Forging Connections through Audience Centered Experiences

Workbook

Spring 2018

Interpretive Development Program
Stephen T. Mather Training Center, Harpers Ferry, WV

Interpretation in the 21st Century

Purpose

The primary purpose of interpretation is to *enrich people's lives through meaningful learning experiences and enjoyable recreation; preserve and protect natural and cultural resources through broad collaboration and shared stewardship; and inspire social and environmental consciousness to build community and sustain the health of the planet.*[1]

Philosophy

Interpretation explores the primary reasons for preserving natural and cultural resources. These resources represent who we are as a society, what we value, where we have been, and—most importantly—inform our shared future. Interpretation also fosters active participation in society by building skills for exploring complex questions and issues to create a more sustainable, free, and equitable world. Through interpretation, participants and practitioners alike develop understanding, empathy, and respect for the perspectives of others.

The reach of interpretation stretches beyond physical boundaries and strict reading of enabling legislation, exploring a resource's contemporary significances and the perspectives of diverse audiences, thereby helping people view historical, cultural, and environmental legacies as evolving. It analyzes past actions and considers the essential questions these places pose to society today. Critical access to and exploration of authentic sites and their evolving stories help us to understand ourselves and our world.

Principles and Practice

Design and facilitation of interpretation in the 21st century is resource-based and audience-centered. Interpretation facilitates intellectual and emotional connections to the meanings and value of parks—to help audiences care about these places so audiences will care for them. It is grounded in existing interpretive theories, tenets, and practices, and is responsive to evolving 21st century demands. To meet those needs, interpretation today provides a range of opportunities for connection, contribution, collaboration, and co-creation to continuously learn from and with audiences. Audiences are stakeholders and primary contributors to the meaning-making process.

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[1] Purpose of Interpretation in the 21st Century was collaboratively derived from the *Advancing the National Park Idea: National Parks Second Century Commission Report*; the *Interpretive Skills Vision Paper—21st Century National Park Service* and the standard Position Description for the full-performance Interpretive Park Ranger.

Interpretation in the 21st Century

21st Century Interpretation is:

- *Investigative:* Exploring multiple perspectives and truths ascribed to resources; synthesizing scientific and historical evidence, national significance, and current context
- *Participatory:* Inviting audiences to interact with the resource and each other, enriching experiences through an active exchange of ideas
- *Collaborative:* Directly meeting community needs through strong, mutually-beneficial relationships
- *Skills-Focused:* Building skills for a 21st century civil society, inspiring lifelong learning and active engagement

To achieve mutual learning, build new skills and create collaborative relationships, practitioners must adopt an audience centered approach.

What is Audience Centered Interpretation?

Audience Centered Interpretation is an ethic and practice. It is the belief that audiences' perspectives and contributions add richness to the unfolding legacy and values of America. It is the practice of eliciting participation and contribution from an audience and community.

Audience-centered interpretation can infuse any and all park experiences by providing opportunities for audience members to contribute to the meaning-making process, engage with each other, and explore the current social context of national park resources. The interpreter, while still maintaining and sharing subject matter expertise, employs skills as a facilitator using dialogic questions and techniques.

This course introduces the skill sets for Foundations of Interpretation Competencies for the 21st Century through the ethic and practice of Audience Centered Interpretation. Only a portion of the Foundations of Interpretation standards will be taught and practiced through this curriculum. To continue development in other competency standards, please find additional resources on the Interpretation and Education Learning and Development website on the Common Learning Portal at:

MYLEARNING.NPS.GOV/PROGRAM-AREAS/CAREER-DEVELOPMENT/IANDE/

Interpretation as an Evolving Craft

The Profession of Meaning Making

As early as 1957, Freeman Tilden recognized the "chief aim of Interpretation is not instruction, but provocation." Today, advances in communication, motivation, and learning theory – as well as our exploding access to information – make that more true than ever. These advances also help pave the way for our deepening and evolving craft in the 21st century.

Through the Audience Centered Experience curriculum found in this workbook, you will have the chance to build upon your current skills, to try new approaches, and tap into your core curiosity – the root of provocation.

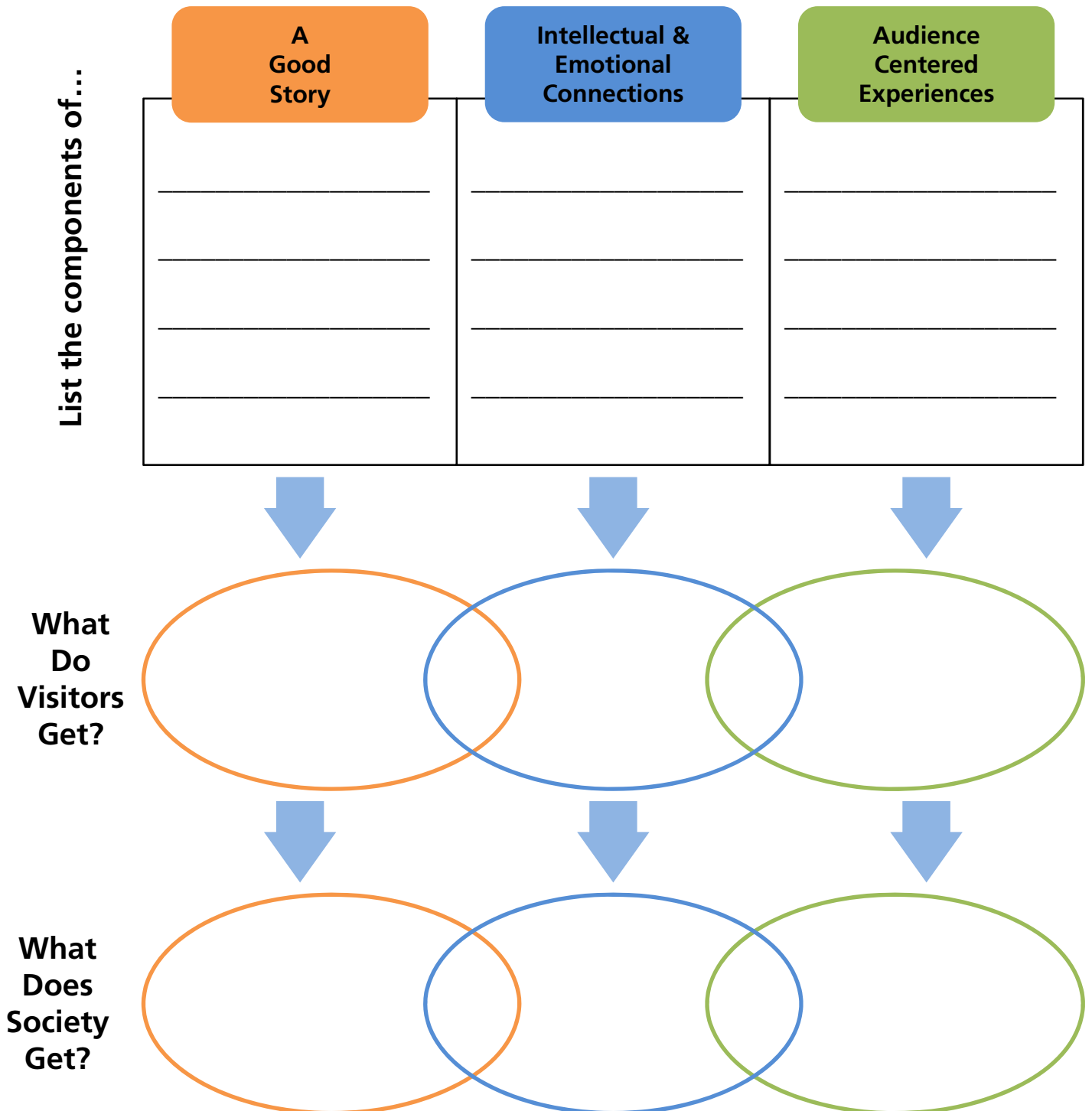|	Interpretive Skills Late 20th C.	Interpretive Development Program 1.0 Turn of the Century	21st Century Interpretation Early 21st C.
Craft	Craft a story and tell it well	Craft opportunities to connect intellectually and emotionally	Craft opportunities for participation and collaboration
Meanings	Draw our meaning	Draw your own meaning, silently	Draw your own meaning, express it
Goal	Resource preservation	Enjoyment and understanding	New skills, capacities, and behaviors

