Ritual

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## Guide to app usage

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Key stroke | Effect |
| n, space | next slide |
| p | previous slide |
| f | fullscreen |
| esc, o | overview slide |
| m | toggle menu |
| audio inlay | start/stop audio playback |

## Wait! What?

### Ritual Defined

* A ritual is a **ceremonial act** or a **repeated stylized gesture** used for specific occasions.
* n.b. not necessarily "sacred"
* In society, there are many civic rituals.
* In American courts, raising the right hand, swearing on the Bible, and reciting an oath signifies the obligation to tell the truth.
* In everyday life we participate in numerous personal rituals.
* Shaking hands as a sign of mutual trust
* Standing in honor of a particular person

#### Ritual for any occasion

One of the things **ritual** enables is making adjustment for different audiences

* the purpose of the ritual
* that it can be adjusted for the **audience**

## Ritual in Religious Contexts

* Ritual plays an important role in every religious tradition.
* Some religions are famous for their ritual character
  + Roman Catholicism
  + Eastern Orthodoxy
  + Tibetan Buddhism

### Resistance to ritual?

Other religions are known for their resistance to ritual, but even these religions have certain stylized forms of behavior that are rituals

* Society of Friends (Quakers)
* Puritans

#### Mythos and Ritual

* common form of ritual is dramatizing sacred stories
* such drama allows for participation in the **creative power of the sacred**
* "remembering" – "acting out" – "participating in the power"
  + One of the most common forms of ritual involves acting out or dramatizing religious stories.
  + The conjunction of myth and ritual serves as a way for people to participate in the creative power of the sacred.
  + In many tribal societies people not only remember the tribal myths but also live them and act them out.

#### Ritual Reenactment

* tribal societies ritualize creation stories through dance and gesture
* Greek traged derived from ritualized worship
* modern drama derives from "Passion Plays" of the middle ages.
  + In tribal societies, creation stories may be ritualized through dance and gesture at particular times of the year so that people reenact - the first deeds of gods and goddesses.
  + The Greek tragedy is derived from the ritualized worship of the Dionysus.
  + The modern drama derives from the acting out of the Easter story in French monasteries during the Middle Ages.

#### The Passover

* The **Passover** meal is also called the seder, a Hebrew word that means “order” or “arrangement.”
* Commemorates the meal eaten by the Jews as the were delivered from slavery
* Retelling the story of the **Exodus** is central to the meal
* The **Passover** meal is not merely a historical remembrance.

**The key thing to remember is that the meal is far more than just a meal**

* For Jews participating in the Passover meal, there is a combination of memory, worship, and hope.
* To celebrate the Passover is to become ritually one with those who first observed it before leaving Egypt.
* Thus, Jews celebrate an ancient story in their tradition by reenacting the story in a highly ritualized fashion

Note: - At Passover, Jews all over the world gather in their homes to share a formal meal involving the eating of symbolic foods, various readings and prayers, and a number of blessings. - The meal is orchestrated by the head of the household, who conducts it according to well established traditions.

* Passover commemorates the meal eaten by the Jews the evening before they left Egypt and the enslavement of their people in order to journey toward, and eventually reach, the Promised Land.
* Central to the Passover meal are the great events described in the Bible in the book of Exodus.
* One of the high points of the meal comes when the youngest person present at the table asks why the meal is eaten. The response comes in the form of a reading from the haggadah.

#### 3 min Seder

3 min. video: <https://youtu.be/rfWtBpR1VzA>

Passover\_Seder\_Dinner\_at\_the\_White\_House\_2011-1000x600.jpg

#### Holy Communion

* **Holy Communion** in Christianity functions in ways that are analogous to the **Passover** in Judaism.
* The various Christian communities give diverse interpretations of the significance of communion.
* However, all Christian groups agree that when they celebrate the communion meal, they are reenacting events connected with Jesus of Nazareth.

Note: - The gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, as well as the letter of Paul known as First Corinthians, describe a ceremony involving the use of bread and wine, which are given significance through words attributed to Jesus. - Holy Communion is a ritual reenactment of this story. - Like the Passover meal, the celebration of Holy Communion carries a meaning that the community of believers, long after the event itself, wishes to restate.

#### Other examples of Religious Rituals

* In **Shi'a Islam**, the “passion plays” of the month of **Muharram** reenact the martyrdom of **Husayn** at Karbala in 692 C.E.
* In Shinto, the rituals performed at shrines throughout Japan reenact the conflict between the sun goddess and the god of storms
* thus the participants themselves are a part of the struggle to bring order to the world

Note: - In **Shi'a Islam**, the “passion plays” of the month of **Muharram** reenact the martyrdom of **Husayn** at Karbala in 692 C.E. and draw members of the Shi'a community into an eternal drama in which good suffers in its struggle with evil. - In Shinto, the rituals performed at shrines throughout Japan reenact the conflict between **Amaterasu** (the sun goddess) and **Susanoo** (the god of storms) and enable participants to feel themselves a part of the struggle to bring order to the world.

## Rites of Passage

<https://dribbble.com/shots/4766210-Rite-of-Passage>

Rite of Passage by James OBrien

An illustration for Notre Dame magazine for a story about rites of passage.

### Rites of Passage

* Rites of passage describe those ceremonies associated with the transitional moments in a person's life.
* All religions provide rituals of some sort or another
* Rituals may transformed to be for **nominal** believers to observe customs of tradition (e.g. weddings)

**All rites of passage have three phases:**

* separation,
* liminal, and
* reintegration.
* Note: - All religions provide rituals and/or theological rationales to commemorate such moments. - Even nominal believers who feel no great need to observe most of the customs of a tradition may still turn to religion for rites of passage.

