



SMALL YET MIGHTY

Writing Interpretive Captions
Presented by Sarah Lisle

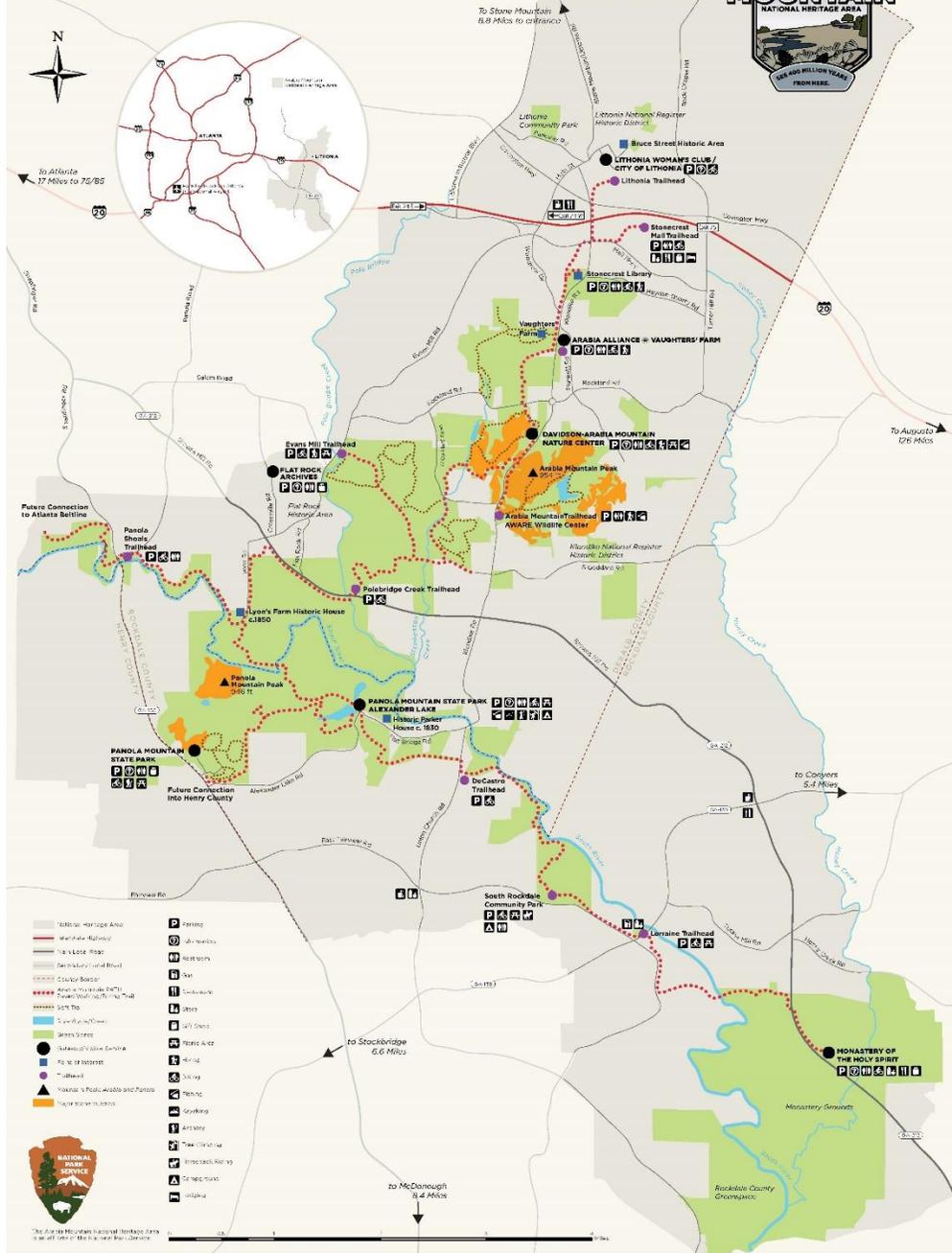
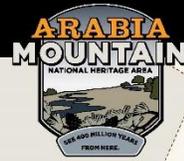
HELLO! I'M SARAH



ARABIA MOUNTAIN NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA



Arabia Mountain



The Arabia Mountain National Heritage Area is an all-ages, all-abilities park.