Want to Dive Deeper?

- Freeman Tilden, *Interpreting Our Heritage* (1957)

- Enos Mills, *Adventures of a Nature Guide* (1920)

- Grant Sharpe, *Interpreting the Environment* (1982)

- William Lewis, *Interpreting for Park Visitors* (1981)

- David Larsen, *Meaningful Interpretation* (2006)

- Sam Ham, *Environmental Interpretation: A Practical Guide* (1993)

- Lisa Brochu & Tim Merriman, *Personal Interpretation: Connecting Your Audience to Heritage Resources* (2008)

- Knudson, Cable & Beck, *Interpretation of Cultural and Natural Resources (1995)*

- Nina Simon, *The Participatory Museum* (2010)

- John Falk, *Identity and the Museum Visitor Experience* (2009)

- Doug Knapp, *Applied Interpretation: Putting Research into Practice* (2008)

Finding The Value of Our Craft

Components and Benefits of Each Evolution

21st Century Interpretation doesn't discard its 20th Century roots. It relies on them to grow and thrive. By carefully combining the strongest elements of our craft, we can maximize the benefit for the agency, visitor, and society.

List the components of…

A Good Story	Intellectual & Emotional Connections	Audience Centered Experiences
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

What Do Visitors Get?

What Does Society Get?

Why Do We Interpret?

Exploring Personal Purpose

Being Audience Centered starts with understanding the motivations of your very first audience - yourself! By focusing on why you do the work of interpretation, you may uncover how your personal motivation could help or hinder your ability to acknowledge the motivations of others.

Additionally, hearing the motivations of your colleagues may broaden your understanding of the potential benefits of interpretation in the 21st century. By exploring an array of social implications and potential outcomes of interpreting our national heritage, we move beyond preservation for preservation's sake to clearly articulate the broader benefits of parks.

Complete the following sentence with 3-4 phrases from the Foundations of Interpretation Competencies for the 21st Century (see the appendix). Choose the reasons that are most compelling to you, or write your own.

The reason I interpret is to. . .

- _____
  _____
- _____
  _____
- _____
  _____
- _____
  _____

The reasons you chose above should form the foundation of your personal purpose statement. They likely reflect your intrinsic motivation – or internal driver – for doing the job of interpretation and education.
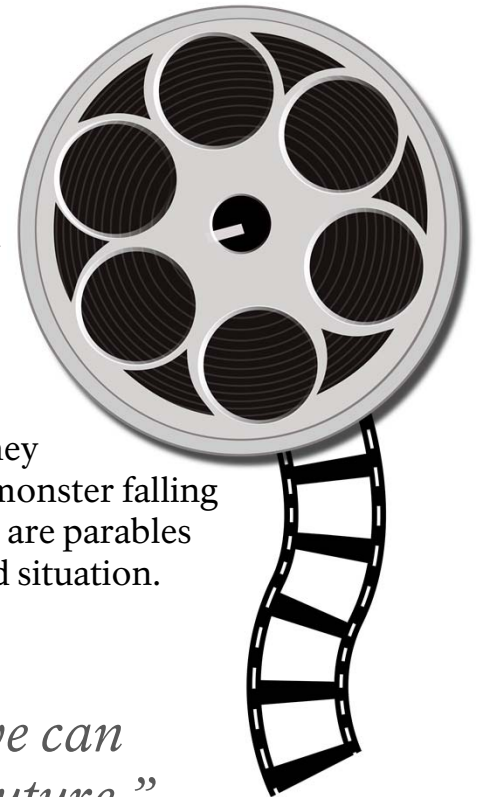
The Big Question of Parks

Essential Questions – The Big Juicy So-Whats?

Quick, think of your favorite movie! Why do you love it? What is it about the movie that speaks to you? If you had to sum up the question that movie asks of all of us – its *essential* question – what would it be?

_____

_____ **?**

Filmmakers usually don't just make a movie to make money. They are trying to ask society a bigger question. A movie about a sea monster falling in love with a woman is often about *more* then just that. Movies are parables that help us investigate things about our current time, place, and situation.

Parks can do that too!

> *"We have to do with the past only as we can make it useful to the present and to the future."*
>
> Frederick Douglass

Parks are not simply about the ancient rocks, soaring trees, and historic houses. If they are truly relevant, they have bearing on the decisions facing our society today and tomorrow. They are places to ask and discuss the big questions facing our society.

What's an Essential Question?

- intriguing, complex, and problematic
- rooted in issues facing society today
- Serve as catalyst for critical thinking
- can't be easily solved or answered
- provides a springboard for conversation
- Addresses a real-world dilemmas which your site can uniquely speaks to
- open-ended and open to exploration.

What do they look like?

- What responsibility should society have to protect the environment?
- What should the limits of freedom be in a democracy?
- How should we measure the value of land?
- When is violence just?
- Who deserves the right to access limited resources?
- Who has the right to define "justice?"
- How do we move forward in a polarized society?

Ripped from the Headlines
Finding Essential Questions in the News

Grab a copy of the A-section of a newspaper – it could be a big national paper or your hometown one. Shuffle through the headlines. You're looking at the pressing issues facing our society summarized in a few short words.

We can use the news of today to help us find relevance in our resources. How does your park echo off of the headlines of today? What essential questions facing society does it help us to discuss?

Brainstorm:
Grand Canyon
National Park

"What's our responsibility to provide protection?"

Condors? Trail Erosion? Colorado? Water Rights?

LOCAL STUDENTS MOUNT PROTEST AFTER LATEST SCHOOL SHOOTING
High Schoolers Call For Safer Schools

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Brainstorm:
Independence National
Historical Park

"How much should we limit personal freedoms?"

Liberty Bell? Metal Detectors @ "Independence" Hall? Disagreements on Bill of Rights?

Now it's your turn!

Leaf through the newspaper and find a headline that catches your eye. It shouldn't be *directly* about your park, but being in your park should somehow make discussing those issues more meaningful.

