

Haiku

Definition

The haiku is a Japanese verse in three lines. Line one has 5 syllables, line two has 7 syllables and line three has 5 syllables. The 17 syllables are a compressed form which is a composition in praise of nature. Many original books of haiku verse in Japanese are illustrated gracefully in pen and ink sketches which capture the essence of a simple moment in nature. Haiku is a mood piece in which there is no rhyme and there are no metaphors or similes! There is a rhythmic difference between Japanese and English, therefore much is lost in the translation. I have broken the rule in the examples below, regarding figures of speech, because the haiku seemed lifeless without them. This is known as poetic license.

- Examples:*
- | | |
|---------------------------------------|-----|
| Old crow in command | (5) |
| Always foraging for food | (7) |
| On his daily route | (5) |
| <hr/> | |
| A color riot | (5) |
| Lilac bush bursts into bloom | (7) |
| A splash of flowers | (5) |
| <hr/> | |
| Ink black night cover | (5) |
| A wrapper of soft silence | (7) |
| Our way lit with stars | (5) |
| <hr/> | |
| Water slaps the shore | (5) |
| Against the white crystal sand | (7) |
| Under a hot sun | (5) |



Guidelines: Find examples of authentic Japanese haiku poetry books to get a sense of the simplicity of this form. Practice the skill of syllabication, as a class, by tapping out syllables against the desk or by clapping. Say the words out loud in unison to help the rhythmic exercise. For variations, give the class a first line only and let each student complete the second and third lines independently. Read aloud to check syllabication and appreciate the variations of the poets in the class. Enlist the skills of the art teacher to instruct in the fragile haiku art which accompanies the poems.

