

TED
HUGHES

Wodwo



1967

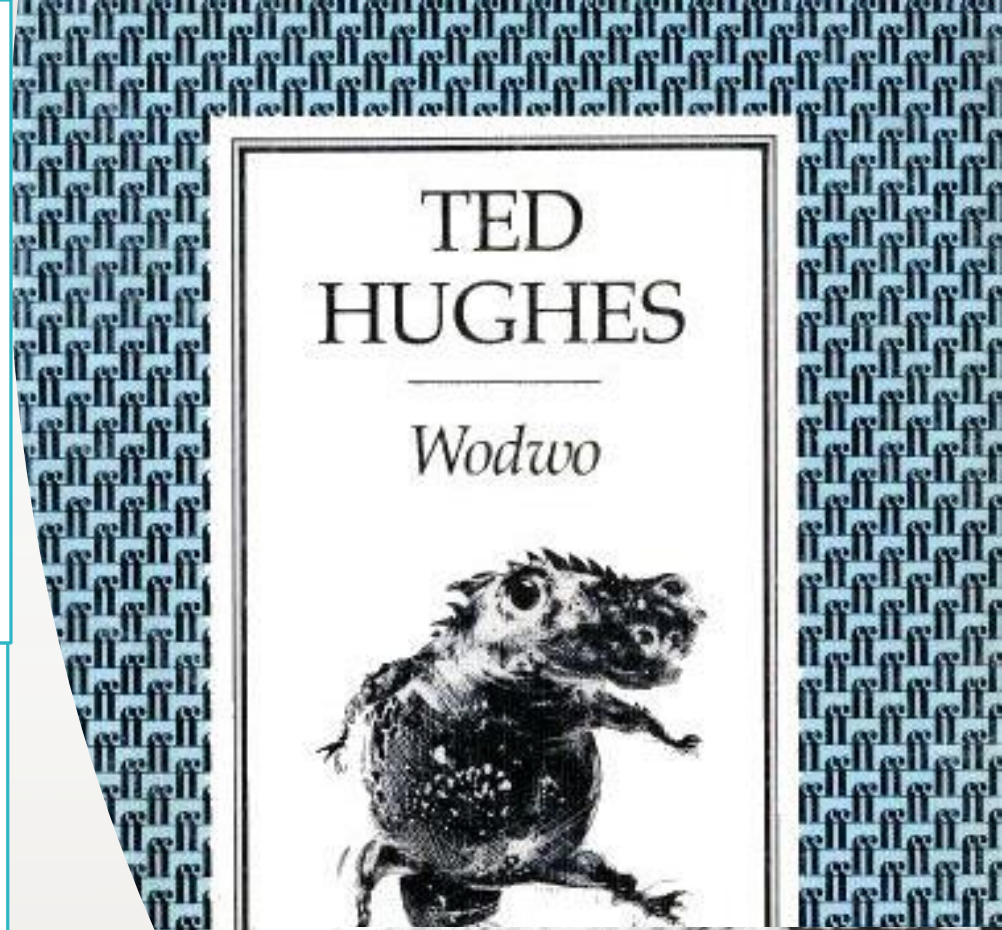
WODWO

Read the poem

- First read the poem silently
- Now read it aloud
- What are your first impressions of the poem?

What am I? Nosing here, turning leaves over
Following a faint stain on the air to the river's edge
I enter water. Who am I to split
The glassy grain of water looking upward I see the bed
Of the river above me upside down very clear
What am I doing here in mid-air? Why do I find
this frog so interesting as I inspect its most secret
interior and make it my own? Do these weeds
know me and name me to each other have they
seen me before do I fit in their world? I seem
separate from the ground and not rooted but dropped
out of nothing casually I've no threads
fastening me to anything I can go anywhere