Clip out the article and paste it here, then write an essential question that's facing our world that echoes off the issues raised in the article.

Remember that essential questions have no "right" answer – oftentimes we will never, ever be able to answer them once and for all. They often use the word "we" or "society" and usually make you go, "hmmm."

Brainstorm:

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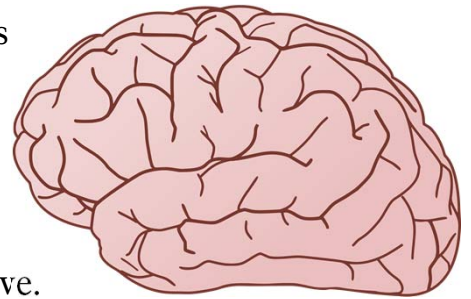---------

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Tapping the Brains of our Visitors

Building Human Understanding

Think about your life for a minute. Think of all the birthdays you have had. Think of the moments when you've been proud. Think of the times you were embarrassed. Think of a time when you were angry, or in love, or scared. Your life experiences belong to only you – they are unique.

Each visitor you encounter has had birthdays and been in love. They have felt embarrassed or hoped for a better opportunity. Their life experience is just as rich as your own.

$$\times \qquad =$$

How Many Visitors came to National Park Service sites last year?	Average age of a National Park Service visitor?	…years of lived experience coming to National Park Service sites *every year*.

With so much lived experience, National Park sites have the vast potential of helping our visitors not just understand the natural and historical world, but the world they live in today and the people they share it with.

We often think of the source of content in our programs as just the resources. But visitors bring an important element to the story if they are given space to share their personal experiences and truths. This view of truth – seeing truths as something each person helps define themselves – can open up new avenues for collaborative meaning making.

Turn back to page 7. Think about the "Essential Question" your site helps pose for society.

What is a personal experience from *your life* that revolves around that idea? What is an experience that *only you have had* that adds richness and vibrancy to a conversation about that topic? Capture some notes here:

Share your essential question with someone else. Then share your personal story. Ask them to share their own personal story that echoes off of that essential question.

What about the story you heard *them tell* makes you think *differently* about your site?

Dialogic Questions

"You" Questions for Audience Contribution

Dialogic questions make audience-centered experiences audience-centered. With dialogic questions, there are no right or wrong answers or assumptions, because the questions are not based in forensic truth, but rather in the unique thoughts and perspectives of audience experience and relevance.

Dialogic questions are...
- **Inviting:** People can respond with their feelings and their thoughts.
- **Experiential:** The only "right" answer comes from the lived experience of each participant (ORACLE)
- **Non-judgmental:** No embedded cultural, political, or ideological assumptions.
- **Inclusive:** Anyone could have something valuable to say-whatever their age, race, gender, or level of education may be.
- **Generative:** Can't be answered with a "yes" or "no", or a platitude. Generate robust discussion or examples.

Examples of possible dialogic invitations:
- Who in your life first shaped your relationship with nature?
- What impact does immigration have on your daily life?
- When have you had to give up something you love?
- What does the word "citizen" mean to you?
- When asked where you're from, how do you answer & why do you answer that way?
- Where do you feel safest in the world? Why?
- When have you witnessed someone being treated unfairly?
- When have you had to show courage in your life?

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Good, Better, Worst, Best
Workshopping Some Dialogic Questions

Below are some works-in-progress – attempts at audience centered questions that could be even better. For each question, circle all the elements of a good dialogic question it fulfills.

- **Where do you think Frederick Roeder got the money to open his bakery?**

  Inviting   Experiential   Non-Judgemental   Inclusive   Generative

- **What part of the Harpers Ferry story is the most interesting to you?**

  Inviting   Experiential   Non-Judgemental   Inclusive   Generative

- **What impact does immigration have on your daily life?**

  Inviting   Experiential   Non-Judgemental   Inclusive   Generative

- **How much do you think temperatures will change during the 21st century if emissions remain at their current trend?**

  Inviting   Experiential   Non-Judgemental   Inclusive   Generative

- **What thought or image first come to mind when you hear the word "river"?**

  Inviting   Experiential   Non-Judgemental   Inclusive   Generative

Now choose 1 of the questions that needs the most help. Rephrase and redraft it to make a good dialogic question:

_____

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ORACLE Question Bank

Lived Experience Is the Key

ORACLE is a useful acronym to remember what makes the best dialogic questions.

O nly

R ight

A nswer

C omes from the

L ived

E xperience

…of your audience.

Brainstorm ORACLE questions in the space below and on the next page:

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ORACLE Question Bank

Lived Experience Is the Key

O nly

R ight

A nswer

C omes from

L ived

E xperience

The Arc of Dialogue

A Strategy for Scaffolding ACE Questions

The Arc of Dialogue is a *strategically designed suite of questions to guide participants into a purposeful, meaningful, audience-centered conversation about a challenging or controversial topic.* The interpreters scaffolds or tiers the questions to create a safe and encouraging environment for dialogue and participation - "from me to we." All or parts of an arc of dialogue can be woven effectively into traditional programs and media.
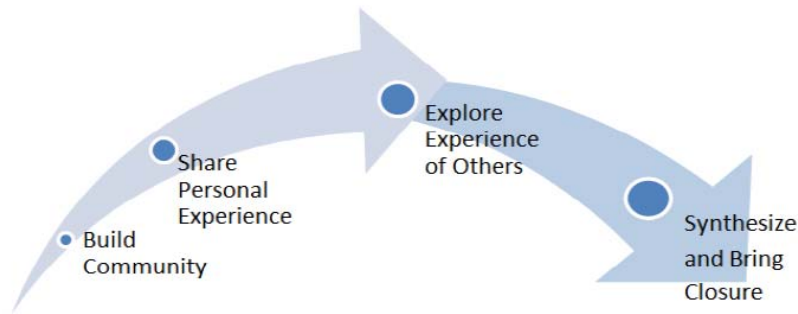
Phase 1: Build Community

>Non-threatening questions encourage all participants to join the dialogue; invite participants   to share information about themselves and to start to learn about the o thers in the group; "me-easy" questions become springboard to harder questions.

Phase 2: Sharing Personal Experience

>More challenging "me" questions invite participants to think about and share their own experiences related to the topic, and begin to make personal connections to the topic. The facilitator helps participants recognize how their experiences are alike and different and why.

Phase 3: Explore Beyond Ourselves

>"We" questions help participants explore the topic beyond their personal experience with it; encourage inquiry and exploration in an effort to learn with and from one another; probe the underlying social conditions that inform our diversity of perspectives.

Phase 4: Synthesis, Impact and Closure

>Synthesis questions help participants make meaning and draw insights from the diversity and common threads of the dialogue; participants are invited to reflect on what they may have learned about themselves, one another and the topic and are encouraged to share the personal impact.

