

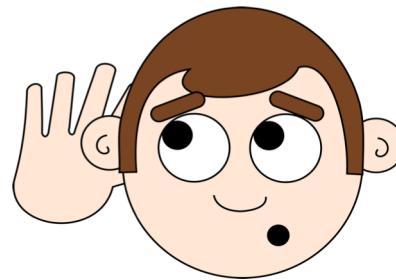


# Big Woods, Big Rivers

## MINNESOTA MASTER NATURALIST PROGRAM

# LESSON FIVE: What did you say?

## Communicating your message



Objective: *Participants will gain a basic understanding of interpretation and interpretive techniques.*



# WHAT IS INTERPRETATION?



Image courtesy of Minnesota DNR.



# PRINT MATERIALS





## **INTERPRETATION:** DEFINITIONS

“An educational activity which aims to reveal meaning and relationships through the use of original objects, by firsthand experience, and by illustrative media, rather than to communicate factual information.”

--Freeman Tilden, *Interpreting our Heritage*

## INTERPRETATION: DEFINITIONS

“Interpretation is a form of communication which strives to reveal meaning rather than simply present facts.”

-- Sam Ham, *Environmental Interpretation*



## INTERPRETATION: DEFINITIONS

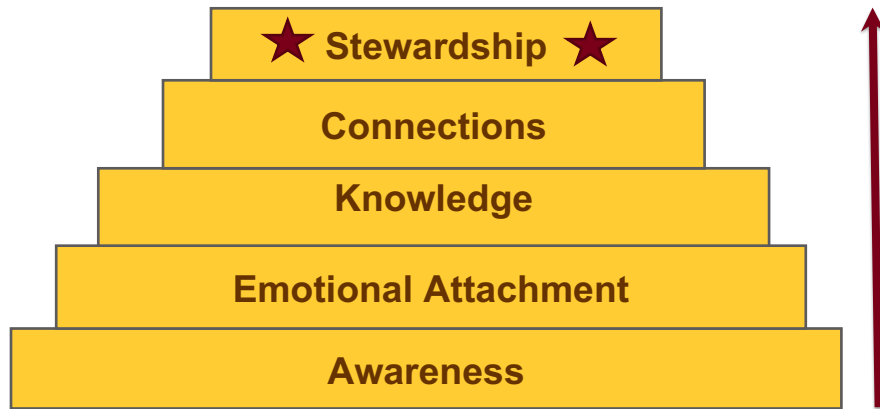
“...provide[s] memorable, meaningful, and inspirational experiences....to strengthen public understanding of the full meaning and relevance of the nation's natural and cultural resources.”

- NPS Interpretation and Education Business Plan, 2006





## GOAL OF INTERPRETATION



## GOAL OF INTERPRETATION

“Through interpretation, understanding;  
through understanding, appreciation;  
through appreciation, protection.”

- Freeman Tilden



many techniques  
knowledge of audience  
organization  
+ theme


---

good interpretation





# UNDERSTAND YOUR AUDIENCE




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## AUDIENCE CONSIDERATIONS:

**Motivation?**  
Captive vs. Voluntary audience



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# AUDIENCE CONSIDERATIONS:

## Demographics?



- ✓ How many?
- ✓ Age?
- ✓ Background?



**ORGANIZE YOUR IDEAS**

# HOW SHOULD INTERPRETATION BE STRUCTURED?



## Structure your interpretation

TSAFBIPHDMCIA

TSA FBI PHD IBM CIA



-- Sam Ham, *Environmental Interpretation*



## How much is too much?

- Captive Audience: up to 5-9 components
- Non-captive Audience: 5 or fewer components



## How much is too much?

*Do not try to satisfy your vanity  
by teaching a great many things.*

*Awaken people's curiosity.*

*It is enough to open minds;  
do not overload them.*

***Put there a spark.***

*If there is some good inflammable stuff,  
it will catch fire.*

- Anatole France



## Kellogg - Weaver Dunes

Scientific and Natural Area

Whether this is your first visit or you have been here several times, the sand dune prairies of Kellogg-Weaver Dunes will captivate you. Experience the wealth of natural beauty, numerous interesting and sometimes rare species, and enjoy the relaxation that overcomes you. As you explore, remember this is a sensitive area.

