

Themeguide

A Guide for Writing
Meaningful Interpretive Themes

2016



Essential Tools for Interpreters

Four Books in One!

Theme Guide is written in sections that help you easily access exactly the content you want to read, learn, and use.

Must-read Content

The Heart of the Matter. The first chapter is a must-read chapter for everyone. It briefly but powerfully presents an innovative approach to interpretive theme-writing — an essential prerequisite to understanding the content in all other chapters.

Interest-driven Content

Planning Primary Themes. The first optional chapter focuses on planners and managers. It provides the tools necessary to conduct a workshop in which the participants write the park's formal set of primary interpretive themes.

Training Subthemes. The second optional chapter focuses on supervisory interpreters, peer coaches, and trainers. It provides the tools necessary to conduct a training session that teaches frontline interpreters how to write interpretive subthemes for their own work (interpretive and educational services, programs, and products).

Writing Subthemes. The third optional chapter focuses on frontline interpreters writing or improving their own interpretive subthemes, for their own work (interpretive and educational services, programs, and products).

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A Guide for Writing Meaningful Interpretive Themes

2016

Richard Kohen

Essential Tools for Interpreters

Interpretation and Education
Intermountain Region



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Visitors approach the Memorial of the sunken USS Arizona, the final resting place for many of the battleship's 1,177 crewmen who lost their lives on December 7, 1941, World War II Valor in the Pacific National Monument, Pearl Harbor, Hawai'i. NPS Photo (RKohen)

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Hinting at the afternoon warmth to come and prompting us to ponder beauty in an unforgiving environment, vibrant hues fill the dawn sky over Sonoran Desert wilderness, Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument, Arizona. NPS Photo (RKohen)

Introduction

Theme Guide: A Guide for Writing Meaningful Interpretive Themes is written in sections that help you focus on exactly the content you want to read, learn, and use.

Must-read Content

This section contains must-read content that lays the groundwork upon which all other chapters have been built.

Learning the Heart of the Matter

This chapter briefly but powerfully presents an innovative approach to interpretive theme-writing — an essential prerequisite to understanding the content in all other chapters.

Interest-driven Content

This section contains content matched to your interests. Select the content you want to read, learn, and use — and skip the others

Planning Primary Themes

This first optional chapter focuses on planners and managers. It provides the tools necessary to conduct a workshop in which the participants write the park's formal set of primary interpretive themes.

If your objective is to lead a consensus-based, group process to develop a park's formal set of

primary interpretive themes, then this chapter was written for you!

Subchapters include:

- **Planner's Guide.** This subchapter contains a printable guide for the planner to use in setting up and conducting the workshop. It contains checklists, detailed instructions, tips, scheduling, scripted language, and more.
- **Planning Handouts.** This subchapter contains handouts to be used in a workshop.
- **Planning Examples.** This subchapter contains park sets of significance statements and corresponding sets of primary interpretive themes. Each of these sets of primary interpretive themes resulted from the *Theme Guide* approach to theme-writing.

Training Subthemes

This second optional chapter focuses on supervisory interpreters, peer coaches, and trainers. It provides the tools necessary to conduct a training session that teaches frontline interpreters how to write interpretive subthemes for their own work (interpretive and educational services, programs, and products).

If your objective is to lead a training session that teaches interpreters how to write subthemes for their own interpretive work, then this chapter was written for you!

Subchapters include:

- **Trainer's Guide.** This subchapter contains a printable guide for the trainer to use in setting up and conducting the training session.

It contains checklists, detailed instructions, tips, scheduling, scripted language, and more.

- **Training Handouts.** This subchapter contains handouts to be used in a training session.
- **Training Examples.** This subchapter contains interpretive subthemes resulting from the *Theme Guide* approach to theme-writing.

Writing Subthemes

This third optional chapter focuses on frontline interpreters writing or improving their own interpretive subthemes, for their own work (interpretive and educational services, programs, and products).

If your objective is to teach yourself to write or improve subthemes for your own interpretive work, then this chapter was written for you!

Usability

Theme Guide is intended to be used as a working tool kit. Accordingly, it's been designed for ease of use. *Theme Guide's* planning and training chapters are designed to be customized for park-specific application. These chapters include customization placeholders that make customization easy to accomplish.

Another feature that promotes practical use is the structure of the folios (page numbers) at the bottom of *Theme Guide's* pages, which match the actual page count. This matched format ensures that you'll always be printing the pages that you're intending to print. For example, these references and input strings all represent the same thing:

- Page 14 in a printed hard copy.
- Page 14 in the electronic Microsoft Word® file, displayed as “Page 14” in the status bar at the bottom-left corner of your computer screen as well as “Theme Guide | 14” in the lower-right corner of the page.
- Page 14 in the table of Contents.
- Entering “14” on the “Page range: Pages: __” printing dialog box.

This guide is distributed as a Word® electronic document file to enable you to customize and print the materials directly from within this publication file. Please note that significant portions of these

materials are purposefully color-coded and, therefore, *need to be printed in color to be effective.*

Terminology

To enhance clarity, some of the terminology choices used in this guide are explained here:

- The term *park* is synonymous with heritage sites or organizations that include, but are not limited to, national, state, and local parks, monuments, historic sites, forests, preserves, nature centers, zoological gardens, aquaria, museums, and other places that interpret heritage resources.
- The term *interpreter* is synonymous with any person who interprets the park's resources on behalf of the park and could, therefore, be thought of as part of the interpretive workforce. These positions include, but are not limited to, permanent, seasonal, full-time, part-time, or temporary staff members, volunteers, educators, park partners, and others.
- In some contexts, the term *interpretive themes* is broadly used as synonymous with themes at all levels of themes (*primary interpretive themes* and *interpretive subthemes*). In other, more specific contexts (such as in *Foundation Documents*), the term *interpretive themes* is synonymous with *primary interpretive themes*. More than other terms, the context in which this term is used will indicate its meaning.
- The term *interpretive subtheme* or *subtheme* is synonymous with *secondary theme* or *program theme*.

Themes Back Then

In the 1990s and before, what were referred to as themes were often just topics: Scenery and Wildlife, Geology, Archeology, etc. And while each topic was useful in describing some aspect of the larger set of park resources to be interpreted, that was a limit to their usefulness. Sometimes these topics were accompanied by explanatory text, which was helpful and indicative of the need for more information than just a label.

Later, themes took on a sentence format. These were usually restatements of fact and appeared very

similar to a park's significance statements (which factually describe the significance of a park's combined natural and cultural resources). Sentences were more useful than just topics, and were more focused than the combination of topics and their explanatory text because, as sentences, they expressed an interconnected series of elements, *a group of words that expressed a statement, question, command, or wish*. However, these interpretive theme sentences did little in the way of trying to model relevance (make their content relevant to the lives of park visitors) and, therefore, usually resulted in the conveyance of information rather than the exploration of meanings, ideas, beliefs, and values from multiple perspectives.

In 1995, the National Park Service (NPS) Interpretive Development Program (IDP) improved on interpretive themes once more. Each theme was required to include tangible and intangible elements, and concepts that were universal to most people. This list of items for inclusion in an interpretive theme sentence was very useful, and was definitely progress, ushering in the next generation of interpretive themes in parks. However, the deeper philosophy of thematic structure and the training to apply it were lacking. The interpretive services, programs, and products based on these themes were still not consistently meaningful and relevant to visitors.

And that's where our office's publication series, *Essential Tools for Interpreters*, comes onto the scene (*see Essential Tools for Interpreters on the last page of this book*).

Theme Guide is the latest in an ongoing evolution in interpretive theme philosophy, standards, instruction, and writing techniques. It stands on the shoulders of publications that have gone before it, on the thinking and processes presented in prior works of our office's *Essential Tools for Interpreters* publication series:

The original version of this publication, *Theme Guide: A guide to the thematic approach to interpretation used by the Intermountain Support Office of the National Park Service*, was published in 2001. It implemented the IDP philosophy in a practical instructional format, turning philosophy into theme-writing reality.

Interp Guide: The Philosophy and Practice of Connecting People to Heritage, was added to the series in 2005. This guide compellingly defined the profession of interpretation within the context of

contemporary culture. It explored how cutting-edge interpretive philosophy and practice could help interpreters and managers provide interpretive services that accomplish the mission of interpretation: *Providing enhanced opportunities for visitors to explore their own intellectual and emotional connections to the natural and cultural resources that comprise shared heritage*.

Also in 2005, we completed and published a major update to another publication in the series, *CIP Guide: A Guide to Comprehensive Interpretive Planning*. In this vastly improved version, we not only incorporated the ideas represented by the just-published *Interp Guide*, but also absorbed and enriched the material from *Theme Guide* — which was subsequently no longer used as a stand-alone publication. One of the primary reasons we did this was to put the development of primary interpretive themes into context: At that time, most of the primary interpretive theme writing being done throughout the NPS was being done within the comprehensive interpretive planning context. Our office assisted more than 50 parks in writing their formal set of primary interpretive themes.

Themes Today

Today, the planning landscape within the NPS has significantly changed yet again. By the end of 2016, every NPS park (now totaling more than 400 units) will have developed a *Foundation Document*. These documents are meant to contain the standards and information on which all park management decisions are founded, and against which all major decisions in the park are tested. A typical *Foundation Document* includes:

Mission of the National Park Service

Introduction

Part 1: Core Components

- Brief Description of the Park
- **Park Purpose**
- **Park Significance**
- Fundamental Resources and Values
- Other Important Resources and Values
- **Interpretive Themes**

Part 2: Dynamic Components

- Special Mandates and Administrative Commitments

- Special Designation
- Assessment of Planning and Data Needs
- Analysis of Fundamental Resources and Values
- Analysis of Other Important Resources and Values
- Identification of Key Issues and Associated Planning and Data Needs
- Planning and Data Needs

Part 3: Contributors

Appendixes

- Appendix A: Enabling Legislation for [park]
- Appendix B: Inventory of Administrative Commitments
- Appendix C: Past and Ongoing Park Planning and Data Collection Efforts

Because *Foundation Documents* include Park Purpose, Park Significance, and Interpretive Themes sections, it is no longer a typical practice to generate this content during a comprehensive interpretive planning process.

Birth of *Theme Guide*

The *Foundation Document* workshops, however, have not always generated effective or useful interpretive themes. A combination of inadequate and inconsistent training across the NPS for interpreters, interpretive managers, and the planners who facilitated these workshops, largely contributed to this situation. Sometimes, it was decided that the *Foundation Document* workshop process would not even attempt to develop the Interpretive Themes section during the workshop. In these cases, parks would generate them on their own, then add them back into the *Foundation Document*. This was usually one of the last steps in the document's development because the set of interpretive themes is based on the park's purpose and set of significance statements, and the park would need the newly-written significance statements developed during the *Foundation Document* workshop to be completed before the themes could be appropriately developed.

As a result, some parks and planning managers developed their new interpretive themes internally; others sought assistance in developing them. Our office responded to these requests by conducting

many theme-writing workshops for the purpose of generating sets of primary interpretive themes for *Foundation Documents*. This work resulted in the creation of an engaging and effective process which, in turn, became manifest through the creation of *Theme Guide*.

It quickly became evident that this process was useful beyond the *Foundation Document* prompt that sparked it, and beyond primary interpretive themes to also include interpretive subthemes:

For *managers*, *Theme Guide* explains how to use interpretive themes in decision-making that requires taking into account visitor experience and enjoyment.

For the *interpretive workforce*, this guide presents a practical and effective, step-by-step approach to writing audience-relevant primary interpretive themes as well as the interpretive subthemes that are used to outline and construct individual services, programs, and products.

For *all employees* of a park, this guide explains the value of heritage in a way that is easily expressed and translated to many contexts and types of work.

Invitation to Contribute

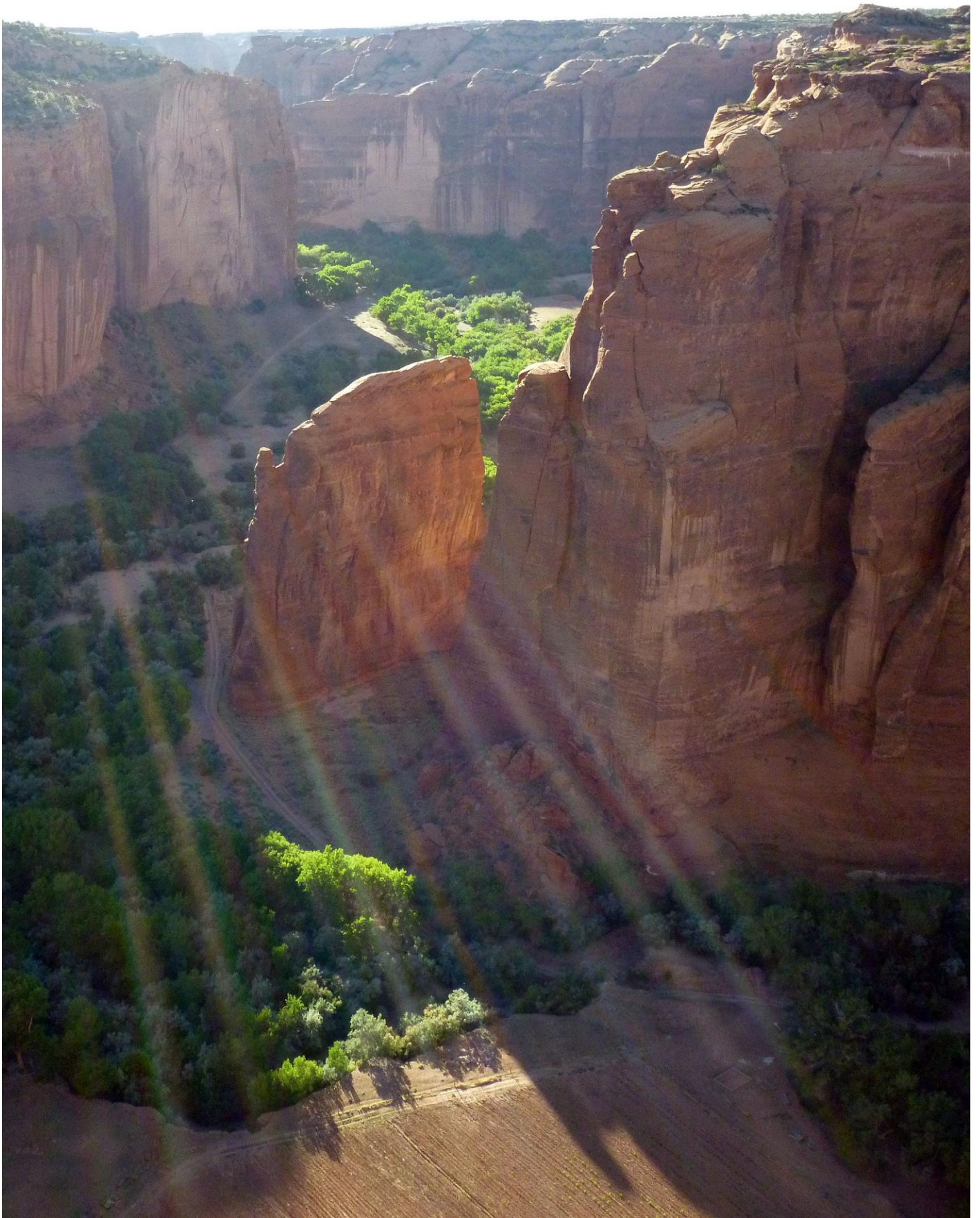
This guide will be updated from time to time. Our office would greatly appreciate your feedback regarding how to improve this guide's approach and content. Contact information is located on the last page of the book, where you'll also find information about related publications in our office's Essential Tools for Interpreters publication series.

We wish you great success in all of your interpretive endeavors!

*Richard Kohen
Lakewood, Colorado
August 2016*

MUST-READ CONTENT

This section contains must-read content that lays the groundwork upon which all other chapters have been built.



The interplay of nature and culture can create inspiring beauty, Canyon de Chelly National Monument, Arizona. NPS Photo (RKohen)

The Heart of the Matter

This chapter presents an innovative approach to interpretive theme-writing — an essential prerequisite to understanding the content in all other chapters.

Theme-writing Prerequisites

Theme-writing Requires Knowing Interpretation Philosophy

The content of *Theme Guide* is predicated on the reader's familiarity with the profession of interpretation as described and taught by the National Park Service (NPS) Interpretive Development Program (IDP). It's also tied to the aspects of that philosophy and practice that our office explored in *Interp Guide* (see *Essential Tools for Interpreters on the last page of this book*).

Theme Guide was written for interpreters and non-interpreters alike to reinforce understanding of interpretation philosophy, and to develop and enhance theme-writing skills that are immediately and pragmatically applicable. As a reader of *Theme Guide*, or as a participant in a theme-writing workshop or training session, you are presented with everything you need to successfully accomplish the task at hand, and then to apply this knowledge and skill to broader aspects of your work throughout the rest of your career.

Writing a Set of Primary Interpretive Themes Requires an Up-to-date Set of Significance Statements

Theme Guide's process for writing a park's formal set of primary interpretive themes relies on a park already having developed a vibrant, useful set of statements that factually describe its significance in a local, regional, national, or global context. In the NPS, the process for developing significance statements might have occurred during the creation of a park's *General Management Plan*, *Comprehensive Interpretive Plan*, or most recently, its *Foundation Document*.

One of *Theme Guide's* workshop handouts describes significance statements in detail (see the *Planning Handouts subchapter of the Planning Primary Themes chapter*).

Theme Guide also includes example sets (see the *Planning Examples subchapter of the Planning Primary Themes chapter*).

The process for developing a set of park significance statements is described in our office's publication, *CIP Guide: A Guide to Comprehensive Interpretive Planning* (see *Essential Tools for Interpreters on the last page of this book*).

Writing an Interpretive Subtheme Requires an Up-to-date Set of Primary Interpretive Themes

Theme Guide's process for writing an interpretive subtheme relies on a park already having developed a vibrant, useful set of primary interpretive themes (see the *Planning Primary Themes chapter*).

Theme-writing

The philosophical, conceptual basis for understanding, appreciating, and writing meaningful interpretive themes is described in this chapter — free from the distraction of planning-workshop or training-session logistics. Most of this language was extracted from the planning and training materials in subsequent chapters, though it has been modified to maximize its usefulness in the context of this chapter, *The Heart of the Matter*. Accordingly, the text below addresses you directly, the reader, as an active participant in the theme-writing process.

For the purpose of this chapter, imagine you are working in a park....

Personal Relevance

Considering what the park means to you, personally, focuses on your connections to one or more park meanings and resources. The theme-writing process starts here to foreshadow the critical importance of relevance in well-crafted interpretive themes.

Why is this place special or important to you (personally)?

Social Relevance

Establishing a connection between your values and the values of the larger American society — as expressed through the U.S. laws that established the NPS as an agency — creates the initial and largest context for working at, for, or with a park. The planning framework of heritage preservation and enjoyment is built here.

Familiarizing you with the agency's strategic planning mission — wherein the agency expresses its mission in its own language — is the next step-down level in the planning framework. Here, the importance of enjoyment, education, and inspiration are highlighted.

This is a significant place to us *as individuals*.

This is a significant place to us *as a society*.

That's the reason it's a unit within our national system of parks.

The *National Park Service* manages that system, protecting and interpreting America's significant places.

It's mission is described this way:

The National Park Service (NPS) was established in 1916. Referring to the park units that would be placed under the jurisdiction of the new agency, the NPS Organic Act stated that the agency's purpose will be "...to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein, and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations."

More recently, the agency's mission was re-stated in the NPS *Strategic Plan* (2000):

- The National Park Service preserves unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the national park system for the *enjoyment, education, and inspiration* of this and future generations.
- The National Park Service cooperates with partners to extend the benefits of natural and cultural resource conservation and outdoor recreation throughout this country and the world.

The park's Interpretation & Education division — and the partners who work alongside it — play a critical role in facilitating that *enjoyment, education, and inspiration*.

Theme-writing Goal

Establishing the intended outcome of this theme-writing effort is important to successfully reaching that goal and evaluating success.

What is the scope of your theme-writing endeavor? Your goal — and role in accomplishing it — might look like one of these sets:

- My goal is to participate in a consensus-based, group workshop that results in writing the park's formal set of primary interpretive themes.
 - My role might be to lead that effort as a planner, or to participate as a group member.

- My goal is to participate in a training session that results in participants writing an interpretive subtheme for their own work (interpretive or educational services, programs, and products).
 - My role might be to lead that effort as a trainer or peer coach, or to participate as an interpreter.
- My goal, through self-study, is to write an interpretive subtheme for my own work (interpretive or educational services, programs, and products).
 - My role is self-contained within this scope of endeavor.

Park Purpose

Having established the levels of the planning framework that are larger than a single unit of the agency — the structure within which a park exists — we turn our attention to the park level. Park purpose is, by definition, park-specific. All other aspects of the planning framework, sideboards, and guidelines that follow a look at the park's purpose will be park-specific and fall under the umbrella of park purpose.

A park's purpose statement identifies the specific reason(s) for establishment of a park. It's drafted through a careful analysis of a park's enabling legislation and the legislative history that influenced its development. The purpose statement lays the foundation for understanding what is most important about a park.

When, and by what means, was your park added to the NPS?

Park Significance

Establishing an understanding of the park's nationally significant resources and values — factually describing the distinctiveness of the park — builds the foundation upon which the park's set of primary interpretive themes are built, which in turn guide the writing of interpretive subthemes.

The significance of places and things is embedded in their enduring tangible and intangible resource

characteristics: elements that are so attractive, interesting, and engaging that people choose to experience them time and again. Every organization that offers heritage interpretation describes, in some way, the importance of the people, places, events, and things that relate to a park. Significance descriptions can be found in enabling legislation, a charter, mission statement, foundational statement, general management plan, or master plan. These statements are *factual and evidence-based*, are linked to park purpose, and are supported by data, research, and consensus. This description is most useful when it is more than just a resource list — when it includes relevant context that makes the listed items meaningful to the reader.

This description of resources is characteristically formatted as a set of *significance statements*. Significance statements, taken together as a whole, describe the distinctiveness of the combined resources of a park, including natural, cultural, inspirational, scientific, historic, recreational, and other aspects. They include tangible and intangible characteristics and the context in which these characteristics are embedded. The statements are listed in an order that best contributes to clarity; the sequence does not connote a hierarchy of importance.

In most organizations, the mission of the organization, the purpose of the site, and the site's set of significance statements combine to focus management actions and operations on the preservation and enjoyment of those attributes that most directly contribute to the importance of the place. In the NPS, significance statements also express why a park's resources and values are important enough to merit designation as a unit of the national park system.

What are your park's nationally significant resources and values?

This body of work is the foundation upon which we'll build the park's set of primary interpretive themes.

Theme Philosophy

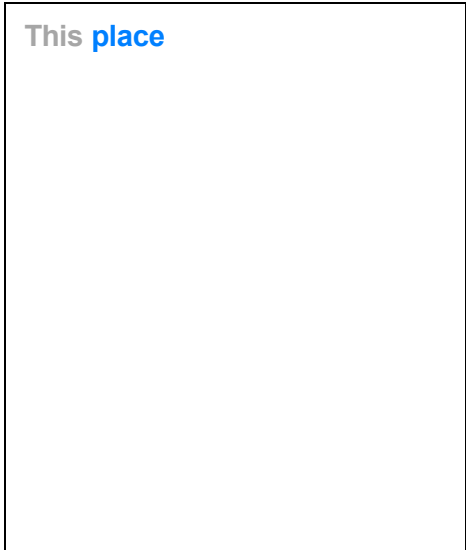
Establishing an understanding of heritage philosophy to reinforce the NPS mission, reinforcing your park's connection to that mission, connecting your interpretive work to achievement of that mission, and establishing an understanding of thematic sentence structure — form the primary philosophical instruction in Theme Guide.

A short, four-word sentence can powerfully demonstrate that idea, and guide our theme-writing efforts.

This

This

In this sentence, the word “This” indicates specificity, as in “this” instead of “that.”



Place

When we think of the word “place,” we usually think about its geographic location, its physical coordinates.

In this sentence, the word “place” is used in a much broader context: It encompasses all of the characteristics that contribute to this place’s national significance.

Our *sensual* experiences here (smelling, tasting, touching, seeing, hearing) enable us to associate specific, factual, *tangible* characteristics with this place — including *people, places, events, and things*.

- Tangibles*
- people
 - places
 - events
 - things

Our *intellectual* experiences here also enable us to associate specific, *intangible* characteristics with this place — including *ideas, meanings, beliefs, and values*.

- Intangibles*
- ideas
 - meanings
 - beliefs
 - values

This place **enriches**

Tangibles:
people
places
events
things

Intangibles:
ideas
meanings
beliefs
values

This place enriches **humanity.**

Tangibles:
people
places
events
things

Intangibles:
ideas
meanings
beliefs
values

Enriches

When we think of the word “enriches,” we usually think about monetary wealth.

In this sentence, the word “enriches” is used in a much broader context: It refers to anything that enhances or increases the value of something.

What does this place enrich?

Humanity

In this sentence, the word “humanity” is the thing being enriched.

“Humanity” embodies all that we conceive ourselves to be: our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.

For our purposes, “humanity” could also be viewed as “people” or “society” or “culture.”

This place enriches humanity.

Tangibles:
people
places
events
things

Intangibles:
ideas
meanings
beliefs
values

**This place enriches humanity.
me.**

Tangibles:
people
places
events
things

Intangibles:
ideas
meanings
beliefs
values

This place enriches humanity.

Although this statement might come across as rather abstract or lofty or idealistic, it can be applied quite literally by reducing its scale to that of the individual.

This place enriches me.

When a person experiences this place, onsite or remotely, and gets something out of it that is valuable to him or her, then his or her life has been enriched by that experience.

Simply put, this place — by virtue of everything it is and represents — adds value to the human experience.

This national monument or park — by definition — is one of the best touchstones for exploring our personal and national identity and character. Experiencing it can rejuvenate our spirits, challenge and strengthen our beliefs, and provoke contemplation and discussion of our past, present, and future. It offers opportunities for people to enrich their lives and broaden their experience — to enjoy a more fulfilling existence, a higher quality of life.

If we make this sentence plural...

This place enriches humanity.
me.

These places enrich humanity.

Tangibles:

people
places
events
things

Intangibles:

ideas
meanings
beliefs
values

This place enriches humanity.
me.

These places enrich humanity.

Tangibles:

people
places
events
things

Intangibles:

ideas
meanings
beliefs
values

These places enrich humanity.

...what comes to mind?

Answer: The U.S. national park system might come to mind, which is a collection of these places that we've purposefully set aside for perpetual enjoyment, via preservation and interpretation.

These places enrich humanity.

These places enrich me.

And... These places enrich *me*.

Within each of these special places, we've also established a professional group that works to enhance the personal enjoyment that visitors derive from their park experiences:

- "Interpretation & Education"

Let's take a closer look...

This place enriches humanity.
me.

These places enrich humanity.

Tangibles:
people
places
events
things

Intangibles:
ideas
meanings
beliefs
values

Park resources

This place **enriches** humanity.
me.

These places **enrich** humanity.

Tangibles:
 people
 places
 events
 things

Intangibles: **Universal**
 ideas **Intangible**
 meanings **Concepts**
 beliefs
 values

Park resources **Park relevance**

This Place

Together, these two blue words serve to describe specific characteristics of this place.

This is the *descriptive* part of the sentence.

These observable, tangible characteristics are intermixed with the intangible meanings that the nation attaches to those characteristics.

These are park resources.

Enriches humanity

Together, these two red words serve to indicate why this place matters.

These two words are the *relevance* part of the sentence.

Relevance is conveyed by *universal concepts* — intangibles (ideas, meanings, beliefs, values) that are so fundamental to the human condition that these concepts are commonly understood across most cultures.

For instance, consider the concepts of relationships — *family*, for instance. We're each connected to a family, and though our comparisons of those connections might describe very different relationships, *we can all relate to the concept of family*.

Relating to these concepts fosters deeper thinking and feeling about this place, thereby enhancing personal enjoyment and the individual's preservation ethic.

In theme sentences, universal intangible concepts are essential to enabling the widest range of people to relate to park resources. *They are essential to relevance.*

Examples of Universal Intangible Concepts

Change

- Change generates additional change.
- Change can be either positive or negative.

- Change is inevitable.
- Change is necessary for growth.
- Change can be evolutionary or revolutionary.

Conflict

- Conflict is composed of opposing forces.
- Conflict may be natural or human made.
- Conflict may be intentional or unintentional.
- Conflict may allow for synthesis and change.

Exploration

- Exploration requires recognizing purpose and responding to it.
- Exploration confronts “the unknown.”
- Exploration may result in “new findings” or the confirmation of “old findings.”

Force

- Force attracts, holds, or repels.
- Force influences or changes.
- Force and inertia are co-dependent.
- Force may be countered with equal or greater force.

Order vs. Chaos

- Order may be natural or constructed.
- Order may allow for prediction.
- Order is a form of communication.
- Order may have repeated patterns.
- Order and chaos are reciprocals.
- Order leads to chaos, and chaos leads to order.

Patterns

- Patterns have segments that are repeated.
- Patterns allow for prediction.
- Patterns have an internal order.
- Patterns are enablers.

Power

- Power is the ability to influence.
- Power may be used or abused.
- Power is always present in some form.
- Power may take many forms (chemical, electrical, political, mechanical).

Relationships

- Everything is related in some way.
- All relationships are purposeful.
- Relationships change over time.

Structure

- Structure has parts that interrelate.
- Parts of structures support, and are supported by, other parts.
- Smaller structures may be combined to form larger structures.
- A structure is no stronger than its weakest component parts.

Systems

- Systems have parts that work to complete a task.
- Systems are composed of sub-systems.
- Parts of systems are interdependent upon one another and form symbiotic relationships.
- A system may be influenced by other systems.
- Systems interact.
- Systems follow rules.

*Source: Extracted from <http://teacherweb.com/ca/carpinteriausd/gateprogramteresakoontz/Universal-Concepts.pdf>, [Universal Concepts and Generalizations](#) (which was adapted from: *Curriculum Guide for the Education of Gifted High School Students, Texas Association for the Gifted and Talented, 1991*).*

Note: These example universals (change, conflict, exploration, etc.), along with their bulleted descriptions, are provided to foster conversation and comprehension. Although many of the universals connected to your park’s resources might be listed here, this list should not be considered as all-encompassing or complete.

Human communication techniques

Human communication techniques

Interpretive communication

Human Communication

Do you remember English Composition in high school? “What are the three parts of a paragraph?” Introduction, body, and conclusion.

Who attended third grade *before* attending fourth grade? We all did.

As humans, we tend to do things sequentially and progressively:

- Description then relevance.
- First then second.
- “A” then “B.”
- We tend to communicate *what* before we communicate *why*.
- We describe the *familiar*, then build a bridge to the *unfamiliar*.
- We describe what we *observe*, then extrapolate *abstract concepts*.
- We move from *simple* to *complex*.
- And we tell stories moving from *story setup*, to *struggle*, to *resolution*.

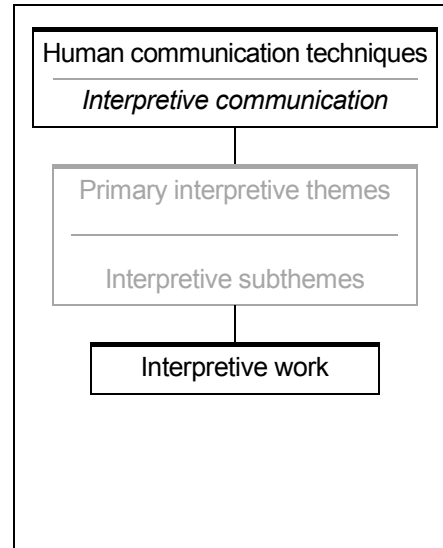
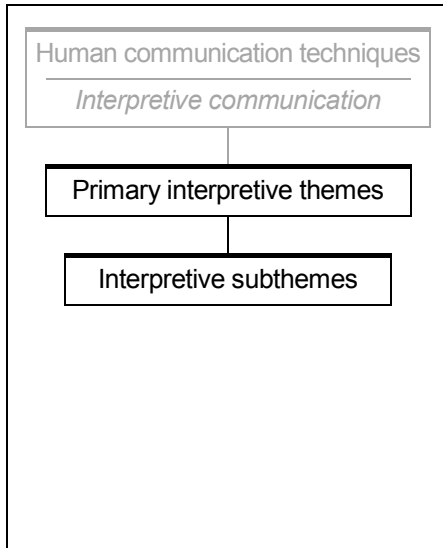
Using these techniques, humans *communicate meaning, educate each other, and transmit culture from one generation to the next.*

Interpretive and Educational Communication

For those same reasons, as interpreters and educators, we use these fundamental communication characteristics of human interaction in all we do:

- in our training
- in our planning and development of services, programs, and products
- in our live, interactive presentations of these services
- in the evaluation and coaching of our work

That work is guided by interpretive themes.



Two Theme Levels

Interpreters use two levels of themes:

- *Primary interpretive themes* organize this place’s largest-scale resources, meanings, and relevance for the purposes of parkwide management and planning.
- *Subthemes* nest within primary interpretive themes, and directly guide the development of specific interpretive and educational services, programs, and products.

Primary interpretive themes can be viewed as broad and expansive in scope, expressing the biggest ideas about the park’s resources.

Subthemes, in contrast, are sharply focused, exploring resources and meanings in a much more detailed, in-depth manner.

Each theme statement (at either level) describes specific aspects of *why and how* “This place enriches humanity.”

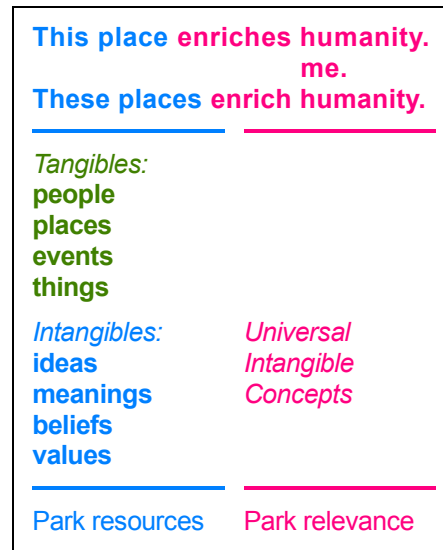
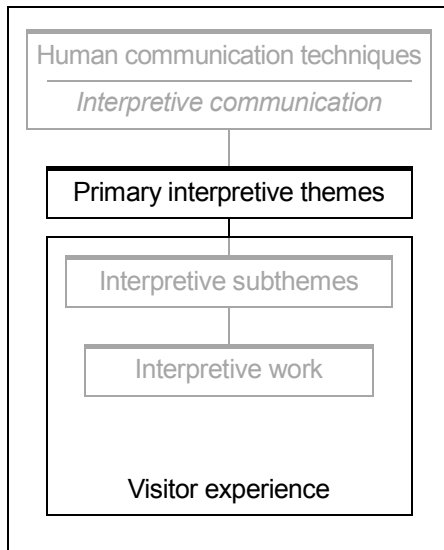
The park’s *set* of primary interpretive themes, viewed as a whole, does the same for the park, as a whole: *The set describes the key reasons why and how “This place enriches humanity.”*

In this workshop, we’re focusing on this larger, higher level.

Themes Model Interpretive and Educational Communication Structure

The maximum utility of both levels of themes stems from writing them with a sentence structure that models the typical structure of interpretive work (interpretive and educational services, programs, and products), which in turn models human communication practices.

Because these progression techniques are essential truths of human communication, *employing these techniques in our theme sentences maximizes the effectiveness of the themes.*



Themes Model Visitor Enjoyment

But wait; there's more!

We've been focusing on the interpretive function of parks for a few minutes...

- Human communication techniques
- Primary interpretive themes
- Interpretive subthemes
- Interpretive work

...but themes have an even broader importance than that implies: Parks rely on primary interpretive themes to help us make large-scale decisions about visitor experience.