I seem to have been given the freedom
of this place what am I then? And picking
bits of bark off this rotten stump gives me
no pleasure and it's no use so why do I do it
me and doing that have coincided very queerly
But what shall I be called am I the first
have I an owner what shape am I what
shape am I am I huge if I go
to the end on this way past these trees and past these trees
till I get tired that's touching one wall of me
for the moment if I sit still how everything
stops to watch me I suppose I am the exact centre
but there's all this what is it roots
roots roots roots and here's the water
again very queer but I'll go on looking



1967

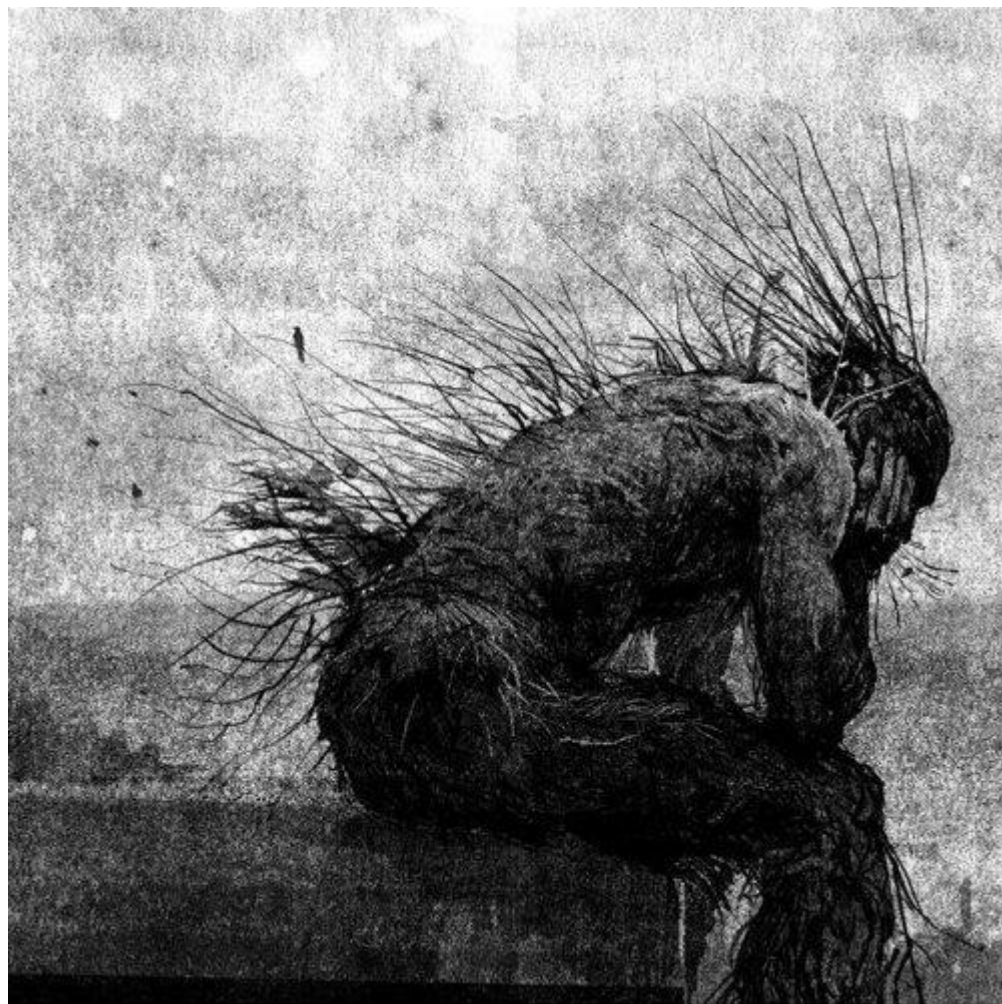


Origin of the title

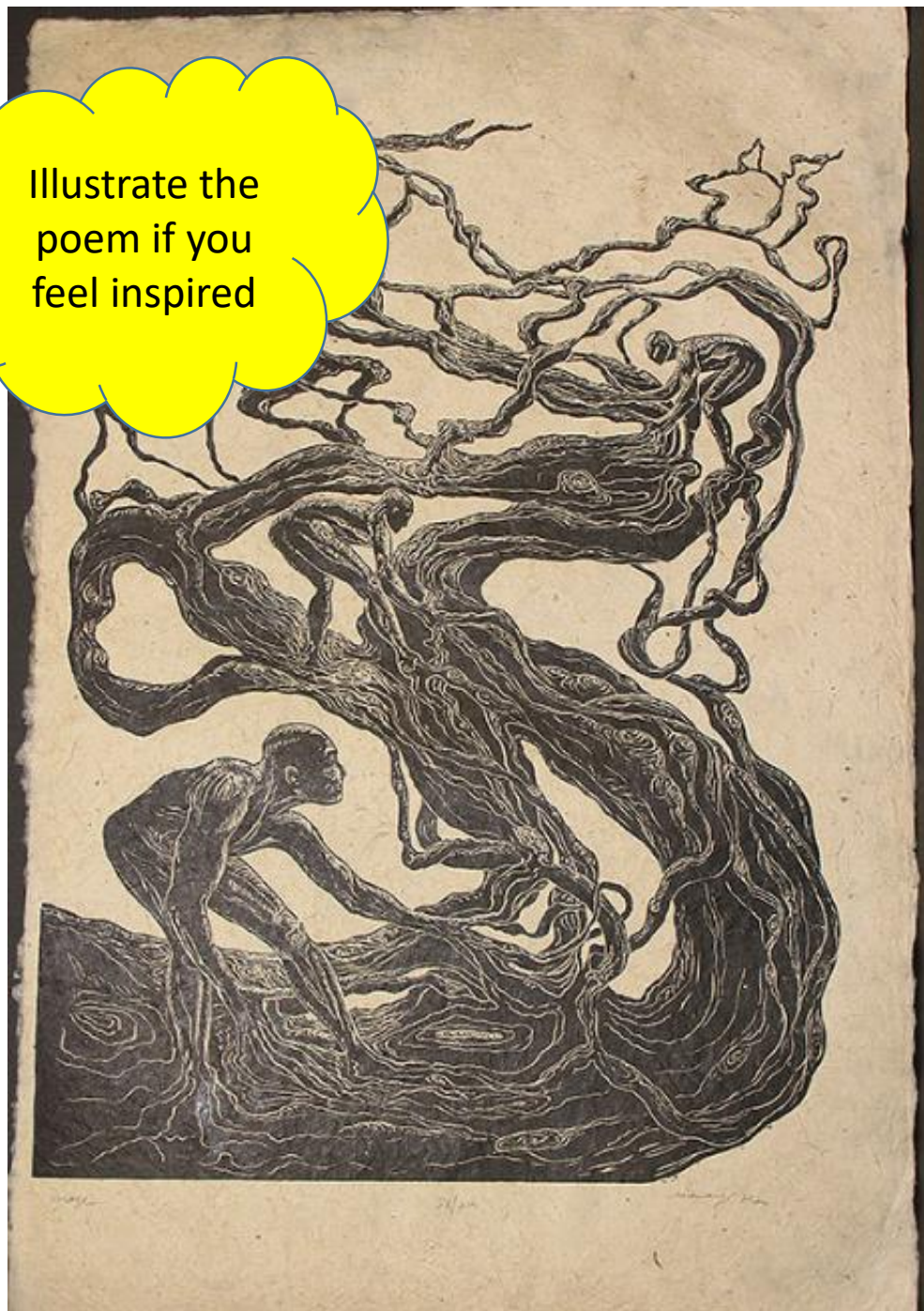
- The first element of *woodwose* is usually explained as from *wudu* "wood", "forest". The second element is less clear. It has been identified as a hypothetical noun **wāsa* "being", from the verb *wesan, wosan* "to be", "to be alive".^[8]
- The [Old English](#) form is unattested, but it would have been **wudu-wāsa* or **wude-wāsa*. It may also mean a forlorn or abandoned person, cognate with the German "Waise" and Dutch "wees" which both mean "orphan."