See Appendix for a more detailed handout -The Arc of Dialogue--Overview
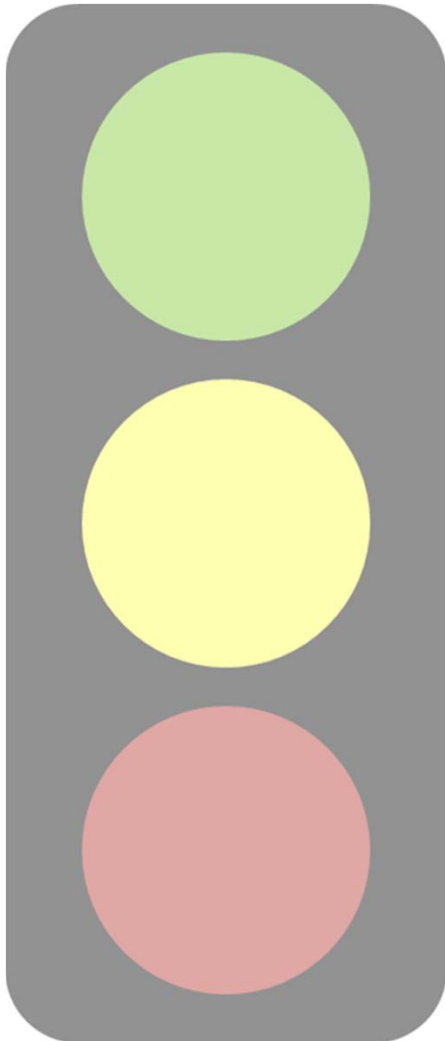
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The MuseumHack Ethic

Traffic Light Experience Scaffolding

MuseumHack, a "renegade" tour company founded in New York City with branches in Chicago, Washington, D.C., and San Francisco, structures their experiences based on a model of a guide "earning" deeper engagement from an audience, based around a traffic light.

Green Light experiences, while always interactive in some way, require the least "investment" from participants. These typically use Small engagement techniques that require small amounts of risk like movement within a space, raising hands, taking a photos and sharing or simply sharing answers to community building open-ended questions.

Yellow Light experiences incorporate deeper interactivity, usually shifting the interaction from audience member with the interpreter to the audience members amongst themselves. These interactions may ask audience members to answer tougher prompts or undertake more "risky" moments of sharing/activity with their fellow participants. Generally, to "earn' a yellow light, an interpreter needs to build rapport through a few green light experiences.

Red Light experiences are the most "risky"-requiring participants to expose the most personal elements to the larger group. These might be opportunities to create new works of art, collaborate on crafting a shared story or undertake a complex scavenger hunt. To "earn" a red light experience, an interpreter needs to build the rapport with the group up to a few yellow light experiences.

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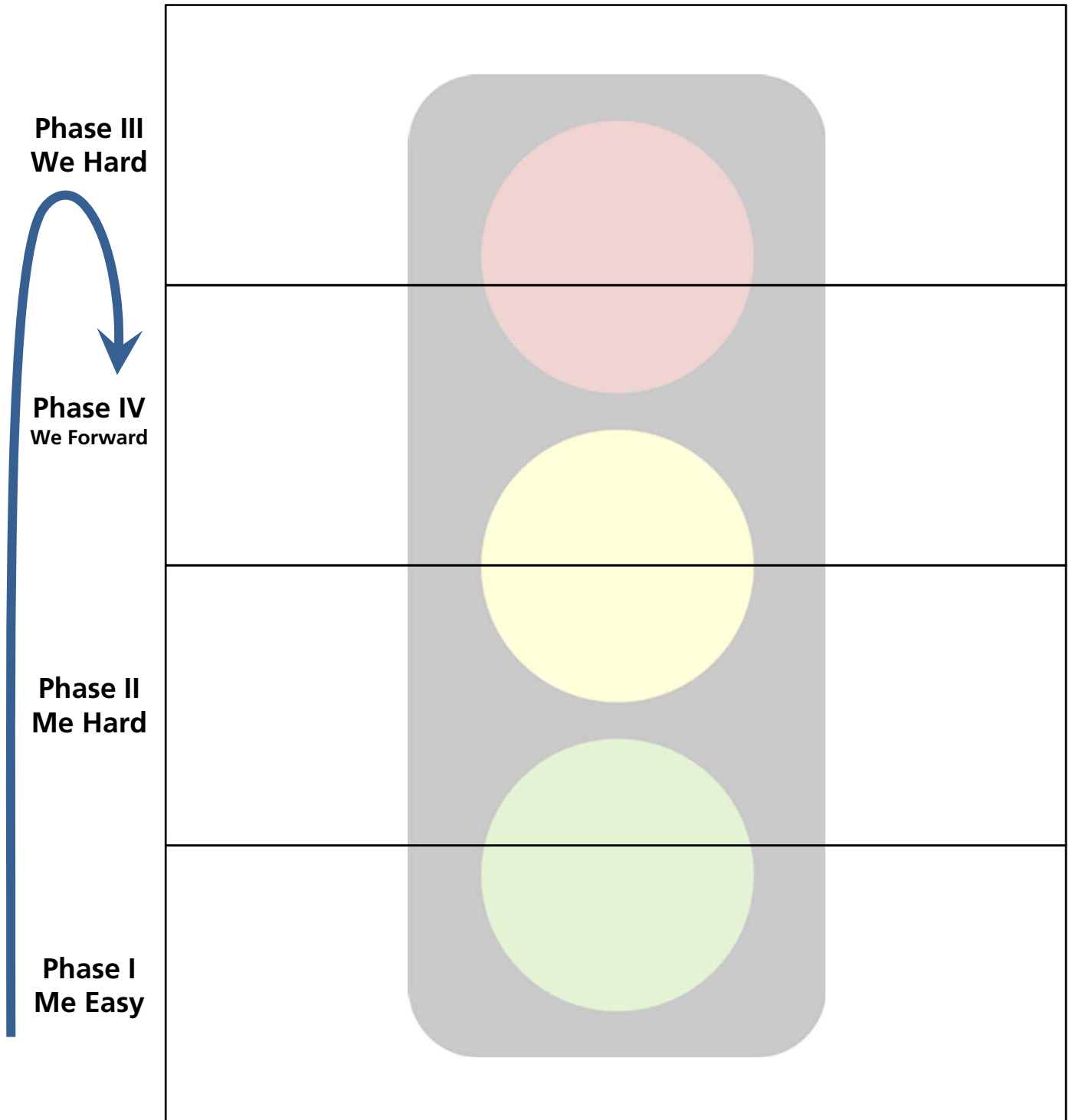
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Scaffolding ORACLE Questions

Building Safe Space by
Choosing the Right Questions

Begin sorting the dialogic questions you have already been developing into the levels of intensity, then keep experimenting with new questions and new phrasing.

**Phase III
We Hard**

**Phase IV
We Forward**

**Phase II
Me Hard**

**Phase I
Me Easy**

Pop-Up Experiences

Short, Tasty and Meaningful Interactions

Pop-ups are all the rage in American society. Famous chefs are using limited engagement restaurants in vacant storefronts to experiment with new recipes and menu concepts. Major brands offer temporary retail locations with special exclusive merchandise to gauge customer interest and help drive innovation. Artists are creating street art and experiences which, unlike a traditional curated gallery, are intended to be stumbled upon and consumed haphazardly and by accident.

Pop-up interpretive experiences mimic these ideas – they are short, ephemeral interactions where visitors stumble on an opportunity to share their experiences within a meaningful resource and connect more deeply with that resource. They may be media based, personal services based or a combination of the two. Oftentimes, they add an extra layer on top of existing park offerings to welcome visitor interaction and engagement in dialogic questions.

