

RPTM 297B Interpreting Halloween to Children (1 credit)

Fall 2009

Description and Objective

The purpose of this course is to introduce students to various environmental interpretation methods through involvement in the Children's Halloween Trail. Through a combination of conducted activities and program evaluations the students will learn and demonstrate sound and effective interpretive techniques.

Instructor: Doug Wentzel, Program Director (djw105@psu.edu, 814-863-2000)

Office hours are by appointment at Shaver's Creek Environmental Center.

Overview and Course Dates

The Children's Halloween Trail is one of the largest on-site programs offered by Shaver's Creek. You will join community volunteers, other students, and Shaver's Creek staff to provide a fun and educational experience for approximately 900 children and adults. Working as part of an interpretive team, you will, on one day, teach a six-minute interactive program numerous times in front of a continually changing audience and, on another day, act as a trail guide. The **unifying topic** of this year's trail is **biodiversity** (or **natural heritage**). According to the Pennsylvania Biodiversity Partnership, public surveys reveal that Pennsylvanians put a high priority on protecting our natural heritage, and yet our understanding of what it is we are protecting remains low. Scientists estimate that we have about 23,600 recognized species, with many more to be discovered. Each station will focus on interpreting biodiversity while connecting the topic to Halloween traditions or icons.

Training Session and Dress Rehearsal with Huntingdon Area School District

Sunday, October 19, 10:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.

With this training and your preparation you will be ready to teach at a station and guide a group along the trail.

Children's Halloween Trail

Saturday and Sunday, October 25 and 26, 10:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.

You will take part in two different scheduled interpretation experiences during the weekend. On one day you will act as a trail guide and, on the other day, as a station teacher/interpreter.

Required Materials

A station lesson plan, teaching tips, and guide notes will be provided prior to and at the training session.

Lisa Brochu and Tim Merriman. 2002. *Personal Interpretation*. Fort Collins, CO: InterpPress (National Association for Interpretation). (copies available to borrow)

Happiness is when what you think, what you say, and what you do are in harmony.

—Mohandas K. Gandhi (1869–1948)

Guidelines for Reflections and Grading Criteria

During the trail days you will have time to reflect, write, and assign yourself a grade. Your report may be submitted after each day or by e-mail. All work should be completed by October 31.

Summarize each day by briefly commenting on your performance (e.g., *I arrived early and was excited to put my in-depth planning to the test. My positive attitude seemed to be infectious, as ...*) and answering the assigned reflection questions, and give yourself a grade for each day's effort. You will receive **your** final grade if you provide sufficient justification and thoroughly answer each day's questions. Please use these criteria to help guide your thoughts on performance.

- A. You are on time and ready to **actively participate** in the day's events. Your work shows clear evidence of preparation, attention to detail, and commitment to providing a **high-quality** program.
- B. You are on time and ready to **participate** in the day's events. Your work shows clear evidence of preparation and commitment to providing a program of acceptable **quality**.
- C. You are on time for the day's events. Your work shows **some evidence** of preparation and commitment to the program.
- D. You are late and/or absent for portions of the assignment. Your work shows **little commitment** to the program. What are you doing?

F. You are late and/or absent for large portions of the assignment. Your work shows **no commitment** to the program. You should never have enrolled in this class.

Reflection Questions

Dress Rehearsal, October 19

What did you learn about your station's content from the audience? Do you feel that your main message was clearly conveyed? What fine-tuning and adjustments do you need to make for next weekend to guide and to teach?

Station Teaching, October 25 or 26

What element of your station did the children enjoy most? List three different audience behaviors you observed while teaching and how you adapted to each. Which behavior did you find the most challenging to work with and why?

Guide Leadership, October 25 or 26

Briefly describe your leadership style and why you think you connected with both the adults and the children in your group(s). What new or deeper insight did you gain regarding your style and your ability to work with a guide partner during this experience?

And those who were seen dancing were thought to be insane by those who could not hear the music.

—Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, philosopher (1844–1900)