

Writing a Haiku

**An old silent pond...
A frog jumps into the pond,
splash! Silence again.**

Matsuo Basho (1644-1694)

**The lamp once out
Cool stars enter
The window frame.**

Natsume Soseki (1867-1916)

About the haiku

A haiku is a traditional Japanese poem of three short lines that do not rhyme. The first and third lines have five 'moras' and the middle line has seven (referred to as the 5-7-5 structure). A mora is a sound unit, like a syllable, but not identical to it. For instance, the word 'haiku' has three Japanese moras but only two English syllables. This is why in the two examples above from two of the 'Great Four' Japanese master haiku poets, the English translation doesn't follow the 5-7-5 syllable format.

Traditionally a haiku is about nature and uses seasonal or weather words. More than just a pretty picture, however, haiku poets try to convey a vivid image or poetic moment by observing nature combined with human nature.

Haiku poems became a popular activity in the 9th century in Japan, when they were written as progressive poems, with one person writing the first three lines with a 5-7-5 structure, then the next person adding a section with a 7-7 structure. The first verse was called a 'hokku' and set the mood for the rest of the verses, of which there could be hundreds. In the 19th century, the 'hokku' became the 'haiku' and began to be written and read as an individual poem.

Instructions

- English haiku are written in three lines of 17 syllables or less. Start with the 5-7-5 pattern to get used to the form.
- Think of the poem as having two parts, or sentences. Describe the setting in the first line, then the subject and action in the second and third lines. One line is usually a fragment - usually the first line - while the other two lines are one phrase.

- A haiku is written in the present tense, as if you are ‘in the moment’.
- Poetic devices like metaphors and similes are not used - keep it simple!
- Capital letters are not necessary, nor punctuation. Haiku are meant to feel open, almost unfinished.
- Show, don't tell. You aren't just describing a scene - you are creating an emotional resonance by juxtaposing your human experience with the description of the setting.
- Write what you like to read. You are your first and most important audience.

Haiku are not easy to write, but with practice, you can learn to create something wonderful out of the ordinary.

Good luck and most importantly, have fun and enjoy yourselves!

Here are a couple of examples from our very own CARM team, to inspire you - or at least give you confidence in your own first efforts!

**Fluting early bird
reaching through glass-paned windows
better than coffee.**

Katie

**Let's get crafting now
crochet draw, knit paint enjoy
It will make us smile.**

Helen

Don't forget to keep your creative efforts safe for when we can collect them. If you can send them now, please do! Let us know your name, age, where you are from, and send to: CARM, Unit 12 Mountfield Road Industrial Estate, New Romney, TN28 8LH or email to: rem@carmromneymarsh.org.uk

Take care and stay safe xx