Primary interpretive themes play an important role in all parkwide decisions that need to take visitor enjoyment into account — whether the issue be adding to the campground loop, realigning a road, or zoning the park for multiple recreational uses.

Themes can help *all divisions* think through visitor experience and associated aspects of the operation.

A Unifying Approach

Everything we've discussed up to this point is a seamless, unified approach:

- Human communication techniques
- Interpretive communication
 - Primary interpretive themes
 - Interpretive subthemes
 - Interpretive work
 - I&E training
 - I&E theme sentence structure (both primary & subthemes)
 - I&E planning & presentation of services, programs, products
 - I&E coaching & evaluation
- Visitor experience

This approach results in powerful, durable, meaningful themes.

Park Themes

Understanding the relationships among the set of primary interpretive themes, interpretive subthemes, and interpretive and educational services, programs, and products provides additional, critical context for writing themes. Viewing example themes reinforces this innovative approach to thematic sentence structure.

Attaching meanings to places and things is a fundamental human trait. We ascribe special significance to people, places, events, and things that rejuvenate our spirits, challenge and strengthen our beliefs, and provoke contemplation and discussion of our past, present, and future. Such resources provide opportunities to explore our shared heritage and help us define our character as individuals, communities, and societies.

Story is the communication tool that most effectively facilitates exploration of resource meanings. Societies depend on the power of *story* to explore, clarify, and share ideas, meanings, beliefs, and values that collectively constitute culture. *Story* is at the heart of human interaction and, consequently, at the heart of heritage interpretation.

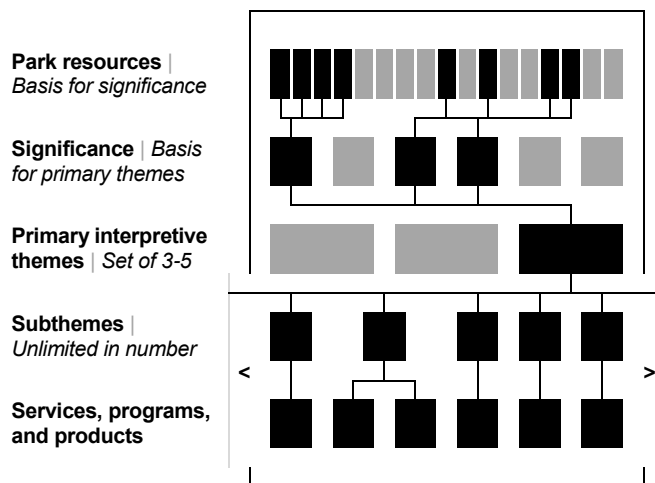
Parks develop a set of overarching *story summaries* to organize the largest-scale ideas and meanings related to the park's resources. These summaries are called *primary interpretive themes*. A park's set of primary interpretive themes fully represents the breadth of its stories, building on the entire set of significance statements.

While significance statements focus on facts and place them within a larger context of meanings, *themes focus on making those meanings accessible to visitors*. Themes guide the development of infrastructure and services that facilitate visitors making connections to the people, places, events, and things associated with a park.

The set of primary interpretive themes is complete when it provides all of the organizational structure needed by park personnel to develop specific opportunities for visitors to explore and relate to all of a park's stories. The set is usually comprised of a handful of themes (commonly three to five).

The number of primary interpretive themes has a lot to do with the level of conciseness appropriate to address park significance.

It has other operational implications, too: The park's interpretation manager is responsible for ensuring that all visitors have an opportunity to experience all of the themes. Ensuring that no one theme gets so much attention that another theme is neglected is part of the job. Tracking interpretation services, programs, and products creates a check-and-balance system. The number of themes in the set has a very real impact on the ease with which services can be tracked (developing, conducting, maintaining, and evaluating them).



Theme Examples from a Variety of Parks

Examples of primary interpretive themes written using *Theme Guide's* innovative approach are displayed on the next two pages, the second of which decodes them by displaying their constituent parts — a Rosetta Stone for thematic expression.

Please note that the *sentence structure* for both primary interpretive themes and interpretive subthemes is *identical*. These examples, therefore, serve to demonstrate the best practices for writing *all levels* of themes.

A Park-specific Example

Following the two Theme Examples pages, you'll see a park-specific version of the diagram above. (*These two pages were extracted from the Planning Handouts subchapter of the Planning Primary Themes chapter.*)

Theme Examples

Best Practices in Thematic Expression

The story of quarrying and using Alibates flint offers unique opportunities to explore the inherent human need to make and use tools to improve the quality of life.¹

The history of people using Alibates flint exemplifies the powerful human drive to combine practical functionality with aesthetic beauty in everything we do — even in crafting common, utilitarian objects.¹

The fort at colonial Dorchester, built as a response to the French and Indian War and adapted for use in the Revolutionary War, exemplifies the need of communities to ensure the safety of their members.²

The defeat of the proposed Echo Park dam in Dinosaur National Monument in the 1950s played a significant role in the development of the American conservation movement, and continues to frame public debate over the best uses of public lands.³

The paradoxical aspects of fossilization in the Florissant Formation fuel our drive to solve Earth's mysteries and inspire us to marvel at the complexity and subtlety of the natural world.⁴

The invention of interchangeable parts in arms manufacturing at the Harpers Ferry Armory provided unprecedented momentum to the Industrial Revolution, forever changing the human experience and intensifying the ongoing dialogue regarding the costs and benefits of technological innovation.⁵

The popularity of recreational activities at Lake Meredith National Recreation Area are testament to the importance of both relaxing and also invigorating recreation in maintaining a happy and productive life.⁶

Mesa Verde is vitally important to many affiliated peoples who view the park's resources as critical to their religious beliefs, cultural identity, and sense of place in the world.⁷

The diversity, context, and sheer volume of cultural and natural resources at Mesa Verde make the park an important center for studying how science and traditional cultural knowledge interact to help us learn about, and learn from, the past.⁷

One of America's first national parks, and a World Cultural Heritage Site, Mesa Verde National Park is one of the best places to study the evolving ethics of resource conservation, preservation, interpretation, and stewardship.⁷

Primary Interpretive Themes

The integrity, diversity, and magnitude of Olympic National Park's relatively unimpacted wilderness ecosystems powerfully affect the human spirit — providing outstanding opportunities for exploration, research, introspection, and inspiration.⁸

This geologically active area, formed by rifting, volcanism, and erosional forces including the Rio Grande and its tributaries, has attracted people for thousands of years and powerfully influenced their lifeways, traditions, and beliefs — exemplifying how landscapes shape and influence human societies.⁹

The hallowed ground of Washita provides opportunities to understand the resiliency of the human spirit and the struggle of societies to maintain cultural identity.¹⁰

Sources

- ¹ Alibates Flint Quarries NM
- ² Colonial Dorchester State Park (South Carolina)
- ³ Dinosaur NM
- ⁴ Florissant Fossil Beds NM
- ⁵ Harpers Ferry NHP
- ⁶ Lake Meredith NRA
- ⁷ Mesa Verde NP
- ⁸ Olympic NP
- ⁹ Petroglyph NM
- ¹⁰ Washita Battlefield NHS

Note: A park's set of *primary interpretive themes* is founded upon its corresponding set of *park significance statements*, the content of which is further described in the park's statements of *fundamental resources and values*. These three sets are intimately related to each other, one summarizing the other in that order. However, for the purposes of illustrating best practices in thematic expression, only selected themes are shown above. Complete sets are available upon request.

Themes Decoded

Best Practices in Thematic Expression — Decoded

Thematic Rosetta Stone

The story of quarrying and using Alibates flint offers unique opportunities to explore the inherent human need to make and use tools to improve the quality of life.

The history of people using Alibates flint exemplifies the powerful human drive to combine practical functionality with aesthetic beauty in everything we do — even in crafting common, utilitarian objects.

The fort at colonial Dorchester, built as a response to the French and Indian War and adapted for use in the Revolutionary War, exemplifies the need of communities to ensure the safety of their members.

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The hallowed ground of Washita provides opportunities to understand the resiliency of the human spirit and the struggle of societies to maintain cultural identity.

Thematic Content Tools

Read the sentence below, then fill in the blank [**z**] with any of the red phrases on the sheet.

This place enriches humanity by being one of the best places in the world to experience _____.
z

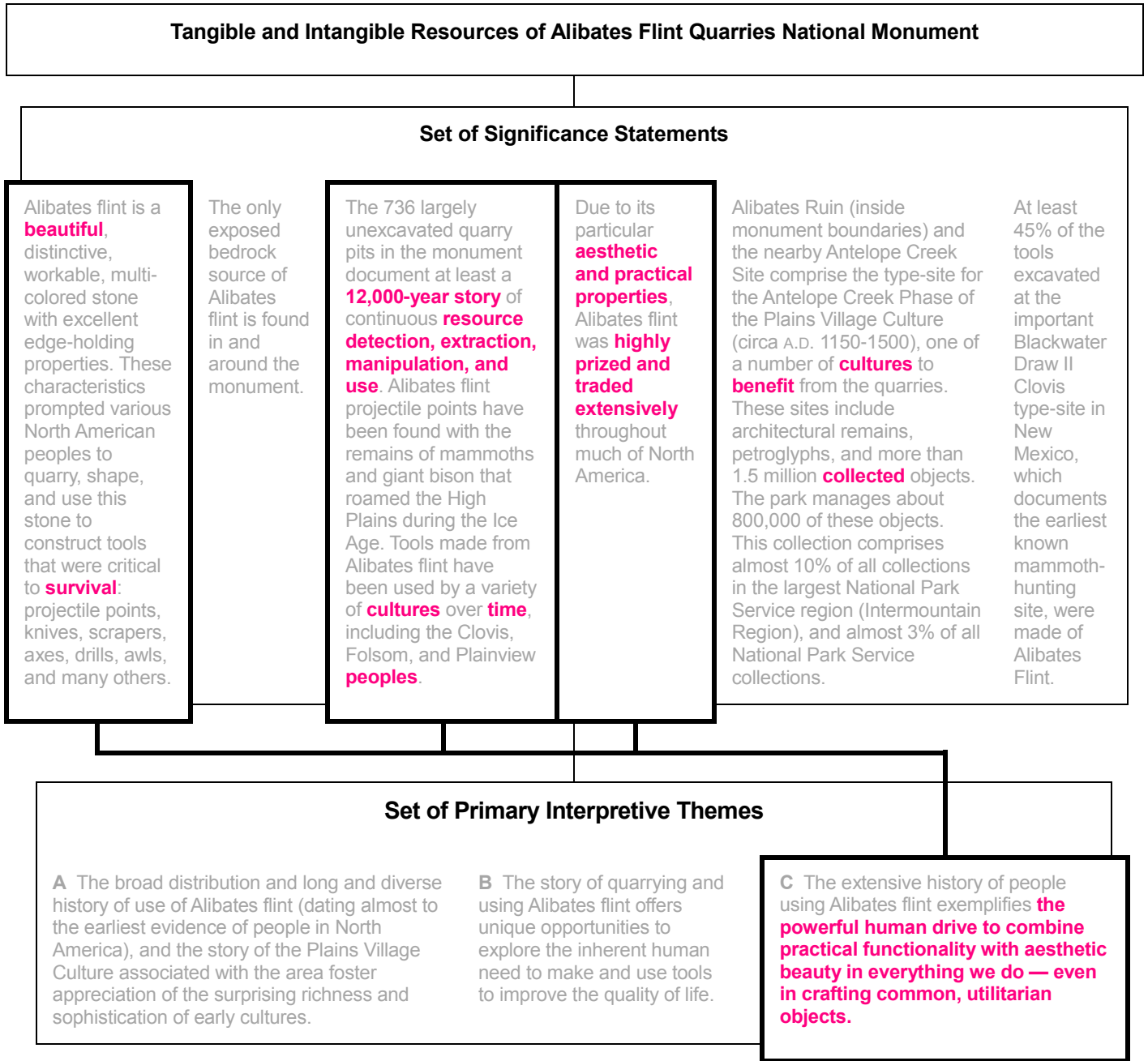
Using any of the red phrases on the sheet as variable [**z**], read the sentence below filling in the blank [**x**] with that phrase's corresponding blue phrase.

*These park resources (_____) make this one of the _____ best places in the world to experience [**z**].*
x

KEY — Interwoven tangible-intangible park resources < relationship > universal intangible concepts.

A Case Study in Theme Writing

Multiple Significance Statements Prompt One Primary Theme



E Pluribus Unum. Latin for, “Out of many, one.” Although each primary interpretive theme *usually* arises from multiple significance statements, this is not a requirement.

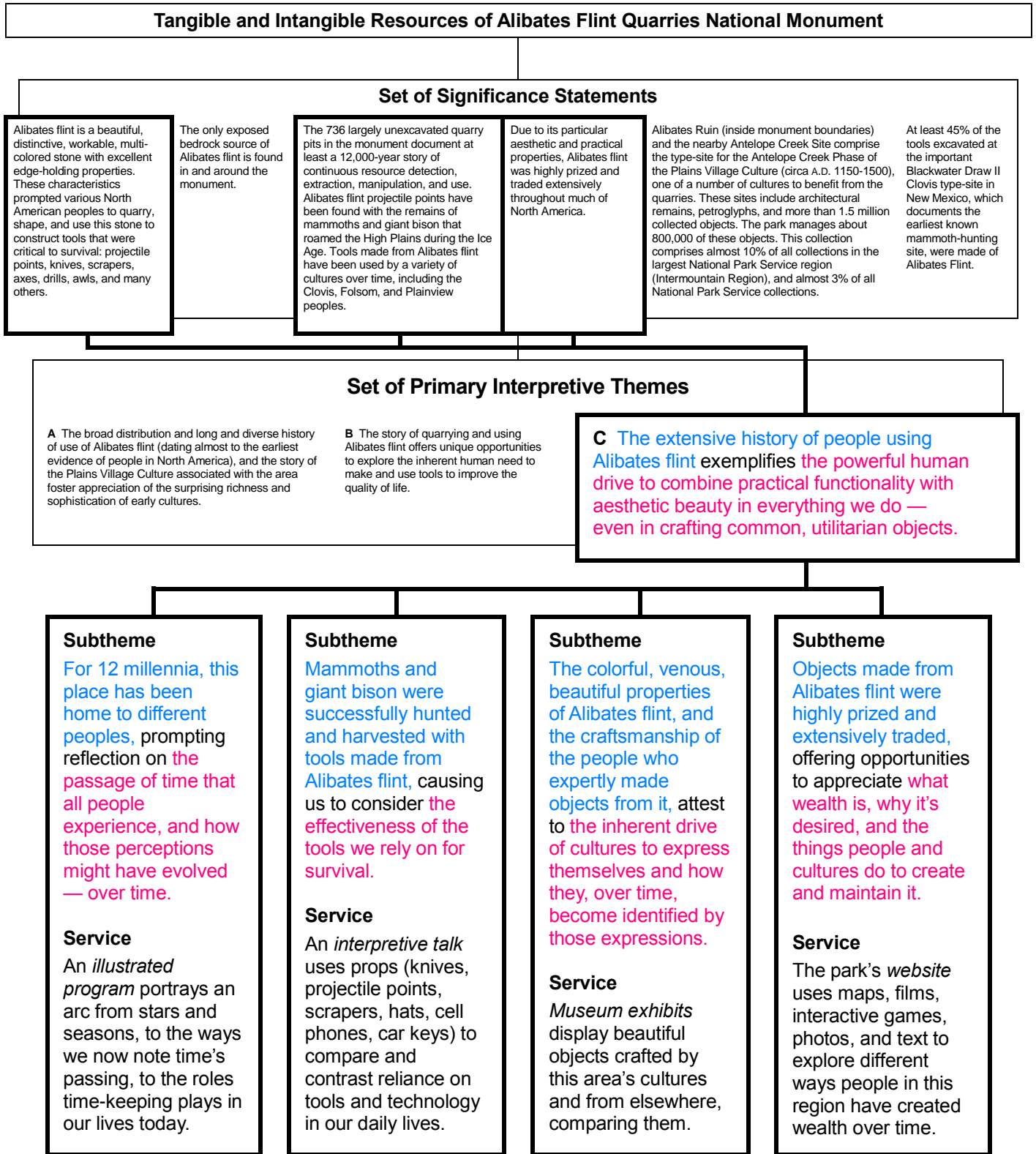
Universal intangible concepts across multiple significance statements typically overlap and

reinforce each other. It’s also common for some of these universals to be inferred rather than stated overtly.

In this park example, three of the six significance statements had enough similarities among them that writing a primary interpretive theme that interlinked them seemed appropriate.

A Case Study in Theme Writing

One Primary Interpretive Theme Prompts Multiple Subthemes



Next Steps

Congratulations! You've completed the *must-read* content section.

Please proceed to the *interest-driven* content of your choice by clicking on its corresponding **page number**:

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INTEREST-DRIVEN CONTENT

This section contains content matched to your interests. Select the content you want to read, learn, and use.



Each imbued with enduring meaning, U.S. and Navajo Nation flags fly at Navajo National Monument, Arizona. NPS Photo (RKohen)

Planning Primary Themes

If your objective is to lead a consensus-based, group process to develop a park's formal set of primary interpretive themes, then this chapter was written for you!

This first optional chapter focuses on planners and managers. It provides the tools necessary to conduct a workshop in which the participants write the park's formal set of primary interpretive themes.

Subchapters include:

- **Planner's Guide.** This subchapter contains a printable guide for the planner to use in setting up and conducting the workshop. It contains checklists, detailed instructions, tips, scheduling, scripted language, and more.
- **Planning Handouts.** This subchapter contains handouts to be used in a workshop.
- **Planning Examples.** This subchapter contains park sets of significance statements and corresponding sets of primary interpretive themes. Each of these sets of primary interpretive themes resulted from the *Theme Guide* approach to theme-writing.

About You, the Planner

A successful leader of this workshop will possess the following knowledge, skills, and abilities:

- Deep interpretation and education experience, and the ability to clearly share these experiences in the furtherance of workshop goals.

- Excellent listening, synthesizing, organizing, visual information portrayal, and facilitation skills (focused on consensus processes, and recognizing and managing one's own biases).
- Experience using Microsoft Word® to successfully customize and use these planning materials.
- Ability to stand all day, smiling, thinking on the fly while always remaining attentive and courteous.

About the Participants

The composition of the planning workshop's participant group can vary widely, though a typical group would include:

- park management and senior staff members (superintendent, division chiefs)
- park or external subject-matter experts (division chiefs or interpreters often possess expert knowledge, lessening the need for additional experts)
- the park's interpretive and educational workforce (including permanent and seasonal staff members, volunteers, and partners who perform interpretive duties)

About the Setting

Conceptually, this workshop could occur within the context of some larger-scale planning process. It could also occur as its own, standalone planning event. *Theme Guide's* approach works equally well in both settings.

Physically, the planning workshop typically occurs onsite at the park, though it can also occur equally successfully offsite. (See the *Pre-workshop Setup* section below for additional details about meeting room requirements.)

About the Workshop

The workshop typically requires eight work hours of actual work time (not including lunch breaks). About 25% of the day will be devoted to instruction, followed by 75% devoted to park-specific application of that instruction (theme writing). This workshop can be accomplished in a single day or across two half-days.

Conducting a workshop usually involves these parts (see the *Planner's Guide* subchapter for detailed information):

- Pre-workshop Setup & Checklist
- Travel to the Park
- Workshop
- Post-workshop at the Park
- Travel Home
- Post-workshop Reporting

Pre-workshop Setup & Checklist

Pre-workshop tasks usually include setting up the process, expectations, and logistics.

When setting up a planning workshop, a tried-and-true set of processes includes:

- Creating a folder with five subfolders that help keep everything organized:
 - (1 docs sent to the park)
 - (2 docs received from the park)
 - (3 travel)
 - (4 workshop)
 - (5 photos)
 - (6 follow-up)
- Copying the electronic version of *Theme Guide* to the "(4 workshop)" subfolder.

- Adding an abbreviation of the park name to the *Theme Guide* filename (e.g. "ThemeGuide - {PARK}.docx").
- *Tip:* You might consider adding that same park-name abbreviation to the title text of the front cover (e.g., replacing "Theme" or "Guide" with {PARK}) to indicate that this file is now park-specific and intended only to be used for this specific project. This can be helpful when doing similar work for multiple parks at the same time.
- Customization of *Theme Guide's* contents can then begin. Throughout *Theme Guide*, customization usually entails searching for placeholders (such as "{parkname}") and globally replacing them with the appropriate, park-specific information. Words-in-braces placeholders on yellow backgrounds are designed to be easily found and modified. (*More information about this feature is located on the introductory pages of appropriate chapters and subchapters.*)

Checklist. Prior to the workshop, you'll want to set up specific logistics and determine the answers to some organizational questions, many of which will be incorporated into the *Planner's Guide* subchapter.

- Has a room been reserved for the workshop, set up in a "U" shape with tables and chairs, and possessing adequate wall space for posting 15-25 flipchart sheets (viewable all at once)?
 - Yes (default)
 - No
- Does the room setup include two (2) flipchart easels with paper pads?
 - Yes (default)
 - No
- If the flipchart paper sheets are not self-adhering, will we be able to use tape or push pins to post the sheets, and will those be available?
 - Yes (default)
 - No
- *On the day of arrival*, can the planner visit and set up the meeting room (to avoid having to arrive early the morning of the workshop)?
 - Yes (default)
 - No (must do morning of workshop)

- *On the day of arrival*, can the planner obtain one of the flipchart paper pads (to take to the hotel and pre-write a few pages this evening)?
 - Yes (default)*
 - No*
- Does the room setup include table tents (for participant names), lined writing paper, pens or pencils?
 - Yes (default)*
 - No*
- Starting time?
 - 8:00 a.m. (default)*
 - _____
- Ending time?
 - 5:00 p.m. (default)*
 - _____
- Lunch time?
 - 12:00 p.m. (default)*
 - _____
- Lunch length?
 - One hour (default)*
 - _____
- Will lunch be provided for participants?
 - No (default)*
 - Yes (note on the agenda handout)*
- What is the actual label of the park's interpretation and education division, branch, group, or unit?
 - Interpretation & Education (default)*
 - Interpretation & Visitor Services*
 - Resource Education*
 - _____
- How many people will participate (total for handouts and room arrangement)?
 - _____
- Are any of the participants from elsewhere (e.g. other parks)?
 - No (default)*
 - Yes (consider optional Personal Relevance questions to start the workshop)*

- Does the chief or manager need a sign-in sheet to be routed through participants to record specific information?
 - No (default)*
 - Yes... to include:*
 - Name*
 - Organization*
 - Phone*
 - Email*
 - _____
- Regarding attire, it is customary for both the planner and participants to be dressed in business casual attire except for any uniformed person who might be called upon to perform uniformed duties during the workshop day.
 - Yes, discussed with chief (default)*
 - No*

Travel to the Park

If you routinely check your luggage for airline travel, here is a packing tip:

- **Checked bag.** Pack clothing, personal items, workshop handouts, and markers in checked luggage. Include a package of self-adhering (but removable) dots in case the need for a technique involving ranking or voting arises.
- **Carry-on Backpack.** Take a backpack with you that can be placed under an airline seat. Pack it with all the items needed to successfully conduct the workshop in case the checked luggage becomes lost. The backpack's items typically include:
 - Planner's Guide
 - One full set of markers
 - One of each handout
 - Props
 - Reference files and notes

Shipping handouts and supplies to the park before the workshop is another option, if time permits.

Workshop

Tip: Be at ease; the process bears the weight of the load. Focus on the participants' needs, as their servant, and all will be well.

Post-workshop at the Park

Tasks usually include:

- determining how much of what was penned on flipchart sheets needs to be transcribed into a document about the workshop (discuss with chief)
- photographing each of the flipchart sheets and/or transporting them, as needed

Travel Home

Tip: You've done it! — you've conducted a successful theme-writing workshop. Life is short so relax, celebrate, and enjoy the moment.

Post-workshop Reporting

Once back at the office, tasks usually include:

- transcribing the draft statements
- sending them to the park for continued editing, as needed
- continuing to consult and advise, as needed

The transmittal email to send the first draft back to the park often includes content like the following.

To: Park superintendent and chief

Subject: {PARK} Theme-development Workshop - Theme set (draft 1)

Hello {Superintendent's and chief's names},

Thanks again for all your efforts in making {Wednesday}'s theme-development workshop a success!

Here are the draft themes (also attached):

{parkname}

Primary Interpretive Themes - Draft 1

- A — {ThemeSentence}.
- B — {ThemeSentence}.
- C — {ThemeSentence}.
- D — {ThemeSentence}.

Next theme steps:

The park's staff and *Foundation Document* team should review these themes again and make any necessary modifications.

Incidentally, the A-B-C labels are for the park's interpretation staff to help track the implementation of interpretive and educational services and the extent to which they address the themes. They're useful shorthand but should be removed wherever not needed. There is no priority order in a set of themes.

Later in the process, once the significance statements are finalized, re-check the themes against them to ensure that everything still lines up the way it should.

I'm available to assist on any of these things, as needed. Thanks again for the opportunity to work with all of you!

{Signed: Planner's name}

The project usually concludes over the following few weeks.

• Planner’s Guide

This subchapter contains a printable guide for the planner to use in setting up and conducting the workshop. It contains checklists, detailed instructions, tips, scheduling, scripted language, and more.

Customize It

Although the entire Planner’s Guide should be reviewed for potential customization to best meet the specific needs and conditions of a workshop, specific parts of this subchapter have been marked for mandatory customization before the Planner’s Guide is used:

{Text on a yellow background set within braces — i.e. “{Note...” — is used throughout the chapter to indicate places where customization is needed. **Search** for “{” to locate places where information should be customized. **To replace these notes or text marked like this for customization**, highlight the text block from outer brace through outer brace — i.e. “{Note...” — then overwrite it, paste to replace it, or click “delete” to delete it. This brace-to-brace technique completely removes the yellow highlight as the text is updated. A last double-check can also be made by searching for any remaining braces “{” or yellow highlights in the document, and addressing them as needed.}

Refer to the customized, printed Planner’s Guide during real-time facilitation, further customizing it (if needed) as the workshop evolves.

Print It

A couple of considerations come to mind when preparing to print *Theme Guide* for leading a planning workshop:

- It’s handy to print and take the park-specific, customized version of *Theme Guide*’s Planner’s Guide subchapter to the workshop, bound with a staple. This places all of the instructional content into the fewest printed pages possible, which can then be easily held, used, and marked up during the workshop. This should accompany the planner during travel (and not be placed in checked luggage).

After customizing both the Planner’s Guide and Planning Handouts subchapters for a specific workshop, *print those subchapters* as follows:

- print ***one*** copy for the planner’s use
- print ***two-sided***
- print in ***black ink***
- print on ***white paper***
- bind with a ***staple***
- For reference, it’s also helpful to print and take the entire, park-specific, customized *Theme Guide* to the workshop. This document not only has the customized material in it, but also contains other content that might be referenced during the workshop or in chatting with participants during breaks. Being less critical to the success of the workshop, this version could be placed in checked luggage if desired. Taking a digital version of the

Theme Guide file can also be a comforting backup to have on hand.

After customizing both the Planner's Guide and Planning Handouts subchapters for a specific workshop, *print the entire document* as follows:

- print ***one*** copy for the planner's use
- print ***two-sided***
- print in either ***black ink*** or ***full color ink*** or some pages of each, as needed
- print on ***white paper***
- bind as desired (e.g. binder clip, 3-ring binder, plastic report spine, spiral comb, large staple, etc.)

Planner's Guide

{planner's name}
{planner's office}

{PARK} Theme-writing Workshop

{Note: Search for and replace “{parkname}” with the full title, e.g. “White Sands National Monument.” Search for and replace “{PARK}” with an acronym (the park’s NPS acronym, e.g. “WHSA”). Delete this note.}

Schedule in Brief

{day1}	{date1}	Travel	
{day2}	{date2}	Workshop Day	{time1} - {time2}
{day3}	{date3}	Travel	

Supplies & Materials Checklist

Park contact provides:

- Room that includes both tables and chairs, set up in a “U” shape, with adequate wall space for posting 15-25 flipchart sheets (viewable all at once).
- (2) flipchart easels w/paper pads.
 - Obtain one of these paper pads **on arrival day** (the afternoon before the workshop) so that you can pre-write five pages in the hotel.
- Tape or push pins, table tents (for participant names), writing paper, pens.

Planner provides:

- This entire, park-specific, **Theme Guide** document.
- Support materials and personal notes.
- Various park planning documents (CIP, *Foundation Document*) and background documents.
- Workshop handouts for participants: (____ + 3 = ____)
- Prop: (1) U.S. coin (a nickel, as a back-up prop).
- (4) boxes markers. / (2) binder clips to secure loose corners of flipchart paper pad for transport from park to hotel to meeting room.
- (1) package of ranking dots, multi-colored (might be useful to achieve consensus, at times — infrequently needed).

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Check-in	96
Rearrange	96
Evening Work?	96
Travel?.....	96
{day3}	96
Travel	96

{Note: After customizing all Planner’s Guide contents, update the Planner’s Guide Contents. To update the bookmark-based table of contents, place your cursor on a text line within the table (but not on a dot leader or page

number), right-click or Control-click your mouse, select “Update Field,” select “Update entire table,” and click “OK.” Delete this note.}

Travel & Arrival Tasks

Tasks

- Travel • Lunch • Drive to park Morning
- Set up opening sequence with park chief: Afternoon
Chief opens (or superintendent, then to chief):
 1) Importance of event, 2) introduces planner.
Planner follows:
 1) Introductions, 2) meeting logistics (or chief does).
- Review and set up workshop meeting room at: Before 5:00

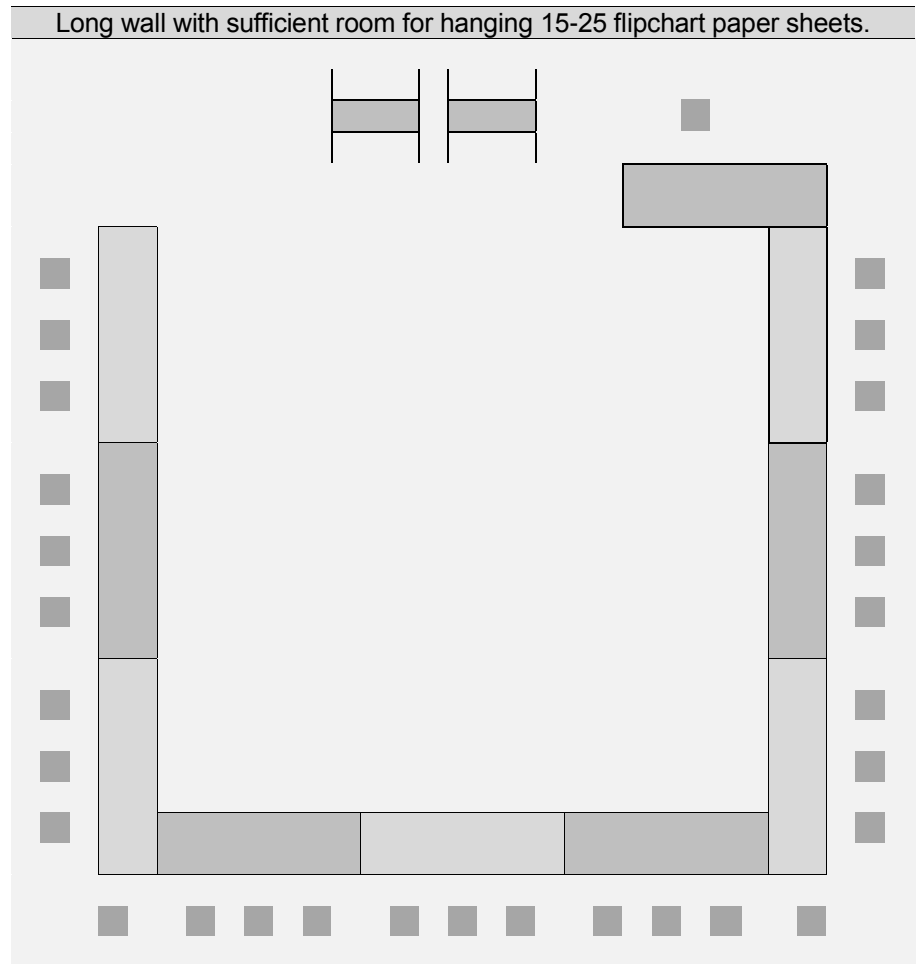
Typical Room Arrangement

Always arrange the room on the day before the workshop if possible (discuss this with park personnel ahead of time). Having to arrange it the morning of the workshop is needlessly stressful and counterproductive.

Every planning job varies since room dimensions and the possibility of space oddities — like support columns in a space — create challenges to setting up a room in the most useful organization possible.

Set up tables and chairs in a “U” shape, with a table for the planner at the end of the “U.” (The arrangement illustrated here provides seating for 29 participants, plus the planner — a group size that should probably not be surpassed.)

Place one flipchart in the open space of the “U.” Later in the workshop, place the second flipchart next to the first.



- Experience the park and/or visitor center, as time allows.

Site-familiarization {optional}

Purchase water, food, and snacks for the planner.

Food & Drink Tasks

Purchase snacks for participants?

HANDOUTS & SUPPLIES

Handouts & Supplies Tasks

Position the handouts, supplies, and table tents.

Allow 30 minutes

Flipchart Preparation Tasks

FLIPCHART

Welcome (not visibly titled)

Write the title on the second paper sheet:

- Welcome!

Note: Leave a blank sheet on top of this one for protection during transport to the meeting site (if written in the hotel).

FLIPCHART

Introductions (not visibly titled)

Skip two sheets to maintain opacity between sheets.

Write the title and the following questions, but keep them concealed until needed:

- Who are you?
- {If participants are park workforce members only, then use...} What do you do for the park?

OR

- {If participants also include stakeholders, use this instead...} What organization or interest do you represent?
- {If time is limited, then omit the third question}

OR

- {If there is adequate time for answers to this third question, then also include...} Why is this place special or important to you (*personally*)?

FLIPCHART

Visitor Experience (not visibly titled)

Skip two sheets to maintain opacity between sheets.

Draw the following diagram on a sheet that is a couple sheets back from the previous one (for opacity).

Draw an even amount of vertical space in between each boxed row.

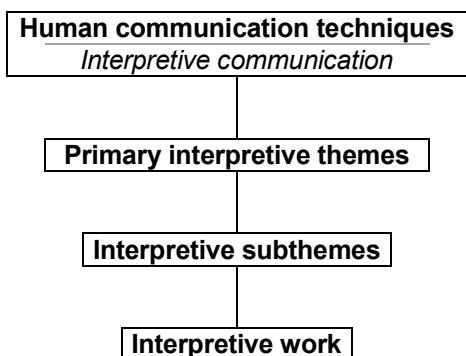
Leave space for additional text and boxing to be written under the lowest boxes.

Diagram (as in a flowchart) the relationship of:

- Human communication techniques
- Primary interpretive themes
- Interpretive subthemes
- Interpretive work

Use **ONLY LIGHT GREEN marker** to outline and interconnect the boxes.

Use **ONLY GREEN marker** to write the **text** inside the boxes.



FLIPCHART

Park Resources Question (not visibly titled)

Skip two sheets to maintain opacity between sheets.

Write the following statement in large text at the **TOP** of a sheet, using no more than the top 50% of the sheet.

- **These park resources (_____)**
make this one of **x**
the best places to
experience [**z**].

Use **ONLY BLUE marker** (bold) for **These park resources (_____)**.
x

Use **ONLY RED marker** (thin) for everything else.

Neatly tear off the bottom 50% of the sheet, and discard it.

FLIPCHART

Relevance Question (not visibly titled)

On the next sheet:

Write the following statement in large text in the **BOTTOM** 50% of the sheet (so it can be visible while the prior sheet is displayed over it at the same time).