SESSION SNAPSHOT

- About Captions
- Choosing the Image
- The Seven Rules of Caption Writing
- Making Captions Interpretive
- Let's try it!
- Final Thoughts



WHAT IS A CAPTION?

brief text over or under a picture in a book, magazine, or newspaper that describes the picture or explains what the subject doing or saying

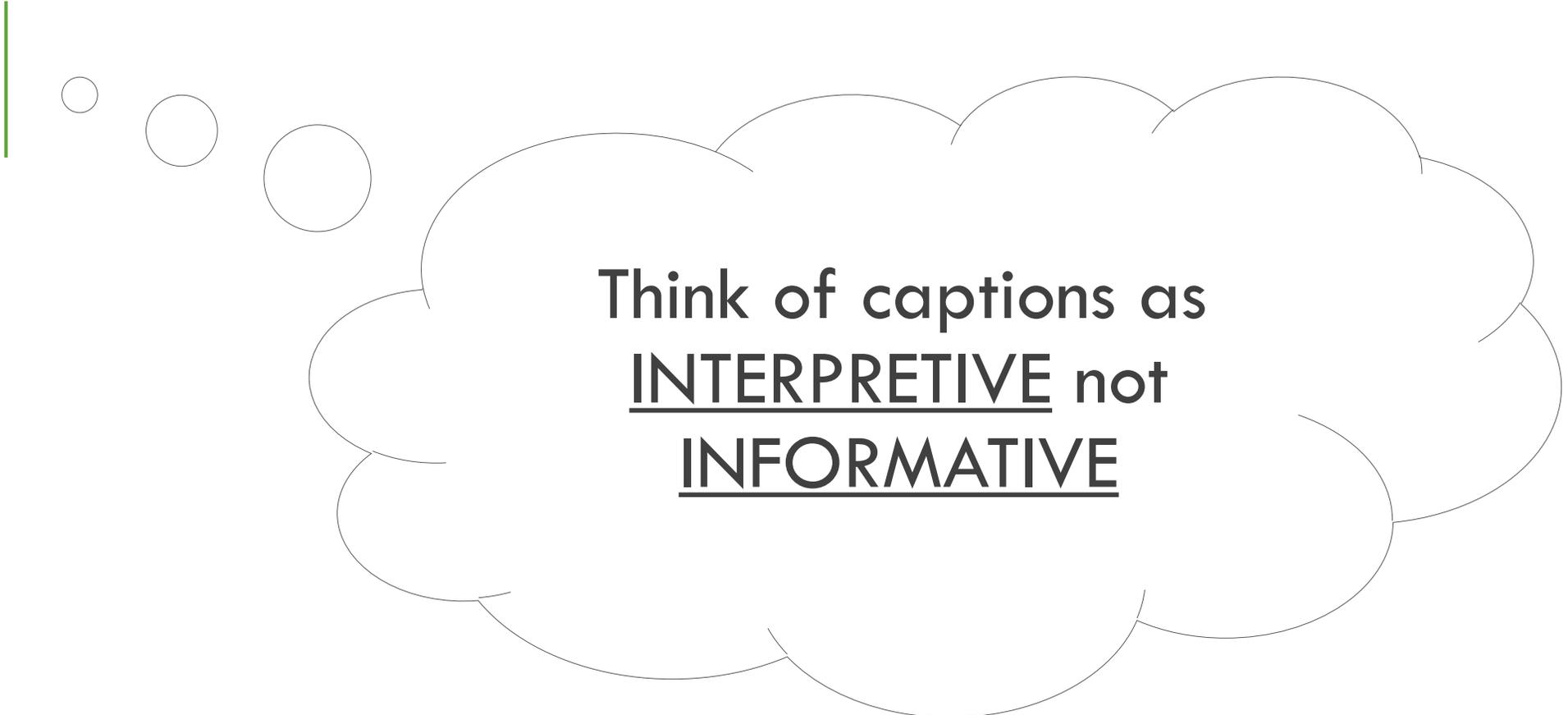
-the internet

WHAT ABOUT?

- Facebook posts
- Instagram text
- Tweets
- Program descriptions/taglines in calendar entries and flyers
- What else?

