

# Keeper Talks Can be Fun ... Seriously!

## Interpretation Basics

or ...

*How Am I Going To Talk with All These Different  
People and Know I Am Making a Difference While  
Keeping Our Guests Engaged and Sharing with  
Them What We Think They Should Know?*

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# Who are you?

**Please come up with something you want us to know about you. Tell us what that is in ONE SENTENCE.**

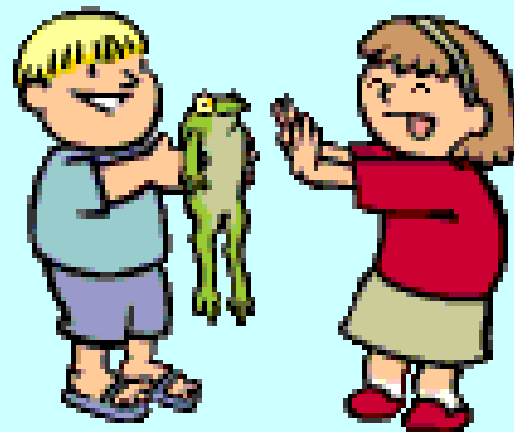


Yes – there is a reason that it should be only one sentence to get across one major point about you.

# Importance of Zoos



# Interpretation Activity ...





# INTERPRETATION

Brief History

Enos Mills

Freeman Tilden

What is Interpretation? What is it NOT?

Goal:

connect tangible to intangible, change  
behavior, inspire action, increase local  
knowledge

It's all about perception! Meaningful and personal.

Universal values and framing

Use of biofacts

**It is an art ... containing many arts**



We want our guests to let *us* fill it up, but ...

# *The Swamp* : our guest's first reaction to ...

## Oceans

Not like land  
Accidents happen  
Heal themselves  
Drop in the bucket  
All on the surface  
Are public resources



## Science

Einstein vs. Ben Franklin  
Skepticism about models  
Science will save us  
No solutions yet

## Politics

Two sides rule in effect  
Political football  
Solutions will be blocked

## Sacrifice

Humans are victims  
Humans are innately selfish  
Environmentalists are extremists  
I would but no one else would

*What's in the swamp of...*

# Climate Change & Oceans

## Effects

Big, scary, depressing  
Is it getting warmer or colder?  
How do scientists know that?  
My observation is as good as yours  
It's natural; you shouldn't/couldn't  
stop it  
It's weather; it's debatable



## Progress

Comes with costs  
Is irreversible  
Winners and losers  
Americans are problem-solvers,  
innovators  
Requires responsible management of  
resources

