



# **Introduction to the Tour Guide Program (TGP) & Historical Interpretation**

6 Dec 2017

# How NOT to Interpret History



Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dxPVyieptwA>

# Agenda



- Welcome & Staff Introductions
- Why the TGP?
- Docents vs. General Volunteers
- Program Overview & Goals
- Summary & Questions
- Demonstration
- Practical Application
- The Visitor Experience (Rail Yard Tour)



# Welcome



- Staff introductions
- The VMT Mission Statement:

“To advance all modes of transportation across the Commonwealth, **to celebrate and preserve** the hard work and ingenuity of generations past, and to **inspire current and future generations** to value this industry which is essential to Virginia’s history, culture, and economic growth.”

# Why the TGP?



- Implementation & standardization
- Eventually establish a series of professionally-guided tours
- Celebrate, preserve & inspire



*James Watt (1736-1819). Pro-tech.co.uk*



## Docents vs. General Volunteers

---

- A docent (or tour guide) is someone who leads guided tours, especially through museums or art galleries
- All docents are volunteers, but not all volunteers are docents

# The Nuts & Bolts of the TGP

- Delivery & content
- Nineteen courses
- Initial & follow-on training
- Awards & Recognition

# Curriculum

---

- Four phases of training:
  - Introduction
  - Indoctrination
  - Certification
  - Follow-On

*Wright Model "A" Military Flyer. Fort Myer, VA (1908).  
Wikipedia.com.*





# Sample Courses



## Delivery ("A"-Series) Courses:

A.3 Learning Styles

A.6 Connecting with  
Your Audience

A.8 Tour Practicum



## Content ("B"-Series) Courses:

B.2 Virginia Rail History

B.7 The Life and Legacy  
of John T. Hanna

B.11 VMT Architectural  
History

# Training Documents



- TGP Training Syllabus
- Follow-On Training Log
- Training Roster
- Standardized Lectures

TRAINING OUTLINE						
TASK / TOPIC	LECTURE NO.	HOURS	DATE	INSTRUCTOR	TRAINEE INT.	INSTRUCTOR INT.
Introduction to the TGP and Historical Interpretation	A.1	1.5				
The Visitor Experience	A.2	2.0				
Learning Styles	A.3	1.5				
Public Speaking	A.4	1.0				
Leadership Essentials	A.5	0.5				
Connecting with Your Audience	A.6	1.0				
Museum Facilities, Staff, and Special Situations	A.7	0.5				
An Overview of Transportation in Virginia	B.1	1.0				
The History of Roanoke	B.10	0.5				
Tour Practicum	A.8	1.0				



# Core Values ("P3")

- Patrons
- Personality
- Professionalism

# Historical Interpretation



- Tour guides/interpreters are *not* walking textbooks!
- Six Principles:
  - Context
  - Revelation
  - Art
  - Provocation
  - Inclusiveness
  - Applicability



*Tilden, F. (1977). Interpreting Our Heritage (3rd ed.). Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.*



# Goals

- Skill development
- Public engagement
- Knowledge
- Emergency response
- Feedback
- Consistency & accuracy

# Standards of Interpretation



## Know Your Subject:

“Knowledge is the key to credibility and critical to a visitor’s comprehension of the experience. A dedicated interpreter constantly seeks out sources for a greater breadth and depth of information. The learning process never stops.”

## Standards of Interpretation (Cont.)



### Know Your Audience:

“Knowledge alone is insufficient to interpret effectively. Get to know people.”

“Examine your audience.”

“Empathize with the people your encounter.”



# Standards of Interpretation (Cont.)



## Know How to Make Connections:

“Think of this as your toolbox. What are some of the possible tools you can use?”

- Quotations
- Questions
- Setting the scene
- Humor





# Standards of Interpretation (Cont.)



## Know Your Parameters:

“Know the time parameters.”

“Know the conceptual parameters.”

“Stick to them.”



# Standards of Interpretation: Summary



“Know Your Subject”

“Know Your  
Audience”

“Know How to Make  
Connections”

“Know Your Parameters”





## **Discussing Objects in Context**

- Discuss objects in time and place they were used
- Differences between the past and present
- Relate objects to historical vignettes or anecdotes (verifiably TRUE accounts!)

# Presentation Techniques

- Eye contact
- Non-verbal cues (body language)
- General appearance & posture
- Language
- Quality of voice
- Clarity of message
- Confidence

  
VIRGINIA MUSEUM OF  
TRANSPORTATION

**IT'S WHAT YOU DON'T SAY THAT COUNTS!**



The infographic illustrates five individuals with red arrows pointing to their non-verbal cues and associated negative perceptions:

- Woman in black dress:** lying? (pointing to her hand on her chin), not open to communicating? (pointing to her crossed arms).
- Man in sunglasses and headphones:** hiding something, but what? (pointing to his sunglasses), menacing? (pointing to his slumped posture).
- Man in a suit:** hostile attitude? (pointing to his crossed arms), aggressive? (pointing to his stern expression).
- Woman in brown top:** interested? (pointing to her hand on her hip), defensive? (pointing to her hand on her hip), closed mind? (pointing to her stern expression).
- Man in a blue t-shirt:** thinks you're stupid? (pointing to his hand on his hip), impatient to leave? (pointing to his hand on his hip).

**LEARN TO READ AND INFLUENCE PEOPLE THROUGH NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION.**

# Tour Guide's Role During the Tour



- Not a disciplinarian
- You're an educator, not crowd control!
- Be adaptive and change the pace
- Look at the students, not the adults, they're the ones you want answering the questions

# Summary



- Contribute to the VMT mission
- Core values
- Consistency & accuracy
- Tilden's Six Principles Handout



# Questions ?



**HISTORICAL  
INTERPRETATION  
DEMO**







# Practical Exercise

---

- Groups of two or three
- Select prop to interpret
- Five-minute prep time
- Five-to-ten minute presentation
- Peer-review process
- Remember Tilden & Monticello guidelines



# The Visitor Experience

- Observe the presentation
- Critique
  - Content/Flow
  - Presentation
- Distribute TGP Books
  - Take home material

*End of Session*