

Top tips for interpretive text

The general rule is:

Keep it simple - text needs to be clear, concise and easy to read

Getting started:

1. Consider your audience – who will be reading the text? What are their needs?
2. What are your aims for the text, what are the key messages that you want to get across? Write these down now.
3. What do you want the outcome for the audience to be?

Layout

1. Beginning – Your display in a snapshot. It is a short introduction to the chosen theme and display concept.
2. Middle – tell more of the story, show your research.
3. End – conclude and finish up.

Don't assume your audience is familiar with the topic or objects you are displaying.

To keep it simple, as a rule only cover one idea per sentence.

To formulate your text, you need to ask:

1. How does the display fit together as a whole – you are going to tell the audience about how the display fits the chosen theme.
2. Consider your audience – who will be reading the text? What are their needs?
3. What else do we know about the objects and subject? Is there anything else that would be helpful for visitors to know about the objects and how they connect? What have you found out through your research?

Example 1:

Inspiring Women. The WI in the Isle of Ely

A co-creation project between Wisbech Centre Women's Institute and Wisbech & Fenland Museum

This exhibition shines a light on the effects and benefits of the Women's Institute network in Britain and beyond over the last century. In recent years and in the run up to its' 100 years celebration in 2015, the WI has been celebrated in books, television and newspaper and magazine articles. The traditional views of the WI with its Country Markets, members singing Jerusalem and making crafts have been challenged.

In her book, 'A Force to be reckoned with: A history of the Women's Institute', author, Jane Robinson, describes the WI as the 'original social network'.

The WI has long been a countryside tradition with the first WI setting up at Llanfair PG on Anglesey in Wales in 1915, spreading across to rural villages in England.

By 1919, the first WIs were being formed locally across the Isle of Ely at Doddington, Stretham and Whittlesey. More recently, new WI groups have been setting up in cities, for example Shoreditch Sisters in London, and locally, Cambridge Blue Belles, making national headlines for changing the image of the WI. The Belles have developed their own cocktail and its celebrated recipe has been published in 'The Cambridgeshire Cookbook Second Helpings'.

Wisbech & Fenland Museum has been involved with local WI groups from the beginning. An extract from the Wisbech Centre WI's meeting minutes note that:

'Mrs Brooking asked Mr Curtis Edwards to give his lecture on Wisbech Museum and its most interesting contents. This proved to be a very entertaining and edifying talk, and enthused several of the members to visit the Museum. The visits we hope were not made in idle curiosity only, but will have an educational effect on us all, and we hope many members will have entered into the competition for the best paper on a visit to the Museum, which Mr Curtis Edwards has kindly offered to judge.'

This exhibition charts the work of the local WIs from the war effort, making jam and preserving vegetables to activism and furthering national campaigns in mental health, loneliness, climate change, fair trade and modern slavery.

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