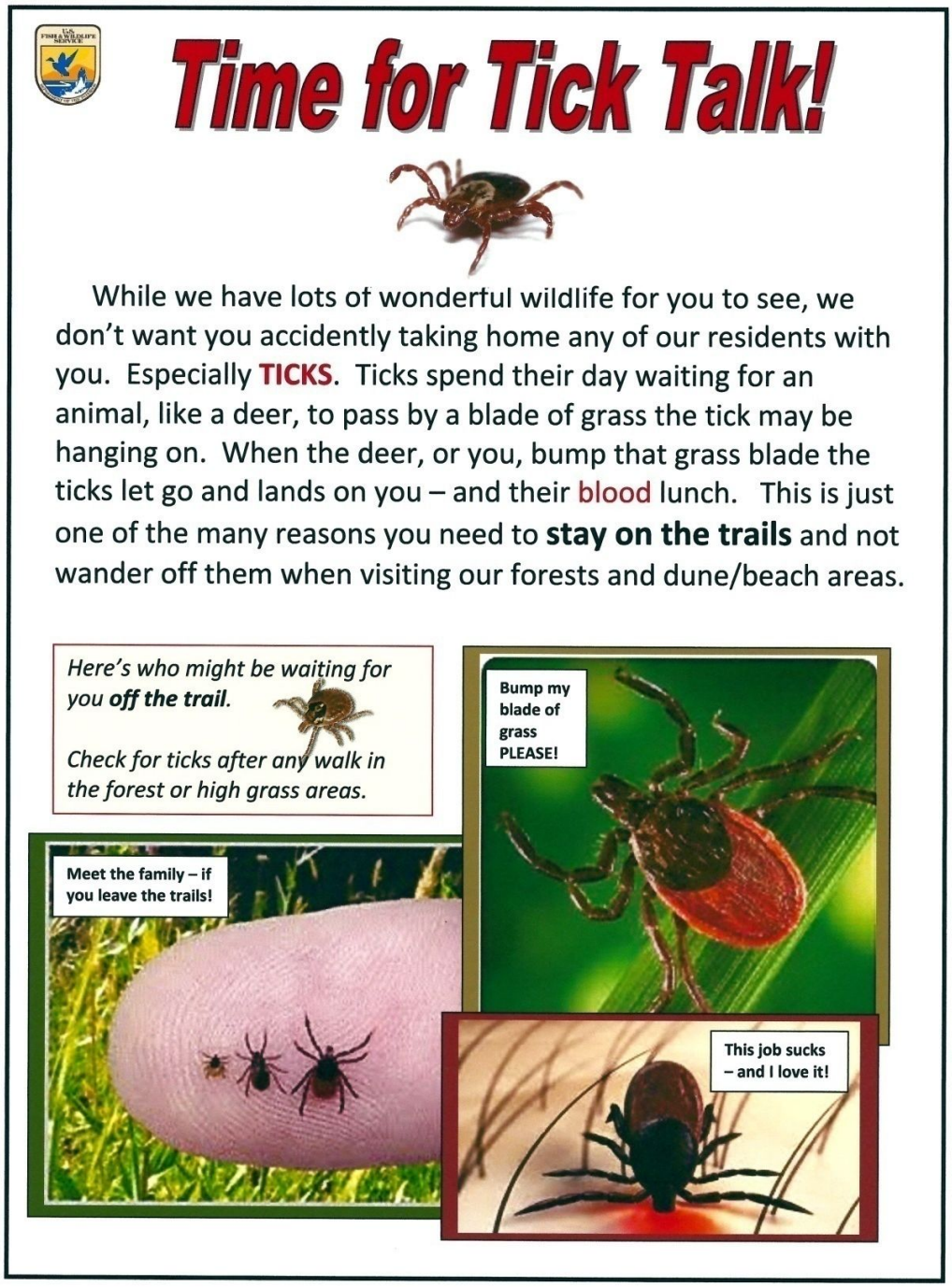
In the fall/winter the Swallow-wort looks like this. The white seeds are everywhere and this is the time we have to check our boots and clothes the most.

Robert G. Wehle State Park

The writing for this management issue is for an on-going and serious management program - that of invasive plants. The main management goal was to have park visitors in the fall to be sure they wipe their shoes and boots to keep the seeds from being distributed to other areas.

The "before" sign by the Porcupine an then the new "interpretive" panel.

Here's a good example for an interpretive writer. The original sign for the porcupine top left, and the interpretive writers new way to address and interpret the "do not touch the Porcupine".



One final example for interpretive writing from the Fish and Wildlife Service at Cape May that had a problem with visitors going off the trails and walking on sensitive sand dunes. The other issue is that if they go off the trail then will probably encounter ticks. By posting this panel at areas where visitors were going off the trail - the number of visitors going off the trail was dramatically decreased, as were the problems with visitors getting tick. The objectives of the panel and the writing worked.

These are a good sampling of interpretive writing to address management or critical issues. While the writing takes on a more serious note, and one that can help save lives or help protect visitors for harm, the interpretive writing rules stay in play. In particular the emotional and behavioral objectives are the main focus for the writing and its relationship with the graphics to accomplish.

Remember to pre-test the media you have written for to make sure the interpretation/message is understood and that your behavioral objectives have a higher opportunity to become accomplished.