- This place enriches humanity
by being one of the best places
in the world to experience _____.
z

Use **ONLY BLUE marker** (thin) for **This place**.

Use **ONLY RED marker** (thin) for **enriches humanity**.

Use **ONLY RED marker** (bold) for everything else.

FLIPCHART PAPER PAD

Tips: If written away from the meeting room on the arrival day...

- Leave a blank sheet on top for protection during transport to the meeting site.
- After pre-writing these flipchart sheets, use binder clips or tape to secure both lower corners of the flipchart pad for easier transport.

{time1}
10 minutes

Personal Relevance

The park **superintendent** might open the meeting with a few brief remarks welcoming the participants, then introduces the chief of interpretation.

The **chief** usually makes a few brief remarks regarding the importance of themes, then introduces the planner.

FLIPCHART Introductions (not visibly titled)

The **planner** stands, personally answers these questions, then reveals the flipchart sheet.

The tone should be conversational, friendly, warm, and welcoming. Nothing said is recorded since this session is intended to foster participants getting to know each other.

The **planner** then directs the same questions to the stakeholder at the nearest end of the u-shaped room arrangement, calling them by name.

Then each **stakeholder** responds in kind, going around the room.

{**CHOICE B** - If not choice A, then conduct choice B... Delete if not used.}

Ask for a show of hands (and raise own hand). (It's likely that **all** hands will be raised.)

Welcome & Introductions

Who are you?

What do you do at the park?

{**OR**}

What organization or interest do you represent?

{**CHOICE A** - If a scheduled exercise, also include...} Why is this place special or important to you (**personally**)?

I'd like each of us to answer these questions. Let's introduce ourselves, starting here (gesturing)...

{**CHOICE B** - If not choice A, then conduct choice B... Delete if not used.}

How many of you are here at the workshop because {**parkname**} is a special or important place to you?

8:10

5 minutes

{**Note:** Most of the session start times throughout the document (e.g. “**8:10**” above) need to be adjusted manually based on the park-specific, customized start time of the day. Delete this note.}

Social Relevance

Agency Mission

This is a significant place to us
as individuals.

This is a significant place to us
as a society.

That’s the reason it’s a unit within
our national system of parks.

The **National Park Service** manages that
system, protecting and interpreting
America’s significant places.

It’s mission is described on side two
of this handout...

HANDOUT

- (Cover)
- Personal Relevance
- Social Relevance

Distribute the handout.

Flip over to side two.

Read aloud:

- Social Relevance

Verbally reinforce key ideas.

The park’s Interpretation & Education
division – and the partners who work
alongside us – play a critical role in
facilitating that **enjoyment, education,**
and **inspiration.**

Workshop Goal

Envisioning the Future

Here's what we're going to achieve together today...

HANDOUT

- Workshop Goal
- Today's Agenda
- Park Purpose

Distribute the handout.

Read aloud:

- Workshop Goal

Verbally reinforce key ideas.

We're going to brainstorm today, capturing your thoughts, opinions, and perspectives.

Questions?

Today's Agenda

Schedule / Subjects

And here's how we're going to accomplish that...

HANDOUT

- Workshop Goal
- Today's Agenda
- Park Purpose

Read aloud:

- Today's Agenda

Verbally reinforce key ideas.

Questions?

Are You Here? {optional}

Please sign-in for our records.

HANDOUT

- Are you here?

Circulate the handout.

If you think of something after the workshop, that you'd like me to know, you'll find my contact information on the second side of the sheet.

Please feel free to jot it down.

Logistics

There are a few logistical details you should know about...

Present meeting logistics information:

- Breaks
- Food & drink
- Restroom locations
- Phone
- Other?

Questions?

HANDOUT

- Workshop Goal
- Today's Agenda
- Park Purpose

Flip over to side two.

Read aloud:

- Park Purpose

Verbally reinforce key ideas.

Purpose Statement

From this point forward, our focus will be placed on this specific park...

Questions?

HANDOUT

- Park Significance
- Park Themes

Hold up as a prop.

Significance Statements

Let's talk a little more about national significance now.

- The **left** column on this next handout describes what significance statements are.
- The **right** column displays the actual significance statements for this park.

Please read the left column, then look up so I know you're done.

When you're all looking up, we'll review the park's significance statements together **as a group**.

Doing that will help us establish a common understanding of this material.

Distribute the handout.

Self-reading, 5 minutes:

- Park Significance

Verbally reinforce key ideas.

Questions?

Let's read the actual park statements.

HANDOUT

- Park Significance
- Park Themes

Read aloud:

- Park Significance

Verbally reinforce key ideas.

This body of work is the foundation upon which we'll build the park's themes.

Questions?

Theme Philosophy — This place enriches humanity.

FLIPCHART 2
This place enriches humanity.

A short, four-word sentence will guide
our efforts today.

Reveal a blank sheet.

FLIPCHART 2
This place enriches humanity.

**Leave space for all four words of the sentence
to be written on the same line.**

Use ONLY BLUE marker.

Write “This” — the first word in the sentence.

<p>This</p>

This

In this sentence, the word “This”
indicates specificity, as in “this”
instead of “that.”

FLIPCHART 2

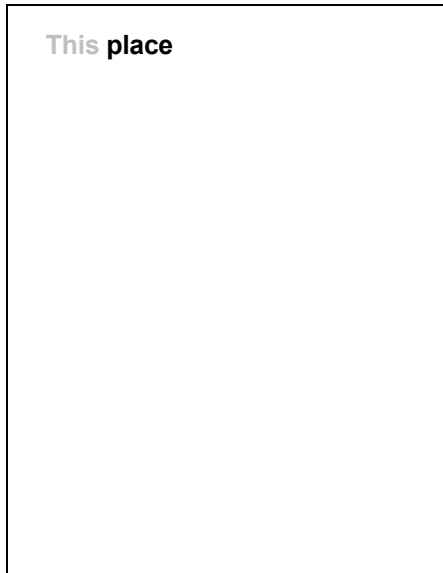
This place enriches humanity.

Leave space for all four words of the sentence to be written on the same line.

Use ONLY BLUE marker.

Write “place” — the second word in the sentence.

This place



This **place**

When we think of the word “place,” we usually think about its geographic location, its physical coordinates.

In this sentence, the word “place” is used in a much broader context: It encompasses all of the characteristics that contribute to this place’s national significance.

- Our **sensual** experiences here (smelling, tasting, touching, seeing, hearing) enable us to associate specific, factual, **tangible** characteristics with this place – including **people, places, events, and things**.

FLIPCHART 2

This place enriches humanity.

Leave space for two more full sentences underneath the first, plus a little white space underneath that.

Use ONLY BLUE marker.

Draw a horizontal rule vertically under “this place” and extend it two characters past (to the right of) “place” — almost halfway across the sheet.

Use ONLY LIGHT GREEN marker.

Write “Tangibles” underneath the rule.

Use ONLY GREEN marker.

Write “people, places, events, things” in a vertical column underneath the word “Tangibles.” Do not indent them (the color alone conveys the idea of a sublist.)

This place

Tangibles
people
places
events
things

- Our **intellectual** experiences here also enable us to associate specific, **intangible** characteristics with this place – including **ideas, meanings, beliefs, and values.**

FLIPCHART 2

This place enriches humanity.

Use ONLY LIGHT BLUE marker.

Write “Intangibles” underneath “things” leaving a little extra white space between them.

Use ONLY BLUE marker.

Write “ideas, meanings, beliefs, values” in a vertical column underneath the word “Intangibles.” Do not indent them (the color alone conveys the idea of a sublist.).

This place

Tangibles
people
places
events
things

Intangibles
ideas
meanings
beliefs
values

FLIPCHART 2

This place enriches humanity.

Leave space for all four words of the sentence to be written on the same line.

Use ONLY RED marker.

Write “enriches” — the third word in the sentence.

This place enriches

Tangibles
people
places
events
things

Intangibles
ideas
meanings
beliefs
values

Note - Definition of Enriches

“Enriches” is a transitive verb, meaning 1) that it expresses a doable activity and 2) that it has a direct object that receives the action of the verb.

This place **enriches**

When we think of the word “enriches,” we usually think about monetary wealth.

In this sentence, the word “enriches” is used in a much broader context: It refers to anything that enhances or increases the value of something.

What does this place enrich?

FLIPCHART 2

This place enriches humanity.

Use ONLY RED marker.

Write “humanity.” — the fourth word in the sentence.

This place enriches humanity.

Tangibles

**people
places
events
things**

Intangibles

**ideas
meanings
beliefs
values**

This place enriches **humanity**.

In this sentence, the word “humanity” is the thing being enriched.

“Humanity” embodies all that we conceive ourselves to be: our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.

For our purposes, “humanity” could also be viewed as “people” or “society” or “culture.”

This place enriches humanity.

Although this statement might come across as rather abstract or lofty or idealistic, it can be applied quite literally by reducing its scale to that of the individual.

FLIPCHART 2

This place enriches humanity.

Use ONLY RED marker.

Write “me” under the word “humanity.”

This place enriches humanity.
me.

Tangibles
people
places
events
things

Intangibles
ideas
meanings
beliefs
values

This place enriches me.

When a person experiences this place, onsite or remotely, and gets something out of it that is valuable to him or her, then his or her life has been enriched by that experience.

Simply put, this place – by virtue of everything it is and represents – adds value to the human experience.

This **national {monument}** – by definition – is one of the best touchstones for exploring our personal and national identity and character. Experiencing it can rejuvenate our spirits, challenge and strengthen our beliefs, and provoke contemplation and discussion of our past, present, and future. It offers opportunities for people to enrich their lives and broaden their experience – to enjoy a more fulfilling existence, a higher quality of life.

If we make this sentence plural...

FLIPCHART 2

This place enriches humanity.

Use ONLY BLUE marker and RED marker.

Write the plural version, using BLUE for “**These places**” and RED for “**enrich humanity.**” underneath the “me” line.

This place enriches humanity.
me.

These places enrich humanity.

Tangibles
people
places
events
things

Intangibles
ideas
meanings
beliefs
values

These places enrich humanity.

...what comes to mind?

Answer: The U.S. national park system might come to mind, which is a collection of these places that we've purposefully set aside for perpetual enjoyment, via preservation and interpretation.

- These places enrich humanity.
- And... These places enrich **me**.

Within each of these special places, we've also established a professional group that works to enhance the personal enjoyment that visitors derive from their park experiences:

- **Interpretation & Education.**

At this park, that function is conducted by the division of **{division name}**.

Let's take a closer look...

FLIPCHART 2

This place enriches humanity.

Point to the first sentence's two BLUE words "This place" on the flipchart.

This place enriches humanity.

Together, these two blue words serve to describe specific characteristics of this place.

This is the **descriptive** part of the sentence.

These observable, tangible characteristics are intermixed with the intangible meanings that the nation attaches to those characteristics.

These are park resources.

FLIPCHART 2

This place enriches humanity.

Use ONLY BLUE marker.

Draw a horizontal rule vertically under "values" and match its length to the line above it.

Write "Park resources" underneath the rule.

This place enriches humanity.
me.

These places enrich humanity.

Tangibles
people
places
events
things

Intangibles
ideas
meanings
beliefs
values

Park resources

FLIPCHART 2

This place enriches humanity.

Point to the first sentence's two RED words "enrich humanity." on the flipchart.

This place **enriches humanity.**

Together, these two red words serve to indicate why this place matters.

These two words are the **relevance** part of the sentence...

the relevance of park resources.

FLIPCHART 2

This place enriches humanity.

Use ONLY RED marker.

Draw a horizontal rule vertically under "enrich humanity" and match its length to the line at its left.

Draw a horizontal rule under this one, and to the right of the rule in the lower left of the sheet. Match its length to the line above it.

Write "Park relevance" underneath the rule.

This place enriches humanity.	
	me.
These places enrich humanity.	
_____	_____
<i>Tangibles</i>	
people	
places	
events	
things	
<i>Intangibles</i>	
ideas	
meanings	
beliefs	
values	
_____	_____
Park resources	Park relevance

Relevance is conveyed by **universal concepts** – intangibles (ideas, meanings, beliefs, values) that are so fundamental to the human condition that these concepts are commonly understood across most cultures.

FLIPCHART 2

This place enriches humanity.

Use ONLY LIGHT RED (PINK) marker.

Write “Universal intangible concepts” in the right column, vertically aligning “Universal” with “Intangibles.”

This place enriches humanity. me.	
These places enrich humanity.	

<i>Tangibles</i>	
people	
places	
events	
things	
<i>Intangibles</i>	<i>Universal</i>
ideas	<i>intangible</i>
meanings	<i>concepts</i>
beliefs	
values	

Park resources	Park relevance

For instance, consider the concepts of relationships – **family**, for instance. We’re each connected to a family, and though our comparisons of those connections might describe very different relationships, **we can all relate to the concept of family.**

Relating to concepts like these fosters deeper thinking and feeling about this place, thereby enhancing personal enjoyment and the individual’s preservation ethic.

Human Communication

How many of you remember English Composition in high school?

Who can tell us what the three parts of a paragraph are?

- Introduction, body, conclusion.

Who attended third grade *before* attending fourth grade?

As humans, we tend to do things sequentially and progressively:

- Description then relevance.
- First then second.
- "A" then "B."
- We tend to communicate **what** before we communicate **why**.
- We describe the **familiar**, then build a bridge to the **unfamiliar**.
- We describe what we **observe**, then extrapolate **abstract concepts**.
- We move from **simple** to **complex**.
- And we tell stories moving from **story setup**, to **struggle**, to **resolution**.

Using these techniques, humans **communicate meaning, educate each other, and transmit culture from one generation to the next.**

Interpretive and Educational Communication

For those same reasons, as interpreters and educators, we use these fundamental communication characteristics of human interaction in all we do:

- in our training
- in our planning and development of services, programs, and products
- in our live, interactive presentations of these services
- in the evaluation and coaching of our work

**That work is guided by
interpretive themes.**

Two Theme Levels

Interpreters use two levels of themes:

- **Primary interpretive themes** organize this place's largest-scale resources, meanings, and relevance for the purposes of parkwide management and planning.
- **Subthemes** nest within primary interpretive themes, and directly guide the development of specific interpretive and educational services, programs, and products.

Primary interpretive themes can be viewed as broad and expansive in scope, expressing the biggest ideas about the park's resources.

Subthemes, in contrast, are sharply focused, exploring resources and meanings in a much more detailed, in-depth manner.

Each theme statement (at either level) describes specific aspects of why and how "This place enriches humanity."

The park's **set** of primary interpretive themes, viewed as a whole, does the same for the park, as a whole: **The set describes the key reasons why and how "This place enriches humanity."**

In this workshop, we're focusing on this larger, higher level.

Definition of "Sentence"

Reference for the Planner

noun | sen-tence | \ 'sen-tən(t)s, -tənz\

: a group of words that expresses a statement, question, command, or wish

Full definition of SENTENCE

4 a : a word, clause, or phrase or a group of clauses or phrases forming a syntactic unit which expresses an assertion, a question, a command, a wish, an exclamation, or the performance of an action, that in writing usually begins with a capital letter and concludes with appropriate end punctuation, and that in speaking is distinguished by characteristic patterns of stress, pitch, and pauses

<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/sentence>

[sen-tns]

noun

1. *Grammar.* a grammatical unit of one or more words that expresses an independent statement, question, request, command, exclamation, etc., and that typically has a subject as well as a predicate, as in *John is here.* or *Is John here?* In print or writing, a sentence typically begins with a capital letter and ends with appropriate punctuation; in speech it displays recognizable, communicative intonation patterns and is often marked by preceding and following pauses.

<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/sentence?s=t>

Themes Model Interpretive and Educational Communication Structure

The maximum utility of both levels of themes stems from writing them with a sentence structure that models the typical structure of interpretive work (interpretive and educational services, programs, and products), which in turn models human communication practices.

Because these progression techniques are essential truths of human communication, **employing these techniques in our theme sentences maximizes the effectiveness of the themes.**

Themes Model Visitor Enjoyment

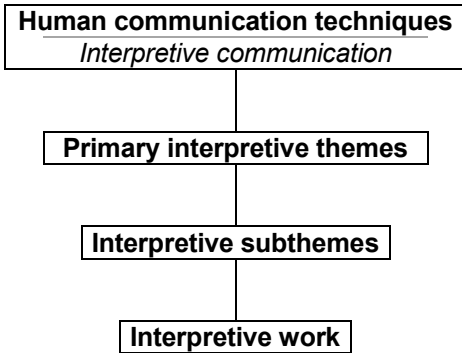
But wait; there's more!

Here's a diagram of these pieces...

FLIPCHART

Visitor Experience (not visibly titled)

Reveal the flipchart sheet that displays this diagram:



We've been focusing on the interpretive function of parks for a few minutes, but themes have an even broader importance than that implies...

Parks rely on primary interpretive themes to help us make large-scale decisions about visitor experience.

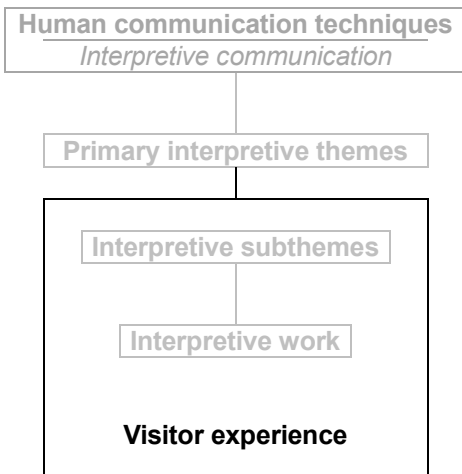
FLIPCHART

Visitor Experience (not visibly titled)

Diagram the addition of an enclosing box and label:

- Visitor experience

Use ONLY BLACK marker.



Primary interpretive themes play an important role in all parkwide decisions that need to take visitor enjoyment into account – whether the issue be adding to the campground loop, realigning a road, or zoning the park for multiple recreational uses.

Themes can help **all divisions** think through visitor experience and associated aspects of the operation.

A Unifying Approach

Everything we've discussed up to this point is a seamless, unified approach:

- Human communication techniques
- Interpretive communication
 - Primary interpretive themes
 - Interpretive subthemes
 - Interpretive work
 - I&E training
 - I&E theme sentence structure (both primary & subthemes)
 - I&E planning & presentation of services, programs, products
 - I&E coaching & evaluation
- Visitor experience

This approach results in powerful, durable, meaningful themes.

Questions?

HANDOUT

- Park Significance
- Park Themes

Flip over to side two.

Hold up as a prop.

Primary Interpretive Themes

Please flip over this handout. It's formatted just like the significance side,...

- The **left** column describes what theme statements are.
- The **right** column displays a placeholder for the themes that result from our workshop.

This side is provided as a reference while we do most of the work up here on flipcharts and the wall.

Please read the left column, then look up so I know you're done.

When you're all looking up, we'll review those guidelines **as a group**. Doing that will help us establish a common understanding of this material.

Self-reading, 5 minutes:

- Park Themes

Verbally reinforce key ideas.

The number of primary interpretive themes has a lot to do with the level of conciseness appropriate to address park significance.

It has other operational implications, too: The park's interpretation manager is responsible for ensuring that all visitors have an opportunity to experience all of the themes. Ensuring that no one theme gets so much attention that another theme is neglected is part of the job. Tracking interpretation services, programs, and products creates a check-and-balance system. The number of themes in the set has a very real impact on the ease with which services can be tracked (developing, conducting, maintaining, and evaluating them).

Questions?

8:55

0 minutes

Theme Philosophy

HANDOUT

- Philosophy
- Universal Concepts

Distribute the handout.

This Place Enriches Humanity — The Handout

Here's a handout of the flipchart we just drew, as a reference.

8:55

5 minutes

Examples of Universal Intangible Concepts

HANDOUT

- Philosophy
- Universal Concepts

Flip over to side two.

Verbally reinforce key ideas.

Examples of Universal Intangible Concepts

In theme sentences, universal concepts are essential to enabling the widest range of people to relate to park resources. **They are essential to relevance.**

This side of the handout lists examples and describes their characteristics. Let's look at some of them...

Questions?

Best Practices in Thematic Expression

HANDOUT

- Theme Examples
- Themes Decoded

Distribute the handout.

Verbally reinforce key ideas.

Simplified Answers

Stone with same text in three languages.

Ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphics, Demotic script, and Ancient Greek.

Led to understanding of Egyptian Hieroglyphics.

Flip over to side two.

Demonstrate the function of the two **Thematic Content Tools** located in the lower right corner, using the first theme (upper left) as the example for **z** and **x** components.

Verbally reinforce key ideas.

Self-reading, 5 minutes:

- Themes Decoded

Theme Examples

This handout provides us with a variety of examples.

Looking at other parks' themes can sometimes give you ideas about drafting or updating your own.

Thematic Rosetta Stone

Who knows what the Rosetta Stone is?

What were those languages?

What did that do for understanding language?

Decoded

I'd like to present to you the Rosetta Stone for thematic expression.

Please flip over this handout.

This colorful side decodes the theme examples by displaying their constituent parts, showing us how they're constructed. Let's look at how that works...

Please take a few minutes and read the rest of the themes on this page.

Questions?

Record sequential page numbers in the lower right corner of each flipchart sheet that has been used in the workshop so far, and do the same for all subsequent sheets. Being disciplined about this can help to trace the evolution of each draft statement, as needed.

Post these flipchart sheets...

FLIPCHART
Welcome (not visibly titled)

Post the flipchart.

FLIPCHART
Introductions (not visibly titled)

Post the flipchart.

FLIPCHART
Visitor Experience (not visibly titled)

Post the flipchart.

FLIPCHART 2
This place enriches humanity.

Post the flipchart.

Note: These flipchart sheets should remain covered (unrevealed)...

FLIPCHART
Park Resource Question (not visibly titled)

Remain covered (unrevealed).

FLIPCHART
Relevance Question (not visibly titled)

Remain covered (unrevealed).

A Case Study in Theme Writing

Now let's look at the actual theme-writing process.

Have any of you visited Alibates Flint Quarries National Monument in the panhandle of Texas?...

HANDOUT

- Alibates Flint Quarries National Monument - A
- Complete Sets of Significance Statements and Primary Themes - B

Distribute the handout.

Verbally reinforce key ideas on both sides.

HANDOUT

- Significance Statements — Decoded - C
- Significance Statements — Decoded (continued) - D

Distribute the handout.

Verbally reinforce key ideas on both sides.

Similar Universals in Three Significance Statements

The United States of America has an official motto.

Does anyone know what it is?

Since 1787, it's been printed on every U.S. coin.

Does anyone have a nickel with them?

Let's look at that.

"E pluribus Unum" is Latin for,
"Out of many, one."

That phrase represents the idea that from 13 original colonies, our nation was formed.

"E pluribus Unum" applies to themes, too.

That's the typical relationship between individual significance statements and individual theme statements:

- **Each theme statement usually arises from multiple significance statements, though not a requirement.**

PROP

- US coin

Owner of coin holds up as a prop.

Or...

Planner holds up backup coin as a prop.

HANDOUT

- Multiple Significance Statements
Prompt One Primary Theme - E
- Working with Relevance - F

Distribute the handout.

Verbally reinforce key ideas on both sides.

HANDOUT

- Working with Park Resources - G
- Working with Park Resources (continued) - H

Distribute the handout.

Verbally reinforce key ideas on both sides.

HANDOUT

- Working with Park Resources (continued) - I
- Working with Relationships - J

Distribute the handout.

Verbally reinforce key ideas on both sides.

HANDOUT

- Working with Relationships (continued) - K
- Working with Relationships (continued) - L

Distribute the handout.

Verbally reinforce key ideas on both sides.

PRESENTATION

Present an impromptu, brief interpretive talk to demonstrate the relevance of this theme's universal intangible concepts to the lives of the participants.

Talk about the drink containers that almost everyone has in front of them, and how they serve very **similar functions** (contain a liquid, drinking structures, portability, lids, reliability, convenience, affordability, etc.) yet have **different designs** (due to engineering choices, specificity of the use environment, specifications regarding attaching containers to other things, marketers, cost of production, company ethics about recyclability, value of clear vs. opaque, value of different materials as insulators, etc.).

Close by repeating the example theme.

If useful, could also make the same points about the clothing that everyone is wearing (similar functions but various designs).

HANDOUT

- One Primary Theme
Prompts Multiple Subthemes - M

Distribute the handout.

Verbally reinforce key ideas on side M.

Questions?

Plenary Theme-writing Process

Thus far, we've discussed:

- park purpose
- national significance
- "This place enriches humanity."
- universals
- a theme-writing case study

Now we're going to start writing!

To help with that, please pull out your **Park Significance** handout.

This is our foundation for the set of themes we're writing together.

HANDOUT

- Park Significance
- Park Themes

Hold up as a prop.

FLIPCHART 2

Universal Intangible Concepts

Place the second flipchart with the blank pad in the center of the "U" by displacing the flipchart that was already there.

Write the title **Universal Intangible Concepts** on the flipchart sheet.

Use ONLY LIGHT RED marker.

FLIPCHART 2

Universal Intangible Concepts

Record participant responses on the blank pad.

Use ONLY RED marker.

Note: Leave a little space to the left of each word or phrase for writing check marks or bullets in the next stage of using this listed information.

Post all completed sheets nearby to continue marking on them.

Universal Intangible Concepts - Listing

What universals do you see in the park's significance statements?

Let's work from the first statement to the last, and create a single list of all the universals - explicit and implicit - written into the set of significance statements.

FLIPCHART 2

Group 1 (not visibly titled)

Pick a bright color to represent this first group of interrelated universal intangible concepts.

Use ONLY BRIGHTLY COLORED marker for the Group 1 color.

Draw an identifying checkmark in the upper right corner of the Group 1 sheet (which essentially becomes its title).

Universal Intangible Concepts - Grouping

Create a Grouping

Looking at this inclusive list of universals, let's identify a group of interrelated concepts.

Who see's a group of things that make sense to address together?

What universals should we focus on first?

FLIPCHART 2

Group 1 (not visibly titled)

Record participant responses in two ways:

STEP 1 - **Copy** a participant's answer from the Universal Intangible Concepts list to the Group 1 sheet.

Note: Use the same language as is on the Universal Intangible Concepts list. Do not improvise or use shorthand.

Use ONLY RED marker.

STEP 2 - **Place** a checkmark next to the corresponding concept on the Universal Intangible Concepts list.

Use ONLY Group 1 marker color.

Repeat steps 1 and 2 until participants believe Group 1 to be complete.

Note: Sometimes, as universal concepts are expressed, **tangibles and intangibles** are also verbally linked to them. If they are useful to the process, include them by **writing them in BLUE marker** (as the single color that is used to portray their interwoven nature). If not useful at that point in time, remind everyone what universal intangible concepts are.

Some of the universals on the Universal Intangible Concepts list might end up in several subgroups. In that case, they'll have several checkmarks next to them.

FLIPCHART

Relevance Question (not visibly titled)

Relocate the flipchart and pad with prewritten material next to the new one.

Reveal the flipchart sheet that says:

- This place enriches humanity **by being one of the best places in the world to experience** _____.
z

Self-write for 5-10 minutes.

While participants are writing phrases, the planner does the same.

FLIPCHART 2

Group 1 Phrases (not visibly titled)

{**optional** - Only write the planner's phrase if a demonstration is needed}. **Write the planner's phrase** on the flipchart sheet to help the group understand the scope and scale of this phrase.

Use ONLY RED marker.

Universal Intangible Concepts - Expressing

Express the Grouping in a Phrase

Our next task is to summarize this group of concepts into a phrase.

Putting all of that together, how would you complete this statement:

- This place enriches humanity **by being one of the best places in the world to experience** _____.
z

Let's take a few minutes and each try our hand at writing a phrase for [z], then we'll share them with each other.

{**optional**} I took a shot at this too, and wrote my phrase up here to help indicate the potential scope and scale of the [z] phrase we're working on.

Who'd like to share their phrase with the group?

FLIPCHART 2

Group 1 Phrases (not visibly titled)

Record participant phrases, using several sheets if necessary.

Use ONLY RED marker.

Note: It's helpful to participants if each phrase is written as a hanging indent (about 2" wide), so that it's easier to read the sheet(s) of phrases as they accumulate. Additional line leading between phrases can also be helpful and aid the process.

...the universal intangible concept
phrase written by the planner.
{optional}

...a universal intangible concept
phrase written by a participant.

...another universal intangible
concept phrase written by a
participant...

Do any of these phrases talk more loudly and clearly to the content being summarized?

Which phrase is the best one for use to build on and continue editing as a group?

FLIPCHART 2

Group 1 Phrases (not visibly titled)

Write a consensus-generated phrase and edit it until it says what the participants want to say, in a way that best expresses their ideas.

Use ONLY RED marker.

Work on this until a draft phrase emerges. Use as many flipchart paper sheets as needed.

Is this phrase feeling pretty solid at this point?

Let's double-check how many of these notes universal intangible concepts we captured...

Compare the draft phrase to the group of universal intangible concepts. This might result in further editing of the phrase, or in marking several of the universals for inclusion elsewhere (for those that, after developing the phrase, did not group well here and might therefore be better expressed in other groups instead).

FLIPCHART

Relevance Question (not visibly titled)

Reveal the flipchart sheet that says:

- **These park resources** ()
make this one of **x**
the best places
to experience [**z**].

FLIPCHART 2

Group 1 Resources & Phrases (not visibly titled)

List associated park resources, and evolve that into fashioning a phrase (or phrases), by consensus.

Use ONLY BLUE marker.

Work on this until a draft phrase emerges. Use as many flipchart paper sheets as needed.

Note: As the park resources phrase evolves, the universal intangible concept phrase will like evolve as well. This iterative process creates back-and-forth influence that strengthens both parts and knits them together.

Note: Remember to leave a couple of line spaces of room vertically between the park resources and universal intangible concept phrases to accommodate a placeholder phrase that is added in the next step.

Park Resources - Listing & Expressing

Listing & Expressing Interwoven Tangible-intangible Park Resources

Now let's connect this universal intangible concept phrase [z] back to specific park resources [x]:

- **These park resources** ()
make this one of **x**
the best places
to experience [**z**].

FLIPCHART 2

Group 1 (not visibly titled)

Write this phrase between the draft park resources and universal intangible concept phrases.

Use ONLY BLACK marker.

Note: BROWN marker can be substituted, if needed.

Relationship Phrase – Adding Placeholder

Add a Linking Placeholder Phrase

In between the park resources phrase and universal intangible concepts phrase, we're going to add a phrase that expresses the relationship of one to the other.

That phrase is:

- **offer(s) unique opportunities to appreciate**

We'll put this draft aside for now, and return to it later and work on refining it some more.



Repeat these steps...

- Universal Intangible Concepts - Grouping
- Universal Intangible Concepts - Expressing
- Park Resources - Listing & Expressing
- Relationship Phrase – Adding Placeholder

...until all of the universals have been check-marked on the master Universal Intangible Concepts list.

Repeat All Theme-writing Steps

Let's create our next group of universal intangible concepts...

12:00

1 hour

(Lunch Break)

1:00

1 hours 25 minutes

Write Theme Statements (continued)

Repeat these steps...

- Universal Intangible Concepts - Grouping
- Universal Intangible Concepts - Expressing
- Park Resources - Listing & Expressing
- Relationship Phrase – Adding Placeholder

...until all of the universals have been check-marked on the Universal Intangible Concepts list.

Repeat All Theme-writing Steps

Let's create our next group of universal intangible concepts...

2:25

5 minutes

(Short Bio Break)

2:30

1 hour 30 minutes

Write Theme Statements (continued)

Repeat these steps...

- Universal Intangible Concepts - Grouping
- Universal Intangible Concepts - Expressing
- Park Resources - Listing & Expressing
- Relationship Phrase – Adding Placeholder

...until all of the universals have been check-marked on the Universal Intangible Concepts list.

Repeat All Theme-writing Steps

Let's create our next group of universal intangible concepts...

Testing the Draft Set of Themes

We can apply these two questions across the draft set of themes to help us determine if the set is complete.

This is akin to what you might say in an elevator when you have limited time to answer, "What's {parkname} all about?"

It's about...

Read aloud the draft themes' universal intangible concept phrases (endings of each theme).

And the reasons that {parkname} is about these meanings is because the park possesses, preserves, and interprets these primary resources...

Read aloud the draft themes' park resources phrases (beginnings each theme).

Do these 30-second replies do what you need them to do?

Does the set seem complete, or is it missing something?

Continue to edit the themes in response to the answers to these questions, as needed.

HANDOUT

- Working with Relationships - K
- Working with Relationships - L

Refer to side L.

Continue to edit the themes in response to the answers to these questions, as needed.

Once all these questions are successfully answered, the workshop goal has been achieved.

These questions will also help us ensure that the quality of the draft set has achieved our workshop goal:

- Do the **relevance phrases** that end each theme – as a set – represent the park’s most significant meanings? (*This is the 30-second reply to: What’s the park about?*)
 - Do the **park resource phrases** that start each theme – as a set – represent the park’s most significant resources? (*This is the 30-second reply to: Why is the park about those things?*)
 - Does the entire set of draft primary interpretive themes convey the **complete set** of significance statements?
 - Is each theme **critical** to achieving the interpretive mission?
 - Will these themes be **useful guides** in creating subthemes?
 - Do the statements reflect **current scholarly** inquiry and interpretation, including changes that might have occurred since the park’s establishment?
 - Does each theme do more than just **restate** one or more significance; does it include tangibles, intangibles, and relevant universal intangible concepts?
 - Is each theme a complete, **understandable** sentence?
-

FLIPCHART SHEETS

Mark the theme order with the letters: **A, B, C...** on the flipchart sheets.

Theme Organization

In English, we write left to right, top to bottom.

Our last task is to place these themes in some sort of order that will make the most sense to someone unfamiliar with your park.

Organizing schemes can be based on chronology, scope or scale, most-known to least-known, etc. **What makes the most sense for this set?**

4:55
5 minutes

Conclude the Workshop

Closeout

Great job! Thank you for helping the park move forward!

{time2}
30 minutes

Huddle

Debrief with the chief:

- How did it go today?
- Anything unexpected happen?
- Best parts of day?
- Worst parts of day?
- Getting what you need?
- Any course corrections the planner needs to make?

Check-in

FLIPCHARTS

- Remove all of today's used sheets from the flipchart easels and walls, and neatly stack all of them.
- Then fold them and pack them, as needed.
- Also pack markers and other miscellaneous supplies that need to be taken.

Rearrange

DINNER

During dinner, strategize how best to continue the project, if appropriate.

Evening Work?

Travel home?

Travel?

{day3}
{date3}

Travel

Check out of the hotel.

Travel home.

• Planning Handouts

This subchapter contains handouts that the planner distributes during the workshop. This content can also be used for self-learning.

Customize Them

Although the entire set of handouts should be reviewed for potential customization to best meet the specific needs and conditions of the workshop, specific parts of this subchapter have been marked for mandatory customization before the handouts are used:

{Text on a yellow background set within braces — i.e. “{Note...}” — is used throughout the chapter to indicate places where customization is needed. **Search** for “{” to locate places where information should be customized. **To replace these notes or text marked like this for customization**, highlight the text block from outer brace through outer brace — i.e. “{Note...}” — then overwrite it, paste to replace it, or click “delete” to delete it. This brace-to-brace technique completely removes the yellow highlight as the text is updated. A last double-check can also be made by searching for any remaining braces “{” or yellow highlights in the document, and addressing them as needed.}

Use Them

Although it’s tempting — for the sake of efficiency and convenience — to combine all of the handouts into a packet for each participant, and to distribute

those at the beginning of the workshop, this is discouraged. Instead, this workshop’s handouts are intended to be distributed individually at specific times, in a specific sequence, during the workshop. This technique accomplishes several important things:

- It maintains the participants’ focus on the current topic.
- It maintains the designed learning sequence.
- It provides a series of mini-breaks (visual designers refer to this as “white space”) that provide relief and time for reflection between pieces of content.

