

HOW TO MAKE HAIKU



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*My golden
dandelion
Has flown asunder
All over the world*

Inna Yegaj, Age 5, female
Russia (2008)

What is Haiku?

'Haiku', or 'play verse' began in 17th century Japan as a result of poetry contests. It was once considered to be a simple play on words or reason and was seen as second rate literature. However, Masaoka Shiki(1867-1902), a great modern Haiku poet advocated that 'Haiku is Literature.' Since then, Haiku has been one of the most important traditional literary forms in Japan.

Haiku is a form of poetry that captures a moment in the poet's life in a very short, descriptive verse. The poem freezes a moment in time, leaving room for your imagination. Each word melts seamlessly into the other, transporting the reader into a poetical realm conjured up by three verses alone. A contemplative poetry, Haiku values nature, color, seasons, contrast and surprises. It has developed as a verse that expresses deep feeling for nature including human beings. This follows the traditional Japanese idea that man is a part of the natural world, and should live in harmony with it.

Matsuo Basho(1644-1694)is known as the greatest poet in the history of Haiku. He was born into a poor samurai family in southern Japan. When he was quite young he started studying Haiku and shortly afterwards opened his own school, where 2000 students studied under him. Basho wrote his poems using jokes and plays upon words in his early stages as they were in fashion but then began to attach importance to the role of his verse from around 1680.

*A long dark night
Full of whistling wind
No moon*

Ana Sirnik
age 12, female, Slovenia (2008)



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*I adore the wind
It makes me feel excited
When it blows at me*

Guy Peppiatt
Age 6, male, UK (2008)



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The Shape of Haiku



Hold On
Playful spring breezes,
Sorry little ladybug,
Hold on to the stem.

*Playful spring breezes
Sorry little ladybug
Hold on to the stem*

Keoho Bryant
age 8, male, USA (2008)

The form is very simple- a traditional 3-line verse of 17 syllables divided into a 5-7-5 pattern.

This creates a short-longer-short pattern. Anyone is able to write Haiku. The best thing about Haiku is that it does not have to rhyme. Some poets write more or less than the traditional 17 syllables. As long as you stick to the short-longer-short pattern your poem is still a Haiku.

Symbolism is often used when creating Haiku, and although the image is always expressed in simple language, the hidden suggestion is often very subtle. Detailed observation and a deep love for nature can often be seen in good Haiku.

Many Haiku are beautiful word pictures, but not elaborate description. The more modest the description the more room there is left for the reader to build his own image.

Haiku is usually one breath long. So poets must listen with their ears, as well as their eyes and hearts in order to write good Haiku.

The Beauty of Haiku

The interpretation of Haiku depends on the reader. In order to appreciate international Haiku we should understand the background culture of the poet. When exposed to the diverse expression and emotions, we would like to think that Haiku exists as common means of communication between people all over the world. From this too, we can share the pleasure of Haiku, promoting mutual understanding together with the beauty of Haiku verse.

In the 21st century it is vital that the economic, political and cultural barriers between nations be brought down, so that we can work together to achieve our purposes. For this to happen, the mental barriers between nations must also be erased.

Perhaps the appreciation of Haiku will contribute to the creation of a more harmonious global society.

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Let's Try Illustrating the Haiku



Nutchanard Wongsricha
Age 12, female,
Thailand (2008)

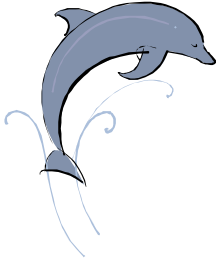
When you have written your Haiku, try drawing a picture about what you have written. It does not have to be a masterpiece - just something that reflects the image within your mind. It could be full of colors, or it could be black and white.

In this picture, Nutchanard has drawn her image of her Haiku: *'Wind gently sweeps the field, Protruding rice ears bow along, Buffalo ride cools me down.'* She uses simple language to express her daily life, and the colourful picture shows the beauty that she sees.