WODWO

HOW DO THESE IMAGES RELATE TO THE POEM?



Illustrate the poem if you feel inspired



En utilisant les services de Twitter, vous a
de statistiques, de personnalisation et pu

Accueil À propos



Robert Macfarlane ✓

@RobGMacfarlane

Books (The Lost Words, The Old Ways, Landmarks, The Wild Places); Films (Mountain); Essays (Guardian, New Yorker). Underland out in May. Fellow at Cambridge.

The Anthropocene

tinyurl.com/y7xx6vlw

Inscrit en février 2017



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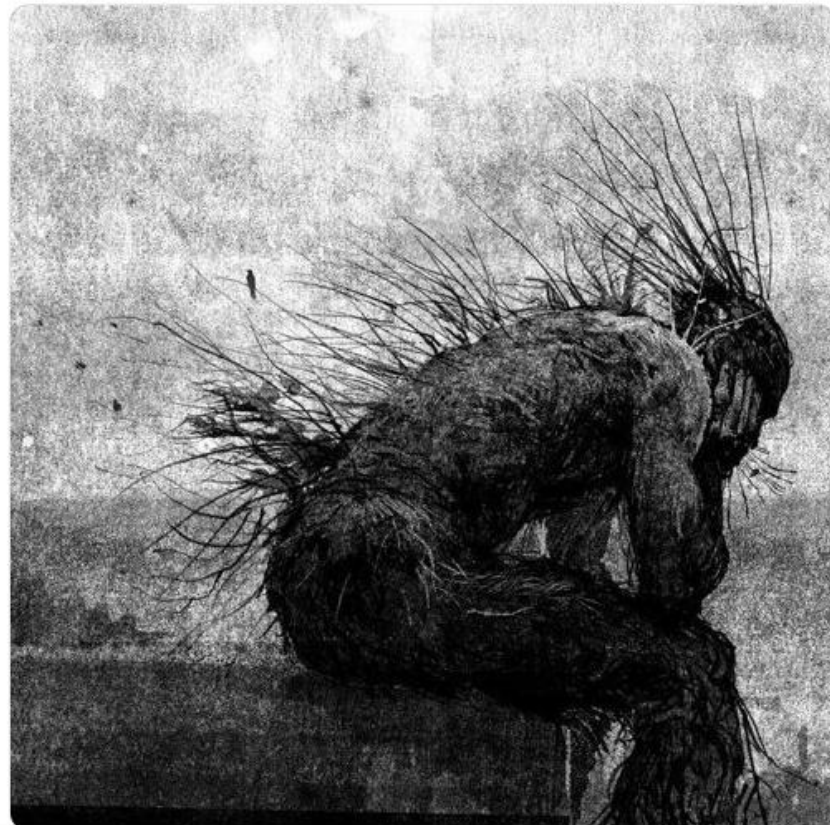
Suivre

Word of the day: "wodwo" - a wild & hybrid folkloric creature, part-human, part-forest, challenging our sense of where beings start & end.

"What am I? Nosing here, turning leaves over following a faint stain to the river's edge..."

(Ted Hughes, Wodwo)

Image by Jim Kay.