Print Them

After customizing this Planning Handouts subchapter, *print the handouts* as follows:

- print ***multiples*** (one copy per participant) plus several extras to have on hand for unexpected participants (this really does occur)
- print ***two-sided***
- Print all handouts in ***full-color ink***;
Or, if you need to limit color printing, do this:
 - print in ***black ink*** the cover page through the Park Themes page
 - Print in ***full color ink***: the Theme Philosophy flipchart-summarizing handout through the Case Study pages
- print on ***white paper***
- ***do not bind***

The “Are you really here?” sign-in sheet is located at the end of this subchapter, since its use is optional.

When using this two-page handout, print as follows:

- print **one** copy to route among participants
- print **two-sided**
- print in **black ink**
- print on **yellow paper** (for visibility, which is helpful in tracking and retrieving it)

{parkname}

{Replace with the brief, descriptive title and paragraph from the park website.}

{Replace this graphic rectangle with an inspiring park photo. The photo should be full width. Preferred (and maximum acceptable) dimensions are 4.7" wide x 6.26" tall (3:4 ratio). Shorten the vertical dimension as needed. Delete this note.}

{caption}. (NPS photo)

Theme-writing Workshop

{month year}



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Personal Relevance

Welcome!

- Who are you?
- What do you do for the park? {OR - Use this alternate version;}
What organization or interest do you represent?
- This place is special or important to you (*personally*). {OR - Use this alternate version if running the longer exercise;} Why is this place special or important to you (*personally*)?

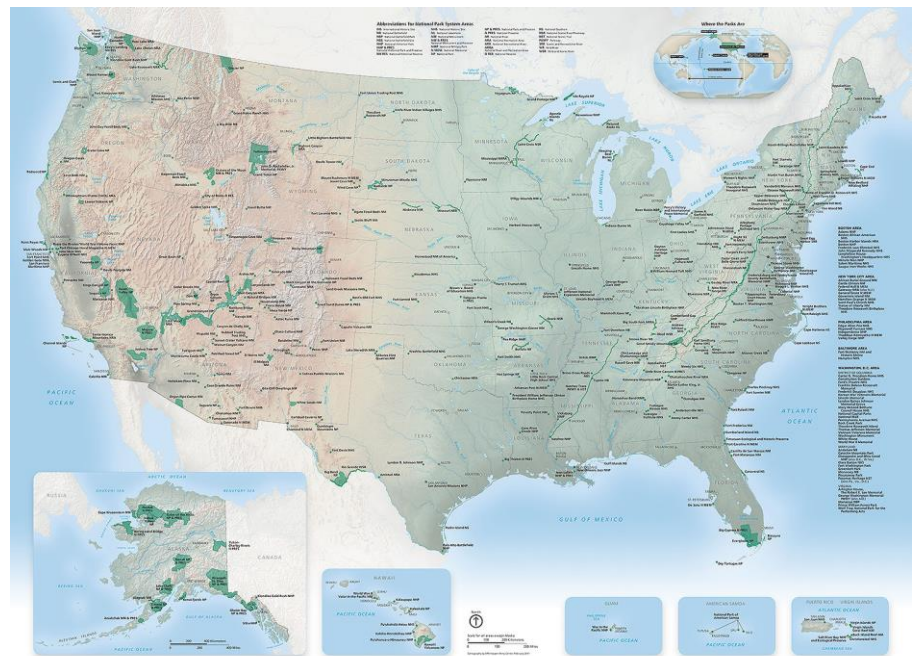
Social Relevance

The **National Park Service (NPS)** was established in 1916. Referring to the park units that would be placed under the jurisdiction of the new agency, the NPS Organic Act stated that the agency's purpose will be

...to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein, and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.

More recently, the agency's mission was re-stated in the **NPS Strategic Plan, 2000** (at right).

Agency Mission



The National Park Service manages more than 400 sites across the country.



The **National Park Service** preserves unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the national park system for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations.

The National Park Service cooperates with partners to extend the benefits of natural and cultural resource conservation and outdoor recreation throughout this country and the world.

Workshop Goal

This information will assist the park's personnel in planning visitor services for the foreseeable future.

Enhancing Relevance through Themes

The goal of this workshop is to write an effective set of primary interpretive themes for {parkname}.

This set will be incorporated into the park's draft {*Foundation Document*}.

Today's Agenda

Schedule

{time1}	Morning Sessions Begin
12:00	Lunch {(provided)}
1:00	Afternoon Sessions Begin
{time2}	Adjourn

Subjects

- Personal Relevance
- Social Relevance
- Workshop Goal
- Today's Agenda
- Park Purpose
- Park Significance
- Park Themes

Park Purpose

A park's purpose statement identifies the specific reason(s) for establishment of a park. It's drafted through a careful analysis of a park's enabling legislation and the legislative history that influenced its development. The purpose statement lays the foundation for understanding what is most important about a park.

{park-specific information, e.g....
{parkname} was established by
President {name}'s January 18,
1933 proclamation.}

Purpose Statement

{Replace this graphic rectangle
with another inspiring park photo.
The photo should be full width.
Preferred dimensions
are 4.7" wide x 2.35" tall (2:1ratio).
Shorten vertical dimension as needed.
Delete this note.}

{caption} (NPS Photo)

{purpose statement(s)}

Park Significance

The significance of places and things is embedded in their enduring tangible and intangible resource characteristics: elements that are so attractive, interesting, and engaging that people choose to experience them time and again. Every organization that offers heritage interpretation describes, in some way, the importance of the people, places, events, and things that relate to a park. Significance descriptions can be found in enabling legislation, a charter, mission statement, foundational statement, general management plan, or master plan. These statements are **factual and evidence-based**, are linked to park purpose, and are supported by data, research, and scholarly consensus. This description is most useful when it is more than just a resource list — when it includes relevant context that makes the items on such a list meaningful to the reader.

Such a description of resources is characteristically formatted as a set of **significance statements**.

Significance statements, taken together as a whole, describe the distinctiveness of the combined resources of a park, including natural, cultural, inspirational, scientific, historic, recreational, and other aspects. They include tangible and intangible characteristics and the context in which these characteristics are embedded. The statements are listed in an order that best contributes to clarity; the sequence does not connote a hierarchy of importance.

In most organizations, the mission of the organization, the purpose of the site, and the site's set of significance statements combine to focus management actions and operations on the preservation and enjoyment of those attributes that most directly contribute to the importance of the place. In the NPS, significance statements also express why a park's resources and values are important enough to merit designation as a unit of the national park system.

Significance Statements

{significance statements}

Park Themes

Attaching meanings to places and things is a fundamental human trait. We ascribe special significance to people, places, events, and things that rejuvenate our spirits, challenge and strengthen our beliefs, and provoke contemplation and discussion of our past, present, and future. Such resources provide opportunities to explore our shared heritage and help us define our character as individuals, communities, and societies.

Story is the communication tool that most effectively facilitates exploration of resource meanings. Societies depend on the power of **story** to explore, clarify, and share ideas, meanings, beliefs, and values that collectively constitute culture. **Story** is at the heart of human interaction and, consequently, at the heart of heritage interpretation.

Parks develop a set of overarching theme statements to organize the largest-scale ideas and meanings related to the park's resources. These theme statements are called **primary interpretive themes**. A park's set of primary interpretive themes fully represents the breadth of its stories, building on the entire set of significance statements.

While significance statements focus on facts and place them within a larger context of meanings, **themes focus on making those meanings accessible to visitors**. Themes guide the development of infrastructure and services that facilitate visitors making connections to the people, places, events, and things associated with a park.

The set of primary interpretive themes is complete when it provides all of the organizational structure needed by park personnel to develop specific opportunities for visitors to explore and relate to all of a park's stories. The set is usually comprised of a handful of themes (commonly three to five).

Primary Interpretive Themes

(The themes we're developing today would go here.)

**This place enriches humanity.
me.**

These places enrich humanity.

Tangibles
people
places
events
things

Intangibles
ideas
meanings
beliefs
values

Universal
Intangible
Concepts

Park resources

Park relevance

Universal Concepts

Examples of Universal Intangible Concepts

Change

- Change generates additional change.
- Change can be either positive or negative.
- Change is inevitable.
- Change is necessary for growth.
- Change can be evolutionary or revolutionary.

Conflict

- Conflict is composed of opposing forces.
- Conflict may be natural or human made.
- Conflict may be intentional or unintentional.
- Conflict may allow for synthesis and change.

Exploration

- Exploration requires recognizing purpose and responding to it.
- Exploration confronts “the unknown.”
- Exploration may result in “new findings” or the confirmation of “old findings.”

Force

- Force attracts, holds, or repels.
- Force influences or changes.
- Force and inertia are co-dependent.
- Force may be countered with equal or greater force.

Order vs. Chaos

- Order may be natural or constructed.
- Order may allow for prediction.
- Order is a form of communication.
- Order may have repeated patterns.
- Order and chaos are reciprocals.
- Order leads to chaos, and chaos leads to order.

Patterns

- Patterns have segments that are repeated.
- Patterns allow for prediction.
- Patterns have an internal order.
- Patterns are enablers.

Power

- Power is the ability to influence.
- Power may be used or abused.
- Power is always present in some form.
- Power may take many forms (chemical, electrical, political, mechanical).

Relationships

- Everything is related in some way.
- All relationships are purposeful.
- Relationships change over time.

Structure

- Structure has parts that interrelate.
- Parts of structures support, and are supported by, other parts.
- Smaller structures may be combined to form larger structures.
- A structure is no stronger than its weakest component parts.

Systems

- Systems have parts that work to complete a task.
- Systems are composed of sub-systems.
- Parts of systems are interdependent upon one another and form symbiotic relationships.
- A system may be influenced by other systems.
- Systems interact.
- Systems follow rules.

Note: These example universals (change, conflict, exploration, etc.), along with their bulleted descriptions, are provided to foster conversation and comprehension. Although many of the universals connected to your park’s resources might be listed here, this list should not be considered as all-encompassing or complete.

Source: Extracted from <http://teacherweb.com/ca/carpinteriausd/gateprogramteresakoontz/Universal-Concepts.pdf>, *Universal Concepts and Generalizations* (which was adapted from: *Curriculum Guide for the Education of Gifted High School Students*, Texas Association for the Gifted and Talented, 1991).

Theme Examples

Best Practices in Thematic Expression

The story of quarrying and using Alibates flint offers unique opportunities to explore the inherent human need to make and use tools to improve the quality of life.¹

The history of people using Alibates flint exemplifies the powerful human drive to combine practical functionality with aesthetic beauty in everything we do — even in crafting common, utilitarian objects.¹

The fort at colonial Dorchester, built as a response to the French and Indian War and adapted for use in the Revolutionary War, exemplifies the need of communities to ensure the safety of their members.²

The defeat of the proposed Echo Park dam in Dinosaur National Monument in the 1950s played a significant role in the development of the American conservation movement, and continues to frame public debate over the best uses of public lands.³

The paradoxical aspects of fossilization in the Florissant Formation fuel our drive to solve Earth's mysteries and inspire us to marvel at the complexity and subtlety of the natural world.⁴

The invention of interchangeable parts in arms manufacturing at the Harpers Ferry Armory provided unprecedented momentum to the Industrial Revolution, forever changing the human experience and intensifying the ongoing dialogue regarding the costs and benefits of technological innovation.⁵

The popularity of recreational activities at Lake Meredith National Recreation Area are testament to the importance of both relaxing and also invigorating recreation in maintaining a happy and productive life.⁶

Mesa Verde is vitally important to many affiliated peoples who view the park's resources as critical to their religious beliefs, cultural identity, and sense of place in the world.⁷

The diversity, context, and sheer volume of cultural and natural resources at Mesa Verde make the park an important center for studying how science and traditional cultural knowledge interact to help us learn about, and learn from, the past.⁷

One of America's first national parks, and a World Cultural Heritage Site, Mesa Verde National Park is one of the best places to study the evolving ethics of resource conservation, preservation, interpretation, and stewardship.⁷

Primary Interpretive Themes

The integrity, diversity, and magnitude of Olympic National Park's relatively unimpacted wilderness ecosystems powerfully affect the human spirit — providing outstanding opportunities for exploration, research, introspection, and inspiration.⁸

This geologically active area, formed by rifting, volcanism, and erosional forces including the Rio Grande and its tributaries, has attracted people for thousands of years and powerfully influenced their lifeways, traditions, and beliefs — exemplifying how landscapes shape and influence human societies.⁹

The hallowed ground of Washita provides opportunities to understand the resiliency of the human spirit and the struggle of societies to maintain cultural identity.¹⁰

Sources

- ¹ Alibates Flint Quarries NM
- ² Colonial Dorchester State Park (South Carolina)
- ³ Dinosaur NM
- ⁴ Florissant Fossil Beds NM
- ⁵ Harpers Ferry NHP
- ⁶ Lake Meredith NRA
- ⁷ Mesa Verde NP
- ⁸ Olympic NP
- ⁹ Petroglyph NM
- ¹⁰ Washita Battlefield NHS

Note: A park's set of *primary interpretive themes*, set of *significance statements*, description of *fundamental resources and values*, and *purpose* statement are intimately related to each other, interconnected in a descriptive chain. Though they have different purposes, they inform and depend on each other. To illustrate best practices in thematic expression with many varied examples, only selected themes are shown, and these without this larger, real-world context.

Themes Decoded

Best Practices in Thematic Expression — Decoded

Thematic Rosetta Stone

The story of quarrying and using Alibates flint offers unique opportunities to explore the inherent human need to make and use tools to improve the quality of life.

The history of people using Alibates flint exemplifies the powerful human drive to combine practical functionality with aesthetic beauty in everything we do — even in crafting common, utilitarian objects.

The fort at colonial Dorchester, built as a response to the French and Indian War and adapted for use in the Revolutionary War, exemplifies the need of communities to ensure the safety of their members.

The defeat of the proposed Echo Park dam in Dinosaur National Monument in the 1950s played a significant role in the development of the American conservation movement, and continues to frame public debate over the best uses of public lands.

The paradoxical aspects of fossilization in the Florissant Formation fuel our drive to solve Earth's mysteries and inspire us to marvel at the complexity and subtlety of the natural world.

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The integrity, diversity, and magnitude of Olympic National Park's relatively unimpacted wilderness ecosystems powerfully affect the human spirit — providing outstanding opportunities for exploration, research, introspection, and inspiration.

This geologically active area, formed by rifting, volcanism, and erosional forces including the Rio Grande and its tributaries, has attracted people for thousands of years and powerfully influenced their lifeways, traditions, and beliefs — exemplifying how landscapes shape and influence human societies.

The hallowed ground of Washita provides opportunities to understand the resiliency of the human spirit and the struggle of societies to maintain cultural identity.

Thematic Content Tools

Read the sentence below, then fill in the blank [**z**] with any of the red phrases on the sheet.

This place enriches humanity by being one of the best places in the world to experience _____.
z

Using any of the red phrases on the sheet as variable [**z**], read the sentence below filling in the blank [**x**] with that phrase's corresponding blue phrase.

*These park resources (_____) make this one of the _____ best places in the world to experience [**z**].*
x

KEY — Interwoven tangible-intangible park resources < relationship > universal intangible concepts.

A Case Study in Theme Writing

Alibates Flint Quarries National Monument



Alibates Flint Quarries National Monument	A
Complete Sets of Significance Statements and Primary Themes	B
Significance Statements — Decoded	C,D
Similar Universals in Three Significance Statements	E
Working with Relevance	F
Working with Park Resources	G,H,I
Working with Relationships	J,K,L
One Primary Interpretive Theme Prompts Multiple Subthemes	M

This arrowhead was knapped from Alibates flint. Enlarged to show detail, its actual length is 1.125" long. NPS photo (RKohen)

A Case Study in Theme WritingComplete Sets of Significance Statements and Primary Themes

Set of Significance Statements

Alibates flint is a beautiful, distinctive, workable, multi-colored stone with excellent edge-holding properties. These characteristics prompted various North American peoples to quarry, shape, and use this stone to construct tools that were critical to survival: projectile points, knives, scrapers, axes, drills, awls, and many others.

The only exposed bedrock source of Alibates flint is found in and around the monument.

The 736 largely unexcavated quarry pits in the monument document at least a 12,000-year story of continuous resource detection, extraction, manipulation, and use. Alibates flint projectile points have been found with the remains of mammoths and giant bison that roamed the High Plains during the Ice Age. Tools made from Alibates flint have been used by a variety of cultures over time, including the Clovis, Folsom, and Plainview peoples.

Due to its particular aesthetic and practical properties, Alibates flint was highly prized and traded extensively throughout much of North America.

Alibates Ruin (inside monument boundaries) and the nearby Antelope Creek Site comprise the type-site for the Antelope Creek Phase of the Plains Village Culture (circa A.D. 1150-1500), one of a number of cultures to benefit from the quarries. These sites include architectural remains, petroglyphs, and more than 1.5 million collected objects. The park manages about 800,000 of these objects. This collection comprises almost 10% of all collections in the largest National Park Service region (Intermountain Region), and almost 3% of all National Park Service collections.

At least 45% of the tools excavated at the important Blackwater Draw II Clovis type-site in New Mexico, which documents the earliest known mammoth-hunting site, were made of Alibates Flint.

Set of Primary Interpretive Themes

The broad distribution and long and diverse history of use of Alibates flint (dating almost to the earliest evidence of people in North America), and the story of the Plains Village Culture associated with the area foster appreciation of the surprising richness and sophistication of early cultures.

The story of quarrying and using Alibates flint offers unique opportunities to explore the inherent human need to make and use tools to improve the quality of life.

The extensive history of people using Alibates flint exemplifies the powerful human drive to combine practical functionality with aesthetic beauty in everything we do — even in crafting common, utilitarian objects.

A Case Study in Theme Writing

Significance Statements — Decoded

Theme-authoring Stages

Although these stages are typical, variations can usefully occur based on case-specific circumstances.

Encoded Components Observed in the Statements

Tangibles

Tangible park resources are *people, places, things, & events*.

Alibates flint is a beautiful, **distinctive, workable, multi-colored stone with excellent edge-holding properties**. **These characteristics** prompted **various North American peoples** to quarry, shape, and use **this stone** to construct **tools** that were critical to survival: **projectile points, knives, scrapers, axes, drills, awls, and many others**.

The **only exposed bedrock source of Alibates flint** is **found in and around the monument**.

The **736 largely unexcavated quarry pits in the monument** document at least a 12,000-year story of continuous resource detection, extraction, manipulation, and use. **Alibates flint projectile points** have been found with the **remains of mammoths and giant bison** that roamed the **High Plains** during the **Ice Age**. **Tools made from Alibates flint** have been used by a **variety of cultures over time, including the Clovis, Folsom, and Plainview peoples**.

Intangibles

Intangible park resources are *ideas, meanings, beliefs, & values*.

Alibates flint is a **beautiful**, distinctive, **workable**, multi-colored stone with excellent edge-holding properties. **These characteristics prompted various North American peoples to quarry, shape, and use this stone to construct tools that were critical to survival**: projectile points, knives, scrapers, axes, drills, awls, and many others.

The only **exposed** bedrock source of Alibates flint is **found in and around** the monument.

The 736 largely unexcavated quarry pits in the monument **document at least a 12,000-year story of continuous resource detection, extraction, manipulation, and use**. Alibates flint projectile points **have been found with the remains of mammoths and giant bison that roamed the High Plains during the Ice Age**. Tools **made from Alibates flint have been used by a variety of cultures over time**, including the Clovis, Folsom, and Plainview **peoples**.

Universals

Universal intangible concepts are *relevant to most cultures*.

Alibates flint is a **beautiful**, distinctive, workable, multi-colored stone with excellent edge-holding properties. These characteristics prompted various North American peoples to quarry, shape, and use this stone to construct tools that were critical to **survival**: projectile points, knives, scrapers, axes, drills, awls, and many others.

The only exposed bedrock source of Alibates flint is found in and around the monument.

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A Case Study in Theme Writing

Significance Statements — Decoded (*continued*)

Encoded Components Observed in the Statements

Tangibles

Tangible park resources

Due to its **particular aesthetic and practical properties**, **Alibates flint** was highly prized and traded extensively throughout much of **North America**.

Alibates Ruin (inside monument boundaries) and the **nearby Antelope Creek Site** comprise the type-site for the **Antelope Creek Phase of the Plains Village Culture (circa A.D. 1150-1500)**, one of a number of **cultures** to benefit from the **quarries**. **These sites include architectural remains, petroglyphs, and more than 1.5 million collected objects**. The **park** manages about **800,000 of these objects**. **This collection comprises almost 10% of all collections in the largest National Park Service region (Intermountain Region), and almost 3% of all National Park Service collections**.

At least 45% of the tools excavated at the important **Blackwater Draw II Clovis type-site in New Mexico**, which documents the earliest known **mammoth-hunting site**, were made of **Alibates Flint**.

Intangibles

Intangible park resources

Due to its **particular aesthetic and practical properties**, Alibates flint was **highly prized and traded extensively** throughout much of North America.

Alibates Ruin (inside monument boundaries) and the nearby Antelope Creek Site **comprise the type-site for the Antelope Creek Phase of the Plains Village Culture (circa A.D. 1150-1500)**, **one of a number of cultures to benefit from the quarries**. These sites include architectural remains, petroglyphs, and more than 1.5 million **collected** objects. The **park manages** about 800,000 of these objects. This collection comprises almost 10% of all collections in the largest National Park Service region (Intermountain Region), and almost 3% of all National Park Service collections.

At least 45% of the tools **excavated** at the **important Blackwater Draw II Clovis type-site** in New Mexico, which **documents the earliest known mammoth-hunting site**, were **made** of Alibates Flint.

Universals

Universal intangible concepts

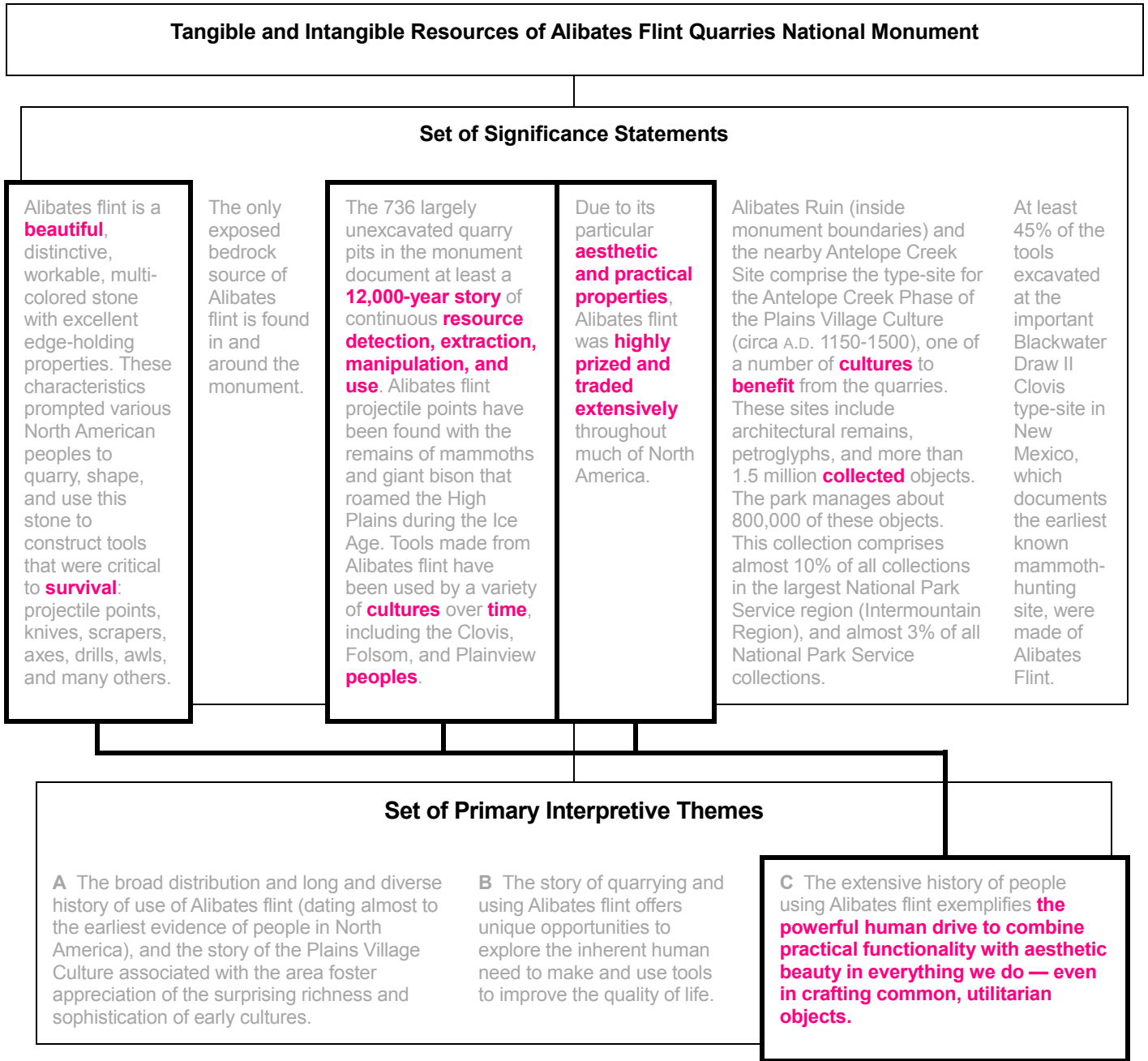
Due to its particular **aesthetic and practical properties**, Alibates flint was **highly prized and traded extensively** throughout much of North America.

Alibates Ruin (inside monument boundaries) and the nearby Antelope Creek Site comprise the type-site for the Antelope Creek Phase of the Plains Village Culture (circa A.D. 1150-1500), one of a number of **cultures** to **benefit** from the quarries. These sites include architectural remains, petroglyphs, and more than 1.5 million **collected** objects. The park manages about 800,000 of these objects. This collection comprises almost 10% of all collections in the largest National Park Service region (Intermountain Region), and almost 3% of all National Park Service collections.

At least 45% of the tools excavated at the important Blackwater Draw II Clovis type-site in New Mexico, which documents the earliest known mammoth-hunting site, were made of Alibates Flint.

A Case Study in Theme Writing

Multiple Significance Statements Prompt One Primary Theme



E Pluribus Unum. Latin for, “Out of many, one.” Although each primary interpretive theme *usually* arises from multiple significance statements, this is not a requirement.

Universal intangible concepts across multiple significance statements typically overlap and

reinforce each other. It’s also common for some of these universals to be inferred rather than stated overtly.

In this park example, three of the six significance statements had enough similarities among them that writing a primary interpretive theme that interlinked them seemed appropriate.

A Case Study in Theme Writing

Working with Relevance

Gather the Selected Universals

In this example, the universal intangible concepts that were observed in three of the six significance statements are gathered here into one bulleted list so they can be easily viewed as a set.

Add Universals, as Needed

As needed, add other associated or inferred concepts to the list. (In this example, none were added.)

Set Aside Universals, as Needed

Likewise, some of these concepts fit together better than others, so the ones that don't fit together as well as others are set aside for consideration in other themes. (In this example, none were discarded.)

Universal intangible concepts:

- beautiful
- survival
- 12,000-year story
- resource detection, extraction, manipulation, and use
- cultures
- time
- aesthetic and practical properties
- highly prized and traded extensively

Summarize Universals as Relevance

Write a phrase that highlights and summarizes the most important aspects of the listed concepts, and clearly yet artfully arranges them. Answer this question:

*This place enriches humanity
by being one of the best places
in the world to experience _____ .*
z

Result:

our need to combine practical functionality with beauty

A Case Study in Theme Writing

Working with Park Resources

Gather Associated Tangible & Intangible Park Resources

Refer to the three significance statements from which the universals were listed, and review the tangibles and intangibles in those statements. These can also be listed like the universals (as shown at right in the order that they appear in the significance statements).

Note that some of the intangibles include embedded tangible resources, though they are all encoded as blue (at right) to portray their interwoven nature. That's because expressing some intangibles requires the inclusion of associated tangible resources to convey a complete thought.

Tangible park resources:

- **Alibates flint**
- **distinctive, workable, multi-colored stone with excellent edge-holding properties / these characteristics**
- **various North American peoples**
- **this stone**
- **tools**
- **projectile points, knives, scrapers, axes, drills, awls, and many others**
- **736 largely unexcavated quarry pits in the monument**
- **Alibates flint projectile points**
- **remains of mammoths and giant bison**
- **High Plains**
- **Ice Age**
- **tools made from Alibates flint**
- **variety of cultures over time, including the Clovis, Folsom, and Plainview peoples**
- **particular aesthetic and practical properties, Alibates flint**
- **North America**

Intangible park resources:

- **beautiful**
- **workable**
- **these characteristics prompted various North American peoples to quarry, shape, and use this stone to construct tools that were critical to survival**
- **document at least a 12,000-year story of continuous resource detection, extraction, manipulation, and use**
- **have been found with the remains**
- **roamed**
- **during the Ice Age**
- **made**
- **have been used by a variety of cultures over time**
- **peoples**
- **particular aesthetic and practical properties highly prized and traded extensively**

A Case Study in Theme Writing

Working with Park Resources (*continued*)

Summarize the Tangible & Intangible Park Resources upon which the Relevance Phrase Most Relies

Consider which of the listed tangible and intangible park resources are *most necessary* to enable opportunities to experience the summarized universal relevance phrase (“our need to combine practical functionality with beauty”).

Note how the workability and colorfulness of Alibates flint are selected as hallmark attributes related to the universal.

Further condensing this example’s content, “Alibates flint” — by definition — is used to represent all of its specific, previously stated characteristics.

Note how “the extensive history of people using Alibates flint” is used to summarize all of the intangible concepts (many peoples, long history, quarry, shape, use, extensive trade, etc.) that are most associated with the universal.

Resulting tangible park resources:

- **exceptionally workable and colorful Alibates flint**

Tangible park resources — further condensed:

- **Alibates flint**

Resulting intangible park resources:

- **extensive history of people using Alibates Flint**
-

A Case Study in Theme Writing

Working with Park Resources (*continued*)

Interweave the Tangible & Intangible Park Resources upon which the Relevance Phrase Most Relies

Distill those summarized park resources into a phrase that succinctly describes them. Answer this question:

*These park resources ()
make this one of the x
best places in the
world to experience [z].*

Result:

*(extensive history of people using Alibates Flint)
[our need to combine practical functionality with beauty]*

Note also that in this example, the intangible (blue) is an incomplete thought without including the tangible that completes it (green). At this stage — *because intangibles often rely on being read with their embedded tangibles in order to be understood* — tangibles and intangibles are merged into a single color (blue) that now describes *interwoven tangible-intangible park resources*.

Interwoven tangible-intangible park resources:

*(extensive history of people using Alibates Flint)
[our need to combine practical functionality with beauty]*

A Case Study in Theme Writing

Working with Relationships

Relationship of Park Resources to Relevance

Establish the relationship between the interwoven tangible-intangible park resources (describing “This place...”) and the relevant universal concept (describing how those resources “...enrich humanity.”).

Example sentence structure with placeholder relationship phrase:
[interwoven tangible-intangible park resources]
offer unique opportunities to appreciate
[universal concepts].

Next, refer to the example words below that could be used in the relationship phrase. Select the combination of words (or even just a single word) that best describe that relationship.

Placeholder relationship phrase applied to example theme:
(extensive history of people using Alibates flint)
offers unique opportunities to appreciate
[our need to combine practical functionality with beauty]

Actions

Action words (verbs) like “offer” often begin the relationship phrase. Context determines the form used (such as offer, offers, offering).

Focus:
offer unique opportunities to appreciate

- | | | | | | |
|-------------------|----------------------|-------------------|------------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| attest | demonstrate | foster | impact | offer | result |
| challenge | emblematic of | frame | increase | play a role | reveal |
| constitute | embody | fuel | influence | present | serve as |
| continue | enable | highlight | inspire | prompt | testify |
| contribute | evoke | identify | intensify | provide | yield |
| create | exemplify | illustrate | invite | remind | |

Characteristics

The interwoven tangible-intangible park resources create opportunities with describable characteristics, like these:

Focus:
offer unique opportunities to appreciate

- | | | | | | |
|---------------------|------------------|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------|----------------|
| abundant | dramatic | exceptional | powerful | sacred | unusual |
| approachable | dynamic | important | pristine | superlative | varied |
| beautiful | enriching | inspiring | rare | surprising | |
| distinct | evolving | interactive | remarkable | unexpected | |
| diverse | excellent | outstanding | rich | unique | |

A Case Study in Theme Writing

Working with Relationships (*continued*)

Opportunities

Because visitor enjoyment, interpretation, and education involve *choices* made by individuals (what to experience, why, when, where, how), this work is viewed as fostering enhanced opportunities for individuals to make their own, meaningful connections to park resources, thus:

...**opportunities to / for**...

The placeholder phrase literally uses the word “opportunities” to include this idea. This concept can also be *implied* to better fit the theme’s syntax. For example, the relationship phrase

...**offers unique insights into**...

implies the concept in this way:

...**offers [opportunities to experience] unique insights into**...

Focus:

offer unique opportunities to appreciate

Desires

What is the individual’s interest in these opportunities? How are the opportunities universally relevant? People desire to...

Focus:

offer unique opportunities to appreciate

- | | | | | | |
|-------------|-------------|------------|----------|----------|------------|
| appreciate | consider | encounter | explore | ponder | study |
| compare and | contemplate | expect | interact | reflect | understand |
| contrast | define | experience | learn | remember | wonder |
| connect | discover | | | | |

Customize the Relationship Phrase

Revise the phrase, as needed, to fit the draft theme.

From the placeholder version:

(**extensive history of people using Alibates flint**)
offers unique opportunities to appreciate
[our need to combine practical functionality with beauty]

To the customized version:

(**extensive history of people using Alibates flint**)
exemplifies
[our need to combine practical functionality with beauty]

A Case Study in Theme Writing

Working with Relationships (*continued*)

Refine the Theme

The refinement of the relationship phrase created a more highly structured environment within which to refine the theme as a whole to make it more concise, clear, creative, and relevant.

In this example, the last refinement amplifies the universal with increased specificity to better explain the ideas and connections, and to make them more relevant to people.

The draft theme (all three components now create a sentence):

The extensive history of people using Alibates flint exemplifies our need to combine practical functionality with beauty.

The refined, final primary interpretive theme:

The extensive history of people using Alibates flint exemplifies the powerful human drive to combine practical functionality with aesthetic beauty in everything we do — even in crafting common, utilitarian objects.

Relationship of the Draft Theme to Other Themes

Compare this theme's content with others as they are being drafted to ensure distinctiveness. Refine as needed.