Because of their transient nature, pop-up interpretive experiences are most often based around questions on the lower end of the intensity spectrum – in the ICSC model, Phases 1 & 2; in the MuseumHack model, green & yellow light experiences. Their temporary nature also offers a deeply powerful opportunity to experiment, draw feedback from the success of an opportunity and iterate to make even richer visitor experiences.

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ACE Interpretive Bingo

Starting Conversations about Our Work

The "Ace Interpretive Bingo" sheet is designed to be a place to start a conversation with your peers. Take it along on a program or use it when you're looking at a piece of interpretive media. Grab a marker, and put a tick mark in a box each time you see an element of excellence.

Just like in a game of bingo, you don't need to fill every spot. Some ACE offerings might only exhibit one or two elements of success – that might be enough to get the audience to a powerful experience. For other offerings, you might cover the card with checkmarks. This is meant as a handy sheet to make capturing ideas and observations easier.

What are the categories of success?

The Bingo board has six different categories of success (five columns, plus the cross-cutting top row):

- **Facilitation** – How well is the experience helping to invite visitor voices and leave space for visitor expression?
- **Container** – How is the experience helping make visitors feel safe and welcomed in the environment to share a diversity of perspectives?
- **Relevance** – How centrally is the experience centered around an issue pressing to today's society and is the experience reactive?
- **Participation** – How are visitors engaged in dialogue with fellow participants (visitors, interpreters, facilitators, etc.) and the resource itself during the experience?
- **Techniques** – How did the techniques chosen for the experience help to make answering questions easier and invite richer answers?
- Questions – How did the questions used for the experience invite the visitors to answer from their personal lived experience?

Just like in a game of bingo, there is a free space at the center of the board; in resource-based interpretation, the story of the place should *always* be present.

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ACE Interpretive Bingo

Experience:_____ Date:_____

Use this form when observing an Audience-Centered Program or consuming a piece of Audience-Centered Media in a park or resource. Each time you see an element of success, put a check in the box.

Facilitation	Container	Relevance	Participation	Techniques
Provided Open-Ended, Generative Opportunities for Interaction	Prompts or Interactions were ORACLE	Experience Incorporated the Visitor's Experience by using "You"	Question Did Not Require Extra or Special Knowledge	Probe for Diversity within and Between Audience Members
Provided Space to Fully Answer Question(s)	Offered Personal Answer to Question to Help Build Trust	Experience Centered Around Problem Essential to Society	Visitors interacted with each other (without prompting)	Used Techniques that made Prompts Answerable
Balances Time Used for Park-Produced and Visitor Input	Took Steps to Create and Maintain a Safe Container for Expression	*The Resource* **FREE SPACE** *Is Present*	Visitors asked clarifying questions of each other	Catered to Multiple Engagement Styles thru Technique Choice
Provided Space for Visitors to Reflect and Absorb	Sequenced Questions to Build Safety and Community	Allowed Visitor Interactions to Guide/Change Exploration of Resource	Visitor(s) Continued Discussing *with Interpreter* After Experience	Clearly Explained Directions When Using Techniques
Allowed or Provoked Visitors to Synthesize Answers	Kept individual voices from dominating	Took Risks and Sought Avenues for Visitors Share in Meaning-Making	Visitor(s) Continued Discussing *with Each Other* After Experience	Used Techniques Which Made Sense for Setting and Time Constraints

Understanding Privilege and Bias

Looking through Johari's Window

Interpreters and educators must first uncover their own expectations, obstacles and biases in order to help others find and overcome theirs. This knowledge of self or "emotional intelligence" has several distinct and increasingly important aspects:

- Awareness of self involves ongoing self-examination to identify conscious and unconscious bias which results from personal experience and perspectives.
- Self-monitoring helps interpreters and educators be aware of and express their own thoughts, feelings and behaviors in constructive and professional ways
- Facilitating social interactions involves understanding and respecting the thoughts, emotions, needs and concerns of others, and reading emotional, behavioral and social cues to help people engage and interact respectfully, even when they disagree.

Johari's window is a tool for gaining awareness of self through self disclosure and seeking feedback. By "opening" your Johari's window, you become more effective and productive in your life, and can help others do the same.

SELF
Solicits Feedback

Things I Know   Things I Don't Know

OPEN   BLIND SPOT

GROUP
Sharing Self

Things They Know

Things They Don't Know

INSIGHT

HIDDEN   UNKNOWN

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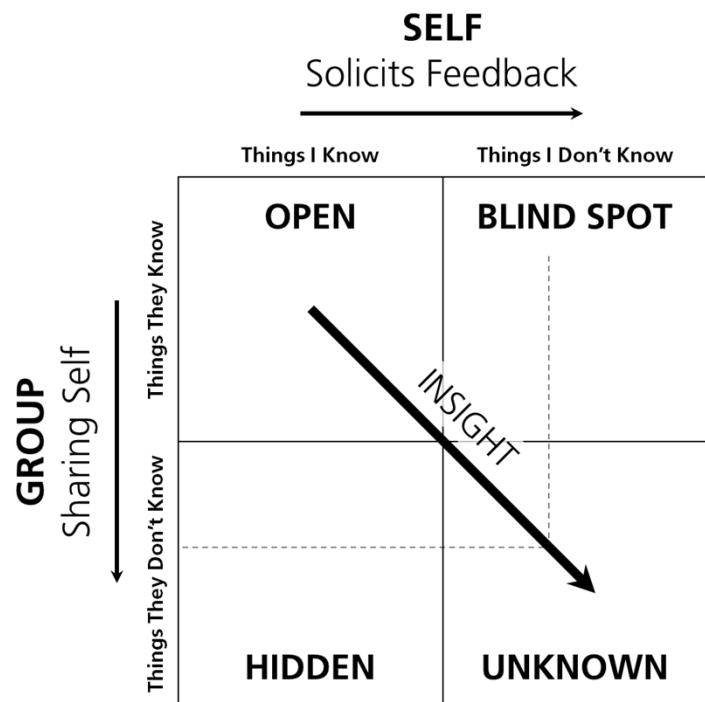
I'm Biased – Now What?

Taking Steps to Understand & Combat Your Biases

Once you realize that – like all humans – you have biases, it can feel overwhelming. But there are simple resources and habits you can practice which help interrupt our biases and begin breaking down the walls between us.

MTV's Look Different project has built a number of easy tools to help fight bias:

BIAS CLEANSE

Stretched out over the course of a week, the bias cleanse delivers a short and simple activity to your email every day to help you fight against biases and become more self-aware.

A bias cleanse can be the perfect first step toward knowing how you react and why.

LOOKDIFFERENT.ORG/WHAT-CAN-I-DO/BIAS-CLEANSE

SNAP JUDGEMENT

Want to start pushing your brain to see people differently? You can use the snap judgement tool to interrupt the way you react to people at first glance.

The tool makes you rethink your default assumptions about others and start shifting your view of peoples' roles in society.