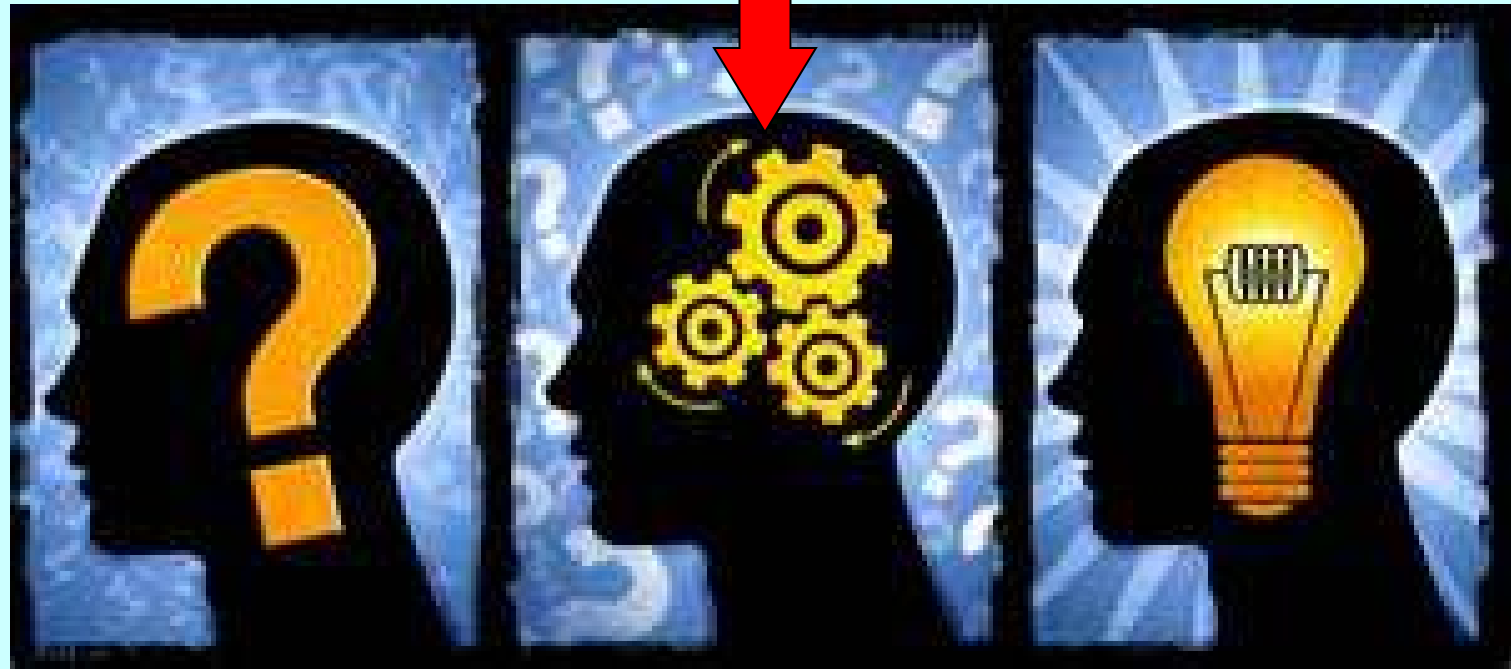
## Shared Fate

Web of life; food chain  
We depend on them, they depend on us  
Stewardship is human responsibility  
Defective canary problem



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# VALUES!

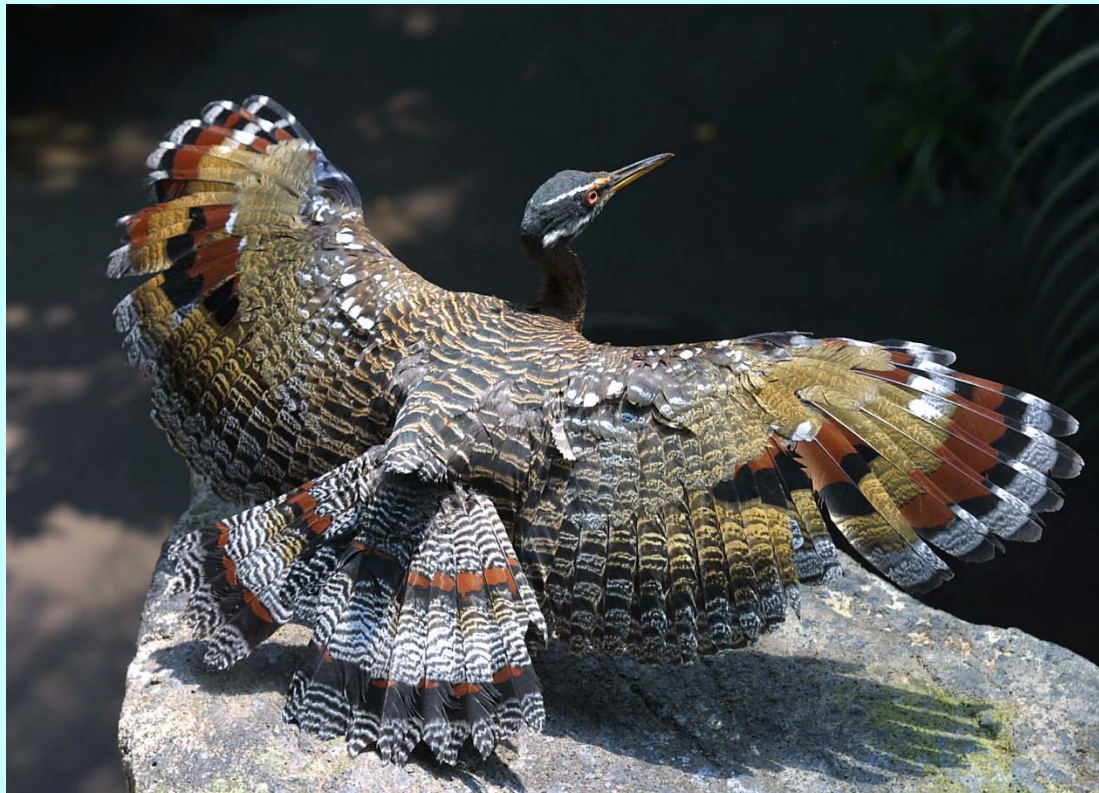


responsible management ... stewardship ...  
interconnectedness ... innovation ... ingenuity





“The chief aim of INTERPRETATION  
is not instruction, but  
**PROVOCATION.**”



Freeman Tilden

# We Are Trying To ..



Tell a story, containing facts within the story

Take audience on a journey, albeit short!

Create *revelation* through information

Bring information to life

Provide “AHA” moments



**Create an *emotional AND intellectual connection* between the audience and the resource and *make that connection meaningful to visitor***

# Learning Styles

Think senses ...