Every 2 years, thousands of children from around the world send their Haiku, together with their pictures into the World Children's Haiku Contest.

HOW TO APPRECIATE HAIKU

Rule.1 The Four Seasons



Haiku is a way to reconnect us with nature as it heightens our awareness of the human's relationships to its environment. Haiku traditionally includes a reference to the seasons, known in Japanese as 'kigo', or 'season word' in English. Having a 'kigo' makes the Haiku deeper and more universal. Some favorite subjects of Haiku are; the brevity of life, birds and other animals, insects, trees and flowers, mountains, the moon, sunshine, snow, rain, mist and other aspects of nature.

There is always a seasonal reference, or 'kigo', sometimes very indirect, such as a 'cold moon' - winter, 'plum-blossoms'- spring, 'fireflies' - summer, or 'maple leaves'/'red leaves' - autumn.

This 'kigo' has always been a feature of Japanese poetry since early times, as awareness of the four seasons has always been important in Japanese culture.

Basho also talked of the importance of feeling close to nature - 'to write about the pine tree, become one with the pine tree' - one should be this close to nature.

In Japan, Haiku poets use a 'saijiki', a seasonal word dictionary, to help them write Haiku. However, each country's poets must find their own 'season words' by observing the seasonal changes in their own environment - so the season words of each country will be a little different.

In Dale's poem we can see a number of references to summer; 'hot sun', and 'surfing on the waves'. He has also given us an idea of what people in Australia like to do in summer by using the word 'surfing'. He has created an images of a hot summer's day at the beach without using the word 'summer' itself. This is the beauty of 'kigo'.



*Under the hot sun
I am surfing on the waves
With my dolphin pals*

Dale Jasch, age 11, male, Australia

Basho talked of the importance of feeling close to nature - 'to write about the pine tree, become one with the pine tree'.

In his poem, Mark uses the word 'frogs', letting us know that the Haiku is set in spring. Words such as 'glitter' and 'swirl' suggest a bright, happy atmosphere.

Remember the language you use creates the atmosphere of your Haiku. Perhaps Mark has caught the frogs having great fun floating downstream!



*Waterfalls glitter
And swirl the frogs down the stream
To the lily pads*

Mark Rokitka, age 11, male, USA

Be careful



In the poem below, Braedon not only watches the subject of his Haiku, but perhaps becomes one with it. He images that the nectar tastes 'sweet' even though he may never have tasted it himself before. He does not need to use the word 'spring' since we know it is spring because of the words 'butterfly', 'rose' and 'sweet nectar.' Braedon has kept his Haiku very simple and subtle, but it still creates a beautiful images in the mind of reader.

*The butterfly comes
Descending to the wild rose
Tasting sweet nectar*

Braedon Stenson, age 9, male, Canada



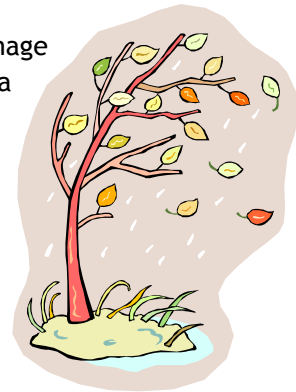
Notice that in the poem below, Christian does not say 'the leaf fell and landed on the ground with the other one.'

This Haiku has an element of surprise as we did not expect there to be another leaf on the ground. When we are told 'now there are two' an image automatically comes to our mind of two leaves sitting peacefully under a tree on an autumn day.



*A leaf falls off the tree
Sailing to the street
Suddenly they're two*

Christian Gunther, age 10, male, Germany



Nela does not say 'a frost on our window because it is a cold winter.' She uses simple but beautiful, suggestive language, allowing the reader to imagine a delicate, wintery sight.



*A beautiful lace
On our window
Woven by winter cold*

Nela Zorko, age 12, female, Slovenia

We can see from these Haiku alone that it is not a good idea to tell the reader what they are seeing. Use simple but vivid language and your poem will allow readers to conjure up images as beautiful as those on this page.