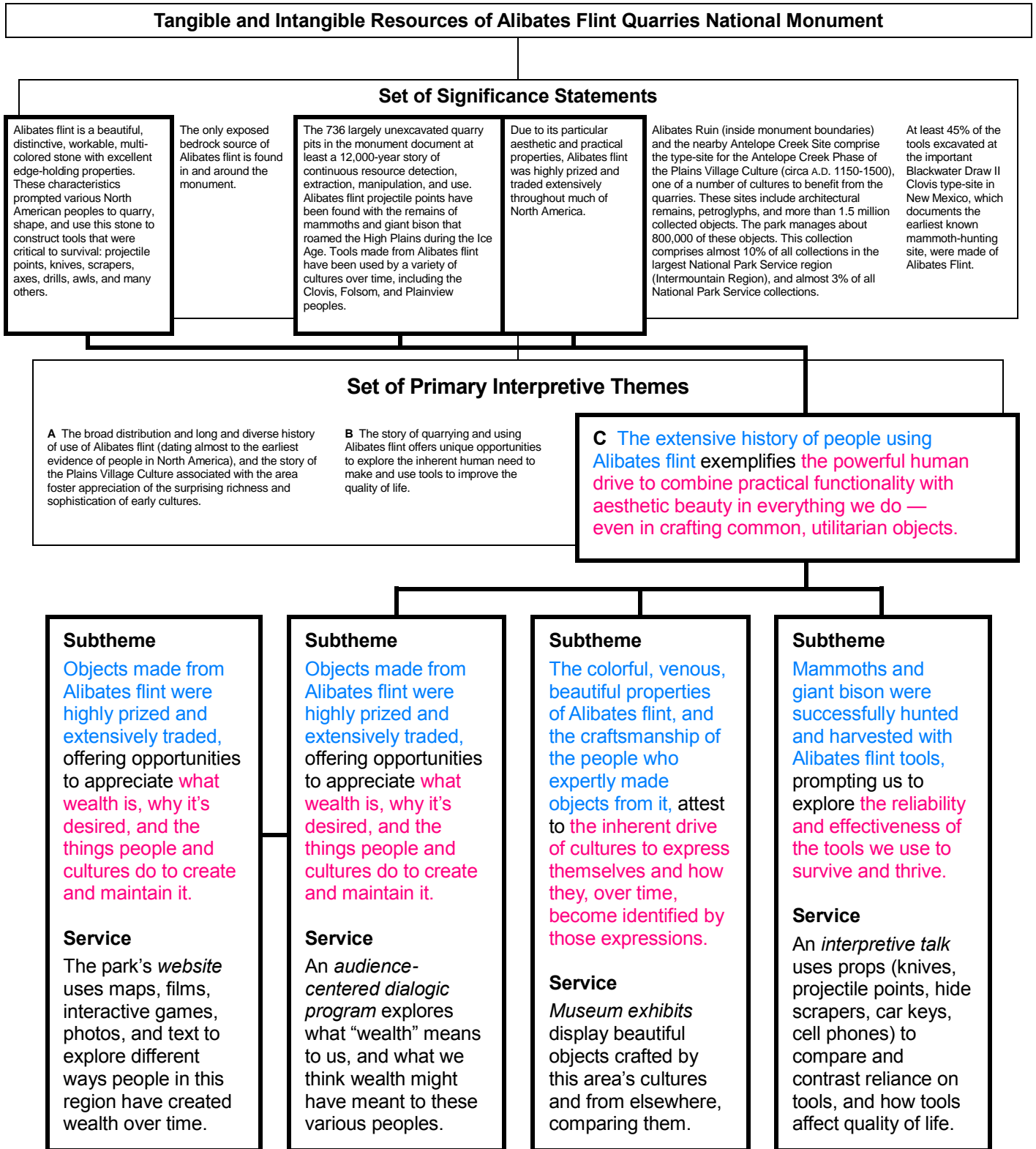
Relationship of the Draft Theme Set to the Set of Significance Statements

Compare this theme with all others, and as part of the overall set. Refine as needed. These questions will help ensure that the quality of the draft set has achieved the workshop goal:

- Do the **relevance phrases** that end each theme — as a set — represent the park's most significant meanings? (*This is the 30-second reply to: What's the park about?*)
- Do the **park resource phrases** that start each theme — as a set — represent the park's most significant resources? (*This is the 30-second reply to: Why is the park about those things?*)
- Does the entire set of draft primary interpretive themes convey the **complete set** of significance statements?
- Is each theme **critical** to achieving the interpretive mission?
- Will these themes be **useful guides** in creating subthemes?
- Do the statements reflect **current scholarly** inquiry and interpretation, including changes that might have occurred since the park's establishment?
- Does each theme do more than just **restate** one or more significance; does it include tangibles, intangibles, and relevant universal intangible concepts?
- Is each theme a complete, **understandable** sentence?

A Case Study in Theme Writing

One Primary Interpretive Theme Prompts Multiple Subthemes



● Planning Examples

This subchapter contains park sets of significance statements and primary interpretive themes *as they appeared at the conclusion of the theme workshops*. These versions (rather than final versions) best demonstrate the initial work product resulting from the workshops. Further editing might have occurred.

The examples are ordered alphabetically to facilitate navigating through them. This content can be referenced by the planner during the workshop (*see the Use Them section below*), or can also be used for self-learning.

Use Them

These examples are not typically handed out during a workshop — partially because participants are already faced with moving through, then managing, many handouts — but some or all of these examples could be referenced, if needed:

- In some cases, the planner might refer to one of the example statements if it appears that doing so would advance the work of the participants. Sometimes, other parks have also addressed content that is similar to that of the current workshop, and comparing and contrasting the themes of other parks with current drafts can be illuminating and inspiring. In these cases, the planner reads aloud the appropriate significance and/or theme(s).
- In other cases, the planner might determine beforehand that one or more of the example

sets might be helpful for participants to refer to during the workshop, and therefore includes these examples in the handouts taken to the workshop.

- And in other cases, it might not be useful to reference them via either technique.

The letters that each theme statement begins with (e.g. “A —”) are included as shorthand labels. For instance, “We could discuss *Theme A* together.” These labels aid interpretive operations: They help interpretive workforces communicate about, track, and implement interpretive themes in their work. They are included herein for those operational purposes. It should be noted, however, that for other purposes — such as for use within a *Foundation Document* context — these shorthand identifiers are removed.

Print Them

If you decide to use some or all of these in printed form, print part or all of these examples as follows:

- print ***multiples*** (one copy per participant) plus several extras to have on hand for unexpected participants (this really does occur)
- print ***two-sided***
- print in ***black ink***
- print on ***white paper***
- could be bound as a reference packet, if desired

Amistad National Recreation Area

Significance Statements

As one of only two reservoirs managed jointly by the United States and the Republic of Mexico, Lake Amistad commemorates a water conservation partnership between the two nations.

The waters of Lake Amistad provide diverse water-based recreational opportunities including some of the finest recreational black bass fishing in the southwestern United States.

Amistad National Recreation Area protects and interprets exceptional examples of the area's distinct Lower Pecos River style rock art, one of the most significant and densest concentrations of Archaic rock art in the world.

Amistad National Recreation Area contains hundreds of archeological sites and a museum collection of over 980,000 artifacts including many uncommon perishable artifacts from dry rock shelters. These resources provide important information from over 10,000 years of Native American hunter-gatherer, US military, ranching, and railroad history.

Amistad National Recreation Area includes one of the largest tracts of public land available for hunting in southwest Texas.

Amistad National Recreation Area encompasses ruggedly scenic canyon lands at the convergence at three ecological zones (Chihuahuan Desert, South Texas Brushlands, and Texas Hillcountry) and three rivers: the Rio Grande and the clear, spring-fed Devils River and Pecos River.

Primary Interpretive Themes

A — Featuring an extensive, clear reservoir at the convergence of three rivers, three ecological zones, and migratory flyways within a semi-arid, rugged landscape, Amistad National Recreation Area provides diverse opportunities for land- and water-based outdoor recreational experiences to enhance the health and well-being of park visitors.

B — Amistad National Recreation Area protects and interprets exceptional examples of one of the most significant and dense concentrations of Archaic rock art in the world, hundreds of archeological sites, and a museum collection of almost one million artifacts — offering unique opportunities to appreciate how peoples past and present express cultural identity and connect to their environments.

C — The area's history of Spanish exploration, military operations, ranching, and railroad development offers insights into the formation of the present-day United States and its legacy.

D — Built and maintained in a spirit of friendship between the United States and Mexico, the Amistad Dam provides flood control, water storage, power generation, and recreational opportunities — highlighting the benefits of intercultural cooperation toward mutual goals, human resilience, and our evolving relationship with dynamic landscapes.

Canyon de Chelly National Monument

Significance Statements

Relationships. Located on Navajo trust land and having a resident community, Canyon de Chelly is unique among national park units. A mutual decision was made to establish the site as a national monument because the National Park Service and Navajo Tribal Council recognized the importance of Canyon de Chelly. The National Park Service, Navajo Nation, and canyon community work in conjunction to manage park resources and enable traditional and contemporary lifeways.

Cultural Continuity. Canyon de Chelly National Monument preserves one of the longest, continually inhabited locations by Native American communities in the United States, spanning at least 5,000 years. Tseyi, the place within the rock, sustains a living community connected to a landscape of great historical and spiritual significance — a landscape composed of places infused with collective memory and defining moments in Navajo history. It is essential to the spiritual and traditional lives and cultural identity of many native peoples.

Watershed. Water is the central element woven throughout the landscape, history, and cultures associated with the canyon. In this environment “water is life.” The largest watershed on the Defiance Plateau, Canyon de Chelly, Canyon del Muerto, Monument Canyon, and associated tributaries provide a perpetual water source that has sustained diverse plant, animal, and human life throughout time.

Cultural Resources. The quantity, diversity, and integrity of cultural resources at Canyon de Chelly provide outstanding opportunities to study and interpret long-term relationships between people and land. Integrated archeological and cultural landscapes reflect a long occupational history, spanning the Archaic through Basketmaker, prehistoric Puebloan, transitional period, historic Navajo and Pueblo, and early European contact. The canyon system contains protective alcoves and cavates that preserve exceptional architecture, the largest, most intact assemblage of perishable materials (i.e. basketry, sandals, reed mats, etc.) in the country, and one of the largest concentrations of pictographs and petroglyphs in North America.

Scenic Values. Canyon de Chelly offers especially striking examples of canyon scenery. The vibrant yet serene beauty of the monument is found in the shapes, colors, contrasts, and interplay of light and shadows across natural and cultural features. The perpendicular red cliffs of the de Chelly sandstone rise from the wash to heights of up to 1000 feet. Scenic vistas from the canyon rims look onto spectacular geological formations, such as Spider Rock and Fortress Rock. From the north and south rim roads, visitors also experience expansive views of high desert mesas, vegetation and distant mountains. These qualities create inspirational and memorable experiences for residents and visitors from around the world.

CACH Foundation Document draft (2015).

Primary Interpretive Themes

A — Water at Canyon de Chelly continuously shapes landscapes and sustains diverse plant, animal, and human life — reminding us of our ongoing dependence on water and the personal and societal decisions that affect it.

B — The iconic features of Canyon de Chelly — its intimate scale and sheer cliffs, geological shapes and vibrant colors, contrasts of light and shadow, exceptional cliff dwellings and rock art, and the serene agricultural landscape — offer opportunities to appreciate how the interplay of nature and culture can create inspiring, memorable beauty.

C — Canyon de Chelly preserves one of the longest, continually inhabited locations by Native American communities in the United States — to which the quantity, diversity, and integrity of material culture attest — a landscape essential to the spiritual lives and cultural identity of many native peoples, exemplifying the intimate, complex, and dynamic relationships between people and land that can develop through long-term interactions.

D — Tséyi’, the place within the rock, sustains a living community connected to a landscape of great historical and spiritual significance — a landscape composed of places infused with collective memory and defining moments in Navajo history — fostering contemplation of the defining moments that have occurred in the cultures that we connect ourselves to, as well as in our own lives.

E — Located on Navajo Trust land, supporting a resident community, and managed cooperatively by the National Park Service and Navajo Nation, Canyon de Chelly National Monument allows for traditional and contemporary life ways to continue here — offering opportunities for us to explore our shared values and preservation ethics, as well as consider our own.

Theme-writing workshop (2015-05-13).

Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve

Significance Statements

Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve:

- Contains the tallest dunes in North America and one of the most fragile and complex dune systems in the world.
- Protects a globally significant water- and wind-driven system, which includes creeks that demonstrate surge flow, a rare hydrologic phenomenon.
- Provides tremendous scenic settings that, for many, provoke strong emotional responses. These settings (including massive dunes surrounded by alpine peaks, a desert valley, creeks flowing on the surface of the sand, pristine mountains, and rural rangeland) offer spacious relief from urban America, exceptional opportunities for solitude and quiet, and a remarkably unspoiled day and night sky.
- Hosts a great diversity of plants and animals, including insect species found nowhere else on earth. The system, which spans high desert to alpine life zones, supports rare biological communities that are mostly intact and functional.
- Contains some of the oldest (9,000+ years before present) known archeological sites in America. The dunes have been identified as having special importance by people of various cultures, and the area is recognized for the culturally diverse nature of human use.
- Provides special opportunities for recreation, exploration, and education in the highly resilient dune mass and adjoining creek environments.

Primary Interpretive Themes

A — Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve protects a globally significant water- and wind-driven dune system — including extraordinary examples of reversing dunes (creating the tallest dunes on the continent) and creeks that demonstrate surge flow (a rare hydrologic phenomenon) — a system so unusual that it inspires extensive scientific study and enables an unexpected freedom in the pursuit of rejuvenating recreation.

B — The unexpected combination of massive dunes surrounded by alpine peaks, a desert valley, and creeks flowing on the surface of the sand forms a unique scenic landscape that inspires awe and wonder, and prompts us to share that beauty with others.

C — Experiencing this place's nighttime starscape, soundscape, and nocturnal life stimulates a deep appreciation of, delight in, and reliance on one's own, complete set of senses — just one more way that Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve makes you feel more alive.

D — This landscape — presently composed of dunes, mountain passes, and water in an arid environment — has been a cultural crossroads over thousands of years, and retains its special and sacred significance to many diverse cultures today, prompting us to ponder the places that are special in our own lives.

E — Protecting and appreciating the health of this place's endemic species, biological diversity, and unusual ecological juxtapositions encourages development of stewardship and wilderness ethics.

Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park

Significance Statements

Lyndon B. Johnson conducted his official duties as president from his home on the LBJ Ranch for more than one-quarter of his presidency. Johnson used jet aircraft and other technological advancements to become the first American president to work “virtually” from the remote location of his Texas ranch.

The historic setting of the Boyhood Home and Johnson Settlement areas in Johnson City, Texas, reflects President Lyndon B. Johnson’s humble origins and the importance of community that influenced his policy agenda as president.

The site of the Texas White House, the LBJ Ranch is a physical manifestation of Lyndon B. Johnson’s personal and political life, the site of his ancestral homeplace as well as a key aspect of his personal and public image.

Lyndon and Lady Bird Johnson’s deep-rooted connection to the rural Texas Hill Country landscape shaped policies directed toward natural and historic conservation, and inspired the establishment of the park.

Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park, as part of a community of presidential sites, provides a setting to interpret the functions of the US presidency, the American political system, and President Johnson’s significant legacy including his Great Society programs and the escalation of American involvement in the Vietnam War.

Primary Interpretive Themes

A — Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park tells one of the most complete stories of any American president, our 36th president, providing important insights into the American political system, the idea of public service, and the roles of politicians, news media, and citizens.

B — The places and stories of Lyndon B. Johnson’s ancestry, origins, and early life in the Texas Hill Country prompt us to appreciate how people and places in our own lives have shaped, and continue to influence, who we are.

C — The most notable aspects of Lyndon B. Johnson’s presidency — his enactment of Great Society legislation and programs and his escalation of American involvement in the Vietnam War — continue to shape the national American character and prompt today’s citizens to consider and discuss the proper roles of government in both domestic and foreign affairs.

D — Advances in technology enabled Lyndon B. Johnson to effectively perform presidential duties away from the White House — similar to how mass-produced advances in mobile technologies today enable us to remain “plugged in” when away from the workplace — providing opportunities to consider the impacts of these changes on our culture, our ability to balance work life and home life, and to balance the pursuit of liberty, prosperity, and happiness.

E — Lyndon and Lady Bird Johnson’s deep-rooted connection to the land in and around their Texas Hill Country ranch influenced their advocacy of natural and historical stewardship, and this park, preserved by the actions of the Johnsons, serves as a place for an increasingly urbanized society to connect to our nation’s rural and agricultural heritage.

Manhattan Project National Historical Park

Significance Statements

Atomic Weapon: Beginning as a race to build an atomic weapon ahead of Germany during WWII, the U.S. established the Manhattan Project at locations across the country. Through this project the United States secretly rushed to design, develop, and deploy an atomic weapon, the use of which ultimately became one of the most pivotal events of the 20th century.

- **Los Alamos:** At remote Los Alamos, world renowned scientists and engineers came together to design, develop, and help deploy the world's first nuclear weapons through unprecedented collaboration between science, industry, and military. Los Alamos also directed the first test of an atomic device on July 16, 1945, at Trinity Site in southern New Mexico. Twenty-seven months from the project's start, Little Boy, the uranium gun assembled weapon, was dropped on Hiroshima on August 6, 1945 and Fat Man, the plutonium implosion weapon, was dropped on Nagasaki on August 9, 1945 bringing the surrender of Japan.
- **Oak Ridge:** At the Oak Ridge site, the X-10 test reactor became the first plutonium-producing graphite reactor in the world. The facility at Oak Ridge produced highly enriched uranium that was used in the atomic weapon dropped on Hiroshima, Japan.
- **Hanford:** At a massive industrial complex at Hanford, Washington, the U.S. engineered and built the world's first full-scale nuclear reactor and chemical separation plant in just 18 months. These facilities produced the plutonium used in the world's first atomic explosion, known as the Trinity test, and the atomic weapon dropped on Nagasaki, Japan.

Science/Mobilization: At Manhattan Project sites in Los Alamos, New Mexico, Oak Ridge, Tennessee, and at the Hanford site in Washington, world-class scientists collaborated with industry, the U.S. military, and tens of thousands of ordinary Americans to apply original scientific discoveries into an entirely new kind of weapon.

Displacement: The unprecedented nationwide urgency of the Manhattan Project led to the displacement of generations-old settlements and tribal communities as people were forced to sacrifice homes, land, and the exercise of treaty rights for the war effort.

Ethical (or Moral) Dilemma: The development of a weapon of such destructive power created unprecedented ethical and moral dilemmas for some scientists involved with the Manhattan Project. Public opinion evolved from support for “whatever would end the war” to concern over the destruction in Japan to concern over longer term effects and potential wielding of such destructive power today.

Impact: The Manhattan Project's successful development of the atomic bomb unleashed [*unimagined? horrific? catastrophic? unparalleled?*] levels of death and devastation in Japan. This devastation and the subsequent development, testing, and proliferation of nuclear weapons has had profound global political, human, and environmental consequences that continue to this day.

Science Legacy: The science and technology used to develop atomic weapons contributed to the development and progress of many fields, such as basic science, materials science, biological science, nuclear medicine, and nuclear energy, and led to the development of the national lab system.

Primary Interpretive Themes

A — The secret cities created by the Manhattan Project, and the sacrifice and displacement connected to them, exemplified this massive wartime effort — demonstrating remarkable opportunities to reflect on the extraordinary lengths to which people and nations go to protect their futures.

B — Revolutionary science and engineering fueled the race to create the world's first atomic bomb, making the park a powerful illustration of technological innovation and collaboration, and offering guidance and insight into solving today's complex problems.

C — From beginning to end, the Manhattan Project, its WWII context, and the many complex decisions ultimately leading to the bomb that unleashed incomprehensible destructive power, prompts us to confront the profound choices and consequences that we continue to struggle with today.

D — The Manhattan Project thrust humanity into the nuclear age and forever changed the world, provoking consideration of both dramatic scientific and technological advances as well as severe human and environmental consequences.

Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument

Significance Statements

Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument is a vast Sonoran Desert designated wilderness area that protects wilderness values, such as opportunities to experience solitude and primitive recreation, expansive vistas, and dark night skies.

Distinct summer and winter rainy seasons and rare freezes contribute to the stature and diversity of Sonoran Desert communities at Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument. This environment supports a rich assemblage of tropical desert endemic species, including a number of endangered species and the largest protected concentration of organ pipe, senita, and saguaro cactus in the United States.

The monument has been continuously studied since the early 1940s, serving an international role in research, conservation, and education, and has been recognized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as a globally important biosphere reserve that is representative of the natural Sonoran Desert ecosystem.

For more than 15,000 years, Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument has been a place of trade, travel, and convergence, as evidenced through prehistoric and historic sites such as Quitobaquito Springs and other culturally significant features, and is still being used today.

Primary Interpretive Themes

A — Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument’s vast, tropical Sonoran Desert wilderness, and its more than 15,000 years of human history, offer unique opportunities to appreciate cultural and natural extremes — inviting us to examine our sense of place.

B — The official interaction of the tri-nations (Tohono O’odham, Mexico, and the United States) and their ancestral convergence in this place attest to human resilience and our evolving relationship with dynamic landscapes.

C — Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument is a globally important, Sonoran Desert living laboratory — a biosphere reserve — advancing scientific discovery and exploration that seeks to satisfy curiosity, and continually inspires us to pursue understanding.

D — Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument’s sensory-immersing experiences within vistas of cacti, mountains, and changing light and shadow — even into the night — unveil stark contrasts, humbling beauty, perspective, and personal rejuvenation.

Pipe Spring National Monument

Significance Statements

The 19th century Mormon fort, ranch, and enterprise at Pipe Spring National Monument is directly representative of, and key to the organizational, political, economic, and societal complexities and strategies of Brigham Young's leadership of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and its relationships and/or conflicts with American Indians, and relationships and struggles with the federal government.

The large-scale 19th century ranching enterprises at Pipe Spring — both Mormon, and subsequently private — were connected to and influenced the cattle business of the American West, reaching throughout the Intermountain West and as far as markets in Chicago, Omaha, and the Pacific Coast.

The monument preserves an assemblage of 19th century historical Mormon structures and artifacts, including the massive and remarkably intact Winsor Castle, other historic stone buildings and artifacts related to day-to-day living, westward expansion, western ranching, and the first telegraph station in Arizona.

Emerging at the foot of the towering Vermillion Cliffs of the Grand Staircase of the Colorado Plateau, a significant and year-round spring has both attracted and provided for flora and fauna and multicultural transit and human occupancy for thousands of years in a remote, rugged, and sparsely populated region of the Intermountain West.

Pipe Spring National Monument's geographic location between early iconic and scenic national parks, its role in the promotion of the newly established National Park Service under Director Stephen Mather's leadership, and Mather's personal involvement in the site's establishment, are important in the history of the Service.

Pipe Spring National Monument's continued partnership with the Kaibab Band of Southern Paiute since the establishment of the monument, and its location within their reservation lands, offers unique opportunities to preserve, explore, and interpret the tribe's culture and history.

PISP Foundation Document draft (2015).

Primary Interpretive Themes

A — The various lifeways and subsistence strategies utilized at Pipe Spring, and their impacts, offer diverse opportunities to experience and reflect upon the difficulties of survival and adaptation in an arid environment, and the results of our day-to-day decisions about where and how we live.

B — Winsor Castle, East Cabin, and other significant aspects of Pipe Spring's history attest to the complex approaches of the U. S. Government and Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints in interacting with American Indians — inviting us to explore and better appreciate American history and build understanding and acceptance of differing cultural viewpoints.

C — The United States Government's 19th century perception that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints might threaten the integrity of the young nation, and the Church's perception that the United States might imperil its communal organization and religious freedom, created a unique relationship that challenges us to compare and contrast past and present conflicts between religious freedom and organization, and separation of church and state.

D — National Park Service Director Stephen Mather's personal involvement in Pipe Spring National Monument's establishment, and related leadership and promotion of the national park system, serves as an example of personal vision and action that inspires conservation and enjoyment of our shared heritage.

Theme-writing workshop (2015-10-14).

San Antonio Missions National Historical Park

Significance Statements

The Spanish Empire's efforts to colonize, evangelize, and defend the northern frontier of New Spain — reflected by the architecture, landscapes, and functioning acequias and agricultural systems — are preserved as the most complete, geographically concentrated, and intact group of Spanish Colonial mission complexes in the world.

San Antonio Missions National Historical Park resources are the result of the complex interweaving of peoples and cultures from indigenous groups, central and northern New Spain, and the Spanish settlers that precipitated a rapid, fundamental, and permanent change most dramatically among the indigenous groups. This new society, neither wholly indigenous nor wholly Spanish, has continually evolved to become the predominant culture of South Texas.

In partnership with the National Park Service, the Archdiocese of San Antonio and local parishes preserve and provide public access to San Antonio Missions National Historical Park's four historic mission churches, all of which are active today. This is the only park unit in the National Park System that has this type of partnership.

Primary Interpretive Themes

A — Like a grand tapestry of interwoven warp and weft, the history of these missions displays recurring opportunity and imposition, will and submission, action and consequence, gain and loss — a picture that inspires us to study and appreciate history in such a way that we emerge better equipped to chart our own future and influence the future of others.

B — The hardship, devastation, and uncertainty of life in this region during the 17th and 18th centuries influenced the extent to which indigenous groups accepted or rejected mission culture — allowing us to more deeply identify with our human capacity to adapt to challenge.

C — The complex mixing of colonial Spain with the indigenous people of this region offers unique opportunities to understand and reflect upon continuity and loss of religious beliefs, cultural identity, and sense of place in the world.

D — Past and present dynamic communities with functioning agricultural systems, complex architectural features, and natural and cultural landscapes at San Antonio Missions National Historical Park, demonstrate how landscapes shape, and are shaped by, human societies.

Tonto National Monument

Significance Statements

The distinctive Salado architecture at Tonto National Monument represents some of the best-preserved cliff dwellings in the American Southwest.

The complex, Upland Sonoran Desert environment at Tonto National Monument has led to diverse types of archeological resources and a high site density, representing a broad range of cultural groups extending for more than ten thousand years.

Natural and cultural resources within Tonto National Monument are significant to a number of contemporary Native American tribes, as evidenced by oral history and continuing traditional practices.

Primary Interpretive Themes

A — Tonto National Monument’s well-preserved Salado cliff dwellings and diverse artifacts, located within the Upper Sonoran Desert, provide opportunities to experience a thriving culture deeply rooted in its natural setting, provoking contemplation of our own connections to nature.

B — The beautiful and complex craftsmanship evidenced by Salado architecture, pottery, textiles, and other artifacts — influenced by the continuous movement of people and ideas — boldly exemplifies how cultural identity, and the value of aesthetic expression, were and remain essential to society.

C — For at least ten millennia, the Tonto Basin area has provided, and continues to provide, a home to many diverse people — emphasizing past and present ties to home and heritage.

Waco Mammoth National Monument

Significance Statements (first draft)

The paleontological resources of Waco Mammoth National Monument, both *in situ* and excavated specimens, represent the nation's first and only recorded evidence of a nursery herd of Pleistocene Columbian mammoths.

The nursery herd of Columbian mammoths is thought to have perished as the result of a single catastrophic natural event. These specimens provide an exceptional opportunity for the study and interpretation of the behavior and herd structure of this extinct species.

Associated with the remains of the mammoths are the remains of other Pleistocene flora and fauna, including western camel, saber-toothed cat, dwarf antelope, American alligator, and giant tortoise, which further the understanding of the area paleoecology.

The site's integrity includes both the *in situ* specimens and their undisturbed geological context sheltered by a state-of-the-art facility and the collected specimens which were excavated and are curated by a single nearby institution, Baylor University. The presence of undisturbed sediments provides the potential for continuing scientific study.

The environment created by the confluence of the Bosque and Brazos rivers provided food and water that repeatedly drew mammoths to the site. Along with other recorded Pleistocene faunal and floral remains, the site provides an important snapshot of the rich diversity of life that existed along the interface of the Great Plains and the Gulf Coastal Plains physiographic provinces during the late Pleistocene, better known as the Ice Age.

The site provides an exceptional opportunity to benefit the scientific community and to foster public understanding of the science of Paleontology. The *in situ* remains provide an opportunity to teach about the scientific method and that paleontology is a science in which researchers reconstruct events that have already taken place. The site could serve as a keystone upon which previous discoveries can be reexamined and new discoveries compared. Future scientific studies will continue to inform the interpretation of the site for the benefit of the scientific community as well as the visiting public.

The culmination of over 30 years of community efforts and investment led to the 2015 designation of Waco Mammoth NM. The site will continue to be collaboratively managed by the National Park Service, City of Waco, Baylor University, the Waco Mammoth Foundation, and others for the benefit of present and future generations.

Primary Interpretive Themes

A — Waco Mammoth National Monument's paleontological resources, and the potential for more discoveries, inspire us to explore, appreciate, and ponder the mystery and diversity of life on Earth.

B — The group dynamics of Waco Mammoth National Monument's nursery herd, dying together in a natural event, provoke exploration of familial and community bonds in times of crisis.

C — Building on the visionary support and perseverance of Central Texas communities, Waco Mammoth National Monument is the embodiment of successful advocacy and collaboration to preserve and share America's heritage.

White Sands National Monument

Significance Statements

In 1933, President Hoover established White Sands National Monument for the preservation of the world's largest gypsum dunefield and its sources of gypsum sand. This enormous dunefield — over 275 square miles in size — is used by astronauts in space as a geographic reference.

The hydrologic, geologic, and climatic forces of the Tularosa Basin create the gypsum cycle that gave birth to and sustains this active and dynamic gypsum dunefield. Rainfall, ground water, and a regional aquifer are essential ingredients that nourish the world's largest gypsum dunefield.

Vast and brilliant white, the geologically young — less than 10,000 years old — gypsum dunefield has provided the conditions for evolution through rapid adaptation in the flora and fauna of the dunefield and surrounding desert scrub communities. Adapted white-colored species include an animal from every class of vertebrate, except birds, in North America.

Legislated to protect resources of scientific interest, the uniqueness of White Sands National Monument promotes a wide range of innovative research that globally leads the way in the fields of rapid evolution and dune dynamics. Internationally recognized experts study aspects of the monument to expand understanding in subjects as diverse as soil micro fauna to space exploration.

At first glance, the dunefield appears inhospitable and uninhabitable, yet the monument protects numerous and diverse evidence of over 10,000 years of human history. The physical properties of gypsum create a time capsule when heated, preserving dateable charcoal, plant, and animal remains, and other cultural material; producing unique archaeological sites called gypsum hearth mounds not known to occur anywhere else in the world.

The monument protects a mega-track site containing the highest density of fossilized Pleistocene animal tracks in North America. These highly ephemeral tracks are found in sediments of ancient Lake Otero and range in age from 20,000 to 40,000 years old. The tracks in the sand and lake sediments are revealed in an unpredictable manner by wind and rain.

White and stark, the awe-inspiring dunefield offers distinctive opportunities to hike barefoot on moist and cool sands, sand sled year-round, and experience solitude broken only by wind and occasional military sounds. This unique setting inspires learning, appreciation, and stewardship.

Comprehensive interpretive planning workshop (2014-06-14).

Primary Interpretive Themes

A — Shifting geologic and climatic processes created ideal conditions for the source of the Earth's largest and geologically recent gypsum dunefield — prompting ongoing wonder at its unspoiled uniqueness found nowhere else on Earth.

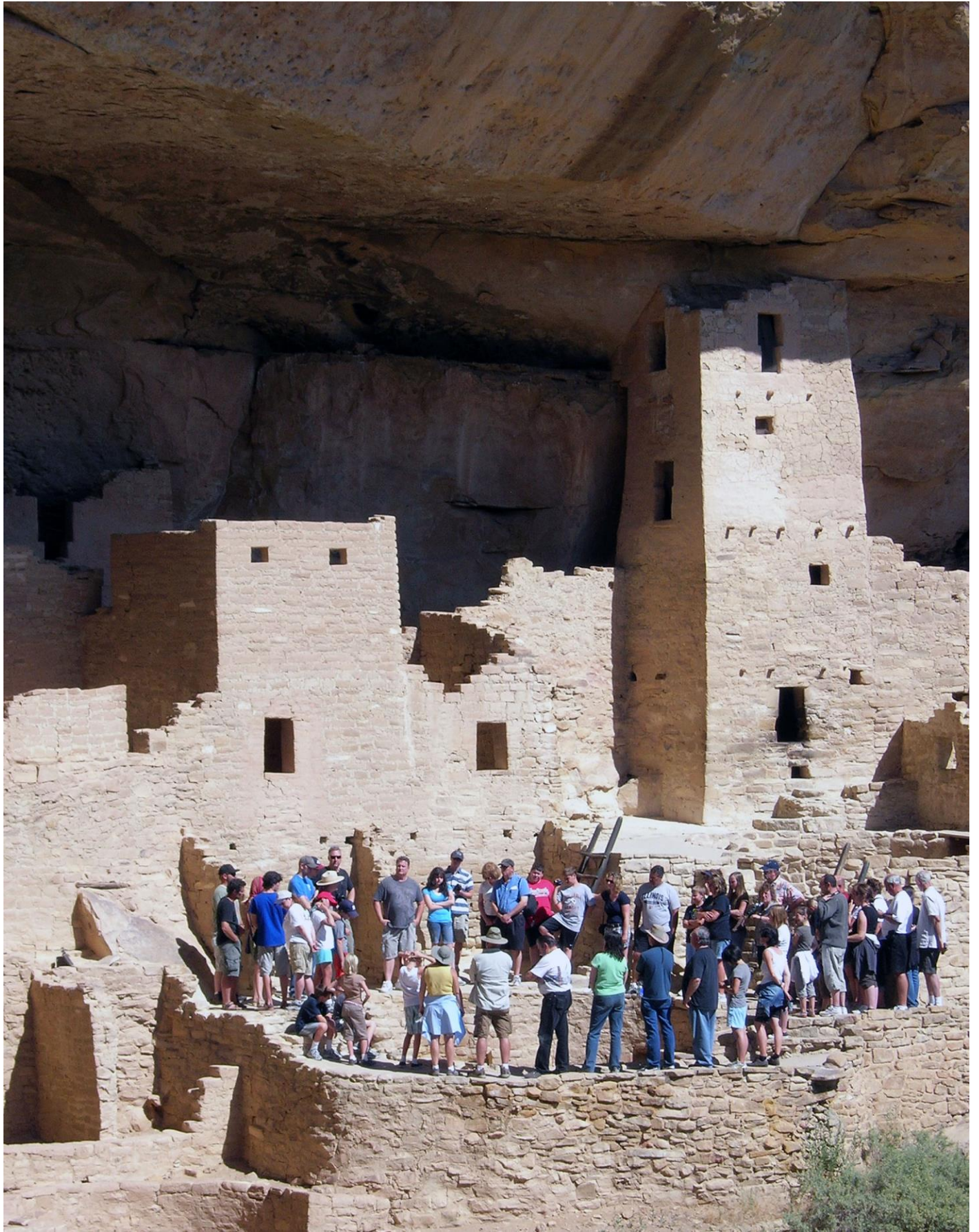
B — Water is essential to the creation, formation, and preservation of the dune system — without which, the dunefield would be irreparably damaged and scientific and recreational pursuits would be permanently degraded.

C — The monument's biological richness and diversity, with more than 50 endemic species, offers insights into the amazing resilience of life and its ability to thrive in what would commonly be thought of as an inhospitable desert environment.

D — Scientific research and discoveries regarding the monument's biological and geological richness — so evident and important that they garner international scientific interest — and the ongoing sharing of this work with the public, offer insights into the degree to which scientific pursuits inform our lives.

E — The richness and diversity of human interaction with this region — from habitation by the paleoindians to aeronautical experimentation — provides opportunities for comparing and contrasting the values and adaptations of former cultures to those of our own.

Comprehensive interpretive planning workshop (2014-06-24).



Visitors participate in a subtheme-guided interpretive talk at Cliff Palace, Mesa Verde National Park, Colorado. NPS Photo (RKohen)

Training Subthemes

If your objective is to lead a training session that teaches interpreters how to write subthemes for their own interpretive work, then this chapter was written for you!

This second optional chapter focuses on supervisory interpreters, peer coaches, and trainers of frontline interpreters. It provides the tools necessary to conduct a training session that teaches frontline interpreters how to write interpretive subthemes for their own work (interpretive and educational services, programs, and products).

Subchapters include:

- **Trainer’s Guide.** This subchapter contains a printable guide for the trainer to use in setting up and conducting the training session. It contains checklists, detailed instructions, tips, scheduling, scripted language, and more.
- **Training Handouts.** This subchapter contains handouts to be used in a training session.
- **Training Examples.** This subchapter contains interpretive subthemes resulting from the *Theme Guide* approach to theme-writing.