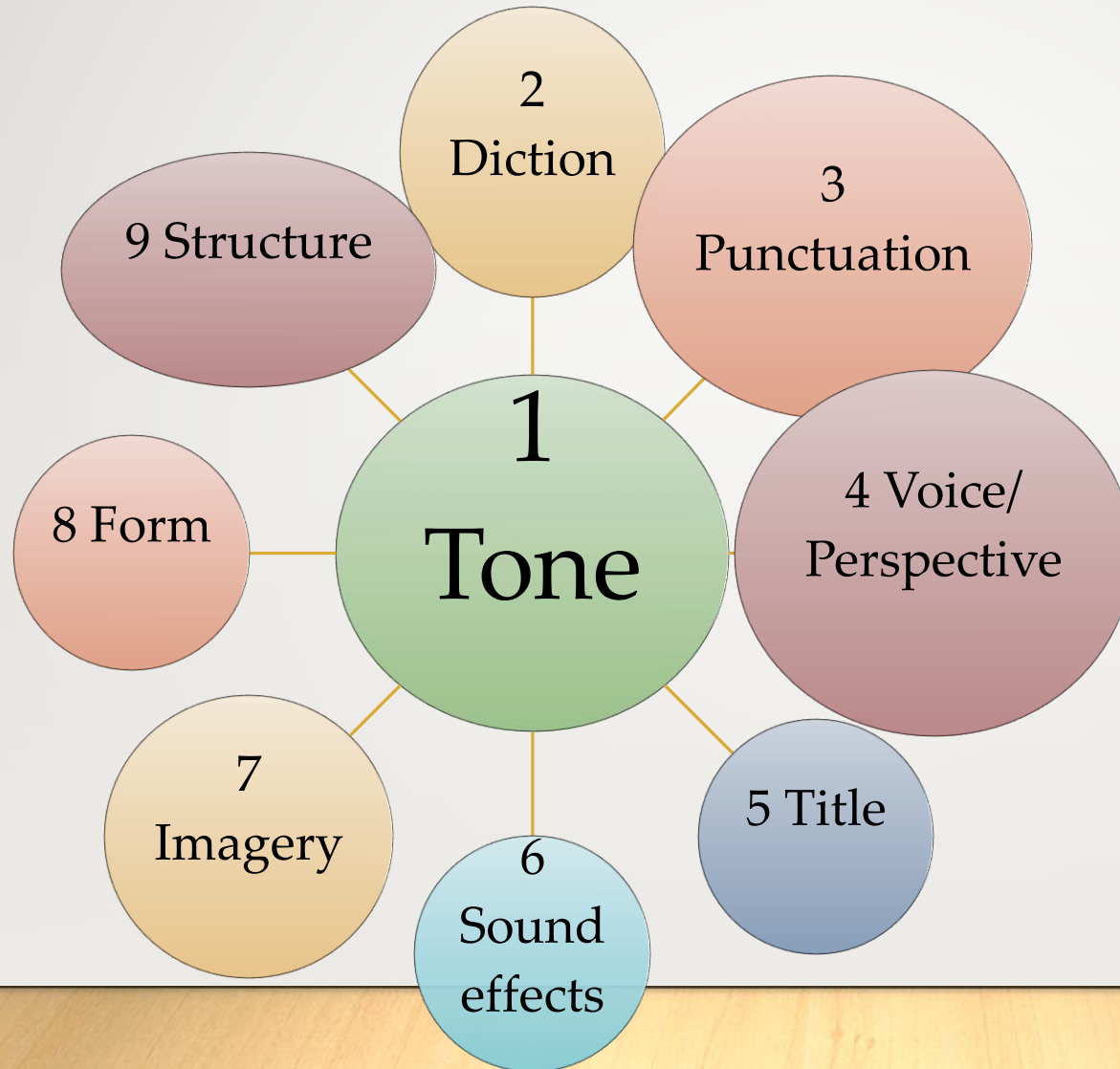


Note
down this
definition
of Wodwo

Second impressions

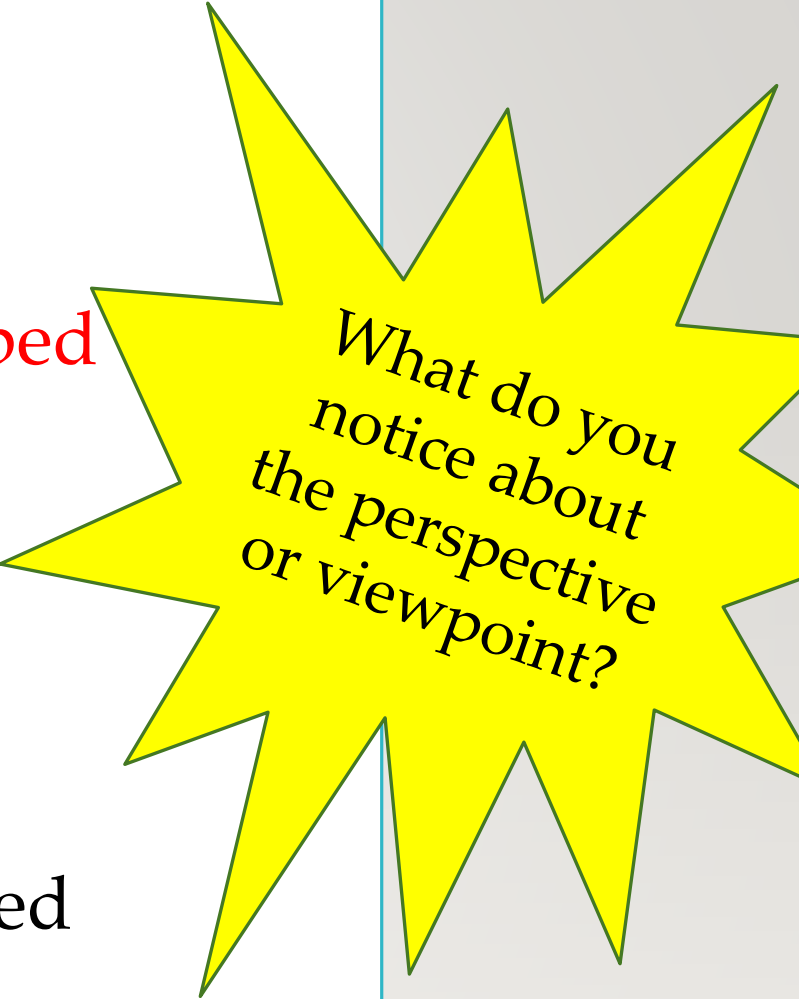
- Highlight:
 - Forest words
 - Water words
 - Words of place
-
- In pairs, discuss how the understanding of these words affects your reading of the poem:

Tools to find meaning



- Looking more closely at the poetic impact, make a note on your assigned aspect:

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Following a faint stain on the air to the river's edge
I enter water. Who am I to split
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What do you
notice about
the perspective
or viewpoint?

I seem to have been given the freedom
of **this place** what am I then? And picking
bits of bark off this rotten stump gives me
no pleasure and it's no use so why do I do it
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Wodwo *Laura Webb*

- “In *Wodwo*, Hughes returns to familiar themes and readdresses them, and we witness a shifting in the perspective, a realignment of the eye-view.”
- “The collection’s stories (and play) narrate the ‘event’, comparable to the fundamental **shamanic** event.





What is a 'shamanic event'?

- Read the information on your worksheet and discuss how this might relate to society and individuals in the 1950s and '60s

Shaman = sorcerer
or Medicine
woman/Medicine
Man

The bridge
between the
material and the
spiritual world

Shamanic event or
rite of passsage



Arnold van Gennep[[edit](#)]



- Van Gennep, who coined the term liminality, published in 1909 his 'Rites de Passage', a work that explores and develops the concept of liminality in the context of rites in small-scale societies.^[9]



Rites of Passage

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- This three-fold structure, as established by van Gennep, is made up of the following components:^[9]
- *preliminal rites* (or *rites of separation*): This stage involves a metaphorical "death", as the initiate is forced to leave something behind by breaking with previous practices and routines.
- *liminal rites* (or *transition rites*): Two characteristics are essential to these rites. First, the rite "must follow a strictly prescribed sequence, where everybody knows what to do and how".^[11] Second, everything must be done "under the authority of a master of ceremonies".^[12] The destructive nature of this rite allows for considerable changes to be made to the identity of the initiand. This middle stage (when the transition takes place) "implies an actual passing through the threshold that marks the boundary between two phases, and the term 'liminality' was introduced in order to characterize this passage."^[13]
- *postliminal rites* (or *rites of incorporation*): During this stage, the initiand is re-incorporated into society with a new identity, as a "new" being.