WHY DO CAPTIONS MATTER?

- They're an interpretive opportunity!
- A caption an introduction your message/theme.
- They give visitors something to think about and want to seek more information/ask questions.
- The combination of words and imagery is powerful.



Think of captions as
INTERPRETIVE not
INFORMATIVE

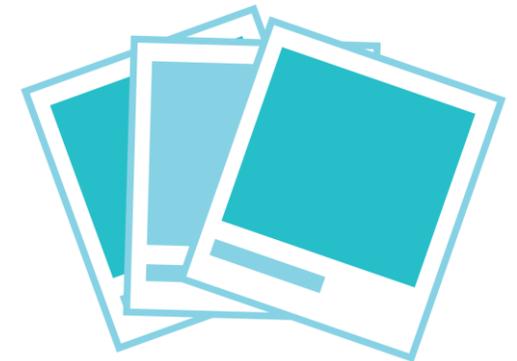




CHOOSING YOUR IMAGE |

CHOOSING THE IMAGE

- Imagery is often the first thing people pay attention to.
- Make it beautiful, powerful, and make your subject prominent.
- Make it high quality; image clarity is key.
- Good images can connect with audiences even if they don't read the caption.
- Get permission and credit the source ALWAYS!



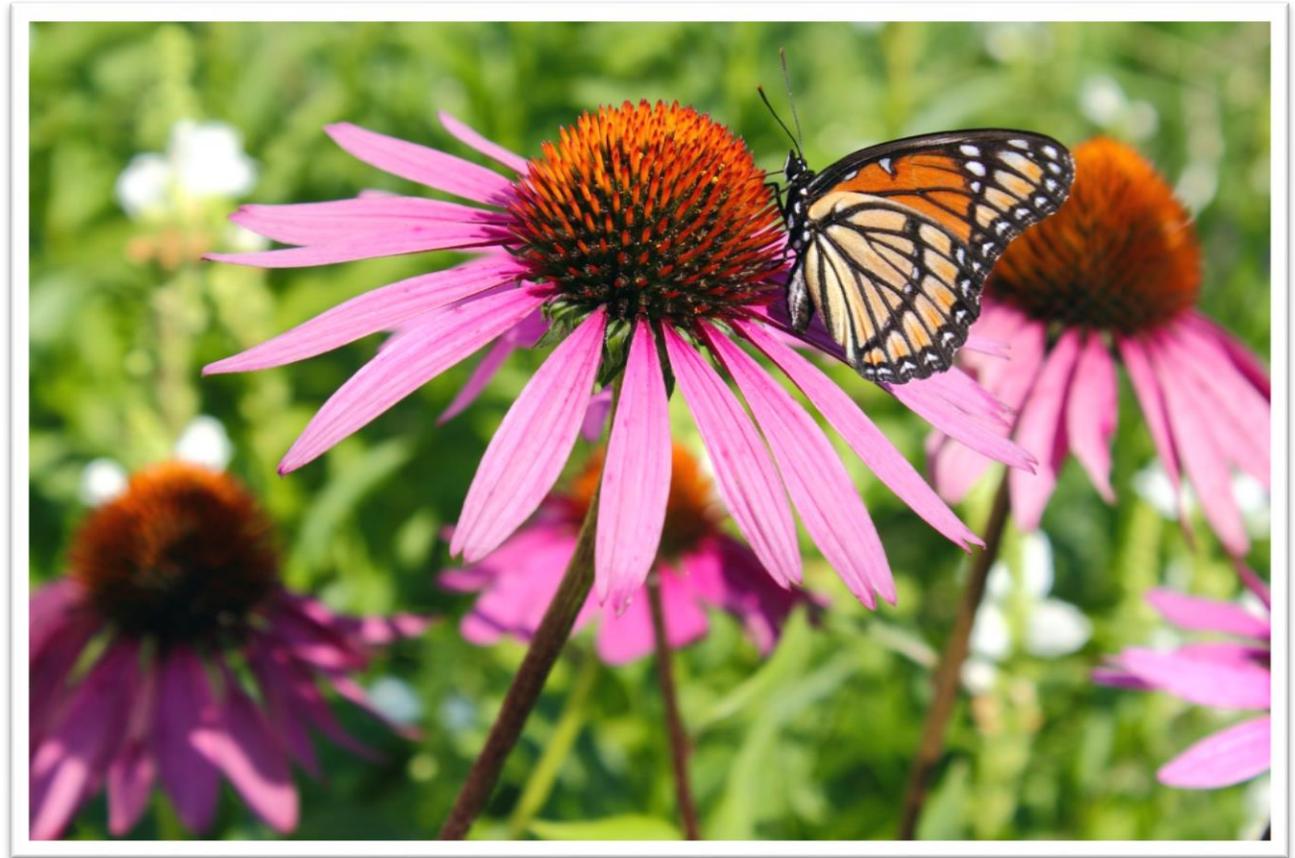
CHOOSING THE IMAGE



With a contrasting combination of soft purple petals and a spiny center, the purple cone flower attracts a variety of pollinators.

CHOOSING THE IMAGE

With a contrasting combination of soft purple petals and a spiny center, the purple cone flower attracts a variety of pollinators.





THE 7 RULES OF CAPTION WRITING

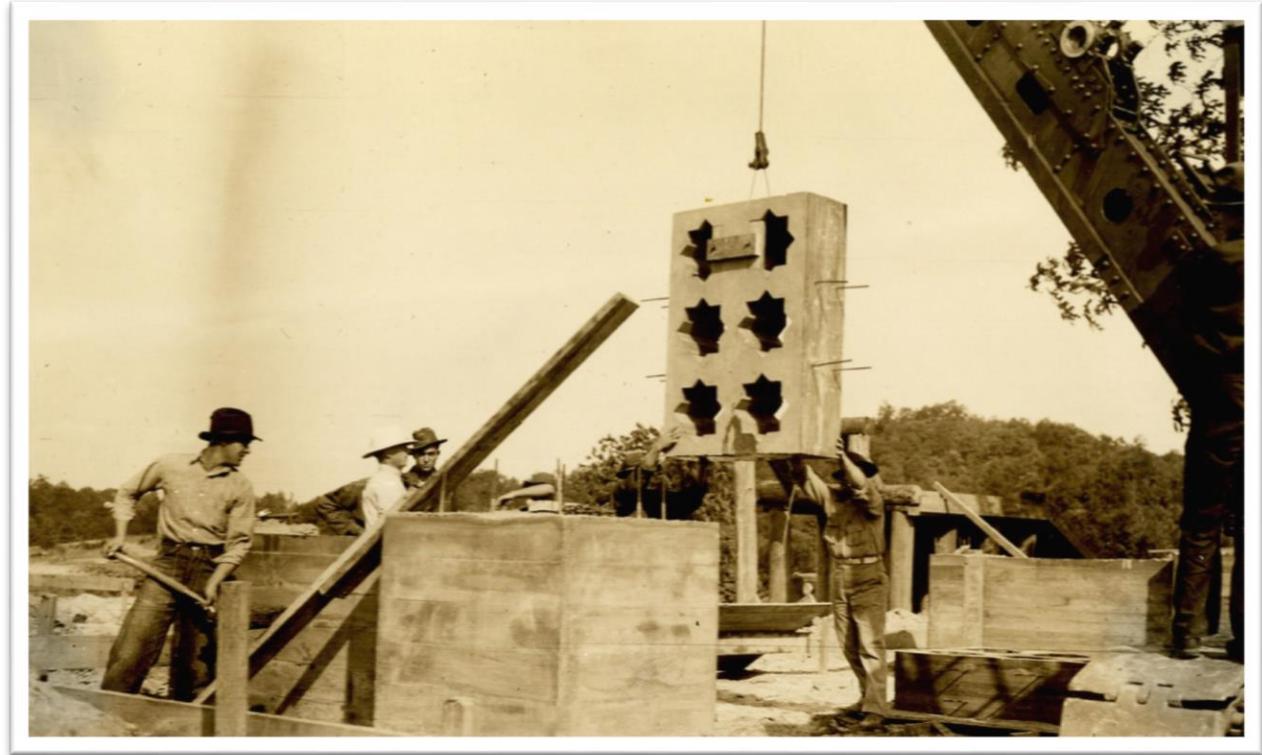
1. MAKE IT A COMPLETE SENTENCE



Walking on the Boardwalk Trail.

