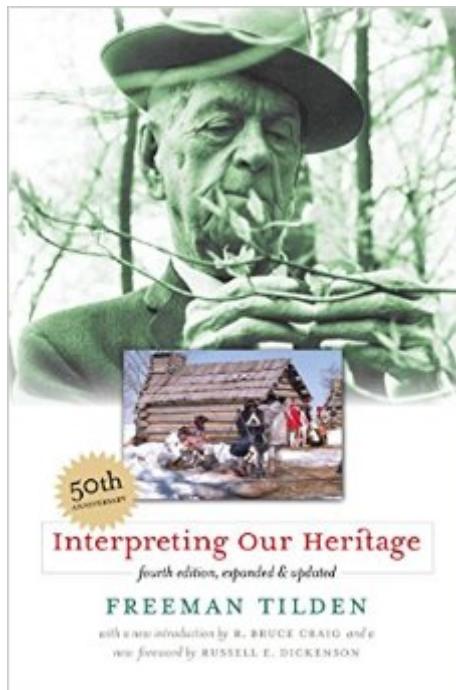


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# Interpreting Our Heritage



## **Synopsis**

Every year millions of Americans visit national parks and monuments, state and municipal parks, battlefields, historic houses, and museums. By means of guided walks and talks, tours, exhibits, and signs, visitors experience these areas through a very special kind of communication technique known as "interpretation." For fifty years, Freeman Tilden's *Interpreting Our Heritage* has been an indispensable sourcebook for those who are responsible for developing and delivering interpretive programs. This expanded and revised anniversary edition includes not only Tilden's classic work but also an entirely new selection of accompanying photographs, five additional essays by Tilden on the art and craft of interpretation, a new foreword by former National Park Service director Russell Dickenson, and an introduction by R. Bruce Craig that puts Tilden's writings into perspective for present and future generations. Whether the challenge is to make a prehistoric site come to life; to explain the geological basis behind a particular rock formation; to touch the hearts and minds of visitors to battlefields, historic homes, and sites; or to teach a child about the wonders of the natural world, Tilden's book, with its explanation of the famed "six principles" of interpretation, provides a guiding hand. For anyone interested in our natural and historic heritage--park volunteers and rangers, museum docents and educators, new and seasoned professional heritage interpreters, and those lovingly characterized by Tilden as "happy amateurs--*Interpreting Our Heritage* and Tilden's later interpretive writings, included in this edition, collectively provide the essential foundation for bringing into focus the truths that lie beyond what the eye sees.

## **Book Information**

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## Customer Reviews

Freeman Tilden was an advocate of environmental education and is considered the originator of interpretation movement within national and state parks. This latest edition includes a new introduction section that gives a background of Tilden's life and thought processes, which sets the stage nicely for Tilden's writings. The theme book is based on the mission of "interpretation" as given by NPS director Conrad Wirth in 1953, "protection through appreciation, appreciation through understanding, and understanding through interpretation." Throughout the book, Tilden defends interpretation as an educational activity. What I find most interesting is the fact that Tilden's strategies for success as an interpreter in parks also apply to natural science classrooms. First of all, Tilden states that the aim of interpretation should be "to reveal meanings and relationships through the use of original objects, by firsthand experience, or by illustrative media, rather than simply to communicate factual information." Inquiry-based learning, usually in the form of original research projects, should be the foundation of science classes, not rote memorization. In Tilden's mind, our national, state, or city parks are the best and greatest natural classrooms for teaching individuals the basics of ecology. Finally, Tilden understood the importance of meeting individuals where they are, no matter their age. "The visitor's chief interest is in whatever touches his personality, his experience, and his ideas. Students must be engaged before they can learn. Tilden supported formalized environmental education for primary school students. However, he knew that we did not have to wait another generation. "We must reach adults, by spoken or written words," Tilden stated.

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