### Stages

Van Gennep viewed rites of passage as an essential ingredient in the rejuvenation of society because they highlight and validate changes in a person’s status. Hence, he argues that they serve to preserve social stability by easing the transition of cohorts of individuals into new statuses; in part, this transition is a social acknowledgement of aging. Furthermore, as individuals are born and age, their positions in society change. In the absence of rites of passage, he says, society would be fraught with conflict as individuals either struggle to assert new social statuses or resist these statuses. Figure 1 Diagrammatic Summary from Les Rites de Passage (diagram by author) Literal: The Territorial Passage: A frontier, an imaginary line connecting milestones marked by an element of nature or landmark, has a physically and magico-religious quality (Gennep, 1960; p. 18).A person passing through a frontier finds him or herself in a special situation for a certain length of time; they wavering between two worlds. It is this situation which is designated as a liminal transition. This symbolic and spatial area of transition may be found in a more or less pronounced form in

### Types of rituals

* Birth rituals
* Initiation rites
* in Postmodern Society?
* Mourning & Death
* temporal rites & celebrations

Note: - Birth rituals - Rites of Initiation - Rituals of Mourning & Death - Rites of passage of time, e.g. cycle of the year, cycle of seasons

## Examples from around the world

### Male initiation

* <http://video.nationalgeographic.com/video/benin_fulaniinitiation> (4:34 min)
* <http://www.artofmanliness.com/2010/02/21/male-rites-of-passage-from-around-the-world/>
* Note: Benin boys move toward manhood by enduring sting of a whip
* **Vanuatu Land Diving** (4 min)
* Vanuatu Land Diving male rite of passage
* Bungee jumping is for wusses… at least compared to the men who live in Vanuatu, a small island nation in the middle of the South Pacific. Here the men take place in a yearly harvest ritual called Land Diving.
* **Hamar Cow Jumping**
* hamar cow jumping photo male rite of passage
* Imagine sitting down with your girlfriend's dad to ask for his daughter's hand in marriage. You're nervous. Sweat gathers on your forehead. You make small talk, but finally manage to get the question out while your voice cracks.
* The dad responds, “Sure! But you'll have to jump over some cows first.”
* **The Ancient Spartan Helot Killing**
* Ancient Spartan Helot Killing male rite of passage
* For ancient Spartans, becoming a soldier was the only way one could be recognized as a man. Military training began at age seven when boys would be taken from their families and placed in the Agoge system. For the next 10 years Spartan boys learned the skills necessary to become a trained killing machine.
* **Satere-Mawe Bullet Ant Glove**
* Satere-Mawe Bullet Ant Glove male rite of passage (2:27 min)
* Deep in the heart of the Brazilian Amazon lives the Satere-Mawe tribe. To become a man in the Satere-Mawe, a boy must stick his hand in a glove woven with bullet ants and withstand their stings for over 10 minutes without making a noise.
* **Maasai Warrior Passage**
* Maasai Warrior boys male rite of passage (5:50 min)
* The Maasai of Kenya and Tanzania have a series of rites of passage that carry boys into manhood. Every 10 or 15 years a new warrior class will be initiated into the tribe. Boys between the ages of 10 and 20 are brought together from all across the country. Dozens of houses are built that will serve as the place of initiation. The night before the ceremony, the boys sleep outside in the forest. At dawn, they return to the little makeshift homestead for a day of singing and dancing. They drink a mixture of milk, cow's blood, and alcohol and eat piles and piles of meat. After the festivities, boys who are of age (12-16) are ready to be circumcised.
* **Mandan Hook Hanging**
* Mandan indians Hook Hanging male rite of passage
* Native American tribes each had their own unique coming of age rituals for the men in the tribe. But few were as intense as that of the Mandans. Before his rite-of-passage, a Mandan boy fasted for 3 days to cleanse his body of impurities. Then, on the day of the ritual, elders of tribe would pierce the boy's chest, shoulder, and back muscles with large wooden splints. Ropes, which extended from the roof of a hut, were then attached to the splints, and the young man was winched up into the air, his whole body weight suspended from the ropes. Despite the pain, the boy was not to cry out in pain. While hanging in the air, more splints were hammered through his arms and legs. Skulls of his dead grandfather and other ancestors were placed on the ends of the splints.
* **Sambia of Papa New Guinea**
* Sambia Papa New Guinea male rite of passage
* In the small country of Papau New Guinea, over 1,000 different culture groups exist. Among them is the Sambia tribe, a group with perhaps the most insane rite of passage into manhood in the world.
* The initiation begins at age seven with the separation of the boy from the mother. The boy will spend the rest of his young life only in the presence of men in an all male hut. The gender separation is taken to such extremes that boys and women use different walking paths around the village. …

### Female initiation

* apache women's initiation (4:30): <https://video.nationalgeographic.com/video/us-apachegirl-pp> at youtube: <https://youtu.be/5B3Abpv0ysM>
* Women's Bwiti Full Initiation Ceremony in Gabon, Africa February 2013: <https://youtu.be/XWnE-yoQ02I> (2 min)
* Note: Gabon, Africa February 2013 Women's Bwiti Initiation in Moukoumou village. This was a dancing ritual that took place after a whole night of ceremony, still going strong the following morning and through most of the day. Iboga House took staff and students to the village for a full initiation and to film a documentary about iboga.

Created by Dale Hathaway.