### Sand prairie: a rare treasure

Along with the sandhills of the Mesquites, Junco, and Orange-bellied birds, sand prairie is a rare treasure. It is a unique and sensitive ecosystem. The sand prairie is a rare and sensitive ecosystem. It is a unique and sensitive ecosystem. It is a unique and sensitive ecosystem.



### Don't tread on me!

PLEASE DO NOT TREAD ON ME! This sign is a warning to protect the sensitive sand prairie ecosystem. It features a turtle icon and the text 'RAKE TURTLE CROSSING'.



### Prairie beauties

Discover the beauty of the prairie with various plant species. This section includes photos of different prairie flowers and their names.



### Natural landscapes: It takes partners

Learn about the importance of partnerships in maintaining natural landscapes. This section includes a map of the area and information about local organizations.



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# WHAT IS A THEME?

## THEMES: WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO SAY?

- What is your message?
- What do you want the audience to remember?
- Why should they care?



## THEME IS THE...

- Main idea
- Key message
- Punch-line
- Moral to the Story
- Big Picture
- So what?



- Sam Ham, *Environmental Interpretation*



## TOPIC VS. THEME

- A **topic** is your *subject matter*
- A **theme** is your *principle message*

-- Sam Ham, *Environmental Interpretation*



## TOPIC VS. THEME

### Topic

- Water Pollution

### Theme

- Water pollution threatens both our health and our economy and there is something we can all do about it.

-- Sam Ham, *Environmental Interpretation*



## TOPIC VS. THEME

### Topic

- Birds

### Theme

- Because they're rarely seen, nocturnal birds are the subject of many superstitions and potentially threatening misconceptions.

-- Sam Ham, *Environmental Interpretation*

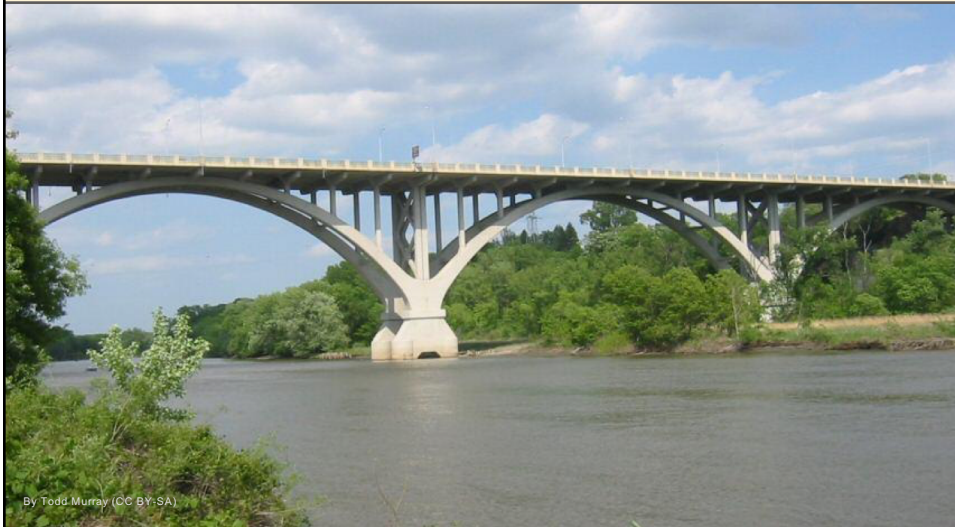


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**“The Minnesota River Valley is a living textbook of Minnesota history.”**



By Todd Murray (CC BY-SA)



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## A few more thoughts about interp

