

The background features abstract, overlapping green geometric shapes, primarily triangles and polygons, in various shades of green, creating a modern, layered effect. The shapes are concentrated on the left and right sides, framing the central text.

Heritage and Interpretation.

- QUESTION:

- Is Interpretation the same as information provision?

Interpretation:

- Definitions of Interpretation
- Heritage interpretation is an educational activity which aims to reveal meanings and relationships through the use of original objects, by first hand experience, and by illustrative media, rather than simply to communicate factual information. (TILDEN)
- Interpretation enriches our lives through engaging emotions, enhancing experiences and deepening understanding of people, places, events and objects from past and present.
- (Association for Heritage Interpretation)

QUESTION:

- What would you say is effective interpretation ?
- What are your thoughts about interpretation for adults and children (differing audiences)?

In his 1957 book, "Interpreting Our Heritage", [Freeman Tilden](#) defined six principles of interpretation:



1. Any interpretation that does not somehow relate what is being displayed or described to something within the personality or experience of the visitor will be sterile.
2. Information, as such, is not Interpretation. Interpretation is revelation based upon information. But they are entirely different things. However all Interpretation includes information.
3. Interpretation is an art, which combines many arts, whether the materials presented are scientific, historical or architectural. Any art is in some degree teachable.
4. The chief aim of Interpretation is not instruction, but provocation.
5. Interpretation should aim to present a whole rather than a part, and must address itself to the whole man rather than any phase.
6. Interpretation addressed to children (say up to the age of twelve) should not be a dilution of the presentation to adults, but should follow a fundamentally different approach. To be at its best it will require a separate program.

Pearce, Morrison and Rutledge (1998) further support Tilden's approach.

- For Pearce et al.....the following 6 principles apply.
- 1) Vary the Interpretative Experience.
- 2) Provide Personal Connections.
- 3) Practise Participation.
- 4) Organise the Interpretation ideas.
- 5) Provide Clear Content.
- 6) Ensure to Engage with a Range of Audiences.

What does interpretation include??

- Give your specific examples of interpretation.....
- 1).....
- 2).....
- 3).....

- QUESTION:
- Moscardo refers to interpretation as producing more 'MINDFUL' tourists - -what do you perceive this to mean?

- Interpretation refers to the full range of 'activities' intended to heighten public awareness and enhance the overall understanding of a heritage site / attraction.
- Moscardo (1996) says that - Interpretation can produce 'Mindful' tourists. These tourists through interpretative forms, can more effectively understand heritage – (*this can be particularly pertinent for intangible heritage forms*).
- Interpretation Examples can include: *print and electronic publications, signage, exhibitions, audio visuals, public lectures, on-site and directly related off-site installations, educational programs, community activities, historical plays, role plays, recreated sets, ongoing research, training, and evaluation of the interpretation process itself.*

Interpretation Forms.

Can be in both PASSIVE AND ACTIVE FORMS.

- Passive Forms = Signs / Exhibitions / Audio Visuals.
- Active Forms = Historical Plays / Role Plays / Recreated Sets.

Reasons for Interpretation at Heritage Attractions.

“Many exhibitions now try to help the visitor to understand and appreciate the meaning and significance of the displayed object by a variety of interpretative media”

- Uzzell – (1996 cited in Harrison - Heritage Management p293)



- Educational Factor.

Reasons for Interpretation at Heritage Attractions.

“Interpretation may be a novel way of ‘pepping’ up tired tourists attractions”

Uzzell – (1996 cited in Harrison - Heritage Management p293)



- Business Development Factor (Marketing)

- NB: Many theorists - -- eg; Stevens (1989) - believe that the primary reason for introducing interpretation at heritage attractions is due to the 'Business' Development / Attraction Factor!
- le: Increasing visitor numbers - due to positive interpretation methods therefore leads to increasing revenue - -- £\$£\$£\$£!
- Question / Debate = Could this a issue of COMMERCIALISATION OF HERITAGE? - - HOW COULD THIS BE AVOIDED - - principles of good interpretation...?

EDUCATION VRS ENTERTAINMENT CONFLICT?!?!?!?!?!?

Principles for Good Interpretation

REF: Harrison 1996.