About You, the Trainer

A successful trainer of this content will possess the following knowledge, skills, and abilities:

- Deep interpretation and education experience, and the ability to clearly share these experiences in the furtherance of workshop goals.

- Excellent listening, synthesizing, organizing, visual information portrayal, and facilitation skills (recognizing and managing one’s own biases).
- Experience using Microsoft Word® to successfully customize and use these training materials.
- Ability to think on the fly while always remaining attentive to the session’s students.

About the Trainees

The composition of the training session’s participant group can vary widely, though a typical group of trainees would include:

- the park’s interpretive and educational workforce (including permanent and seasonal staff members, volunteers, and partners who perform interpretive duties)

About the Setting

Conceptually, this training session is most likely to occur within the context of a larger, parkwide seasonal or similar training curriculum. For most NPS parks, seasonal training is typically a springtime endeavor, a time when the largest group of park interpreters are hired and trained concurrently. This group-based training has the added benefit of learning about individual work assignments and providing the opportunity to immerse oneself in the park’s resources, both of

which aid in writing subthemes for interpretive or educational services, programs, and products.

Throughout the year, similar training is also sometimes conducted on an as-needed basis. This subtheme-writing training session could also occur within the context of a professional conference, among varied offerings. *Theme Guide's* approach works equally well in all of these potential settings.

Physically, the training session typically occurs onsite at the park, though it can also occur equally successfully offsite. (See the *Pre-workshop Setup* section below for additional details about meeting room requirements.)

About the Training Session

The training session typically requires two hours of actual work time (not including breaks). About 50% of the time will be devoted to instruction, followed by 50% being devoted to interpreter-specific application of that instruction (theme writing). This material can be taught across multiple sessions, though a single training session is recommended.

Conducting a training session usually involves these parts (see the *Trainer's Guide* subchapter for detailed information):

- Pre-session Setup & Checklist
- Travel to the Park (if applicable)
- Training Session
- Post-session at the Park
- Post-session Reporting

Pre-session Setup & Checklist

Pre-session tasks usually include setting up the process, expectations, and logistics.

When setting up a training session, a tried-and-true set of processes includes:

- Creating a folder with five subfolders that help keep everything organized:
 - (1 docs sent to the park)
 - (2 docs received from the park)
 - (3 travel) (if applicable)
 - (4 training session)
 - (5 photos)
 - (6 follow-up)
- Copying the electronic version of *Theme Guide* to the "(4 training session)" subfolder.

- Adding an abbreviation of the park name to the *Theme Guide* filename (e.g. "ThemeGuide - {PARK}.docx").
- *Tip:* You might consider adding that same park-name abbreviation to the title text of the front cover (e.g., replacing "Theme" or "Guide" with {PARK}) to indicate that this file is now park-specific and intended only to be used for this specific project. This can be helpful when doing similar work for multiple parks at the same time.
- Customization of *Theme Guide's* contents can then begin. Throughout *Theme Guide*, customization usually entails searching for placeholders (such as "{parkname}") and globally replacing them with the appropriate, park-specific information. Words-in-braces placeholders on yellow backgrounds are designed to be easily found and modified. (More information about this feature is located on the introductory pages of appropriate chapters and subchapters.)

Checklist. Prior to the training session, you'll want to set up specific logistics and determine the answers to some organizational questions, many of which will be incorporated into the *Trainer's Guide* subchapter.

- Has a room been reserved for the session, set up in a "U" shape with tables and chairs, and possessing adequate wall space for posting 15-25 flipchart sheets (viewable all at once)?
 - Yes (default)
 - No
- Does the room setup include two (2) flipchart easels with paper pads?
 - Yes (default)
 - No
- If the flipchart paper sheets are not self-adhering, will we be able to use tape or push pins to post the sheets, and will those be available?
 - Yes (default)
 - No

- *On the day of arrival or day before the session, can the trainer visit and set up the meeting room (to avoid having to arrive early the morning of the session)?*
 - Yes (default)*
 - No (must do morning of session)*
- *On the day of arrival or day before the session, can the trainer obtain one of the flipchart paper pads (to pre-write a few pages)?*
 - Yes (default)*
 - No*
- Does the room setup include table tents (for participant names), lined writing paper, pens or pencils?
 - Yes (default)*
 - No*
- Starting time?
 - _____
- Ending time?
 - _____
- Lunch time (if applicable)?
 - _____
- Lunch length?
 - _____
- Will lunch be provided for participants?
 - No (default)*
 - Yes (note on the agenda handout)*
- What is the actual label of the park's interpretation and education division, branch, group, or unit?
 - Interpretation & Education (default)*
 - Interpretation & Visitor Services*
 - Resource Education*
 - _____
- How many people will participate (total for handouts and room arrangement)?
 - _____
- Are any of the participants from elsewhere (e.g. other parks)?
 - No (default)*
 - Yes (consider optional Personal Relevance questions to start the session)*

- Does the chief or manager need a sign-in sheet to be routed through participants to record specific information?
 - No (default)*
 - Yes... to include:*
 - Name*
 - Organization*
 - Phone*
 - Email*
 - _____
- Regarding attire, sometimes both the trainer and participants are dressed in business casual attire (except for any person who might be called upon to perform uniformed duties during the day). This varies, though, as sometimes everyone is in uniform.
 - Yes, discussed with chief (default)*
 - No*

Travel to the Park (if applicable)

If you routinely check your luggage for airline travel, here is a packing tip:

- **Checked bag.** Pack clothing, personal items, training session handouts, and markers in checked luggage. Include a package of self-adhering (but removable) dots in case the need for a technique involving ranking or voting arises.
- **Carry-on Backpack.** Take a backpack with you that can be placed under an airline seat. Pack it with all the items needed to successfully conduct the training session in case the checked luggage becomes lost. The backpack's items typically include:
 - Trainer's Guide
 - One full set of markers
 - One of each handout
 - Props
 - Reference files and notes

Shipping handouts and supplies to the park before the session is another option, if time permits.

Training Session

Tip: Be at ease; the process bears the weight of the load. Focus on the participants' needs, as their servant, and all will be well.

Post-session at the Park

Tasks could include:

- determining how much of what was penned on flipchart sheets needs to be transcribed into a document about the session (discuss with chief)
- photographing each of the flipchart sheets and/or transporting them, as needed

Travel Home (if applicable)

Tip: You've done it! — you've conducted a successful, subtheme-writing training session. Life is short so relax, celebrate, and enjoy the moment.

Post-session Reporting

Once back at the office or your regular place of business, tasks could include:

- transcribing the flipchart sheets
- sending them to the park, as needed
- continuing to consult and advise, as needed

The project is usually concluded at this point.

• Trainer’s Guide

This subchapter contains a printable guide for the trainer to use in setting up and conducting the training session. It contains checklists, detailed instructions, tips, scheduling, scripted language, and more.

Customize It

Although the entire Trainer’s Guide should be reviewed for potential customization to best meet the specific needs and conditions of a training session, specific parts of this subchapter have been marked for mandatory customization before the Trainer’s Guide is used:

{Text on a yellow background set within braces — i.e. “{Note...}” — is used throughout the chapter to indicate places where customization is needed. **Search** for “{” to locate places where information should be customized. **To replace these notes or text marked like this for customization**, highlight the text block from outer brace through outer brace — i.e. “{Note...}” — then overwrite it, paste to replace it, or click “delete” to delete it. This brace-to-brace technique completely removes the yellow highlight as the text is updated. A last double-check can also be made by searching for any remaining braces “{” or yellow highlights in the document, and addressing them as needed.}

Refer to the customized, printed Trainer’s Guide during real-time facilitation, further customizing it (if needed) as the training session evolves.

Print It

A couple of considerations come to mind when preparing to print *Theme Guide* for leading a training session:

- It’s handy to print and take the park-specific, customized version of *Theme Guide*’s Trainer’s Guide subchapter to the training session, bound with a staple. This places all of the instructional content into the fewest printed pages possible, which can then be easily held, used, and marked up during the training session. This should accompany the trainer during travel (and not be placed in checked luggage) — if traveling to the site.

After customizing both the Trainer’s Guide and Training Handouts subchapters for a specific training session, *print those subchapters* as follows:

- print ***one*** copy for the trainer’s use
- print ***two-sided***
- print in ***black ink***
- print on ***white paper***
- bind with a ***staple***
- For reference, it’s also helpful to print and take the entire, park-specific, customized *Theme Guide* to the training session. This document not only has the customized material in it, but also contains other content that might be referenced during the training session or in chatting with participants during breaks. Being less critical to the success of the training session, this version could be placed in checked luggage if desired. Taking a digital

version of the *Theme Guide* file can also be a comforting backup to have on hand.

After customizing both the Trainer's Guide and Training Handouts subchapters for a specific training session, *print the entire document* as follows:

- print ***one*** copy for the trainer's use
- print ***two-sided***
- print in either ***black ink*** or ***full color ink*** or some pages of each, as needed
- print on ***white paper***
- bind as desired (e.g. binder clip, 3-ring binder, plastic report spine, spiral comb, large staple, etc.)

Trainer's Guide

{trainer's name}
{trainer's office}

{PARK} Subtheme-writing Training Session

{Note: Search for and replace “{parkname}” with the full title, e.g. “White Sands National Monument.” Search for and replace “{PARK}” with an acronym (the park’s NPS acronym, e.g. “WHSA”). Delete this note.}

Schedule in Brief

{training-day} {training-date} Training session Day {training-time1} - {training-time2}

Supplies & Materials Checklist

Park contact provides:

- Room that includes both tables and chairs, set up in a “U” shape, with adequate wall space for posting 15-25 flipchart sheets (viewable all at once).
- (2) flipchart easels w/paper pads.
 - Obtain one of these paper pads **the day before the training** so that you can pre-write five pages.
- Tape or push pins, table tents (for participant names), writing paper, pens.

Trainer provides:

- This entire, park-specific, **Theme Guide** document.
- Support materials and personal notes.
- Various park planning documents (CIP, *Foundation Document*) and background documents, as needed.
- Training session handouts for participants: (____ + 3 = ____)
- Prop: (1) U.S. coin (a nickel, as a back-up prop).
- (4) boxes markers.
- (2) binder clips to secure loose corners of flipchart paper pad for transport from pre-session location to meeting room.
- (1) package of ranking dots, multi-colored (might be useful to achieve consensus, at times — infrequently needed).

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{**Note:** After customizing all Planner’s Guide contents, update the Planner’s Guide Contents. To update the book-mark-based table of contents, place your cursor on a text line within the table (but not on a dot leader or page number), right-click or Control-click your mouse, select “Update Field,” select “Update entire table,” and click “OK.” Delete this note.}

Pre-session Tasks

Room Setup Tasks

Typical Room Arrangement

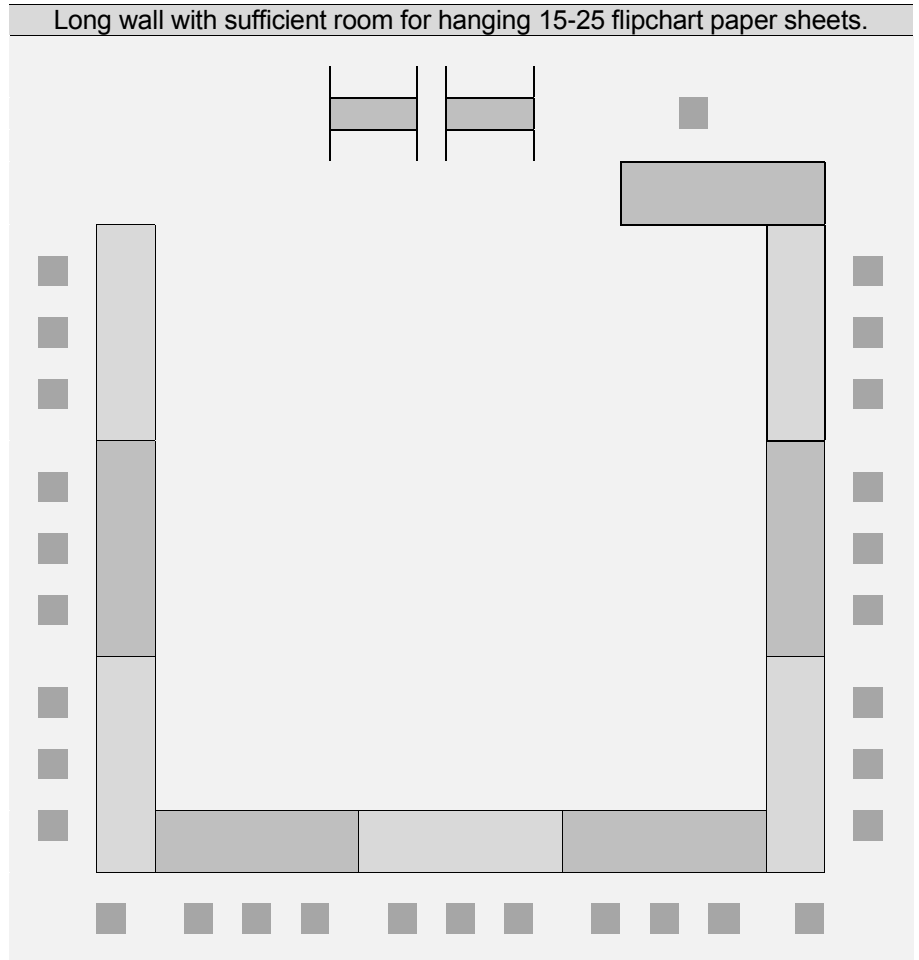
Always arrange the room on the day before the training session if possible (discuss this with park personnel ahead of time). Having to arrange it the morning of the training session can be needlessly stressful and counterproductive.

Every training event varies since room dimensions and the possibility of space oddities — like support columns in a space — create challenges to setting up a room in the most useful organization possible.

Set up tables and chairs in a “U” shape, with a table for the trainer at the end of the “U.” (The arrangement illustrated here provides seating for 29 participants, plus the trainer — a group size that should probably not be surpassed.)

Place one flipchart in the open space of the “U.” Later in the training session, place the second flipchart next to the first.

- Review and set up training session meeting room at: _____ Before the session



- Purchase water, food, and snacks for the trainer.

Food & Drink Tasks

- Purchase snacks for participants?

HANDOUTS & SUPPLIES

Handouts & Supplies Tasks

Position the handouts, supplies, and table tents.

FLIPCHART

Welcome (not visibly titled)

Write the title on the second paper sheet:

- Welcome!

Note: Leave a blank sheet on top of this one for protection during transport to the training site (if written offsite).

.....

Edit or Delete to Avoid Redundancy? Edit or delete parts (or all) of this content if a previous session within this training event already accomplished the intent of this section. Delete this note.

.....

FLIPCHART

Introductions (not visibly titled)

Skip two sheets to maintain opacity between sheets.

Write the title and the following questions, but keep them concealed until needed:

- Who are you?
- {If participants are park workforce members only, then use...} What do you do for the park?
OR
- {If participants also include partners or people from other parks, use this instead...} What organization or interest do you represent?
- {If time is limited, then omit the third question}
OR
- {If there is adequate time for answers to this third question, then also include...} Why is this place special or important to you (*personally*)?

FLIPCHART

Visitor Experience (not visibly titled)

Skip two sheets to maintain opacity between sheets.

Draw the following diagram on a sheet that is a couple sheets back from the previous one (for opacity).

Draw an even amount of vertical space in between each boxed row.

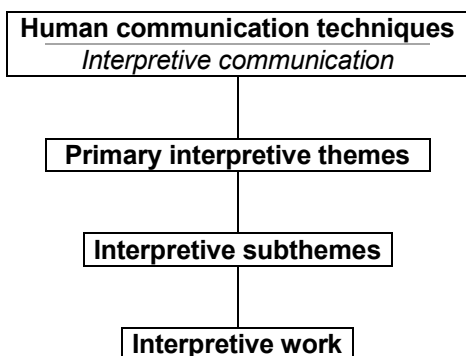
Leave space for additional text and boxing to be written under the lowest boxes.

Diagram (as in a flowchart) the relationship of:

- Human communication techniques
- Primary interpretive themes
- Interpretive subthemes
- Interpretive work

Use ONLY LIGHT GREEN marker to outline and interconnect the **boxes**.

Use ONLY GREEN marker to write the **text** inside the boxes.



FLIPCHART

Park Resources Question (not visibly titled)

Skip two sheets to maintain opacity between sheets.

Write the following statement in large text at the **TOP** of a sheet, using no more than the top 50% of the sheet.

- **These park resources (_____)**
make this one of **x**
the best places to
experience [**z**].

Use **ONLY BLUE marker** (bold) for **These park resources (_____)**.
x

Use **ONLY RED marker** (thin) for everything else.

Neatly tear off the bottom 50% of the sheet, and discard it.

FLIPCHART

Relevance Question (not visibly titled)

On the next sheet:

Write the following statement in large text in the **BOTTOM** 50% of the sheet (so it can be visible while the prior sheet is displayed over it at the same time).

- This place enriches humanity
by being one of the best places
in the world to experience _____.
z

Use **ONLY BLUE marker** (thin) for **This place**.

Use **ONLY RED marker** (thin) for **enriches humanity**.

Use **ONLY RED marker** (bold) for everything else.

FLIPCHART PAPER PAD

Tips: If written away from the training room...

- Leave a blank sheet on top for protection during transport to the training site.
- After pre-writing these flipchart sheets, use binder clips or tape to secure both lower corners of the flipchart pad for easier transport.

{time1}
10 minutes

Personal Relevance

.....
Edit or Delete to Avoid Redundancy? Edit or delete parts (or all) of this content if a previous session within this training event already accomplished the intent of this section. Delete this note.
.....

The **chief** sometimes makes a few brief remarks regarding the importance of themes, then introduces the trainer.

FLIPCHART Introductions (not visibly titled)

The **trainer** stands, personally answers these questions, then reveals the flipchart sheet.

The tone should be conversational, friendly, warm, and welcoming to foster participants getting to know each other.

The **trainer** then directs the same questions to the participant at the nearest end of the u-shaped room arrangement, calling them by name.

Then each **participant** responds in kind, going around the room.

{**CHOICE B** - If not choice A, then conduct choice B... Delete if not used.}

Ask for a show of hands (and raise own hand). (It's likely that **all** hands will be raised.)

Welcome & Introductions

Who are you?

What do you do at the park?

{OR}

What organization or interest do you represent?

{**CHOICE A** - If a scheduled exercise, also include...} Why is this place special or important to you (**personally**)?

I'd like each of us to answer these questions. Let's introduce ourselves, starting here (gesturing)...

{**CHOICE B** - If not choice A, then conduct choice B... Delete if not used.}

How many of you are here at the {parkname} because this is a special or important place to you?

8:10

5 minutes

{**Note:** Most of the session start times throughout the document (e.g. “8:10” above) need to be adjusted manually based on the park-specific, customized start time of this training session. Delete this note.}

Social Relevance

.....

Edit or Delete to Avoid Redundancy? Edit or delete parts (or all) of this content if a previous session within this training event already accomplished the intent of this section. Delete this note.

.....

Agency Mission

This is a significant place to us
as individuals.

This is a significant place to us
as a society.

That’s the reason it’s a unit within
our national system of parks.

The **National Park Service** manages that
system, protecting and interpreting
America’s significant places.

It’s mission is described on side two
of this handout..

HANDOUT

- (Cover)
- Personal Relevance
- Social Relevance

Distribute the handout.

Flip over to side two.

Read aloud:

- Social Relevance

Verbally reinforce key ideas.

The park’s Interpretation & Education
division – and the partners who work
alongside us – play a critical role in
facilitating that **enjoyment, education,**
and **inspiration.**

Envisioning the Future

Here's what we're going to achieve together in this training session...

HANDOUT

- Training Goal
- Session Subjects
- Park Purpose

Distribute the handout.

Read aloud:

- Training Goal

Verbally reinforce key ideas.

We're going to work together to exercise our theme-writing skills.

Questions?

Session Subjects

And here's how we're going to accomplish that...

HANDOUT

- Training Goal
- Session Subjects
- Park Purpose

Read aloud:

- Session Subjects

Verbally reinforce key ideas.

Questions?

Are You Here?

.....
Edit or Delete to Avoid Redundancy? Edit or delete parts (or all) of this content if a previous session within this training event already accomplished the intent of this section. Delete this note.
.....

Please sign-in for our records...

HANDOUT

- Are you here?

Circulate the handout.

If you think of something after the training session, that you'd like me to know, you'll find my contact information on the second side of the sheet.

Please feel free to jot it down.

Logistics

.....

Edit or Delete to Avoid Redundancy? Edit or delete parts (or all) of this content if a previous session within this training event already accomplished the intent of this section. Delete this note.

.....

There are a few logistical details you should know about...

Present training logistics information:

- Breaks
- Food & drink
- Restroom locations
- Phone
- Other?

Questions?

8:25
5 minutes

Park Purpose

.....
Edit or Delete to Avoid Redundancy? Edit or delete parts (or all) of this content if a previous session within this training event already accomplished the intent of this section. Delete this note.
.....

HANDOUT

- Training Goal
- Session Subjects
- Park Purpose

Flip over to side two.

Read aloud:

- Park Purpose

Verbally reinforce key ideas.

Purpose Statement

From this point forward, our focus will be placed on this specific park...

Questions?

Park Significance

.....
Edit or Delete to Avoid Redundancy? Edit or delete parts (or all) of this content if a previous session within this training event already accomplished the intent of this section. Delete this note.
.....

HANDOUT

- Park Significance
- Park Themes

Hold up as a prop.

Significance Statements

Let's talk a little more about national significance now.

- The **left** column on this next handout describes what significance statements are.
- The **right** column displays the actual significance statements for this park.

Please read the left column, then look up so I know you're done.

When you're all looking up, we'll review the park's significance statements together **as a group**. Doing that will help us establish a common understanding of this material.

Distribute the handout.

Self-reading, 5 minutes:

- Park Significance

Verbally reinforce key ideas.

Questions?

Let's read the actual park statements.

HANDOUT

- Park Significance
- Park Themes

Read aloud:

- Park Significance

Verbally reinforce key ideas.

This body of work is the foundation upon which all of the park's themes are built.

Questions?

8:35
15 minutes

Theme Philosophy — This place enriches humanity.

.....
DO NOT MODIFY! Even if some of this content has been taught earlier in this training event, this section's content needs to remain whole and intact, as written, to most effectively achieve this section's intent. Delete this note.
.....

FLIPCHART 2
This place enriches humanity.

Reveal a blank sheet.

A short, four-word sentence will guide our efforts today.

FLIPCHART 2
This place enriches humanity.

Leave space for all four words of the sentence to be written on the same line.

Use ONLY BLUE marker.

Write "This" — the first word in the sentence.

This

This

In this sentence, the word "This" indicates specificity, as in "this" instead of "that."

FLIPCHART 2

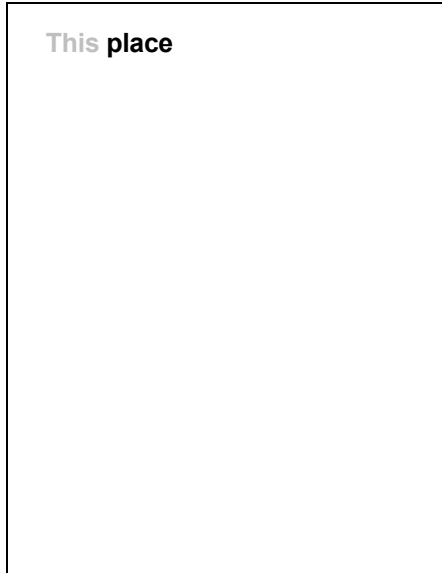
This place enriches humanity.

Leave space for all four words of the sentence to be written on the same line.

Use ONLY BLUE marker.

Write “place” — the second word in the sentence.

This place



This **place**

When we think of the word “place,” we usually think about its geographic location, its physical coordinates.

In this sentence, the word “place” is used in a much broader context: It encompasses all of the characteristics that contribute to this place’s national significance.

- Our **sensual** experiences here (smelling, tasting, touching, seeing, hearing) enable us to associate specific, factual, **tangible** characteristics with this place – including **people, places, events, and things**.

FLIPCHART 2

This place enriches humanity.

Leave space for two more full sentences underneath the first, plus a little white space underneath that.

Use ONLY BLUE marker.

Draw a horizontal rule vertically under “this place” and extend it two characters past (to the right of) “place” — almost halfway across the sheet.

Use ONLY LIGHT GREEN marker.

Write “Tangibles” underneath the rule.

Use ONLY GREEN marker.

Write “people, places, events, things” in a vertical column underneath the word “Tangibles.” Do not indent them (the color alone conveys the idea of a sublist.)

This place

Tangibles
people
places
events
things

- Our **intellectual** experiences here also enable us to associate specific, **intangible** characteristics with this place – including **ideas, meanings, beliefs, and values.**

FLIPCHART 2

This place enriches humanity.

Use ONLY LIGHT BLUE marker.

Write “Intangibles” underneath “things” leaving a little extra white space between them.

Use ONLY BLUE marker.

Write “ideas, meanings, beliefs, values” in a vertical column underneath the word “Intangibles.” Do not indent them (the color alone conveys the idea of a sublist.).

This place

Tangibles
people
places
events
things

Intangibles
ideas
meanings
beliefs
values

FLIPCHART 2

This place enriches humanity.

Leave space for all four words of the sentence to be written on the same line.

Use ONLY RED marker.

Write “enriches” — the third word in the sentence.

This place enriches

Tangibles
people
places
events
things

Intangibles
ideas
meanings
beliefs
values

Note - Definition of Enriches

“Enriches” is a transitive verb, meaning 1) that it expresses a doable activity and 2) that it has a direct object that receives the action of the verb.

This place **enriches**

When we think of the word “enriches,” we usually think about monetary wealth.

In this sentence, the word “enriches” is used in a much broader context: It refers to anything that enhances or increases the value of something.

What does this place enrich?

FLIPCHART 2

This place enriches humanity.

Use ONLY RED marker.

Write “humanity.” — the fourth word in the sentence.

This place enriches humanity.

Tangibles

**people
places
events
things**

Intangibles

**ideas
meanings
beliefs
values**

This place enriches **humanity**.

In this sentence, the word “humanity” is the thing being enriched.

“Humanity” embodies all that we conceive ourselves to be: our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.

For our purposes, “humanity” could also be viewed as “people” or “society” or “culture.”

This place enriches humanity.

Although this statement might come across as rather abstract or lofty or idealistic, it can be applied quite literally by reducing its scale to that of the individual.

FLIPCHART 2

This place enriches humanity.

Use ONLY RED marker.

Write “me” under the word “humanity.”

This place enriches humanity.
me.

Tangibles
people
places
events
things

Intangibles
ideas
meanings
beliefs
values

This place enriches me.

When a person experiences this place, onsite or remotely, and gets something out of it that is valuable to him or her, then his or her life has been enriched by that experience.

Simply put, this place – by virtue of everything it is and represents – adds value to the human experience.

This **national {monument}** – by definition – is one of the best touchstones for exploring our personal and national identity and character. Experiencing it can rejuvenate our spirits, challenge and strengthen our beliefs, and provoke contemplation and discussion of our past, present, and future. It offers opportunities for people to enrich their lives and broaden their experience – to enjoy a more fulfilling existence, a higher quality of life.

If we make this sentence plural...

FLIPCHART 2

This place enriches humanity.

Use ONLY BLUE marker and RED marker.

Write the plural version, using BLUE for “**These places**” and RED for “**enrich humanity.**” underneath the “me” line.

This place enriches humanity.
me.

These places enrich humanity.

Tangibles
people
places
events
things

Intangibles
ideas
meanings
beliefs
values

These places enrich humanity.

...what comes to mind?

Answer: The U.S. national park system might come to mind, which is a collection of these places that we've purposefully set aside for perpetual enjoyment, via preservation and interpretation.

- These places enrich humanity.
- And... These places enrich **me**.

Within each of these special places, we've also established a professional group that works to enhance the personal enjoyment that visitors derive from their park experiences:

- **Interpretation & Education.**

At this park, that function is conducted by the division of **{division name}**.

Let's take a closer look...

FLIPCHART 2

This place enriches humanity.

Point to the first sentence's two BLUE words "This place" on the flipchart.

This place enriches humanity.

Together, these two blue words serve to describe specific characteristics of this place.

This is the **descriptive** part of the sentence.

These observable, tangible characteristics are intermixed with the intangible meanings that the nation attaches to those characteristics.

These are park resources.

FLIPCHART 2

This place enriches humanity.

Use ONLY BLUE marker.

Draw a horizontal rule vertically under "values" and match its length to the line above it.

Write "Park resources" underneath the rule.

This place enriches humanity.
me.

These places enrich humanity.

Tangibles
people
places
events
things

Intangibles
ideas
meanings
beliefs
values

Park resources

FLIPCHART 2

This place enriches humanity.

Point to the first sentence's two RED words "enrich humanity." on the flipchart.

This place **enriches humanity.**

Together, these two red words serve to indicate why this place matters.

These two words are the **relevance** part of the sentence...

the relevance of park resources.

FLIPCHART 2

This place enriches humanity.

Use ONLY RED marker.

Draw a horizontal rule vertically under "enrich humanity" and match its length to the line at its left.

Draw a horizontal rule under this one, and to the right of the rule in the lower left of the sheet. Match its length to the line above it.

Write "Park relevance" underneath the rule.

This place enriches humanity.
me.

These places enrich humanity.

Tangibles
people
places
events
things

Intangibles
ideas
meanings
beliefs
values

Park resources Park relevance

Relevance is conveyed by **universal concepts** – intangibles (ideas, meanings, beliefs, values) that are so fundamental to the human condition that these concepts are commonly understood across most cultures.

FLIPCHART 2

This place enriches humanity.

Use ONLY LIGHT RED (PINK) marker.

Write “Universal intangible concepts” in the right column, vertically aligning “Universal” with “Intangibles.”

This place enriches humanity. me.	
These places enrich humanity.	

<i>Tangibles</i>	
people	
places	
events	
things	
<i>Intangibles</i>	<i>Universal</i>
ideas	<i>intangible</i>
meanings	<i>concepts</i>
beliefs	
values	

Park resources	Park relevance

For instance, consider the concepts of relationships – **family**, for instance. We’re each connected to a family, and though our comparisons of those connections might describe very different relationships, **we can all relate to the concept of family.**

Relating to concepts like these fosters deeper thinking and feeling about this place, thereby enhancing personal enjoyment and the individual’s preservation ethic.

Human Communication

How many of you remember English Composition in high school?

Who can tell us what the three parts of a paragraph are?

- Introduction, body, conclusion.

Who attended third grade *before* attending fourth grade?

As humans, we tend to do things sequentially and progressively:

- Description then relevance.
- First then second.
- "A" then "B."
- We tend to communicate **what** before we communicate **why**.
- We describe the **familiar**, then build a bridge to the **unfamiliar**.
- We describe what we **observe**, then extrapolate **abstract concepts**.
- We move from **simple** to **complex**.
- And we tell stories moving from **story setup**, to **struggle**, to **resolution**.

Using these techniques, humans **communicate meaning, educate each other, and transmit culture from one generation to the next.**

Interpretive and Educational Communication

For those same reasons, as interpreters and educators, we use these fundamental communication characteristics of human interaction in all we do:

- in our training
- in our planning and development of services, programs, and products
- in our live, interactive presentations of these services
- in the evaluation and coaching of our work

**That work is guided by
interpretive themes.**

Two Theme Levels

Interpreters use two levels of themes:

- **Primary interpretive themes** organize this place's largest-scale resources, meanings, and relevance for the purposes of parkwide management and planning.
- **Subthemes** nest within primary interpretive themes, and directly guide the development of specific interpretive and educational services, programs, and products.

Primary interpretive themes can be viewed as broad and expansive in scope, expressing the biggest ideas about the park's resources.

Subthemes, in contrast, are sharply focused, exploring resources and meanings in a much more detailed, in-depth manner.

Each theme statement (at either level) describes specific aspects of why and how "This place enriches humanity."

The park's **set** of primary interpretive themes, viewed as a whole, does the same for the park, as a whole: **The set describes the key reasons why and how "This place enriches humanity."**

In this training session, we're focusing on subthemes that arise from, and underpin, primary themes.

Definition of "Sentence"

Reference for the Trainer

noun | sen-tence | \ 'sen-tən(t)s, -tənz\

: a group of words that expresses a statement, question, command, or wish

Full definition of SENTENCE

4 a : a word, clause, or phrase or a group of clauses or phrases forming a syntactic unit which expresses an assertion, a question, a command, a wish, an exclamation, or the performance of an action, that in writing usually begins with a capital letter and concludes with appropriate end punctuation, and that in speaking is distinguished by characteristic patterns of stress, pitch, and pauses

<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/sentence>

[sen-tns]

noun

1. *Grammar.* a grammatical unit of one or more words that expresses an independent statement, question, request, command, exclamation, etc., and that typically has a subject as well as a predicate, as in *John is here.* or *Is John here?* In print or writing, a sentence typically begins with a capital letter and ends with appropriate punctuation; in speech it displays recognizable, communicative intonation patterns and is often marked by preceding and following pauses.

<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/sentence?s=t>

Themes Model Interpretive and Educational Communication Structure

The maximum utility of both levels of themes stems from writing them with a sentence structure that models the typical structure of interpretive work (interpretive and educational services, programs, and products), which in turn models human communication practices.

Because these progression techniques are essential truths of human communication, **employing these techniques in our theme sentences maximizes the effectiveness of the themes.**

Themes Model Visitor Enjoyment

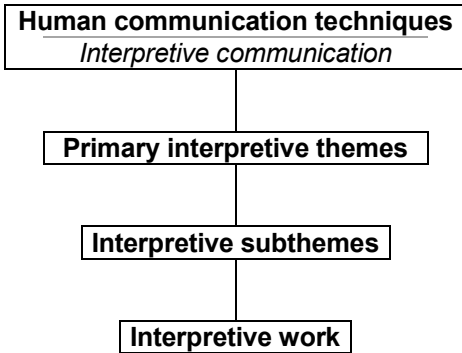
But wait; there's more!

Here's a diagram of these pieces...

FLIPCHART

Visitor Experience (not visibly titled)

Reveal the flipchart sheet that displays this diagram:



We've been focusing on the interpretive function of parks for a few minutes, but themes have an even broader importance than that implies...

Parks rely on primary interpretive themes to help us make large-scale decisions about visitor experience.

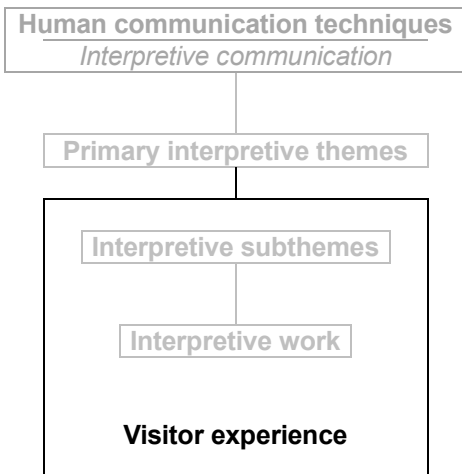
FLIPCHART

Visitor Experience (not visibly titled)

Diagram the addition of an enclosing box and label:

- Visitor experience

Use ONLY BLACK marker.



Primary interpretive themes play an important role in all parkwide decisions that need to take visitor enjoyment into account – whether the issue be adding to the campground loop, realigning a road, or zoning the park for multiple recreational uses.

Themes can help **all divisions** think through visitor experience and associated aspects of the operation.

A Unifying Approach

Everything we've discussed up to this point is a seamless, unified approach:

- Human communication techniques
- Interpretive communication
 - Primary interpretive themes
 - Interpretive subthemes
 - Interpretive work
 - I&E training
 - I&E theme sentence structure (both primary & subthemes)
 - I&E planning & presentation of services, programs, products
 - I&E coaching & evaluation
- Visitor experience

This approach results in powerful, durable, meaningful themes.