LOOKDIFFERENT.ORG/SNAP-JUDGMENT

WATCH VIDEOS

Like Netflix for your implicit biases! MTV has produced a series of award-winning documentaries that dive deep into privilege in American society.
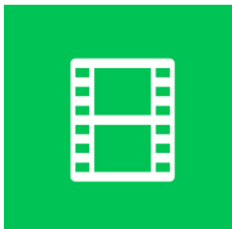
These documentaries are designed to both give you perspective on your own group, and see the world through another's eyes.

LOOKDIFFERENT.ORG/VIDEOS

SEE THAT, SAY THIS

When you're faced with those awkward moments – someone makes an offensive comment and you don't know how to respond – sometimes you just need to know what to say.

Designed in tweet-able snippets, these easy responses can help you interrupt your own (and others') biases

LOOKDIFFERENT.ORG/WHAT-CAN-I-DO/SEE-THAT-SAY-THIS

Why Interpretation and Design?

Thinking Through the Design Thinking Process

Design thinking is a methodology to identify and solve issues and problems called challenges. These challenges are always people-centered, with users in mind. The process is all about defining and solving these problems.

Design thinking promotes "radical interdisciplinary collaboration" It is a product of its practice; or in design language its "form follows function."

ARTISTS

Artists solve their own problems

M. Liang 2015

DESIGNERS

Designers solve other people's problems

Design Implies…

- **Human-centered**: Empathy for the person or people you are designing for, and feedback from users, is fundamental to good design.
- **Radical Collaboration**: Moving to "our" product rather than "My program" and "My park"
- **Experimentation and Prototyping**: Prototyping is not simply a way to validate your idea; it is an integral part of your innovation process. We build to think and learn.
- **A Bias Towards Action:** Design thinking is a misnomer; it is more about doing -than thinking. Bias toward doing and making over thinking and meeting.
- **Show Don't Tell**: Creating experiences, using illustrative visuals, and telling good stories communicate your vision in an impactful and meaningful way.

Design Thinking Doing

Define | Ideate | Prototype
Empathize | Repeat | Test
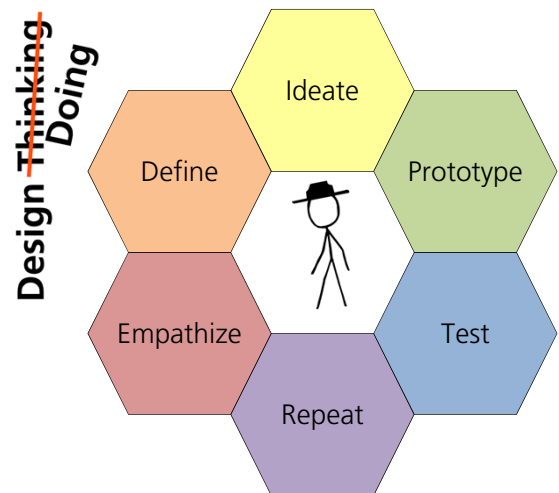
Rapid Prototyping Radical Ideas

Using Design Thinking to Identify What Visitors Want

Design thinking processes help us to think outside the box and imagine exciting new experiences that meet unknown needs of visitors and users. Grab a partner to act as a prospective audience and jump into the design thinking process. Apply what you learn about their experience somewhere else to design an exciting new experience in your own resource!

Your Mission:

Design a meaningful audience-centered experience in _____ for your partner

(name of your resource)

COLLABORATION

Step One

Start by gaining empathy…
Spend 3 minutes interviewing your partner: What's a recent meaningful experience you've had in an authentic place that has fed your soul, intellect or spirit?
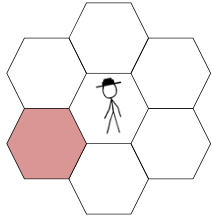
3 Minutes x 2

Notes from your interview.

ON YOUR OWN

Step Two

Processing What You've Heard
Spend 30 seconds gathering your thoughts: what do you think makes an experience meaningful for your partner?
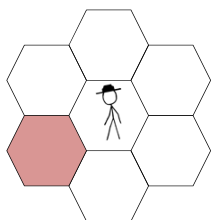
30 Seconds

Your Notes

Rapid Prototyping Radical Ideas

Using Design Thinking to Identify What Visitors Want

Step Three

Digging Deeper…
Spend 3 more minutes asking clarifying questions and probe deeper into what makes experiences meaningful to them.

3 Minutes x 2

Notes from your interview.

Step Four

Capture Your Findings
Spend 3 minutes defining the things that your partner needs and what insights you've gained about their worldview.
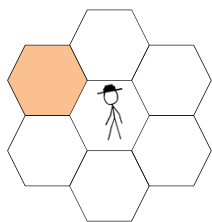
3 Minutes

Needs: things they are trying to do (use verbs)

Insights: new learning about your partner's feelings/worldview to leverage in your design (make inferences from what you heard).

Rapid Prototyping Radical Ideas

Using Design Thinking to Identify What Visitors Want

Step Five

Define a Problem Statement
Spend 2 minutes defining what problem you would like to solve in your resource with a meaningful experience.
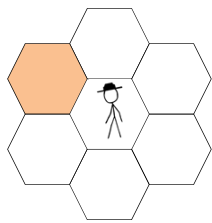
2 Minutes

name and describe your partner

Needs a way to _____

Surprisingly / Because / But…
    circle one

_____

insight

Step Six

Sketch, Draw or Explain at least 3 RADICAL ways to meet your user's needs based on your problem statement. Don't worry about budget confines, social conventions or current program offerings. Imagine!
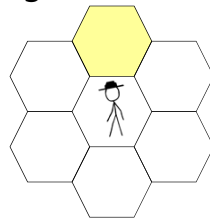
5 Minutes

Idea #1

Idea #2

Idea #3

Rapid Prototyping Radical Ideas
Using Design Thinking to Identify What Visitors Want

Step Seven

Share Ideas & Gather Feedback
Present all three of your ideas to your partner. Take notes on their feedback. What did they like? What part of your experiences would excite them? What would be meaningful to them?
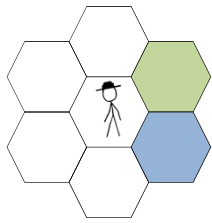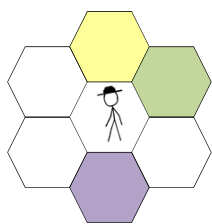
4 Minutes x 2

Notes from their reactions.

Step Eight

Refine the Prototype…
Spend 4 minute choosing the one idea you proposed that got the best feedback. What can you improve? How can you make this idea even better for your partner? Draw, sketch, or write out your new experience.

4 Minutes

It's just a jump to the left! Let's do the brainstorm again!
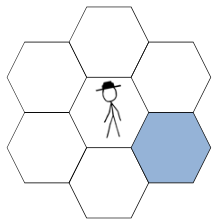
Rapid Prototyping Radical Ideas

Using Design Thinking to Identify What Visitors Want

Step Nine

Share Ideas & Gather Feedback
Present your new idea to your partner. Take notes on their feedback. What did they like? What part of your experiences would excite them? What would be meaningful to them?
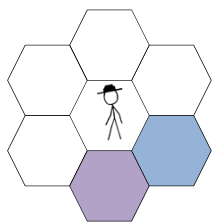
5 Minutes x 2

Notes from their reactions.

