

Interpretation Training Materials for ADK's Trailhead Stewardship Program Training

“The care of rivers is not a matter of rivers, but a matter of the human heart”—Tenaka Shozo

People will only act to protect that which they care about.

Definitions of Interpretation

“Interpretation is a communication process that forges emotional and intellectual connections between the interests of the audience and the meanings inherent in the resource”—*National Association for Interpretation*

Principles of Interpretation¹

1. To spark an interest, interpreters must relate the subject to the lives of the visitors.
2. The purpose of interpretation goes beyond providing information to reveal deeper meaning and truth.
3. The interpretive presentation- as a work of art- should be designed as a story that informs, entertains, and enlightens.
4. The purpose of the interpretive story is to inspire and to provoke people to broaden their horizons.
5. Interpretation should present a complete theme or thesis and address the whole person.
6. Interpretation for children, teenagers, and seniors... should follow fundamentally different approaches.

...

13. Interpretation should instill in people the ability, and the desire, to sense the beauty in their surroundings—to provide spiritual uplift and to encourage resource preservation.

Interpretation is **Purposeful**

As stewards, we're not just having casual conversations with people. We want to educate them and ultimately, we want to influence their behavior. So we need to think about how to do this.

What do you want visitors to do as a result of your conversation?

Interpretation is **Enjoyable**

This is the part where your passion, your enthusiasm, and your own style make all the difference. Here are a couple of tips to help in your planning:

- Stay relaxed and remember to smile
- Involve all of the senses
- Make it relevant to the visitor's experience and use metaphors
- Use the Wow factor!

¹ Larry Beck and Ted Cable, *Interpretation for the 21st Century*. Champaign, IL: Sagamore Publishing, 1998. p 10-11

Things that you can use in your interpretation of the High Peaks Wilderness:

Interpretation is **Relevant**

Relate it to a known and try to figure out what aspect of the resource this visitor is most interested in. (Ex: Black bear facts, 6 million acre park, vast trail network, different ways to poop in the outdoors, the history of the 46 high peaks, backcountry camping opportunities, etc.)

Tangibles, Intangibles, and Universals

Universal concepts help visitors to connect to tangible objects by relating to their own experience. This also makes the interpretation more enjoyable.

Tangible aspects are the physical attributes of an object or place.

Intangibles are the ideas related to the tangible attributes.

Universals are the general concepts that are related to the intangible ideas.

Tangibles from High Peaks Wilderness:

Intangibles from High Peaks Wilderness:

Universals from High Peaks Wilderness:

Knowing your Audience

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs²

All people seek to achieve personal intellectual and emotional growth and experience a sense of fulfillment. Psychologist Abraham Maslow studied human behavior and found that people could only achieve growth and fulfillment when their more basic physiological and emotional needs were met. He articulated these needs as a pyramid, starting with basic needs and moving progressively towards growth needs.

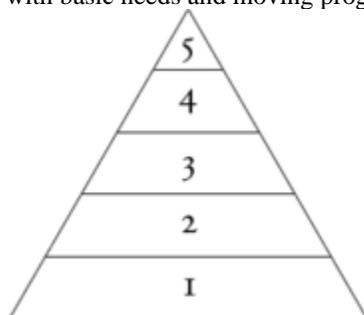


Diagram of Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

- 5. Actualization
- 4. Status (esteem)
- 3. Love/belonging
- 2. Safety
- 1. Physiological (biological needs)

What does this mean for stewarding? People **cannot** focus on the message that you're trying to convey if they are hungry, cold, excited to hit the trail, getting wet, have to go to the bathroom, or being attacked by black flies. Visitors **will not** focus on your message if they're busy trying to get to the trail.

Bottom line: **Timing is everything! If people aren't in a good place with their basic needs, try to help them get there.**

(Examples: "I'll give you a chance to use the bathroom and stop inside the information center, and let me know if you have any more questions after talking to the staff inside.

"Just real quick I want to let you know about current weather and trail conditions before your hike."

| Basic Needs | What the needs are | Actions we can take |
|---------------------|---|--|
| Physiological | Food, Water, Shelter, Sanitation | Give them time to take care of these, answer questions or provide suggestions. |
| Safety and Security | Guarantee of individual physical and emotional security | Have first aid kit and safety plan in place, act consistently. |

² Adapted from: Brochu, Lisa and Tim Merrimen. Certified Interpretive Guide Training Workbook. Fort Collins, CO: NAI, 2006. p 17-18 and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maslow's_hierarchy_of_needs

| Intermediate Needs | What the needs are | Actions we can take |
|--------------------|--|---|
| Love and belonging | Social, emotionally-based need for acceptance as a member of a group. Acknowledgement. | Welcome them to the Adirondack Mountain Club’s Heart Lake Program Center. Acknowledge how far they may have traveled to get here and the expenses involved. |
| Esteem | Need to feel respected and appreciated as an individual | Answer questions as if you’re hearing them for the first time. |

| Growth Needs | What the needs are | Actions we can take |
|--------------------------|--|---|
| Understanding/ Aesthetic | Need for knowledge, opportunities to experience beauty | Guide them to the experience they’re looking for. |
| Self- actualization | Need to be best person one can be | |

Knowing the Audience—Learning Styles³

People have different ways that they learn best. Recognizing this and appealing to a variety of learning styles insures that your message will reach your audience.

Auditory learners- Learn best by hearing information

Visual learners- Learn best by seeing information

Verbal learners- Learn best by reading the information

Kinesthetic learners- Learn best by interacting with the information in a hands-on way

A few other Recommended Resources:

Brochu, Lisa and Tim Merriman, *Personal Interpretation: Connecting Your Audience to Heritage Resources*. Fort Collins, CO: InterpPress, 2002.

Ham, Sam. *Environmental Interpretation: A Practical Guide for People with Big Ideas and Small Budgets*. Golden, CO: North American Press, 1992

National Association for Interpretation: www.interpnet.com