## TANGIBLES and INTANGIBLES

### Tangible

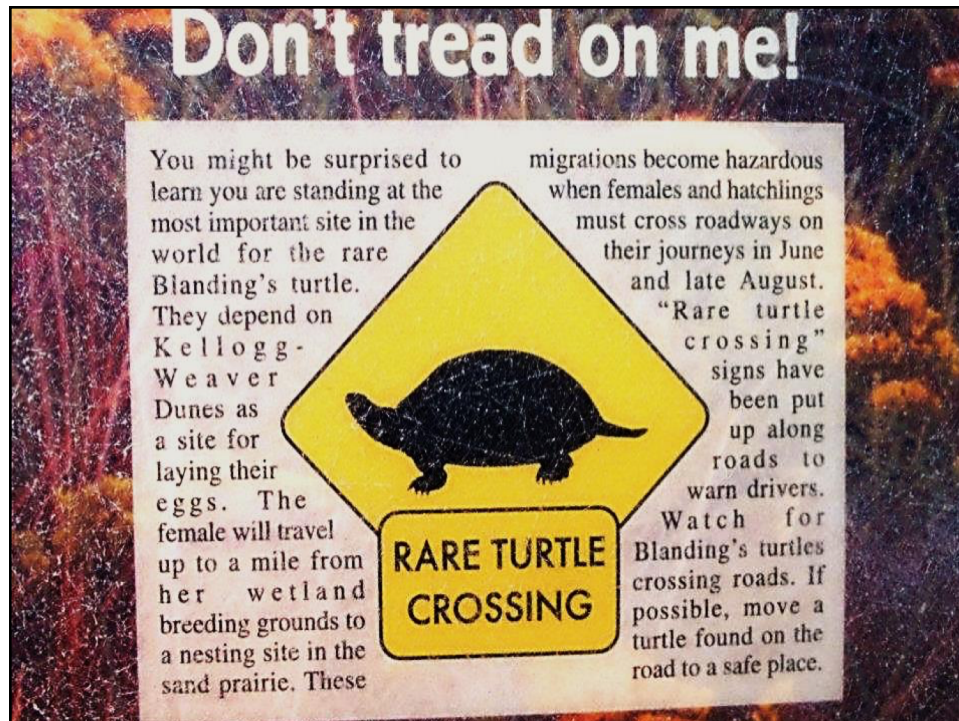
- Information, facts, chronology, narrative

### Intangible

- Relevance, meaning, ideas, concepts







“The nature guide is at his best when he discusses facts so that they appeal to the imagination and to the reason, gives flesh and blood to cold facts, makes life stories of inanimate objects. What the guide says is essentially nature literature rather than encyclopedia natural history.”