Questions?

HANDOUT

- Park Significance
- Park Themes

Flip over to side two.

Hold up as a prop.

Primary Interpretive Themes

Please flip over this handout. It's formatted just like the significance side,...

- The **left** column describes what theme statements are.
- The **right** column displays a placeholder for the themes that result from our training session.

This side is provided as a reference while we do most of the work up here on flipcharts and the wall.

Please read the left column, then look up so I know you're done.

When you're all looking up, we'll review those guidelines **as a group**.

Doing that will help us establish a common understanding of this material.

Self-reading, 5 minutes:

- Park Themes

Verbally reinforce key ideas.

The number of primary interpretive themes has a lot to do with the level of conciseness appropriate to address park significance.

It has other operational implications, too: The park's interpretation manager is responsible for ensuring that all visitors have an opportunity to experience all of the themes. Ensuring that no one theme gets so much attention that another theme is neglected is part of the job. Tracking interpretation services, programs, and products creates a check-and-balance system. The number of themes in the set has a very real impact on the ease with which services can be tracked (developing, conducting, maintaining, and evaluating them).

Questions?

Interpretive subthemes differ significantly in this respect:

- They are unlimited in number.

Each is written by an individual interpreter to guide a specific interpretive or educational service, program, or product.

Therefore, each interpretive subtheme incorporates your creativity in expressing one or more specific aspect of a primary interpretive theme.

Questions?

8:55

0 minutes

Theme Philosophy

HANDOUT

- Philosophy
- Universal Concepts

Distribute the handout.

This Place Enriches Humanity — The Handout

Here's a handout of the flipchart we just drew, as a reference.

8:55

5 minutes

Examples of Universal Intangible Concepts

HANDOUT

- Philosophy
- Universal Concepts

Flip over to side two.

Verbally reinforce key ideas.

Examples of Universal Intangible Concepts

In theme sentences, universal concepts are essential to enabling the widest range of people to relate to park resources. **They are essential to relevance.**

This side of the handout lists examples and describes their characteristics. Let's look at some of them...

Questions?

Best Practices in Thematic Expression

HANDOUT

- Theme Examples
- Themes Decoded

Distribute the handout.

Verbally reinforce key ideas.

Simplified Answers

Stone with same text in three languages.

Ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphics, Demotic script, and Ancient Greek.

Led to understanding of Egyptian Hieroglyphics.

Flip over to side two.

Demonstrate the function of the two **Thematic Content Tools** located in the lower right corner, using the first theme (upper left) as the example for **z** and **x** components.

Verbally reinforce key ideas.

Self-reading, 5 minutes:

- Themes Decoded

Theme Examples

This handout provides us with a variety of examples.

Although these are primary interpretive themes, their structures exactly match the structure we'll use to write interpretive subthemes.

Thematic Rosetta Stone

Who knows what the Rosetta Stone is?

What were those languages?

What did that do for understanding language?

Decoded

I'd like to present to you the Rosetta Stone for thematic expression.

Please flip over this handout.

This colorful side decodes the theme examples by displaying their constituent parts, showing us how they're constructed. Let's look at how that works...

Please take a few minutes and read the rest of the themes on this page.

Questions?

.....

Edit or Delete to Avoid Redundancy? Edit or delete parts (or all) of this content if a previous session within this training event already accomplished the intent of this section. Delete this note.

.....

Post these flipchart sheets...

FLIPCHART
Welcome (not visibly titled)

Post the flipchart.

FLIPCHART
Introductions (not visibly titled)

Post the flipchart.

FLIPCHART
Visitor Experience (not visibly titled)

Post the flipchart.

FLIPCHART 2
This place enriches humanity.

Post the flipchart.

Note: These flipchart sheets should remain covered (unrevealed)...

FLIPCHART
Park Resource Question (not visibly titled)

Remain covered (unrevealed).

FLIPCHART
Relevance Question (not visibly titled)

Remain covered (unrevealed).

A Case Study in Theme Writing

Now let's look at the actual theme-writing process.

Have any of you visited Alibates Flint Quarries National Monument in the panhandle of Texas?...

HANDOUT

- Alibates Flint Quarries National Monument - A
- Complete Sets of Significance Statements and Primary Themes - B

Distribute the handout.

Verbally reinforce key ideas on both sides.

HANDOUT

- Select a Primary Theme & Identify its Universal Concepts - C
- Trace Universal Concepts back to Significance Statements - D

Distribute the handout.

Verbally reinforce key ideas on both sides.

Similar Universals in Three Significance Statements

The United States of America has an official motto.

Does anyone know what it is?

Since 1787, it's been printed on every U.S. coin.

Does anyone have a nickel with them?

Let's look at that.

"E pluribus Unum" is Latin for,
"Out of many, one."

That phrase represents the idea that from 13 original colonies, our nation was formed.

"E pluribus Unum" applies to themes, too.

That's the typical relationship between individual significance statements and individual theme statements:

- **Each theme statement usually arises from multiple significance statements, though not a requirement.**

PROP

- US coin

Owner of coin holds up as a prop.

Or...

Trainer holds up backup coin as a prop.

HANDOUT

- Selected Significance Statements — Decoded - E
- Working with Relevance - F

Distribute the handout.

Verbally reinforce key ideas on both sides.

HANDOUT

- Working with Relevance (continued) - G
- Working with Park Resources - H

Distribute the handout.

Verbally reinforce key ideas on both sides.

HANDOUT

- Working with Park Resources (continued) - I
- Working with Park Resources (continued) - J

Distribute the handout.

Verbally reinforce key ideas on both sides.

HANDOUT

- Working with Park Resources (continued) - K
- Working with Park Resources (continued) - L

Distribute the handout.

Verbally reinforce key ideas on both sides.

HANDOUT

- Working with Relationships - M
- Working with Relationships (continued) - N

Distribute the handout.

Verbally reinforce key ideas on both sides.

HANDOUT

- Working with Relationships (continued) - O
- Interpretive Subthemes & Services
Flow from a Primary Theme - P

Distribute the handout.

Verbally reinforce key ideas on both sides.

HANDOUT

- One Primary Interpretive Theme
Prompts Multiple Subthemes - Q

Distribute the handout.

Verbally reinforce key ideas on side Q.

PRESENTATION

Present an impromptu, brief interpretive talk to demonstrate how the example subtheme organizes an interpretive talk.

Close by repeating the example subtheme.

Questions?

Write Subtheme Statements

Individual Subtheme-writing Process

Thus far, we've discussed:

- park purpose
- national significance
- "This place enriches humanity."
- universals
- a theme-writing case study

Now we're going to start writing!

Each of you will now try your hand at writing one subtheme.

We'll each write one, then we'll each present what we wrote to the group, so we can learn from each other.

HANDOUT

- Park Significance
- Park Themes

Hold up as a prop.

Instructions

To help with that, please pull out your **Park Significance / Park Themes** handout. These form the foundation for the interpretive subtheme you'll write.

Echo the **case study** section of the training handouts by following this specific process:

- Select the primary interpretive theme that motivates or interests you, or to which you have been assigned.

(This is the theme under which your new subtheme will nest.)
- Identify the primary interpretive theme's universal intangible concepts.
- Trace those universals back to the corresponding universal intangible concepts in the park's significance statements, thereby identifying the subset of significance statements that best underpin this primary interpretive theme.

(continued)

- Write the universals within those corresponding significance statements, including implied (unstated) universals.
- Further brainstorm universal intangible concepts that fit within the primary interpretive theme's universals.
- Narrow that list of universal intangible concepts to those on which you intend to focus your interpretive service, program, or product.
- Write a summary phrase of those universals, filling in this blank Z with your phrase:

This place ***enriches humanity by being one of the best places in the world to experience*** _____ [z] .

(This relevant, universal intangible concepts phrase will conclude your subtheme sentence.)

- Within those corresponding significance statements, identify specific tangible and intangible park resources, then narrow them down to only those that best support the universals phrase you just wrote.
- Write a summary phrase of those narrowed park resources, placing them in the blank X and using the universals phrase you wrote to fill in the blank Z:

These park resources (_____) [x] make this one of the best places in the world to experience _____ [z] .

(This park resources phrase will begin your subtheme sentence.)

- Write the placeholder relationship phrase "offer unique opportunities to appreciate" between those two phrases.
- Transform this three-phrase group into a sentence.

- Edit your draft interpretive subtheme to appropriately and effectively connect the universal intangible concepts to the park resources that enable us to experience those concepts at this place.

Questions?

We'll take 15 minutes to do this.

Ready, set, go!

Self-reading and writing, 15 minutes:

- Interpretive Subthemes
-

The **trainer** stands and personally reads aloud his/her subtheme.

The **trainer** then directs the same question to the participant at the nearest end of the u-shaped room arrangement, calling them by name.

Then each **participant** responds in kind, going around the room.

Using peer coaching techniques, the **trainer** interactively asks questions of participants about what they heard, and directs their attention to the strongest aspects of the draft subthemes.

Discuss the Draft Interpretive Subthemes

How did that go? How do you feel about your work?

We're going to share now, reading our draft subthemes aloud, learning from each other's creativity. I'll start...

Thank you -- those are terrific!

Let's take a closer look at some of them...

HANDOUT

- Working with Relationships (continued) - O
- Interpretive Subthemes & Services
Flow from a Primary Theme - P

Refer to side O.

If time allows, participants can edit their draft subthemes in response to the answers to these questions, as needed.

Once all these questions are successfully answered, the training session goal has been achieved.

Testing the Draft Set of Themes

These questions will help us ensure that the quality of the draft subthemes have achieved our training goal:

- Does the **relevance phrase** that ends your subtheme appropriately nest within the primary theme's most significant meanings?
- Does the **park resource phrase** that starts your subtheme appropriately nest within the primary theme's most significant resources?
- Will this subtheme be a **useful guide** in organizing a service, program, or product?
- Does your subtheme reflect **current scholarly** inquiry and interpretation, including changes that might have occurred since the park's establishment?
- Does your subtheme include appropriate tangibles, intangibles, and relevant universal intangible concepts)?
- Is your subtheme a complete, **understandable** sentence?

Questions?

11:55
5 minutes

Conclude the Training session

Closeout

Great job!

• Training Handouts

This subchapter contains handouts that the trainer distributes during the training session. This content can also be used for self-learning.

Customize Them

Although the entire set of handouts should be reviewed for potential customization to best meet the specific needs and conditions of the training session, specific parts of this subchapter have been marked for mandatory customization before the handouts are used:

{Text on a yellow background set within braces — i.e. “{Note...}” — is used throughout the chapter to indicate places where customization is needed. **Search** for “{” to locate places where information should be customized. **To replace these notes or text marked like this for customization**, highlight the text block from outer brace through outer brace — i.e. “{Note...}” — then overwrite it, paste to replace it, or click “delete” to delete it. This brace-to-brace technique completely removes the yellow highlight as the text is updated. A last double-check can also be made by searching for any remaining braces “{” or yellow highlights in the document, and addressing them as needed.}

Use Them

Although it’s tempting — for the sake of efficiency and convenience — to combine all of the handouts into a packet for each trainee, and to distribute those

at the beginning of the training session, this is discouraged. Instead, this session’s handouts are intended to be distributed individually at specific times, in a specific sequence, during the session. This technique accomplishes several important things:

- It maintains the participants’ focus on the current topic.
- It maintains the designed learning sequence.
- It provides a series of mini-breaks (visual designers refer to this as “white space”) that provide relief and time for reflection between pieces of content.

Print Them

After customizing this Training Handouts subchapter, *print the handouts* as follows:

- print **multiples** (one copy per participant) plus several extras to have on hand for unexpected participants (this really does occur)
- print **two-sided**
- Print all handouts in **full-color ink**;
Or, if you need to limit color printing, do this:
 - print in **black ink** the cover page through the Park Themes page
 - Print in **full color ink**: the Theme Philosophy flipchart-summarizing handout through the Case Study pages
- print on **white paper**
- **do not bind**

{parkname}

{Replace with the brief, descriptive title and paragraph from the park website.}

{Replace this graphic rectangle with an inspiring park photo. The photo should be full width. Preferred (and maximum acceptable) dimensions are 4.7" wide x 6.26" tall (3:4 ratio). Shorten the vertical dimension as needed. Delete this note.}

{caption}. (NPS photo)

Writing Interpretive Subthemes for Interpretive and Educational Services, Programs, & Products

{month year}



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Personal Relevance

Welcome!

- Who are you?
- What do you do for the park?
- Why is this place special or important to you (*personally*)?

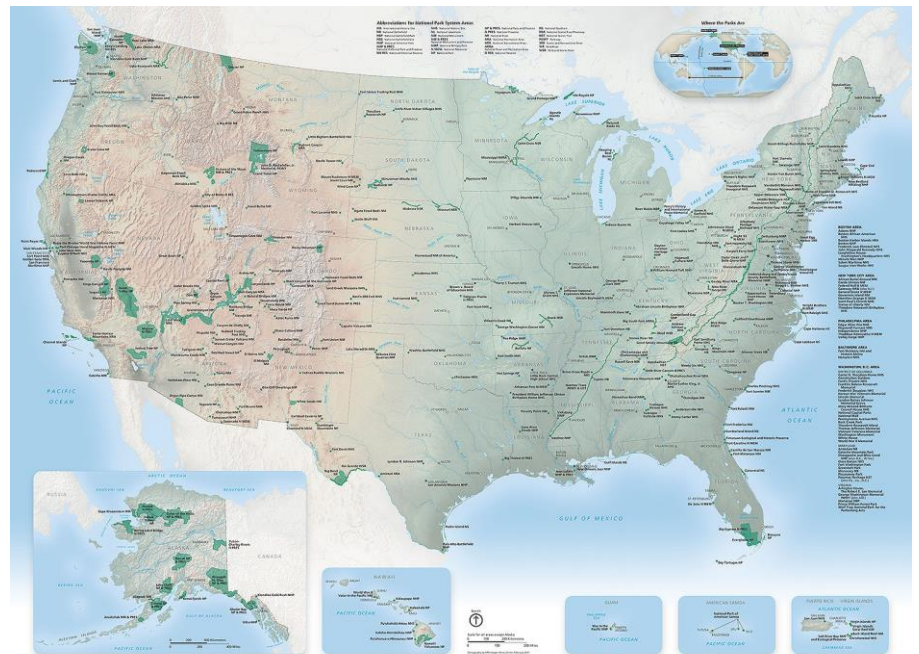
Social Relevance

The **National Park Service (NPS)** was established in 1916. Referring to the park units that would be placed under the jurisdiction of the new agency, the NPS Organic Act stated that the agency's purpose will be

...to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein, and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.

More recently, the agency's mission was re-stated in the NPS **Strategic Plan, 2000** (at right).

Agency Mission



The National Park Service manages more than 400 sites across the country.



The **National Park Service** preserves unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the national park system for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations.

The National Park Service cooperates with partners to extend the benefits of natural and cultural resource conservation and outdoor recreation throughout this country and the world.

Training Goal

Enhancing Relevance through Themes

By the end of this session, you will be able to write an effective, meaningful interpretive subtheme to guide your own interpretive work (an interpretive or educational service, program, or product).

Session Subjects

Subjects

- Personal Relevance
- Social Relevance
- Training Goal
- Session Subjects
- Park Purpose
- Park Significance
- Park Themes (Primary Interpretive Themes)
- Theme Philosophy
- Universal Concepts
- Theme Examples
- Case Study
- Writing an Interpretive Subtheme

Park Purpose

A park's purpose statement identifies the specific reason(s) for establishment of a park. It's drafted through a careful analysis of a park's enabling legislation and the legislative history that influenced its development. The purpose statement lays the foundation for understanding what is most important about a park.

{park-specific information, e.g...
{parkname} was established by
President {name}'s January 18,
1933 proclamation.}

Purpose Statement

{purpose statement(s)}

Park Significance

The significance of places and things is embedded in their enduring tangible and intangible resource characteristics: elements that are so attractive, interesting, and engaging that people choose to experience them time and again. Every organization that offers heritage interpretation describes, in some way, the importance of the people, places, events, and things that relate to a park. Significance descriptions can be found in enabling legislation, a charter, mission statement, foundational statement, general management plan, or master plan. These statements are **factual and evidence-based**, are linked to park purpose, and are supported by data, research, and scholarly consensus. This description is most useful when it is more than just a resource list — when it includes relevant context that makes the items on such a list meaningful to the reader.

Such a description of resources is characteristically formatted as a set of **significance statements**.

Significance statements, taken together as a whole, describe the distinctiveness of the combined resources of a park, including natural, cultural, inspirational, scientific, historic, recreational, and other aspects. They include tangible and intangible characteristics and the context in which these characteristics are embedded. The statements are listed in an order that best contributes to clarity; the sequence does not connote a hierarchy of importance.

In most organizations, the mission of the organization, the purpose of the site, and the site's set of significance statements combine to focus management actions and operations on the preservation and enjoyment of those attributes that most directly contribute to the importance of the place. In the NPS, significance statements also express why a park's resources and values are important enough to merit designation as a unit of the national park system.

Significance Statements

{significance statements}

Park Themes

Attaching meanings to places and things is a fundamental human trait. We ascribe special significance to people, places, events, and things that rejuvenate our spirits, challenge and strengthen our beliefs, and provoke contemplation and discussion of our past, present, and future. Such resources provide opportunities to explore our shared heritage and help us define our character as individuals, communities, and societies.

Story is the communication tool that most effectively facilitates exploration of resource meanings. Societies depend on the power of **story** to explore, clarify, and share ideas, meanings, beliefs, and values that collectively constitute culture. **Story** is at the heart of human interaction and, consequently, at the heart of heritage interpretation.

Parks develop a set of overarching theme statements to organize the largest-scale ideas and meanings related to the park's resources. These theme statements are called **primary interpretive themes**. A park's set of primary interpretive themes fully represents the breadth of its stories, building on the entire set of significance statements.

While significance statements focus on facts and place them within a larger context of meanings, **themes focus on making those meanings accessible to visitors**. Themes guide the development of infrastructure and services that facilitate visitors making connections to the people, places, events, and things associated with a park.

The set of primary interpretive themes is complete when it provides all of the organizational structure needed by park personnel to develop specific opportunities for visitors to explore and relate to all of a park's stories. The set is usually comprised of a handful of themes (commonly three to five).

Primary Interpretive Themes

{set of primary interpretive themes}

**This place enriches humanity.
me.**

These places enrich humanity.

Tangibles
people
places
events
things

Intangibles
ideas
meanings
beliefs
values

Universal
Intangible
Concepts

Park resources

Relevance

Universal Concepts

Examples of Universal Intangible Concepts

Change

- Change generates additional change.
- Change can be either positive or negative.
- Change is inevitable.
- Change is necessary for growth.
- Change can be evolutionary or revolutionary.

Conflict

- Conflict is composed of opposing forces.
- Conflict may be natural or human made.
- Conflict may be intentional or unintentional.
- Conflict may allow for synthesis and change.

Exploration

- Exploration requires recognizing purpose and responding to it.
- Exploration confronts “the unknown.”
- Exploration may result in “new findings” or the confirmation of “old findings.”

Force

- Force attracts, holds, or repels.
- Force influences or changes.
- Force and inertia are co-dependent.
- Force may be countered with equal or greater force.

Order vs. Chaos

- Order may be natural or constructed.
- Order may allow for prediction.
- Order is a form of communication.
- Order may have repeated patterns.
- Order and chaos are reciprocals.
- Order leads to chaos, and chaos leads to order.

Patterns

- Patterns have segments that are repeated.
- Patterns allow for prediction.
- Patterns have an internal order.
- Patterns are enablers.

Power

- Power is the ability to influence.
- Power may be used or abused.
- Power is always present in some form.
- Power may take many forms (chemical, electrical, political, mechanical).

Relationships

- Everything is related in some way.
- All relationships are purposeful.
- Relationships change over time.

Structure

- Structure has parts that interrelate.
- Parts of structures support, and are supported by, other parts.
- Smaller structures may be combined to form larger structures.
- A structure is no stronger than its weakest component parts.

Systems

- Systems have parts that work to complete a task.
- Systems are composed of sub-systems.
- Parts of systems are interdependent upon one another and form symbiotic relationships.
- A system may be influenced by other systems.
- Systems interact.
- Systems follow rules.

Note: These example universals (change, conflict, exploration, etc.), along with their bulleted descriptions, are provided to foster conversation and comprehension. Although many of the universals connected to your park's resources might be listed here, this list should not be considered as all-encompassing or complete.

Source: Extracted from <http://teacherweb.com/ca/carpinteriausd/gateprogramteresakoontz/Universal-Concepts.pdf>, *Universal Concepts and Generalizations* (which was adapted from: *Curriculum Guide for the Education of Gifted High School Students, Texas Association for the Gifted and Talented, 1991*).

Theme Examples

Best Practices in Thematic Expression

The story of quarrying and using Alibates flint offers unique opportunities to explore the inherent human need to make and use tools to improve the quality of life.¹

The history of people using Alibates flint exemplifies the powerful human drive to combine practical functionality with aesthetic beauty in everything we do — even in crafting common, utilitarian objects.¹

The fort at colonial Dorchester, built as a response to the French and Indian War and adapted for use in the Revolutionary War, exemplifies the need of communities to ensure the safety of their members.²

The defeat of the proposed Echo Park dam in Dinosaur National Monument in the 1950s played a significant role in the development of the American conservation movement, and continues to frame public debate over the best uses of public lands.³

The paradoxical aspects of fossilization in the Florissant Formation fuel our drive to solve Earth's mysteries and inspire us to marvel at the complexity and subtlety of the natural world.⁴

The invention of interchangeable parts in arms manufacturing at the Harpers Ferry Armory provided unprecedented momentum to the Industrial Revolution, forever changing the human experience and intensifying the ongoing dialogue regarding the costs and benefits of technological innovation.⁵

The popularity of recreational activities at Lake Meredith National Recreation Area are testament to the importance of both relaxing and also invigorating recreation in maintaining a happy and productive life.⁶

Mesa Verde is vitally important to many affiliated peoples who view the park's resources as critical to their religious beliefs, cultural identity, and sense of place in the world.⁷

The diversity, context, and sheer volume of cultural and natural resources at Mesa Verde make the park an important center for studying how science and traditional cultural knowledge interact to help us learn about, and learn from, the past.⁷

One of America's first national parks, and a World Cultural Heritage Site, Mesa Verde National Park is one of the best places to study the evolving ethics of resource conservation, preservation, interpretation, and stewardship.⁷

Primary Interpretive Themes

The integrity, diversity, and magnitude of Olympic National Park's relatively unimpacted wilderness ecosystems powerfully affect the human spirit — providing outstanding opportunities for exploration, research, introspection, and inspiration.⁸

This geologically active area, formed by rifting, volcanism, and erosional forces including the Rio Grande and its tributaries, has attracted people for thousands of years and powerfully influenced their lifeways, traditions, and beliefs — exemplifying how landscapes shape and influence human societies.⁹

The hallowed ground of Washita provides opportunities to understand the resiliency of the human spirit and the struggle of societies to maintain cultural identity.¹⁰

Sources

- ¹ Alibates Flint Quarries NM
- ² Colonial Dorchester State Park (South Carolina)
- ³ Dinosaur NM
- ⁴ Florissant Fossil Beds NM
- ⁵ Harpers Ferry NHP
- ⁶ Lake Meredith NRA
- ⁷ Mesa Verde NP
- ⁸ Olympic NP
- ⁹ Petroglyph NM
- ¹⁰ Washita Battlefield NHS

Note: A park's set of *primary interpretive themes*, set of *significance statements*, description of *fundamental resources and values*, and *purpose* statement are intimately related to each other, interconnected in a descriptive chain. Though they have different purposes, they inform and depend on each other. To illustrate best practices in thematic expression with many varied examples, only selected themes are shown, and these without this larger, real-world context.

Themes Decoded

Best Practices in Thematic Expression — Decoded

Thematic Rosetta Stone

The story of quarrying and using Alibates flint offers unique opportunities to explore the inherent human need to make and use tools to improve the quality of life.

The history of people using Alibates flint exemplifies the powerful human drive to combine practical functionality with aesthetic beauty in everything we do — even in crafting common, utilitarian objects.

The fort at colonial Dorchester, built as a response to the French and Indian War and adapted for use in the Revolutionary War, exemplifies the need of communities to ensure the safety of their members.

The defeat of the proposed Echo Park dam in Dinosaur National Monument in the 1950s played a significant role in the development of the American conservation movement, and continues to frame public debate over the best uses of public lands.

The paradoxical aspects of fossilization in the Florissant Formation fuel our drive to solve Earth's mysteries and inspire us to marvel at the complexity and subtlety of the natural world.

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This geologically active area, formed by rifting, volcanism, and erosional forces including the Rio Grande and its tributaries, has attracted people for thousands of years and powerfully influenced their lifeways, traditions, and beliefs — exemplifying how landscapes shape and influence human societies.

The hallowed ground of Washita provides opportunities to understand the resiliency of the human spirit and the struggle of societies to maintain cultural identity.

Thematic Content Tools

Read the sentence below, then fill in the blank [**z**] with any of the red phrases on the sheet.

This place enriches humanity by being one of the best places in the world to experience _____.
z

Using any of the red phrases on the sheet as variable [**z**], read the sentence below filling in the blank [**x**] with that phrase's corresponding blue phrase.

*These park resources (_____) make this one of the _____ best places in the world to experience [**z**].*
x

KEY — Interwoven tangible-intangible park resources < relationship > universal intangible concepts.

A Case Study in Subtheme Writing

Alibates Flint Quarries National Monument



Alibates Flint Quarries National Monument	A
Complete Sets of Significance Statements and Primary Themes	B
Select a Primary Theme & Identify its Universal Concepts	C
Trace Universal Concepts back to Significance Statements	D
Selected Significance Statements — Decoded	E
Working with Relevance	F,G
Working with Park Resources	H,I,J,K,L
Working with Relationships	M,N,O
Interpretive Subthemes & Services Flow from a Primary Theme	P
One Primary Interpretive Theme Prompts Multiple Subthemes	Q

This arrowhead was knapped from Alibates flint. Enlarged to show detail, its actual length is 1.125" long. NPS photo (RKohen)

A Case Study in Subtheme Writing

Complete Sets of Significance Statements and Primary Themes

Set of Significance Statements

Alibates flint is a beautiful, distinctive, workable, multi-colored stone with excellent edge-holding properties. These characteristics prompted various North American peoples to quarry, shape, and use this stone to construct tools that were critical to survival: projectile points, knives, scrapers, axes, drills, awls, and many others.

The only exposed bedrock source of Alibates flint is found in and around the monument.

The 736 largely unexcavated quarry pits in the monument document at least a 12,000-year story of continuous resource detection, extraction, manipulation, and use. Alibates flint projectile points have been found with the remains of mammoths and giant bison that roamed the High Plains during the Ice Age. Tools made from Alibates flint have been used by a variety of cultures over time, including the Clovis, Folsom, and Plainview peoples.

Due to its particular aesthetic and practical properties, Alibates flint was highly prized and traded extensively throughout much of North America.

Alibates Ruin (inside monument boundaries) and the nearby Antelope Creek Site comprise the type-site for the Antelope Creek Phase of the Plains Village Culture (circa A.D. 1150-1500), one of a number of cultures to benefit from the quarries. These sites include architectural remains, petroglyphs, and more than 1.5 million collected objects. The park manages about 800,000 of these objects. This collection comprises almost 10% of all collections in the largest National Park Service region (Intermountain Region), and almost 3% of all National Park Service collections.

At least 45% of the tools excavated at the important Blackwater Draw II Clovis type-site in New Mexico, which documents the earliest known mammoth-hunting site, were made of Alibates Flint.

Set of Primary Interpretive Themes

The broad distribution and long and diverse history of use of Alibates flint (dating almost to the earliest evidence of people in North America), and the story of the Plains Village Culture associated with the area foster appreciation of the surprising richness and sophistication of early cultures.

The story of quarrying and using Alibates flint offers unique opportunities to explore the inherent human need to make and use tools to improve the quality of life.

The extensive history of people using Alibates flint exemplifies the powerful human drive to combine practical functionality with aesthetic beauty in everything we do — even in crafting common, utilitarian objects.

A Case Study in Subtheme Writing

Select a Primary Theme & Identify its Universal Concepts

Select a Primary Interpretive Theme. Select a theme that motivates or interests you, or to which you've been assigned. This is the theme under which your new subtheme will nest.

Set of Significance Statements

Set of Primary Interpretive Themes

A The broad distribution and long and diverse history of use of Alibates flint (dating almost to the earliest evidence of people in North America), and the story of the Plains Village Culture associated with the area foster appreciation of the surprising richness and sophistication of early cultures.

B The story of quarrying and using Alibates flint offers unique opportunities to explore the inherent human need to make and use tools to improve the quality of life.

C The extensive history of people using Alibates flint exemplifies **the** powerful human drive to combine practical functionality with aesthetic beauty in everything we do — even in crafting common, utilitarian objects.

Identify Universal Intangible Concepts. Identify the theme's universal intangible concepts, which might be single words, or one or more phrases.

Set of Primary Interpretive Themes

A The broad distribution and long and diverse history of use of Alibates flint (dating almost to the earliest evidence of people in North America), and the story of the Plains Village Culture associated with the area foster appreciation of the surprising richness and sophistication of early cultures.

B The story of quarrying and using Alibates flint offers unique opportunities to explore the inherent human need to make and use tools to improve the quality of life.

C The extensive **history** of **people** using Alibates flint exemplifies the powerful **human drive** to combine **practical functionality** with aesthetic **beauty** in everything we do — even in crafting common, **utilitarian** objects.

Set of Primary Interpretive Themes

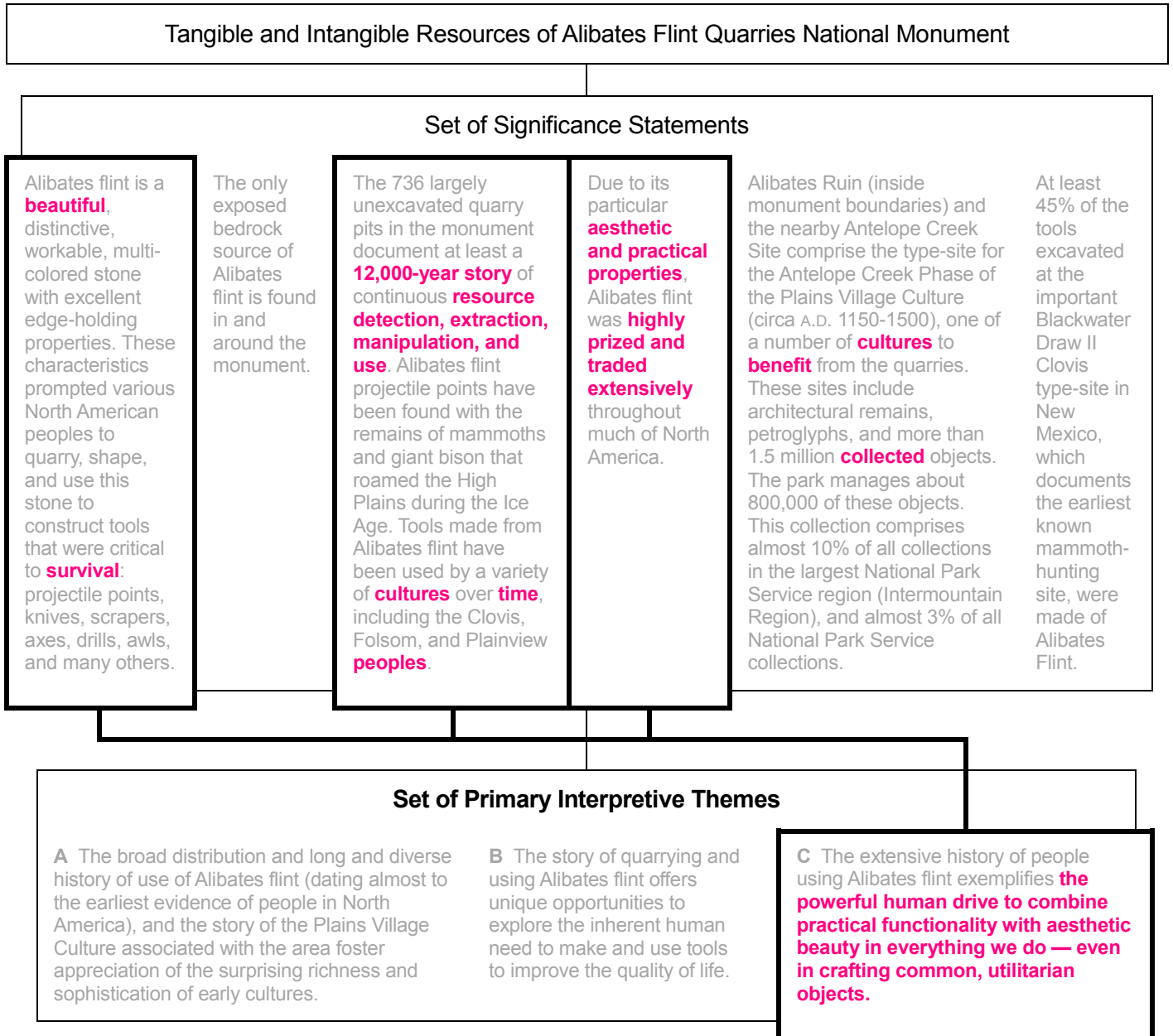
A The broad distribution and long and diverse history of use of Alibates flint (dating almost to the earliest evidence of people in North America), and the story of the Plains Village Culture associated with the area foster appreciation of the surprising richness and sophistication of early cultures.

B The story of quarrying and using Alibates flint offers unique opportunities to explore the inherent human need to make and use tools to improve the quality of life.

C The extensive **history** of **people** using Alibates flint exemplifies **the powerful human drive to combine practical functionality with aesthetic beauty in everything we do — even in crafting common, utilitarian objects.**

A Case Study in Subtheme Writing

Trace Universal Concepts back to Significance Statements



E Pluribus Unum. Latin for, “Out of many, one.” Although each primary interpretive theme *usually* arises from multiple significance statements, this is not a requirement.

Universal intangible concepts across multiple significance statements typically overlap and

reinforce each other. It’s also common for some of these universals to be inferred rather than stated overtly.

In this park example, three of the six significance statements had enough similarities among them that writing a primary interpretive theme that interlinked them seemed appropriate.

A Case Study in Subtheme Writing

Selected Significance Statements — Decoded

Encoded Components Observed in the Three Selected Statements

Tangibles

Tangible park resources are *people, places, things, & events.*

Alibates flint is a beautiful, **distinctive, workable, multi-colored stone with excellent edge-holding properties.** **These characteristics** prompted **various North American peoples** to quarry, shape, and use **this stone** to construct **tools** that were critical to survival: **projectile points, knives, scrapers, axes, drills, awls, and many others.**

The **736 largely unexcavated quarry pits in the monument** document at least a 12,000-year story of continuous resource detection, extraction, manipulation, and use. **Alibates flint projectile points** have been found with the **remains of mammoths and giant bison** that roamed the **High Plains** during the **Ice Age.** **Tools made from Alibates flint** have been used by a **variety of cultures over time, including the Clovis, Folsom, and Plainview peoples.**

Due to its **particular aesthetic and practical properties,** **Alibates flint** was highly prized and traded extensively throughout much of **North America.**

Intangibles

Intangible park resources are *ideas, meanings, beliefs, & values.*

Alibates flint is a **beautiful,** distinctive, **workable,** multi-colored stone with excellent edge-holding properties. **These characteristics** prompted **various North American peoples to quarry, shape, and use this stone to construct tools that were critical to survival:** projectile points, knives, scrapers, axes, drills, awls, and many others.