- 1) Project a clear concept (Avoid confusion in presentation).
- 2) Focus on main points (Need to know basis - - - only so much information a person can absorb).
- 3) Provide an interactive and involving experience (Interest / engage the visitor).
- 4) Focus on the human factor (People want to know about people - - - Emphasise the HUMAN STORY)
- 5) Build on pre-existing knowledge (via research - - establish current knowledge of tourists and visitors on attractions / history - - introduce hierarchies of knowledge).
- 6) Develop different interpretative methods for different audiences (consumer led).

7) Ensure that the interpretation does not become a substitute experience - -
- (ie; greater popularity in interpretation forms - eg visitor centre, than in the attraction).

8) Ensure that interpretation is sympathetic to local people (meeting needs - - -community and visitor).

9) Ensure that interpretation is as a sequence of events / experiences (all themed elements - - themed, restaurant, play areas..... COMPLETE PACKAGE).

10) Provides a variety of methods (interpretation forms – audio visuals / role play.....) – therefore addressing differing senses.

11) Ensure all interpretation is evaluated regularly (trends = eg; VR / Augmented Reality.....).

Interpretation Sceptics.

- “Heritage has been ‘sucked’ in by tourism, public relations and marketing professionals, redefined, reconstituted and re-packaged to become an exercise in trivia”

Stevens 1989.

- “Technological wizardry, media consultants, innovative presentations, audio animatronics, buzz words that switch on the lights in tourist board offices around the world”

Stevens 1989 (cited by Uzzell)

Interpretation Considerations:

- Who makes the decisions on Interpretation?
- Should there be a sole focus on Educational Aspects ?
- Should therefore a sole focus on Entertainment Aspects?

-
- Ideally a balance needs to be created to address 'visitor' needs!! (However this does not always happen.....)



- What do you believe are the main reasons why this doesn't happen?

2 Approaches to Interpretation:



1) Recreation Approach

2) Reconstruction Approach.

- **RECREATION APPROACH:**

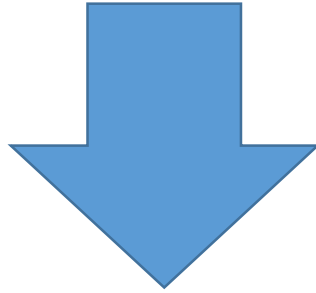


- Case Example – *Ironbridge Gorge Museum*
- Aim of Ironbridge to represent a typical East Shropshire mining community (19th Century).
- Recreated World - - -past interpreted by costumed demonstrators.

Recreation Approach Advantages :

- 1) Brings past to life – NOSTALGIA.
- 2) High Emotional Appeal.
- 3) Is attractive to the uncommitted and disinterested.
- 4) Fashionable Portrayal - - trends.
- 5) Very Attractive to Visitors.
- 6) Encourages Education from Identification with Characters.

- What are your thoughts about point 3 (previous slide)?



“Is attractive to the uncommitted and disinterested”

- QUESTION:
- WHAT COULD BE THE DISADVANTAGES OF THE RECREATION APPROACH?

Recreation Approach Disadvantages :

- 1) Volume of visitors attracted may destroy the site (over-capacity).
- 2) A community is not fixed in time - - - constantly changing. Difficult to depict all areas of early life.
- 3) Recreation Approach offers *ROMANTICISM* - - *NOT REALITY*.
Projects a product of myths.

IRONBRIDGE GORGE MUSEUM (WHS)



COACH PARKING AT THE IRONBRIDGE GORGE MUSEUMS





- RECONSTRUCTION APPROACH

A more objective approach – creates a channel between past and present

(Case Study = Any natural heritage site – Heritage landscapes / Heritage Coastlines / Heritage Monuments (limited human ‘marketing’ interference)).

Reconstruction Approach – Advantages.

- 1) More objective approach.
- 2) More accurate portrayal.
- 3) More emphasis on Education – teaches people to be more critical / analytical.
- 4) Able to use more stimulating interpretative material

Reconstruction Approach – Disadvantages.

- 1) Removing 'Entertainment' elements can result in 'WEAK' interest from tourism / tourists.
- 2) More challenging - - portrayal (Largely reliant on visitors interpreting / understanding the heritage site themselves).
- 3) Tourists have to work harder - - (Greater levels of education required?)
- 4) Requires constant change - - innovative interpretation technologies....

STONEHENGE MUSEUM (WHS)