2. MAKE IT RELATE DIRECTLY TO THE IMAGE

President FDR created the Civilian Conservation Corps as a part of the New Deal program to help those suffering during the Great Depression.



3. MAKE IT A SUCCINCT



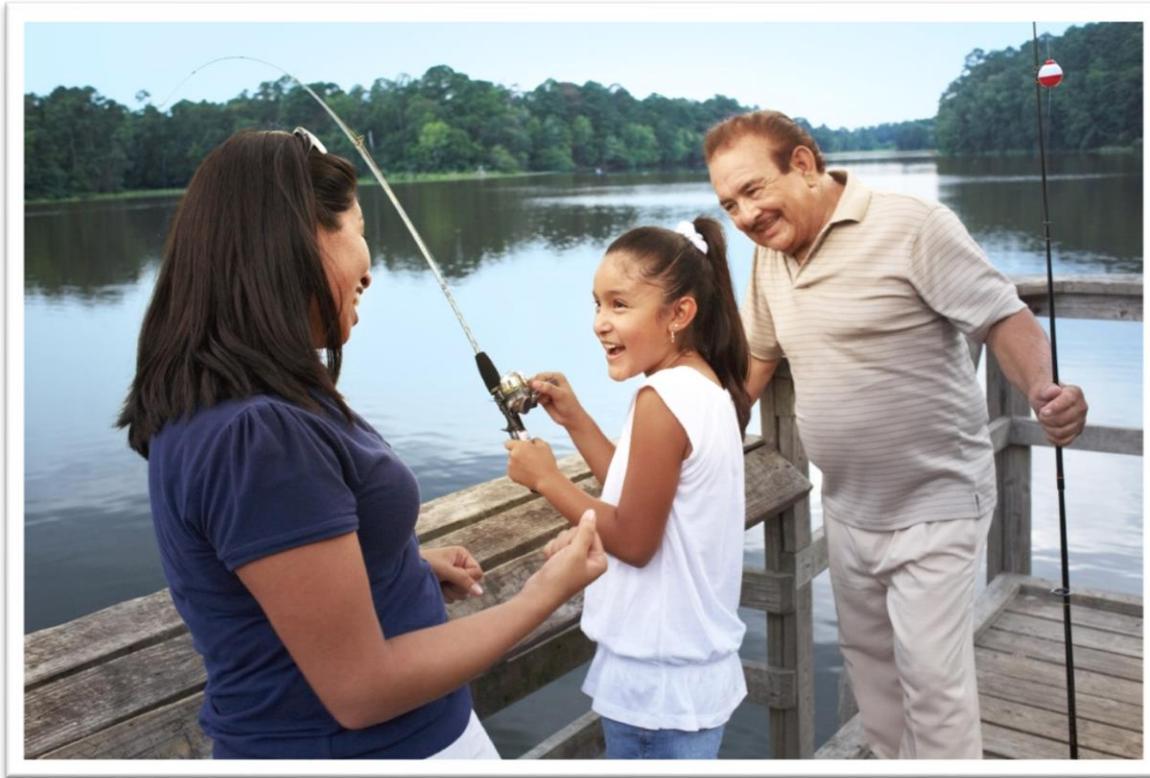
The shaded canyons and natural rock shelters created by years of erosion protect soils from the heat and helps it to retain precious moisture. This creates a cooler and wetter microhabitats that support a variety of life that cannot be found in the surrounding desert. The known only place in the United States to find the erect colunbrina is here at Hueco Tanks State Park and Historic Site.

4. MAKE IT ACCURATE

Often called the “dwarf leopard,” the endangered ocelot once found prime habitat in Texas’ Lower Rio Grande Valley.



5. MAKE IT ACTIVE



This pier is being used by visitors to have fun fishing outdoors.

6. MAKE IT COUNT

Bird



7. MAKE IT INTERPRETIVE



Great! How do I do that?!