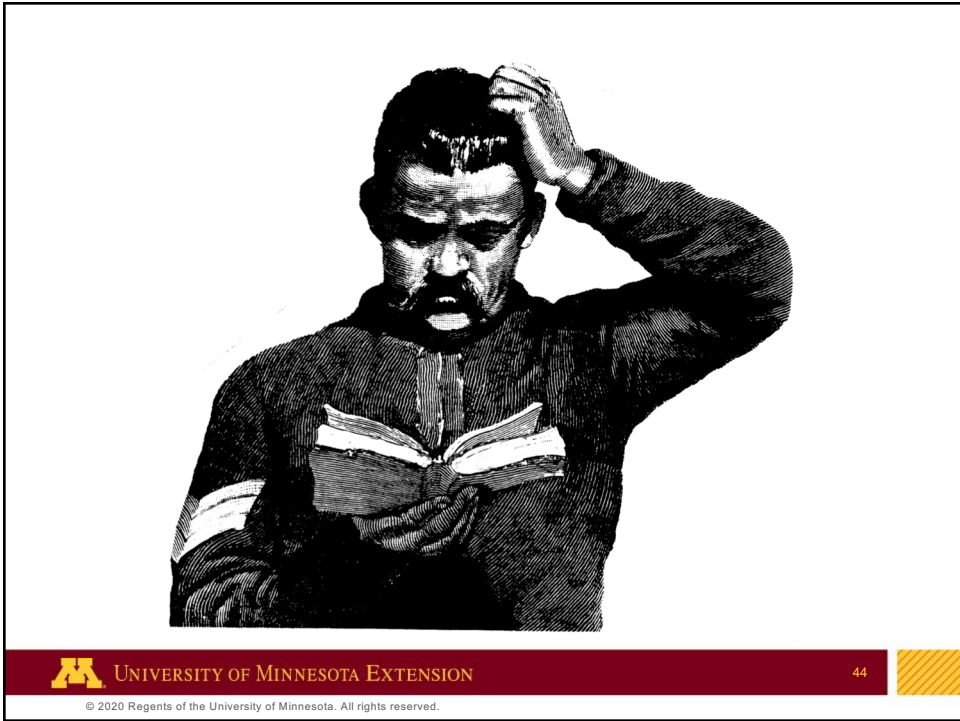
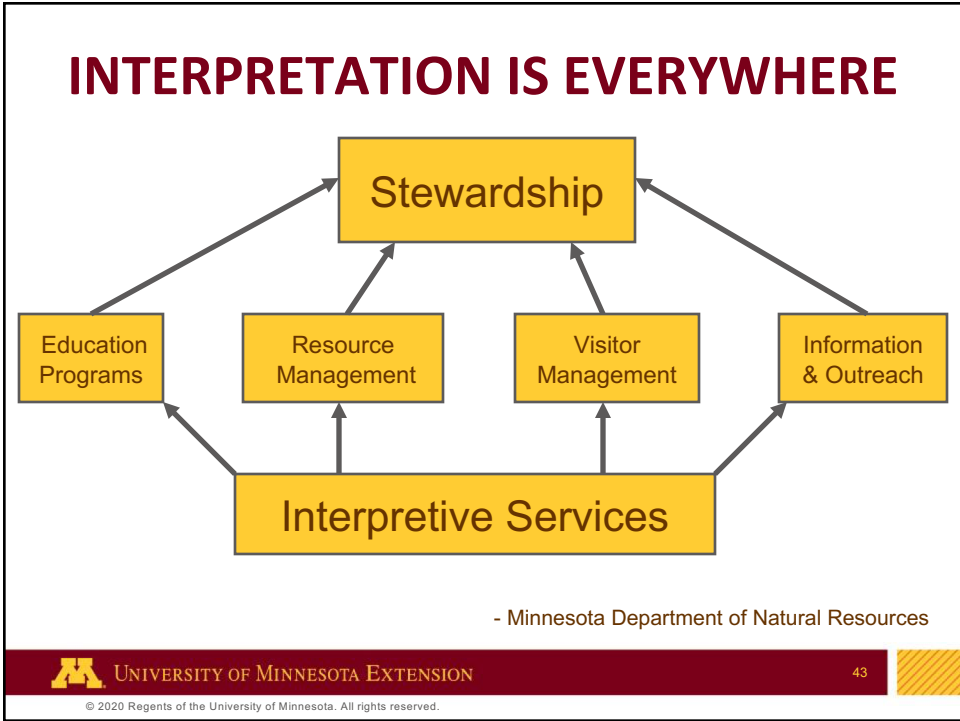
--Enos Mills



## **VARIETY: a little something for everyone**

- Storytelling
- Sensory experience
- Movement
- Call and response
- Simulation
- Drawing
- Mystery Bag
- Photography
- Tools
- Statistics
- Humor
- Discussion
- Artifacts
- Brainstorming
- Drama
- Lecture

**AND MANY MORE!**



Interpretation (and good communication) includes a thoughtful message, tailored to the audience, organized around a theme.



many techniques  
 knowledge of audience  
 organization  
 + theme

---

good interpretation





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Driven to Discover<sup>SM</sup>

## Minnesota Master Naturalist Program

46352 State Highway 329, Morris MN 56267  
320-589-1711 or 888-241-4532  
[info@minnesotamasternaturalist.org](mailto:info@minnesotamasternaturalist.org)



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