

## The Spaces In-Between

It is not a beautiful-sounding word: *interstitial*. There is a related word, one I will admit that I could be tempted to favor because of its sound: *liminal*. Liminal means a threshold, a moment when something is about to happen. Liminal is a good word, and it has a beautiful sound in the mouth, but....

It is not the same thing.

Liminal is only the space between moments, the crack in time between what happened and what *will* happen. Interstitial, though, is *all* the spaces in between.

Between the pickets in a fence. Between notes in a composition. Between two people about to kiss.

Interstitial is the space that *isn't* noticed, the placeholder that makes the music possible—it is anticipation and definition and what things are *not*.

When you are an English teacher, people ask often: “So what’s your favorite word?” I’m a little hesitant to answer honestly. I want to say “liminal,” because it will please them, the sound of this little-known word, its meaning. When I say “interstitial,” they frown. They tell me that it is an ugly-sounding word and want to know what it means. I tell them.

“Oh,” they say, and then “That’s a good word, I guess.”

It *is* a good word, I want to tell them. Because “interstitial” is the mystery, the unknown and the unnoticed that makes the world.