

Definitions of Interpretation

Interpretation is an educational activity which aims to reveal meanings and relationships through the use of original objects, by firsthand experience, and by illustrative media, rather than simply to communicate factual information.

-Freeman Tilden

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



Tilden's Original Six Principles of Interpretation

Freeman Tilden was the first person to formalize and record the prevailing thinking on the principles of effective interpretation. He did so in his book, *Interpreting Our Heritage*, first published in 1957.

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 12) should not be a dilution of the presentation for adults, but should follow a fundamentally different approach. To be at its best it will require a separate program.