It you are writing your Haiku in a certain season, use words that would make you think of that season - try not to use the name of the season itself.

Even if this is difficult, keep practicing and just enjoy your Haiku writing. You will surprise yourself!



Rule.2 Reflect Your World and Your Heart

Haiku is not only a way to connect to nature, but also a way to see and describe the world clearly. Since Haiku is so short, the reader must be able to experience in three short imagistic lines the moment of clarity that stopped the poet's mind.

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*Gently the breezes move
Masses of fluffy clouds enjoy the float
Celestial tell-tale enjoyed down below*

Pruksachart Pratoomnan
Age 10, female, Thailand (2008)

To write a good Haiku, one must see the world clearly and write it down clearly, using specific and concrete images - the image being simply a word or group of words which present an object that appeals to the senses - that can be seen, touched, heard, smelled, tasted, etc.

Haiku have a reputation for being mostly objective descriptions, yet a good Haiku moves the reader, evokes some emotion.

It could be a heavy emotion like sorrow or a subtle feeling of a sense of beauty, or of humor or of the transience of life.

Yet the feeling is evoked indirectly, It is never explained, but rather conveyed through the image.

*Close-eyed Dad laid still
Mom and I hugged him tightly
He breathed his last*

Ekaparb Uawisawathana
Age 12, male, Thailand (2008)



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*It's rattling heavily
In the schoolyard
The wind drives the empty can*

Tobias Bockmann, Age 11, male, Germany (2008)

*Like school bully
Wrestling me to my home
The tough wind pushes*

Claudya Sanchez, Age 11, female, USA (2008)



Be careful

It is important to let the image say the feeling indirectly, or subtly, as in the poems below.

From Daniel's Haiku we feel a great sense of loss and grief. At first we do not know exactly what sort of situation he is writing about when he says 'mixed emotions' and 'memories embrace', but the last line is almost a shock to the reader and his poem is very effective in this way.



*Mixed emotions swirl
Memories embrace my soul
The casket lowers*

Daniel Wood, age 12, male, New Zealand



*The winds are howling
Piercing sunshine bring daylight
Flora blossoming*

Fathatunnur Asyiqin bt. Khairul Anuar
Age 11, female, Malaysia (2008)



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The poem below is very cleverly written, containing elements of both surprise and humor. The first two lines successfully build a feeling of fun and anticipation and we expect that Tarzan will come back with what he goes out to hunt. But instead he comes back with something else - something much less grand than what we would expect.



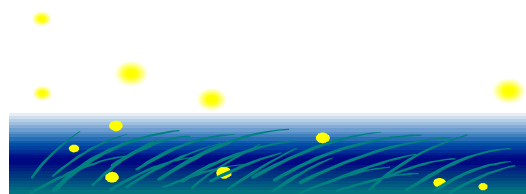
*One two three four five
Tarzan went on a tiger hunt
Came back with a mouse*

Shen Hua Quiang, age 12, male, Singapore

Gianluca's poem is filled with wonder and an appreciation of the beauty of nature. He imagines that the glow of the fireflies is created by each one holding a burning lantern, so that sailors may lose their way home.

*Countless fireflies
Hang across an endless field with lanterns
Sailors have lost their way*

Gianluca Sordi, male, Italy



Rule 3. Capture The Moment



Haiku is a way to slow down in our modern speedy world and therefore relax and appreciate our lives more.

Basho said 'Haiku is what is happening in *this* moment, *this* time, *this* place.' The best Haiku are usually written from one's experience in the moment, in the here-and-now.

*I watch the snowdrift
Fall to the ground I think of
The things I have done*

Hannah Ferguson, age 10, female, Canada



Although some people write from memory or imagination, the Haiku that seem to be genuine are those coming from one's immediate experience or at least partially from one's real experience.