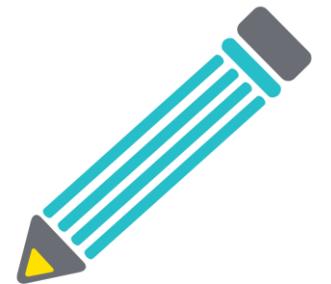


MAKE IT INTERPRETIVE |

INTERPRETIVE WRITING

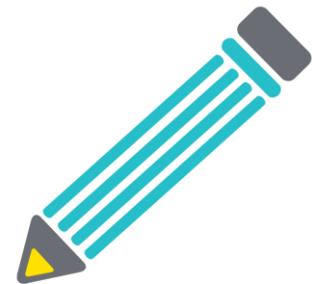
Effective interpretive writing draws from **sound scholarship**, respects **multiple perspectives**, and invites readers to discover their own resource **meanings** and **significance** by providing them with opportunities for **intellectual** and **emotional connections**.

-Eppley Institute



WRITING TOOLS

- Analogies
- Metaphors
- The Flip



ANALOGIES

Active volcanoes contain both heat and gas pressure.

VS.

The plumbing system of an active volcano works just like a pressure cooker and an agitated bottle of champagne.

METAPHORS

Pat Neff founded the Texas State Parks system.

VS.

Pat Neff is the father of Texas State Parks.

THE FLIP

Enchanted Rock is always changing.

VS.

Although it seems like a solid piece of rock, Enchanted Rock is in a constant state of transformation.

ACTION VERBS

- It's alive!
- Action verbs liven things up and emphasize what the subject is doing.
- Active voice promotes clarity and can energize your writing.
- Even a single sentence can be alive!
- Passive voice is the opposite of active voice.

ACTION VERBS

Examples of Active Verbs

accelerate	encourage	nurture	secure
accomplish	examine	observe	show
acquire	facilitate	orchestrate	specify
advance	focus	originate	speculate
amplify	generate	pattern	stage
analyze	guide	persuade	submit
attract	host	preserve	support
broaden	identify	produce	synthesize
build	illustrate	prompt	target
capture	influence	pursue	transfer
challenge	introduce	quantify	transform
collect	involve	rank	travel
construct	join	reconcile	uncover
create	launch	reinforce	unify
define	maintain	replace	utilize
direct	merge	result	validate
distinguish	motivate	revamp	welcome
earn	narrate	revitalize	write

USE YOUR VOICE

- Have a conversation.
- Make it casual and informal.
- Make it enjoyable to read.

WHO IS SPEAKING?

“*Silphium laciniatum* (Compass Flower, Compass Plant or Rosinweed) is a species of flowering plant in the genus *Silphium*. It is native to east-central North America, from southern Ontario and New York south to Alabama and west across the prairies to North Dakota and Colorado south to Texas.”



WHO IS SPEAKING?

“This yard-square relic of original Wisconsin gives birth, each July, to a man-high stalk of compass plant or cutleaf Silphium, spangled with saucer-sized yellow blooms resembling sunflowers. It is the sole remnant of this plant along the highway, and perhaps the sole remnant in the western half of our county. What a thousand acres of Silphiums looked like when they tickled the bellies of the buffalo is a question never again to be answered, and perhaps not even asked.”

-Aldo Leopold



THINGS TO AVOID

- Jargon
- Redundant Language
- Wordiness

JARGON

The RIS provides sites with guidance and expertise in interpretation.

OR

The Regional Interpretive Specialist provides park staff with guidance on programming and exhibits.

REDUNDANT LANGUAGE

Large in size and bright in color, the scarlet macaw rules the rainforest.

OR

The large, bright scarlet macaw rules the rainforest.

WORDINESS

Collecting all the campground fees by 10 p.m. is an impossibility without some kind of extra help.

OR

Collecting all the campground fees by 10 p.m. is impossible without extra help.



ABOUT AUDIENCES



“According to a study by Microsoft, the average human being now has an attention span of eight seconds. This is a sharp decrease from the average attention span of 12 seconds in the year 2000....human attention spans decreases 88% per year.”

cision.com

COMPETING FOR AUDIENCE ATTENTION

- You have **only a moment** to get your audience's attention.
- Your image is the **doorway** into your message.
- Say it **quickly**, say it **well**.
- We're trying to make a **connection**, not tell the whole story.





LET'S TRY IT! |



FINAL THOUGHTS |



FINAL THOUGHTS |



SMALL YET MIGHTY!

Thank you!