Step Ten

Final Thoughts…
Spend 1 minute gathering your final conclusions from this process. What solutions to your partner's problem worked the best? What lessons about visitor desires have you learned?

1 Minute

Gather your final lessons learned.

THE LESSONS WE LEARN FROM PROTOTYPING RADICAL IDEAS ARE LIMITLESS.

THOUGH YOU MAY NEVER GET THE OPPORTUNITY TO IMPLEMENT THE BIG DREAM IDEA THAT YOUR PARTNER WANTED THE MOST, YOU *CAN* START TO INCORPORATE THE LESSONS YOU'VE LEARNED ABOUT VISITORS AND THEIR DESIRES INTO *ANY* INTERPRETIVE EXPERIENCE IN SMALL AND BIG WAYS.

DREAMING OUTSIDE THE BOX IS AN AMAZING WAY TO CAST OFF YOUR OWN ASSUMPTIONS AND THINK OF A PROBLEM THROUGH SOMEONE ELSE'S EYES.
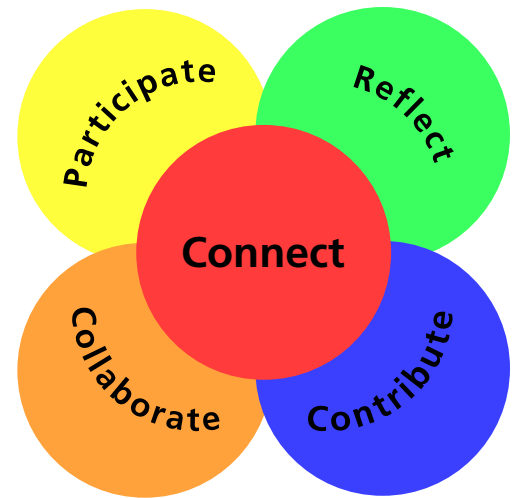
Techniques for ACE

Making Questions Easier to Answer

The techniques you integrate in audience centered experiences can have a profound impact on the visitor, our parks, and society.

The techniques that will be most effective are those in which audience members are included as co-creators of their interpretive experiences, with opportunities to connect. Most importantly, techniques paired with questions provide an invitation to engage – they should help make participation easier and more compelling for the audience.

ACE questions combined with ACE techniques invite the audience to *participate, reflect, contribute and collaborate* in order to facilitate opportunities for *connection*.

Techniques are the "go juice" for your questions – you can have great questions, but without appropriate techniques, you might have a hard time engaging your audience to respond. Techniques make questions easier to answer! Therefore, the choice of a technique should follow the creation of the question – the question helps the interpreter decide which technique to use.

Copy one of your green or yellow light ACE dialogic questions here:

_____

_____

Flip through the next few pages of the workbook. Select a technique you might pair with this question to help make it *inviting* and *easier to answer*, then record it below.

_____
(name of the technique you would choose)

Grab a peer or friend to try your idea out on! Tell them your question, then explain the technique you'd use. How do they react? Does it make it engaging to answer? Does it make it easier to answer?

Quick Tip:

The *first* technique you choose might not be the most effective one. But through *experimentation* and *observing interactions*, you can find which technique works well with which questions.

Fail Forward!

Verbal Techniques

Letting the Visitors Speak Out Loud

	Description	Strengths/Key Uses/Challenges
Serial testimony / Queuing	Each group member shares a story for a short time (perhaps 1-2 minutes)	Allows all voices to be heard; gives facilitator control of situation, so can address domination by one voice. In large group, can take much time.
Using self as a model	Facilitator shares a personal story or experience	May inspire people to look at their own lives honestly—a core of the dialogue process; must be used thoughtfully, so it doesn't dominate dialogue.
Listening pairs & triads	Participants speak to one or two others in response to a question, quote, or statement	May be helpful early, before people are comfortable sharing in a large group; Not everyone's voice heard by whole group – works best inviting large group discussion after.
Mutual invitation	Each speaker invites the next to share their perspective; the invitee may share or pass (knowing that they'll have another chance later)	Gives participants power and the sense that they (rather than the facilitator) own the dialogue and their contributions
Your "two cents"	Participants are given two pennies, indicating they have two opportunities to share during a discussion; after their pennies are gone, they simply listen	Encourages reflection and thoughtful choices about sharing; effective in "sharing the air"
Popcorn	Facilitator (or assistant) captures participants' responses and writes them down for all to see	Gives the group a sense of the scope and variety of responses (especially useful for visual learners); in some cases, only new thoughts are written down, not duplicates
Clarifying questions	Facilitator or participants invite deeper responses to comments already made (e.g. "Could you say more about that?"	Can make dialogue deeper or more personal

Verbal Techniques

Letting the Visitors Speak Out Loud

	Description	Strengths/Key Uses/Challenges
Fishbowl	Facilitator and subgroup talk in an inner circle, while those in an outer circle observe silently	Gives observers a deeper understanding of how different perspectives relate to each other and how dialogue functions; Can be combined with caucuses to allow different identity groups to see how dialogue functions in a group not their own
Caucuses	Typically used in multi-session dialogues: People share within an "identity group," which can be divided along different lines (ethnicity, gender, position, etc.)	May provide safety for more open sharing than within the larger group; this safety can then translate beyond the identity group. Must be used carefully and purposefully, so it does not undermine group cohesion
Wagon Wheel or Concentric Circles (or Speed Dating)	Participants form two circles (one inside the other); the inside circle faces out, and outside faces in; they respond to a question, statement or quote; After responding, each person shifts to their right, so new pairs are formed each time	Allows group members to get to know each other and hear a variety of responses.
_____ (Add Your Own Idea)		
_____ (Add Your Own Idea)		
_____ (Add Your Own Idea)		

Non-Verbal Techniques

Letting the Visitors Express Themselves

	Description	Strengths/Key Uses/Challenges
Photolanguage	Participants respond to images, choosing one to answer a specific question	Allows visual (and other) learners a way into the dialogue process; allows participants to express their perspectives through metaphor, a powerful communication tool
Silence	Facilitator invites time for reflection or internal processing (or group does this without invitation)	Silence often allows the deepest and best thinking to arise; can be used when the group is looking for a way forward Can be forecast with a comment (e.g. "This can be a difficult topic, so let's take a moment to think about it before responding to the question") Can be used to honor a specific response (without feedback, which can be minimizing) that may have deep emotions attached
Gallery walk	Participants walk around the room and read quotes that the facilitator has selected and posted; they stand by the one that most strikes them Within their group (e.g. at a given quote), participants respond to a question asked by the facilitator	
Graffiti wall	Participants draw or write their responses on a whiteboard or large paper posted on a wall (or they use post-its, which they stick to a wall); Participants then walk by and view the drawings/writings	Allows for freer expression than words alone; provides time for reflection and gives a sense of the range of responses; since it's anonymous, can allow for the expression of difficult thoughts or feelings
Anonymous testimony	Participants respond to a question, statement, or quote by writing their response on a large index card or sticky note; these are posted, and dialogue continues around the responses (not the responders)	Since it's anonymous, can allow for the expression of difficult thoughts or feelings