VISUAL

AUDITORY

KINESTHETIC

*Some combination of the above??*

Also - some are social and others solitary

## **The Child VS The Adult**

They do learn differently

The Child: subject driven ... rely on experience of others ...  
rewards/praise enhance learning

The Adult: performance centered ... learn in their own  
environment ... goal oriented



# Presentation Skills

6-10 second rule ... signs

Speak to audience as you might your neighbor

*lose the jargon and technicalities!*

Limit the "doom and gloom" messaging

$$(KR + KA)PT = IO$$

National Park

know resource + <sup>Service</sup> know audience X proper  
technique =

*INTEPRETIVE OPPORTUNITY*

# The Five I's of Interpretation

Ice Breaker



Jamani and Bomassa

Instant Interest

Instruction

Involvement

“Inthusiasm” – I know, I know

# TIPS



Prepare early and start with positive attitude – **BE NICE**

## **SMILE!**

Use notecards if needed; might make up questions before to help engage audience

## **Know and respect the audience**

*Make audience feel important*

**Seize the moment** if something unique happens

Be aware of your body language, and the audience's – **make eye contact**

Be loud enough to be heard – ask!

Involve audience – **ask questions**

It's OK to lose your train of thought

It's OK to say “I don't know” – but try to find an answer to not say it again

**Avoid “Zoo-ese”**; watch pronunciation

Make presentation multi-sensory when possible

How we say something can be as equally as important as what we say

Fall back on science as needed

**Laughter and playfulness are important traits**

take what you do seriously, not yourself

Evaluate self afterwards

Know when learning is done (PA)



# Couple Things to Remember

Our visitors *choose* to come – “recreational learners”

People coming to your zoo/aquarium arrive with some pre-existing knowledge

“A zoo is a conservation organization disguised as a leisure time activity.”

Mike Chamberlain, Monterey Bay Aquarium

Don't worry – less IS more!

If the guest is asking questions and participating in the learning, you did it!

# WZAM!

## Why Zoos and Aquariums Matter

- \*\* visitors see selves as part of the solution
- \*\* visitors believe zoos and aquariums are experts in conservation education and animal care
- \*\* through their visit, guests have a stronger connection to nature
- \*\* our guests have good knowledge of ecological concepts and Z&S reinforce the values and attitudes of visitors





**“In the end, we will conserve only what we love;  
we will love only what we understand;  
we will understand only what we are taught.”**

**Senegalese Conservationist Baba Dioum**



“The essence of nature guiding is  
to travel gracefully rather than to  
arrive.”

Enos Mills

# PRESENTATION TIPS

## BEFORE

- \*\* proper attitude – be nice!, be familiar
- \*\* incorporate action
- \*\* make is multi-sensory when possible
- \*\* be organized
- \*\* know your subject – be confident and relaxed
- \*\* prepare in advance
- \*\* use an outline or note cards to help with the presentation
- \*\* children and adults learn differently
  - use children to get to adults – do not make anyone uncomfortable
- \*\* make up questions beforehand to help engage audience

## DURING

- \*\* proper attitude – be nice!, be familiar
- \*\* listen to the audience – be aware of the audience dynamic
  - these people have chosen to be here – respect that choice
  - the visitor should feel that what they have to say is important to you
- \*\* be respectful of the audience
  - ex: there really are people out there with snake phobias -- be mindful
- \*\* share stories, limit trivia
- \*\* 5 I's → Ice breakers (make audience comfortable) ... Instant interest (make curious, use props, gimmicks) ... Instruction (presentation tips! do not bore) ... Involvement (question, action, props) ... “Inthusiasm” (make them want more)
- \*\* role model good behavior
- \*\* seize the moment if something happens – don't lock into “your” talk
- \*\* hearing and listening are not the same thing
- \*\* use an outline or note cards to help with the presentation
- \*\* children and adults learn differently
  - use children to get to adults – do not make anyone uncomfortable
- \*\* make the audience feel welcome and important

## Body Language

- \*\* smile!
- \*\* body language and our silent communications are sometimes very loud
  - eye contact, gestures, proximity, touch, movements, appearance, etc
- \*\* pay attention to audience body language
- \*\* eye contact – share attention throughout audience

## **Presentation Style**

- \*\* involve/engage audience
  - might make up questions before
- \*\* losing your place or train of thought – very normal
  - let audience know – be real to them
- \*\* saying “I don’t know” is OK – don’t be afraid of it
  - BUT – find out an answer when you can – try not to say it more than once to the same question
- \*\* proper pronunciation is required – take your time when speaking to do it right
  - define the “big words” for everyone, not just the kids
  - not everyone speaks zoo-ese and fewer still are zoologists
- \*\* be loud enough to be heard
- \*\* do not be monotone – vary pitch and volume to fit audience and to make presentation more verbally interesting
- \*\* be enthusiastic – it is contagious
- \*\* use multiple learning styles whenever possible
- \*\* incorporate action
- \*\* make is multi-sensory when possible
- \*\* laughter and a sense of playfulness are important
  - just be sensitive
- \*\* how we say something is as important (maybe more so) than what we say

## **AFTER**

- \*\* saying “I don’t know” is OK – don’t be afraid of it
  - BUT – find out an answer when you can – try not to say it more than once to the same question
- \*\* ask for an evaluation
  - might tape yourself – watch body language