The 736 largely unexcavated quarry pits in the monument **document at least a 12,000-year story of continuous resource detection, extraction, manipulation, and use.** Alibates flint projectile points **have been found with the remains** of mammoths and giant bison that **roamed** the High Plains **during the Ice Age.** Tools **made** from Alibates flint **have been used by a variety of cultures over time,** including the Clovis, Folsom, and Plainview **peoples.**

Due to its **particular aesthetic and practical properties,** Alibates flint was **highly prized and traded extensively** throughout much of North America.

Universals

Universal intangible concepts are *relevant to most cultures.*

Alibates flint is a **beautiful,** distinctive, workable, multi-colored stone with excellent edge-holding properties. These characteristics prompted various North American peoples to quarry, shape, and use this stone to construct tools that were critical to **survival:** projectile points, knives, scrapers, axes, drills, awls, and many others.

The 736 largely unexcavated quarry pits in the monument document at least a **12,000-year story** of continuous **resource detection, extraction, manipulation, and use.** Alibates flint projectile points have been found with the remains of mammoths and giant bison that roamed the High Plains during the Ice Age. Tools made from Alibates flint have been used by a variety of **cultures** over **time,** including the Clovis, Folsom, and Plainview **peoples.**

Due to its particular **aesthetic and practical properties,** Alibates flint was **highly prized and traded extensively** throughout much of North America.

A Case Study in Subtheme WritingWorking with Relevance

Gather the Selected Universals

In this example, the universal intangible concepts that were observed in the *selected primary interpretive theme* are gathered here into one bulleted list so they can be easily viewed as a set.

The universal intangible concepts that were observed in the *three corresponding significance statements* are also gathered here into one bulleted list so they can be easily viewed as a set.

Add Universals, as Needed

As needed, add other associated or inferred concepts are added to the list. (In this example, no others were added.)

Set Aside Universals, as Needed

Likewise, some of these concepts fit together better than others, so the ones that don't fit together as well as others are set aside for consideration in other subthemes. (In this example, none were discarded.)

Universal intangible concepts in the primary interpretive theme:

- **history**
- **people**
- **human drive**
- **practical functionality**
- **beauty**
- **utilitarian**
- **the powerful human drive to combine practical functionality with aesthetic beauty in everything we do — even in crafting common, utilitarian objects.**

Universal intangible concepts in three significance statements:

- **beautiful**
- **survival**
- **12,000-year story**
- **resource detection, extraction, manipulation, and use**
- **cultures**
- **time**
- **aesthetic and practical properties**
- **highly prized and traded extensively**

Compare the Two Sets of Universals

The theme's universal intangible concepts usually *summarize* multiple universals in the significance statements. Comparing the universals in both sets offers insights and increases depth of understanding about the content.

A Case Study in Subtheme WritingWorking with Relevance (*continued*)**Select Universals for Your Subtheme**

Select universal intangible concepts that you would like to focus on for your interpretive or educational service, program, or product and, therefore, for the subtheme you're going to write to guide its development.

Universal intangible concepts in the primary interpretive theme:

- history
- **people**
- human drive
- **practical functionality**
- beauty
- **utilitarian**
- the powerful human drive to combine practical functionality with aesthetic beauty in everything we do — even in crafting common, utilitarian objects.

Universal intangible concepts in three significance statements:

- beautiful
- **survival**
- 12,000-year story
- **resource detection, extraction, manipulation, and use**
- **cultures**
- time
- aesthetic and **practical properties**
- highly prized and traded extensively

Summarize Universals as Relevance

Write a phrase that highlights and summarizes the most important aspects of your selected universals, and clearly yet artfully arranges them. Answer this question:

*This place enriches humanity
by being one of the best places
in the world to experience _____ .*
z

Result:

the reliability and effectiveness of tools used to survive and thrive

A Case Study in Subtheme Writing

Working with Park Resources

Gather Associated Tangibles

Refer to the *selected primary interpretive theme* and list the stated tangible park resources — in the order in which they appear.

Refer to the *three corresponding significance statements* and list the stated tangible park resources — in the order in which they appear.

Compare the Two Sets of Tangibles

The theme's tangible park resources usually *summarize* multiple tangibles in the significance statements. Comparing the tangibles in both sets offers insights and increases depth of understanding about the content.

Add Tangibles, as Needed

As needed, add other associated or inferred tangible park resources to the list. (In this example, none were added.)

Set Aside Tangibles, as Needed

Likewise, some of these tangible park resources do not seem to directly support the draft subtheme's universal intangible concept phrase. The ones that don't fit together as well as others are set aside. (In this example, one was set aside — indicated by **grey text**.)

Tangible park resources in the primary interpretive theme:

- **people**
- **Alibates flint**
- **utilitarian objects**

Tangible park resources in three significance statements:

- **Alibates flint**
- **distinctive, workable, multi-colored stone with excellent edge-holding properties / these characteristics**
- **various North American peoples**
- **this stone**
- **tools**
- **projectile points, knives, scrapers, axes, drills, awls, and many others**
- **736 largely unexcavated quarry pits in the monument**
- **Alibates flint projectile points**
- **remains of mammoths and giant bison**
- **High Plains**
- **Ice Age**
- **tools made from Alibates flint**
- **variety of cultures over time, including the Clovis, Folsom, and Plainview peoples**
- **particular aesthetic and practical properties, Alibates flint**
- **North America**

A Case Study in Subtheme Writing

Working with Park Resources (*continued*)

Select the Tangible Park Resources upon which the Relevance Phrase Most Relies

Consider which of the listed tangible park resources are *most necessary* to enable opportunities to experience the summarized universal relevance phrase (“the effectiveness of the tools we rely on for survival”).

Note that many of these are closely related to each other and *can* easily be incorporated together, but *can* is not the issue; *criticality* is the issue. Which tangible resources *need* to be directly stated in the subtheme sentence to clearly and artfully interconnect the park's relevance and the resources on which that relevance is founded?

Tangible park resources in the primary interpretive theme:

- **people**
- Alibates flint
- utilitarian objects

Tangible park resources in three significance statements:

- Alibates flint
- distinctive, workable, multi-colored stone with excellent edge-holding properties / these characteristics
- various North American peoples
- this stone
- tools
- projectile points, knives, scrapers, axes, drills, awls, and many others
- 736 largely unexcavated quarry pits in the monument
- Alibates flint projectile points
- **remains of mammoths and giant bison**
- High Plains
- Ice Age
- **tools made from Alibates flint**
- variety of cultures over time, including the Clovis, Folsom, and Plainview peoples
- particular aesthetic and practical properties, Alibates flint
- North America

Resulting tangible park resources:

- **people**
 - **remains of mammoths and giant bison**
 - **tools made from Alibates flint**
-

A Case Study in Subtheme Writing

Working with Park Resources (*continued*)

Gather Associated Intangibles

Refer to the *selected primary interpretive theme* and list the stated intangible park resources — in the order in which they appear.

Refer to the *three corresponding significance statements* and list the stated intangible park resources — in the order in which they appear.

Compare the Two Sets of Intangibles

The theme's intangible park resources usually *summarize* multiple intangibles in the significance statements. Comparing the intangibles in both sets offers insights and increases depth of understanding about the content.

Add Intangibles, as Needed

As needed, add other associated or inferred intangible park resources to the list. (In this example, none were added.)

Set Aside Intangibles, as Needed

Likewise, some of these intangible park resources do not seem to directly support the draft subtheme's universal intangible concept phrase. The ones that don't fit together as well as others are set aside. (In this example, many were set aside — indicated by **grey text**.)

Note that some of the intangibles include embedded tangible resources, though they are all encoded as blue to portray their *interwoven* nature. That's because expressing some intangibles requires the inclusion of associated tangible resources to convey a complete thought.

Intangible park resources in the primary interpretive theme:

- **The extensive history of people using Alibates flint**
- **powerful human drive**
- combine
- crafting
- common

Intangible park resources in three significance statements:

- beautiful
- **workable**
- **these characteristics prompted various North American peoples to quarry, shape, and use this stone to construct tools that were critical to survival**
- document at least a 12,000-year story of continuous resource detection, extraction, manipulation, and use
- **have been found with the remains**
- roamed
- **during the Ice Age**
- made
- **have been used by a variety of cultures over time**
- peoples
- particular aesthetic and practical properties highly prized and traded extensively

A Case Study in Subtheme WritingWorking with Park Resources (*continued*)**Select the Intangible Park Resources upon which the Relevance Phrase Most Relies**

Consider which of the listed intangible park resources are *most necessary* to enable opportunities to experience the summarized universal relevance phrase (“the effectiveness of the tools we rely on for survival”).

Note that many of these are closely related to each other and *can* easily be incorporated together, but *can* is not the issue; *criticality* is the issue. Which intangible resources *need* to be directly stated in the subtheme sentence to clearly and artfully interconnect the park's relevance and the resources on which that relevance is founded?

Intangible park resources in the primary interpretive theme:

- The extensive history of people using Alibates flint
- powerful human drive
- combine
- crafting
- common

Intangible park resources in three significance statements:

- beautiful
- **workable**
- **these characteristics prompted various North American peoples to quarry, shape, and use this stone to construct tools that were critical to survival**
- document at least a 12,000-year story of continuous resource detection, extraction, manipulation, and use
- **have been found with the remains**
- roamed
- during the Ice Age
- made
- have been used by a variety of cultures over time
- peoples
- particular aesthetic and practical properties highly prized and traded extensively

Resulting intangible park resources:

- **workable**
- **these characteristics prompted various North American peoples to quarry, shape, and use this stone to construct tools that were critical to survival**
- **have been found with the remains**

A Case Study in Subtheme WritingWorking with Park Resources (*continued*)**Interweave the Tangible & Intangible Park Resources upon which the Relevance Phrase Most Relies**

Distill those subsets of listed park resources into a phrase that succinctly describes them. Answer this question:

*These park resources (_____)
make this one of the _____ x
best places in the
world to experience [z].*

Note also that in this example, the intangible (blue) is an incomplete thought without including the tangible that completes it (green). At this stage — *because intangibles often rely on being read with their embedded tangibles in order to be understood* — tangibles and intangibles are merged into a single color (blue) that now describes *interwoven tangible-intangible park resources*.

The end of the phrase is refined a little more.

Result:

*(mammoths and giant bison were successfully hunted and harvested with tools made from Alibates Flint)
[the reliability and effectiveness of tools used to survive and thrive]*

Interwoven tangible-intangible park resources:

*(mammoths and giant bison were successfully hunted and harvested with tools made from Alibates Flint)
[the reliability and effectiveness of tools used to survive and thrive]*

Interwoven tangible-intangible park resources:

*(mammoths and giant bison were successfully hunted and harvested with Alibates flint tools)
[the reliability and effectiveness of tools used to survive and thrive]*

A Case Study in Subtheme Writing

Working with Relationships

Relationship of Park Resources to Relevance

Establish the relationship between the interwoven tangible-intangible park resources (describing “This place...”) and the relevant universal concept (describing how those resources “...enrich humanity.”).

Example sentence structure with placeholder relationship phrase:
[interwoven tangible-intangible park resources]
offer unique opportunities to appreciate
[universal concepts].

Next, refer to the example words below that could be used in the relationship phrase. Select the combination of words (or even just a single word) that best describe that relationship.

Placeholder relationship phrase applied to example theme:
(mammoths and giant bison were successfully hunted and harvested with Alibates flint tools)
offering unique opportunities to appreciate
[the reliability and effectiveness of tools used to survive and thrive]

Actions

Action words (verbs) like “offer” often begin the relationship phrase. Context determines the form used (such as offer, offers, offering).

Focus:
offer unique opportunities to appreciate

- | | | | | | |
|-------------------|----------------------|-------------------|------------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| attest | demonstrate | foster | impact | offer | result |
| challenge | emblematic of | frame | increase | play a role | reveal |
| constitute | embody | fuel | influence | present | serve as |
| continue | enable | highlight | inspire | prompt | testify |
| contribute | evoke | identify | intensify | provide | yield |
| create | exemplify | illustrate | invite | remind | |

Characteristics

The interwoven tangible-intangible park resources create opportunities with describable characteristics, like these:

Focus:
offer unique opportunities to appreciate

- | | | | | | |
|---------------------|------------------|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------|----------------|
| abundant | dramatic | exceptional | powerful | sacred | unusual |
| approachable | dynamic | important | pristine | superlative | varied |
| beautiful | enriching | inspiring | rare | surprising | |
| distinct | evolving | interactive | remarkable | unexpected | |
| diverse | excellent | outstanding | rich | unique | |

A Case Study in Subtheme Writing

Working with Relationships (*continued*)

Opportunities

Because visitor enjoyment, interpretation, and education involve *choices* made by individuals (what to experience, why, when, where, how), this work is viewed as fostering enhanced opportunities for individuals to make their own, meaningful connections to park resources, thus:

...opportunities to / for...

The placeholder phrase literally uses the word “opportunities” to include this idea. This concept can also be *implied* to better fit the theme’s syntax. For example, the relationship phrase

...offers unique insights into...

implies the concept in this way:

...offers [opportunities to experience] unique insights into...

Focus:

offer unique opportunities to appreciate

Desires

What is the individual’s interest in these opportunities? How are the opportunities universally relevant? People desire to...

Focus:

offer unique opportunities to appreciate

- | | | | | | |
|-------------|-------------|------------|----------|----------|------------|
| appreciate | consider | encounter | explore | ponder | study |
| compare and | contemplate | expect | interact | reflect | understand |
| contrast | define | experience | learn | remember | wonder |
| connect | discover | | | | |

Customize the Relationship Phrase

Revise the phrase, as needed, to fit the draft theme.

From the placeholder version:

**(mammoths and giant bison were successfully hunted and harvested with Alibates flint tools)
offering unique opportunities to appreciate
[the reliability and effectiveness of tools used to survive and thrive]**

To the customized version:

**(mammoths and giant bison were successfully hunted and harvested with Alibates flint tools)
prompting us to explore
[the reliability and effectiveness of tools used to survive and thrive]**

A Case Study in Subtheme Writing

Working with Relationships (*continued*)

Refine the Theme

The refinement of the relationship phrase created a more highly structured environment within which to refine the theme as a whole to make it more concise, clear, creative, and relevant.

In this example, the last refinement describes the universal in such a way as to more directly address the visitor (“we”) while that same “we” also broadly includes “people” through time.

The draft theme (all three components now create a sentence):

Mammoths and giant bison were successfully hunted and harvested with Alibates flint tools, prompting us to explore the reliability and effectiveness of tools used to survive and thrive.

The refined, final primary interpretive theme:

Mammoths and giant bison were successfully hunted and harvested with Alibates flint tools, prompting us to explore the reliability and effectiveness of the tools we use to survive and thrive.

Relationship of the Draft Subtheme to the Primary Interpretive Theme

Compare this interpretive subtheme with the primary interpretive theme upon which it is based.

Refine as needed.

The selected primary interpretive theme (for reference):

C The extensive history of people using Alibates flint exemplifies the powerful human drive to combine practical functionality with aesthetic beauty in everything we do — even in crafting common, utilitarian objects.

The new interpretive subtheme (for reference):

Mammoths and giant bison were successfully hunted and harvested with Alibates flint tools, prompting us to explore the reliability and effectiveness of the tools we use to survive and thrive.

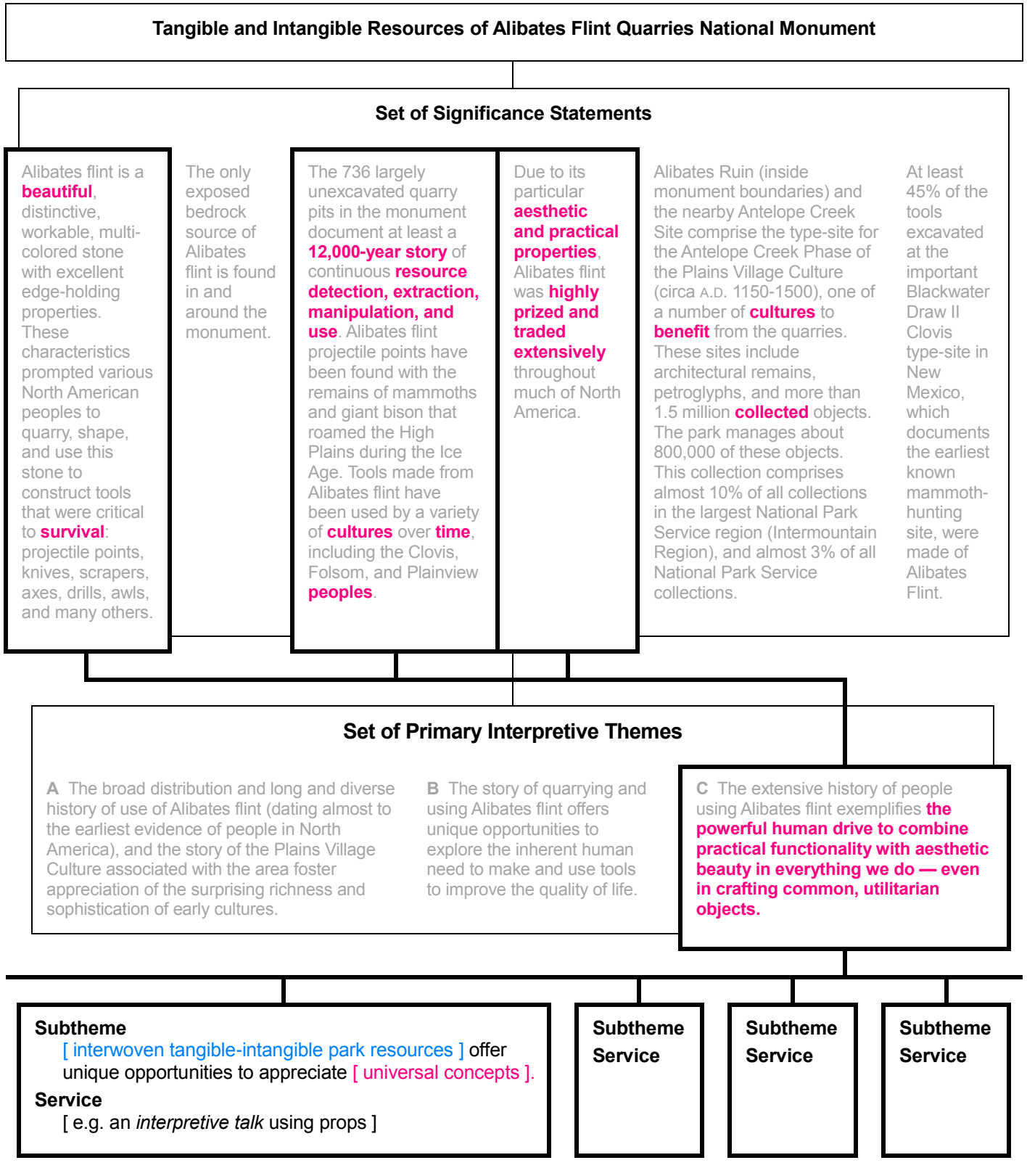
These questions will help ensure that the quality of the draft subtheme has achieved the training goal:

Questions:

- Does the **relevance phrase** that ends the subtheme appropriately nest within the primary theme's most significant meanings?
- Does the **park resource phrase** that starts the subtheme appropriately nest within the primary theme's most significant resources?
- Will this subtheme be a **useful guide** in organizing a service, program, or product?
- Does the subtheme reflect **current scholarly** inquiry and interpretation, including changes that might have occurred since the park's establishment?
- Does the subtheme include appropriate tangibles, intangibles, and relevant universal intangible concepts)?
- Is the subtheme a complete, **understandable** sentence?

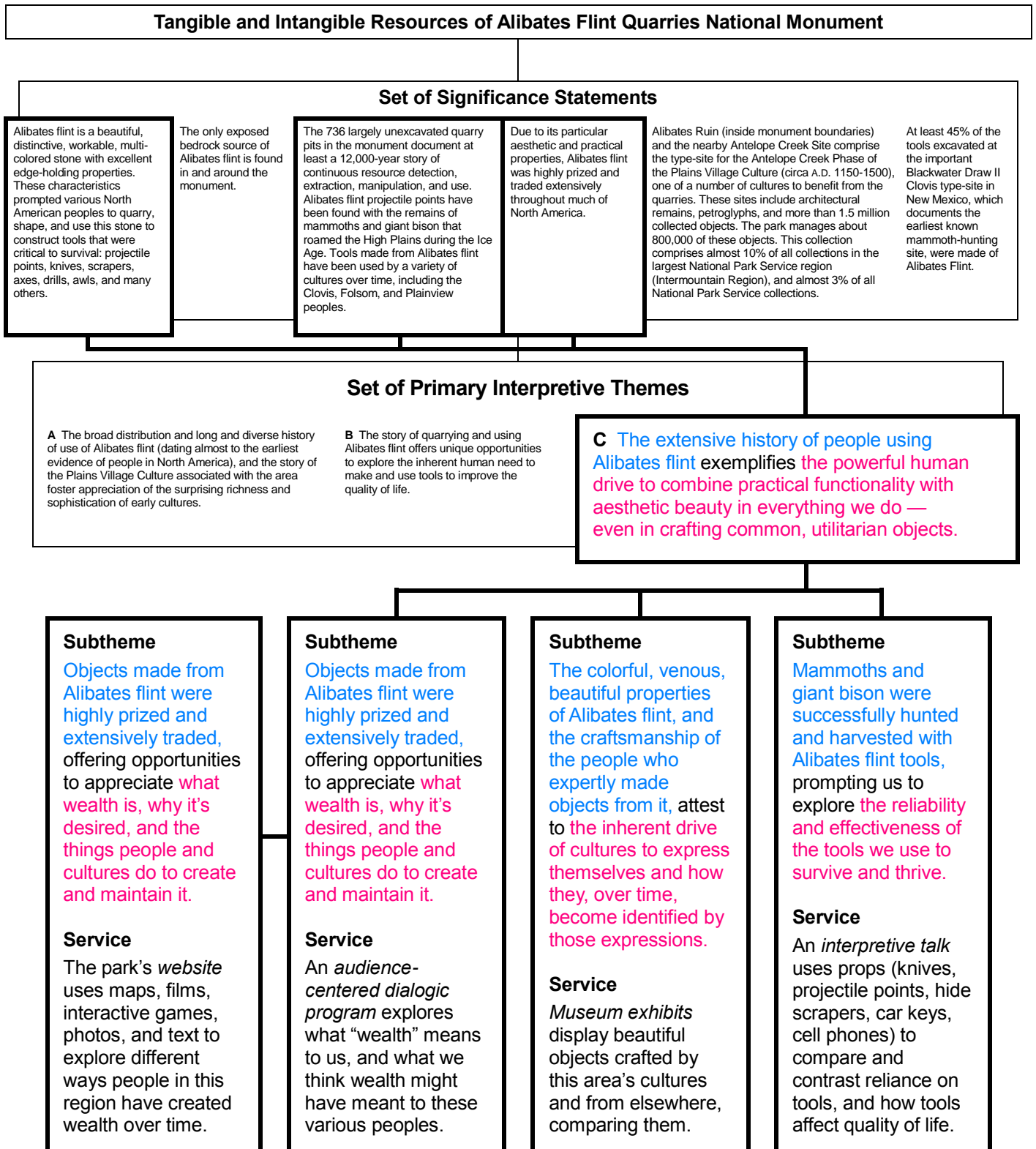
A Case Study in Subtheme Writing

Interpretive Subthemes & Services Flow from a Primary Theme



A Case Study in Subtheme Writing

One Primary Interpretive Theme Prompts Multiple Subthemes



• Training Examples

This subchapter contains park sets of significance statements, primary interpretive themes, and examples of interpretive subthemes. At the time of publication, only the teaching example was available. The author intends to add more examples as they become available.

The examples are ordered alphabetically to facilitate navigating through them. This content can be referenced by the trainer during the training session (*see the Use Them section below*), or can also be used for self-learning.

Use Them

These examples are not typically handed out during a training session — partially because participants are already faced with moving through, then managing, many handouts — but some or all of these examples could be referenced, if needed:

- In some cases, the trainer might refer to one of the example statements if it appears that doing so would advance the work of the participants. Sometimes, other parks have also addressed content that is similar to that of the training session's park, and comparing and contrasting the material from other parks with current drafts can be illuminating and inspiring. In these cases, the trainer reads aloud the appropriate material.

- In other cases, the trainer might determine beforehand that one or more of the example sets might be helpful for participants to refer to during the training session, and therefore includes these examples in the handouts taken to the training event.
- And in other cases, it might not be useful to reference them via either technique.

The letters that each primary interpretive theme statement begins with (e.g. “A —”) are included as shorthand labels. For instance, “We could discuss *Theme A* together.” These labels aid interpretive operations: They help interpretive workforces communicate about, track, and implement interpretive themes in their work. They are included herein for those operational purposes. It should be noted that interpretive subthemes — as informal, individually created-and-used elements of interpretive work — are not typically labeled in that way.

Print Them

If you decide to use some or all of these in printed form, print part or all of these examples as follows:

- print *multiples* (one copy per participant) plus several extras to have on hand for unexpected participants (this really does occur)
- print *two-sided*
- print in *black ink*
- print on *white paper*
- could be bound as a reference packet, if desired

Alibates Flint Quarries National Monument

Significance Statements

Alibates flint is a beautiful, distinctive, workable, multi-colored stone with excellent edge-holding properties. These characteristics prompted various North American peoples to quarry, shape, and use this stone to construct tools that were critical to survival: projectile points, knives, scrapers, axes, drills, awls, and many others.

The only exposed bedrock source of Alibates flint is found in and around the monument.

The 736 largely unexcavated quarry pits in the monument document at least a 12,000-year story of continuous resource detection, extraction, manipulation, and use. Alibates flint projectile points have been found with the remains of mammoths and giant bison that roamed the High Plains during the Ice Age. Tools made from Alibates flint have been used by a variety of cultures over time, including the Clovis, Folsom, and Plainview peoples.

Due to its particular aesthetic and practical properties, Alibates flint was highly prized and traded extensively throughout much of North America.

Alibates Ruin (inside monument boundaries) and the nearby Antelope Creek Site comprise the type-site for the Antelope Creek Phase of the Plains Village Culture (circa a.d. 1150-1500), one of a number of cultures to benefit from the quarries. These sites include architectural remains, petroglyphs, and more than 1.5 million collected objects. The park manages about 800,000 of these objects. This collection comprises almost 10% of all collections in the largest National Park Service region (Intermountain Region), and almost 3% of all National Park Service collections.

At least 45% of the tools excavated at the important Blackwater Draw II Clovis type-site in New Mexico, which documents the earliest known mammoth-hunting site, were made of Alibates Flint.

Primary Interpretive Themes

A — The broad distribution and long and diverse history of use of Alibates flint (dating almost to the earliest evidence of people in North America), and the story of the Plains Village Culture associated with the area foster appreciation of the surprising richness and sophistication of early cultures.

[*Subthemes...*]

B — The story of quarrying and using Alibates flint offers unique opportunities to explore the inherent human need to make and use tools to improve the quality of life.

[*Subthemes...*]

C — The extensive history of people using Alibates flint exemplifies the powerful human drive to combine practical functionality with aesthetic beauty in everything we do — even in crafting common, utilitarian objects.

Interpretive Subthemes

Mammoths and giant bison were successfully hunted and harvested with Alibates flint tools, prompting us to explore the reliability and effectiveness of the tools we use to survive and thrive.

The colorful, venous, beautiful properties of Alibates flint, and the craftsmanship of the people who expertly made objects from it, attest to the inherent drive of cultures to express themselves and how they, over time, become identified by those expressions.

Objects made from Alibates flint were highly prized and extensively traded, offering opportunities to appreciate what wealth is, why it's desired, and the things people and cultures do to create and maintain it.

[*Other subthemes...*]



This hiker takes a break to ponder the unusual "Wonderland of Rocks," Chiricahua National Monument, Arizona. NPS Photo (RKohen)

Writing Subthemes

If your objective is to teach yourself to write or improve subthemes for your own interpretive work, then this chapter was written for you!

This third optional chapter focuses directly on you, the frontline interpreter. This chapter explores how to write powerful, meaningful, useful interpretive subthemes for organizing and guiding your own interpretive or educational services, programs, or products.

Learn It

To teach yourself how to write or improve your own interpretive subthemes, follow these few steps:

1. Read the must-read content chapter, [The Heart of the Matter](#)
2. Read the interest-driven content chapter, [Training Handouts](#)
3. (Optional) Read the interest-driven content chapter, [Trainer's Guide](#), if interested in reading additional context about the use of these handouts in a training event
4. (Optional) Read the interest-driven content chapter, [Training Examples](#), to see what others have done

Do It

Following that self-directed learning, here is a succinct list of writing-process steps to guide your writing (these were extracted from the *Trainer's Guide* chapter):

Instructions

Think about and ponder:

- why this place is special or important to you, personally

Review your:

- organization's **mission** statement
- park's **purpose** statement (or similar)
- park's set of **significance** statements (or similar)
- park's set of **primary interpretive themes** (or similar)

(These form the foundation for the interpretive subtheme you'll write.)

Echo the case study section of the training handouts by following this specific process:

- Select the primary interpretive theme that motivates or interests you, or to which you have been assigned.

(This is the theme under which your new subtheme will nest.)

- Identify the primary interpretive theme's universal intangible concepts.

- Trace those universals back to the corresponding universal intangible concepts in the park’s significance statements, thereby identifying the subset of significance statements that best underpin this primary interpretive theme.
- Identify the universals within those corresponding significance statements, including implied (unstated) universals.
- Further brainstorm universal intangible concepts that fit within the primary interpretive theme’s universals.
- Narrow that list of universal intangible concepts to those on which you intend to focus your interpretive service, program, or product.
- Write a summary phrase of those universals, filling in this blank Z with your phrase:

This place *enriches humanity by being one of the best places in the world to experience* ____ [z].

(This relevant, universal intangible concepts phrase will conclude your subtheme sentence.)

- Within those corresponding significance statements, identify specific tangible and intangible park resources, then narrow them down to only those that best support the universals phrase you just wrote.
- Write a summary phrase of those narrowed park resources, placing them in the blank X and using the universals phrase you wrote to fill in the blank Z:

These park resources (____)[x] make this one of the best places in the world to experience ____ [z].

(This park resources phrase will begin your subtheme sentence.)

- Write the placeholder relationship phrase “offer unique opportunities to appreciate” between those two phrases.
- Transform this three-phrase group into a sentence.

- Edit your draft interpretive subtheme to appropriately and effectively connect the universal intangible concepts to the park resources that enable us to experience those concepts at this place. Continue editing the subtheme sentence until it successfully achieves the following tests:
 - Does the **relevance phrase** that ends the subtheme appropriately nest within the primary theme's most significant meanings?
 - Does the **park resource phrase** that starts the subtheme appropriately nest within the primary theme's most significant resources?
 - Will this subtheme be a **useful guide** in organizing a service, program, or product?
 - Does the subtheme reflect **current scholarly** inquiry and interpretation, including changes that might have occurred since the park’s establishment?
 - Does the subtheme include appropriate tangibles, intangibles, and relevant universal intangible concepts)?
 - Is the subtheme a complete, **understandable** sentence?

That’s all there is to it.

May you enjoy continual success in all of your interpretive endeavors!

Essential Tools for Interpreters

Theme Guide

A Guide for Writing Meaningful Interpretive Themes

This guide methodically explains how a four-word sentence — *this place enriches humanity* — powerfully expresses the value of heritage and models thematic structure. It explains how the park's set of *primary interpretive themes* plays a critical role in management decisions that need to take visitor experience into account, and how to write that set so that it usefully guides the parkwide interpretation and education program. It teaches interpreters how to write *interpretive subthemes* for individual services, programs, and products, and how to train others to do so.

Richard Kohen
220 pages, August 2016 edition

CIP Guide

A Guide to Comprehensive Interpretive Planning

This guide describes how planners of the Office of Interpretation and Education, Intermountain Region (IMR), National Park Service approach comprehensively planning a park's interpretation & education program. It provides many insights into the planning process and is useful for anyone intending to conduct, or participate in, planning for interpretation. It also contains the detailed scripts used by IMR interpretation planners to organize and conduct comprehensive interpretive planning workshops, and contains other elements that are important to the process.

Richard Kohen & Kim Sikoryak
180 pages, February 2005 edition

Interp Guide

The Philosophy and Practice of Connecting People to Heritage

This guide compellingly defines the profession of interpretation within the context of contemporary culture. It explores how cutting-edge interpretive philosophy and practice can help interpreters and managers provide services that accomplish the mission of interpretation: Providing enhanced opportunities for visitors to explore their own intellectual and emotional connections to the natural and cultural resources that comprise shared heritage. If you are a front-line interpreter, interpretive supervisor, or manager of heritage resources, this guide was written with you in mind.

Richard Kohen & Kim Sikoryak
60 pages, January 2005 edition

The publications in this series are periodically updated to reflect the ongoing evolution of the profession of Interpretation. These publications are intended to be freely distributed using electronic mail. They are designed to be printed by the recipient using Microsoft Word® computer software. Graphic designers will note that these publications use type families Times New Roman, Arial, and Arial Black, and that they're designed to print in full color, two-sided on 8½" x 11" letter-sized paper, portrait orientation. For ease of use, page counts are measured cover-to-cover. **Please direct inquiries and comments to the authors (below).**



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Theme Guide: A Guide for Writing Meaningful Interpretive Themes.

Richard Kohen.

Second Edition August 2016 (Kohen);
First Edition June 2001 (Kohen & Sikoryak).

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EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA™

Richard Kohen is the Lead Interpretation Planner for the Intermountain Region Office of Interpretation and Education, National Park Service. He entered the Service in 1991 and worked in the areas of cultural resources, park planning, and ranger activities before joining interpretation in 1995. With a background in communication arts — film, theater, music, art direction, illustration, graphic design, typography, and sculpture — he draws from a rich palette to craft solutions to interpretive communication challenges. His special skill in organizing and clearly depicting processes is valuable in helping others achieve their desired outcomes.

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Kim Sikoryak is a 30-year veteran with the National Park Service and has worked as Chief of Interpretation and Interpretive Specialist at parks and regional offices in Oregon, California, Hawaii, Colorado, and New Mexico. Kim's varied background in secondary and college education, public radio and television, field biology, and theater provides him with an opportunity to view interpretive challenges and opportunities from diverse, and sometimes unusual, perspectives. From 1997 to 2009, he worked with Richard Kohen to develop a set of essential tools for interpreters that are tightly focused on outcomes, yet intimately tied to operational realities.

Kim is enjoying retirement.

Cover photo: A Prairie Sunflower greets the risen sun at Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve, Colorado — symbolizing how well-crafted interpretive themes bring meanings into focus, revealing the wonder of life in provocative ways. NPS Photo (RKohen)

Back cover photo: A delicate, vibrant fern thrives in the rainforest's rich dark soil, Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park, Hawai'i — representing the growth and hope so central to the desired outcomes of interpretive and educational work. NPS Photo (RKohen)

At a Glance

What is an interpretive theme?

A theme is a sentence that relevantly expresses *how a specific park enriches our lives*.

How many kinds are there?

There are two levels of themes:

- Primary interpretive themes
- Interpretive subthemes

What are primary interpretive themes, and how are they used?

A park's set of primary themes is broad and expansive in scope, expressing the biggest ideas about the park's resources, meanings, and relevance. The set (usually 3-5 themes) is read and understood alongside the park's set of significance statements.

- **Site managers** use primary themes to inform decision-making that takes visitor experience into account.
- **Interpretive managers** use primary themes to organize the broad range of interpretive services offered to visitors.
- **Interpreters** use primary themes to provide structure and guidance for writing subthemes (*see below*).

What are interpretive subthemes, and how are they used?

Interpretive subthemes nest within primary interpretive themes, are sharply focused, and explore resources and meanings in a much more detailed, in-depth manner than primary themes.

- **Interpreters** write and use an interpretive subtheme to guide the development of a specific interpretive or educational service, program, or product.

Theme guide