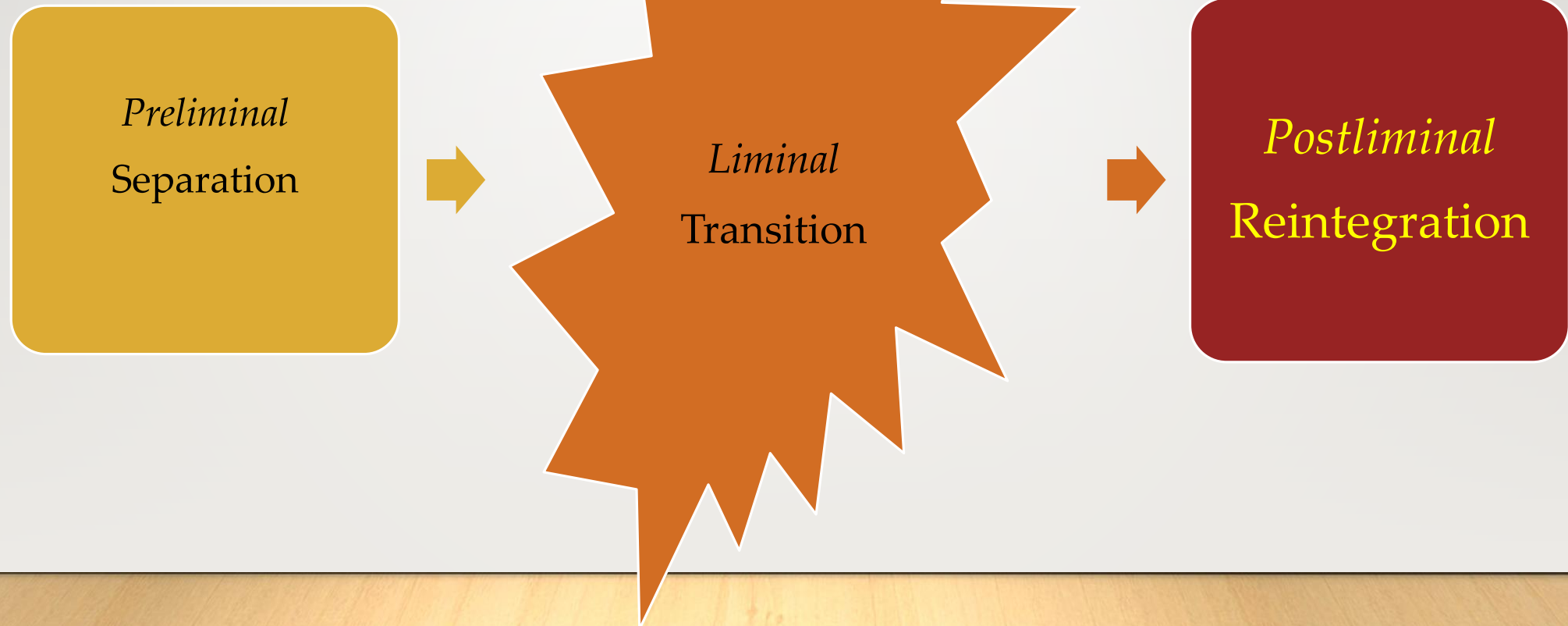
Liminal states

- **liminality** (from the Latin word *līmen*, meaning "a threshold"^[2])
- the quality of ambiguity or disorientation that occurs in the middle stage of **rites**,
- During a rite's liminal stage, participants "stand at the threshold"^[3] between their previous way of **structuring their identity**, time, or community, and a new way, which completing the rite establishes.

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Transformation through the rite of passage



In small groups, discuss and note down any connections you can think of to the overarching themes of the 1950's and '60s.

Themes: identities, growing tensions and transformations

- **Past/future**
- **Gender**
- **Generation gap**
- **National**
- **Artistic/Literary vs economic productivity**
- **Static versus moving**
- **Self/other**
- **Individual/society**

How does this relate to the Post-war context?

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g1ASl7hrKB8>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OOlH-o779k8>