

What Is Interpretation?

Interpretation of natural and cultural heritage is probably as old as the human species. The shaman, storytellers, and elders of tribal groups carried the oral history of their people from generation to generation. Before books and modern methods of recording stories, these oral traditions were key to the survival and evolution of heritage and cultures.

In the modern context, interpretation is the term used to describe communication activities (such as environmental education) designed to improve understanding at parks, zoos, museums, nature centers, historic sites, cruise companies, tour companies and aquariums. The definition provided by the National Association for Interpretation is: "Interpretation is a communication process that forges emotional and intellectual connections between the interests of the audience and the inherent meanings in the resource."