



Haikus



What's a haiku?

Originating in Japan, a classical haiku has 17 syllables total and is broken into 3 lines with 5 – 7 – 5 syllables each. Imagine, these descriptive poems are intended to be recited in a single breath.

Haiku became popular sometime in the 9th to 12th centuries, and the form was revived in the 19th century. There are also plenty of modern haiku.

A haiku would be a wonderful Valentine's Day gift. You might craft and even read your poem as a gift for someone you love.

They often describe a special, brief moment from nature, and they commonly create emotional responses by using colorful images. A haiku looks at nature and sees something deeper. Subjects might include the seasons, months, animals, the moon, or, really, anything of your choosing.

How is a haiku structured?

Remember, traditional haiku have 17 syllables broken into 3 lines with 5, 7, and 5 syllables each.

When you write a haiku, be creative with imagery, as well as with punctuation, capitalization, and word order. Haiku lines do not have to sound like "normal" sentences. They do not have to rhyme either; in fact usually there is no rhyming. They might also include the repetition of words or sounds.

With so few words, readers usually need to make their own connections between ideas. In fact, the last (third) line often contrasts with the first two in a fun or surprising way; it often presents a twist or new way of looking at the topic.

Here are some examples. As you read these, notice the differences and similarities and how they're from different time periods. Also notice how fun they are. What else do you notice?

Fun fact: The famed traditional Japanese poets known as "The Great Four," include Matsuo Basho, Yosa Buson, Kobayashi Issa, and Masoaka Shiki. The first example was written by Matsuo Basho.





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Examples:

Traditional

An old silent pond,
A frog jumps into the pond,
splash! Silence again.
-Matsuo Basho (1644-1694)

19th Century

The lamp once out
Cool stars enter
The window frame.
-Natsume Soseki (1867-1916)

Modern

ground squirrel
balancing its tomato
on the garden fence
-Don Eulert (b. 1935)

Here's a fanciful example dealing with fish, water, and light. Do you see and hear the fish or smell the ocean?

Koi dart and flash
dreaming they're sea creatures
dappled with moonbeams.

Items you will need:

- Paper and pen/pencil
- OR a computer

How do I write my own haiku?

1. Follow these steps to write your own haiku. Have fun!
2. Create a list of possible subjects to write about, especially from nature.
3. Reflect on pictures of nature or walk outside and take notes about what you observe.
4. Create a list of descriptive, emotional words based on your thinking and noticing.
5. Write your 3 lines using descriptive words and images. Remember to edit!
6. You can also decorate the page with drawings or decorations to make your haiku even nicer.
7. Give your haiku to the person you wrote it for.





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For related fun:

Here are some other ideas for ways to write or present your haiku.

- Chalk your haiku outside on the sidewalk.
- Paint or write your haiku on a poster board or piece of cardboard. Use staples or glue to attach it to a stick or long, wooden ruler and then “plant” it in your front yard or in the front yard of a friend, relative or neighbor.
- Use markers or crayons to write your haiku in bold colors. Put it on your refrigerator, on a door or wall, or someplace else where others will be able to see it.
- Use crayons, colored pencils, chalk, or water colors to decorate your haiku with a picture of the scene you used to create it. You might also make a decorative border. Decorating your haiku works for any size paper.