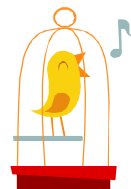


*Rainstorm and strong cold wind
Sent me up shivering on a big branch
My family has gone.*

Kittamet Thongchom, age 12, male, Thailand (2008)

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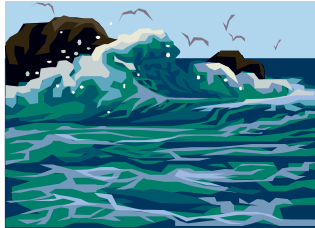
To write a Haiku one must be awake to the world. For when the mind is present and not asleep or crowded by thoughts, one can see clearly what is really there. This 'clear seeing' becomes the surprise or fresh moment. This in turn makes one appreciate everyday life much more. You should never try to surprise or to be shocked, but sit still and notice what is there.



Be careful



The following three poets express personal experiences through their Haiku. Na writes about a time standing on the ocean shore, listening to the 'music' of waves. Notice that he does not directly say that the ocean 'is' music, he suggests this subtly.



*The sound of the waves
A concert to be hold
On the ocean floor*

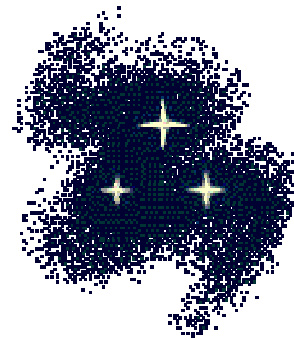
Na Young Moon, age 12, Korea



Perhaps Alex has seen a shooting star one dark night,
and imagines that it is fleeing the Milky Way,
inspiring him to write this Haiku...

*Shooting star
Longs to see the world
Outside of the Milky Way*

Alex Malot, age 13, male, France



These poems show us that while it is important to write from your own experience, it is not always good to tell the reader exactly what happened. Try to use language that is simple, but vivid.

The poem below allows the reader to imagine the subject of the Haiku without being told exactly what it looks like. There is no need to elaborate on things that are common knowledge - for example, we all know what dragonflies looks like. You simply need to express the special characteristics of your subject.



*Reflection in
The eyes of the dragonflies
Andromeda*

Natsuki Toyokawa, age 12, male, Japan

A HAIKU FOR ANY OCCASION

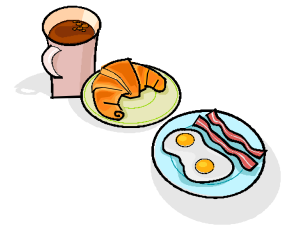
All In One Day...

Sometimes the most interesting Haiku come from the most simple of subjects - your daily life. Even if you live in a house of 6 people, or a city of thousands, your daily activities and discoveries are unique, allowing you to express a world that only you can see. Haiku are also a way of informing people in other countries what you do in your country. By reading your Haiku, they will understand more about life in your part of the globe. You may choose to write about your family, school, neighborhood, hobbies, pets or back garden. When you think about it, there is an endless list of possible subjects for your Haiku. All you need to do is open your eyes...



In the Daytime

What do you usually do first after you get out of bed in the morning?
What is your day like?
Is it a good day or a bad day?
Who is with you?
Where are you?
Remember, you don't need to go into great detail, just give the reader a sense of what a day in your life is like.



In the Dark of Night

The night presents itself in many different ways in different countries...
Is it starry?
Is it scary?
What do you like to do at night?



During the week...

From Monday to Friday our lives can become so busy that we may forget what we did last Tuesday, or even yesterday. Haiku are a good way of taking a close look at what we do during the week, and keeping forever those moments in hands as well as in memories.



On the Weekend

Perhaps the weekend is everyone's best favorite part of the week!
Your Haiku could be about trips with your family, playing with your friends or relaxing on you own.



Over A Year

In all countries throughout the world, a new year brings many new things; changing seasons, new school year, new friends, new experiences...A good way of remembering your feelings at these times is to capture them in a Haiku.



The Heat of Summer



What reminds you of summer in your country?
How would you like people all over the world to see summer in your country?
What do you like to do in summer?



The Chill of Winter

Is it really cold in winter at your place?
Do you live on a tropical Island?
What do you like to do for fun during the winter months?



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