Non-Verbal Techniques

Letting the Visitors Express Themselves

	Description	Strengths/Key Uses/Challenges
Carpet of Ideas	Participants react/respond to a question on a large index card or sticky note. Once participants complete their response they share them on the floor or wall The facilitator leads a discussion based on the responses from the cards and/or allows participants to react to the responses.	Allows for anonymous and more comfortable sharing of potentially heterodox ideas. Can be used to help keep one or two voices from dominating a conversation by instantly bringing all perspectives into view.
Forced Voting	Participants are given ballots (typically a collection of small green and red dots), then presented with a series of quotes or statements. They have to anonymously vote with agree (green) or disagree (red). The facilitator tallies the votes, then leads a discussion about what the aggregate (not any individual vote) says about the issue and the group.	Can allow for outlier viewpoints to be expressed safely. It is important to choose options which have a broader spread of votes, versus those which are "all against one," so as not force a participant to "out" themselves.
Vote with your feet	Participants express their opinions by standing in different areas of a single line continuum.	This strategy allows participants to embody and compare their personal opinion to the opinion of others in a group and to explore the various reasons behind different viewpoints It allows quieter participants to answer without necessarily needing to speak.
_____ (Add Your Own Idea)		
_____ (Add Your Own Idea)		

Positive – Provisional – Specific – Quality

Closing the Feedback Loop

Helping your peers to become better interpreters takes commitment and a caring relationship. When you help coach your peers, you have the opportunity to make a lasting impact on the quality of the interpretation that we all offer the public.

The hallmark of good coaching is practicing positive critical assessment. This sort of assessment has four main elements:

P
- **Look For the Positive:** Focus on what is there, not what is missing. Focus on the elements of what makes the interpretive product effective and what the presentation includes, not what is missing. This keeps the interaction positive and forward-thinking. All interpretive efforts have potential elements of success upon which to build.

P
- **Be Provisional, Not Directive:** Use phrases like "Consider trying…," "What do you think would happen if...," or "That idea might be even more powerful if…." Your fellow interpreter knows the intent of their product better than anyone else. Using provisional language honors that creative autonomy. Provisional suggestions can help strengthen a particular component of an interpretive effort, while allowing the interpreter's personal communication style to remain intact.

S
- **Make Specific Suggestions:** Focusing on specific moments and elements of an interpretive experience can help your peers to understand exactly why they succeeded, or where there is room for improvement. Rather than offer feedback like, "The whole program was great," an effective peer coach identifies the specific elements and actions on the interpreter's part which helped make it a great program.

Q
- **Focus on Quality of Feedback over Quantity:** Every interpreter, regardless of skill level or mastery, has room to improve. An excellent peer coach focuses on the few places where improvement and adjustment could have the greatest benefit, rather than analyzing every single element of an experience. Incremental changes are far easier to make than revising an entire experience from the ground up.

Even the best coaches need to stop and remind themselves often that feedback is meant to help, not hinder. The focus is always on helping our peers to become better practitioners and magnify the excellence they already offer to visitors.

Building Your Pop-Up
Standing Up Your Own Brave Example

The Big Idea / Essential Question

What is the problem facing our world you are designing around? What essential question would you like to help visitors investigate? This should ideally be a question centered in the issues and struggles of society today. It should take special meaning from your site and resources.

> Remember… Only YOU see your Essential Question or Idea – this is for you to use when brainstorming and designing. Get it close, not perfect.

ORACLE Questions

What are some Green-Yellow or Phase 1 / Phase 2 dialogic questions you could use to help spark the visitors' investigation and increase their capacity for empathy? The best questions have no right answers, are rarely binary and are answerable only from the personal experience of the visitor. Brainstorm 6 possible questions.

☐ Answerable? ☐ Open-Ended? ☐ I Want to Answer It?	☐ Answerable? ☐ Open-Ended? ☐ I Want to Answer It?
☐ Answerable? ☐ Open-Ended? ☐ I Want to Answer It?	☐ Answerable? ☐ Open-Ended? ☐ I Want to Answer It?
☐ Answerable? ☐ Open-Ended? ☐ I Want to Answer It?	☐ Answerable? ☐ Open-Ended? ☐ I Want to Answer It?

Now, share your favorite questions with your group. Ask your group if the questions are ORACLE – Are they Answerable? Are they Open-Ended? Are they questions they think they would want to answer and care about the answers of others?

Building Your Pop-Up

Standing Up Your Own Brave Example

Brainstorming Resources

Copy your favorite / best two ORACLE questions from page 1.

Now list and describe some park resources/stories/places which would add power and meaning to an investigation of this question. These might be resources and experiences that echo off of the question, help visitors find different perspectives, help introduce diverse voices/perspectives into the conversation or help make answering the question easier.

Now, share your question(s) and possible resource stories with your group. How do they react to them? Is there a resource story and question combination that they react particularly strongly to? Look for those moments when they stop critiquing the question or delivery and begin wanting to answer the question – those likely are the most fruitful.

Building Your Pop-Up

Standing Up Your Own Brave Example

Copy the best question and resource story pairing below. Brainstorm all the details you might like to include with the resource story.

ORACLE Question	Resource Story

Thinking About Your Medium

Describe in detail the medium you are thinking of using (personal services, traditional media, social media, etc.) to help visitors investigate the essential question. Brainstorm some of the strengths of audience interaction in this medium and some of the potential weaknesses.

Description of the Medium

Strengths	Weaknesses

Building Your Pop-Up

Standing Up Your Own Brave Example

COLLABORATION

Strategies & Sequencing to Make Answering Easier

With your group, discuss the potential barrier to visitor contribution. What are some of the potential techniques you might use to help visitors feel safe and welcome to share diverse opinions and experiences. Think creatively and collaboratively.

Begin outlining your interpretive experience

National Park Service
Common Learning Portal

Dana Buzzelli
Cuyahoga Valley National Park

Dana worked with their supervisor to post an example of an interpretive program on the Civilian Conservation Corps and the service work within the park during the Great Depression. The suggestions that the community on the Common Learning Portal provided helped Dana see different avenues for discovery and strengthen the program, and provided increased confidence to move on to more amazing work.

"This was my first time giving a formal talk to a large audience, so all suggestions are very much appreciated!"

"…while some visitors suggested that an 'entitled' generation would not be interested in service work, other's contradicted that assumption. What if you were to dig into those assumptions with some figures that represent the 'struggle' of a modern young person looking for work?"

Samantha Heinritz

"…this is an excellent suggestion. As you bring the historical context of the CCC to modern times through the 'struggle' of a young person looking for work, you really start to get at a societal benefit for your program by exploring this contemporary issue?"

Scott Babinowich

"I also really like both of your suggestions regarding taking a modern look at young people's struggle to find work. I am an AmeriCorps alumna, so the modern application of the CCC model of (partially) government-funded service work for young people is especially relevant to me."

Dana Buzzelli

Dana has now joined the Peer Collaborators community and is not only submitting ideas for review, but is active giving quality feedback to peers on their own submissions.

CONTINUE THE INTERPRETIVE JOURNEY

JOIN THE
COMMON LEARNING PORTAL

MYLEARNING.NPS.GOV