

WHAT ARE HAIKU POEMS?

Traditional haiku poetry originated in Japan and involves some basic general rules such as a three line structure of 17 syllables or less in three line form

5 syllables -7 syllables -5 syllables

Good haiku poems are short, easily memorized, and yet not superficial. They can be appreciated in a brief moment and yet recalled with pleasure and fresh insight at a later date. Just as favourite photographs may be carefully preserved, and looked at over and over again, to revive fond memories, so with haiku. They have even been called 'flash bulb poems'.

'Writing haiku is like taking photographs without a camera.'

Sam Yada Cannarozzi

Haiku are in the present tense and value simplicity without losing depth. They usually contain a 'seasonal word', such as sledging, swimming or sweeping leaves and avoid the use of alliteration and simile are written in the.

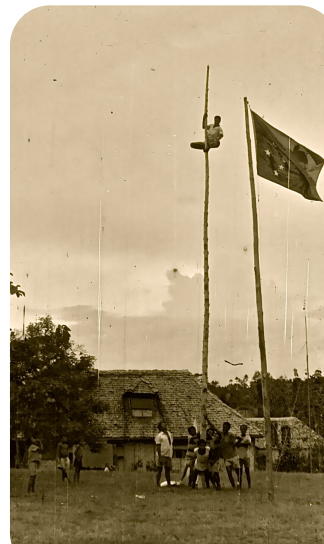
Haiku are usually the result of direct observation, and describe a present reality that has generally been thought unremarkable until attention is drawn to it.

The native North Americans understood Haiku thinking:

"It's like looking back at that and saying, Well, that was simple, why in the world didn't I know that!

And you think, "Well, I knew that I just didn't know that I knew that."

'I really believe that there are things that nobody would not see if I didn't photograph them.'
Kingly Amis in Luck Jim



FAMILY

brand new grandmother
practices her pram turning
on the summer lawn

Raskalnikov
breaks my daughter's heart
150 years later

My son sixteen
still openly surprised
by my card tricks

strangely empty
the house
without your disputes

laughing at himself
my son easily passes through
unstrung tennis racket

engagement ring
sparkles nearly as much
as her brown eyes

new grandfather
remembers the baby's weight
but not the name

late afternoon sun
shadows play
on veranda steps

even on South African TV
Scotland loose
to Australia

'And here is my secret.
It is a very special
secret . . .

It is only with the heart
that one can see rightly.
What is essential
is invisible to the eye.'

Antoine de Saint Exupéry

desperate scooping
net result
three tadpoles

morning sadness
broken against the window
fledgling blackbird

tiny birds beware
silent cat
waits

hard frost
on plum blossom
week end

green shoots
piercing the darkness
soil damp and soft

early morning
birdsong
breaks the silence

spring
sparrow tail ticks
yes, yes, yes.

polished floors
blinds rule out
spring sunshine

tiptoeing through
milky puddles-
cat with four white paws

hawthorn buds
begin to redden
late this year

gentle breezes
misty clouds
lose their grayness

April
awaked at 4 a.m.
bird anthem

unearthing seeds
spoilt children
make mud pies

spring flutters
white butterfly
against last snowfall

April 5a.m.
garbage collectors
scatter birdsong

soft white feather
curves from the sky
calm pond awaits

strawberry flowers
open butterfly wings
spring whiteness

a few white feathers
left behind in the gloaming
and the smell of fox

Studious listener, think of all these creations which God has drawn out of nothing; . . . recognize everywhere the wisdom of God; never cease to wonder, and, through every creature, to glorify the Creator.

Basil the Great (329-379)

The colour-scheme of a kimono so discreet, subdued, and apparently dull that there seems to be no scheme at all, is shibuyi. . . A nineteenth-century manual of painting advocates the technique of "leaving out", illustrated by drawings of the familiar kind where the simple outline of a face, minus features, serves as a surprisingly expressive formula: 'Figures, even though painted without eyes, must seem to look; without ears, must seem to listen. There are things which ten hundred brushstrokes cannot depict but which can be captured by a few simple strokes if they are right. giving expression to the invisible.'

early alarm call
prowling cat sets off
parent bird

first day of summer
doe white skin
start to redden

puppy and girl
take each other for a walk
delightful eyes

cooling the grass
a deeper shade of green
soft spring rain

SUMMER

drying green
legs crazily crossed
clothes pegs

moist grass
hammerheaded starlings
worms beware

midsummer's day
barefoot on warm concrete
centipede ponders

dry bird dropping
on the old tree swing
children long gone

blue washed sky
swifts loop the loop
summer is here

baking safari park
elephantine droppings
dung beetles help

heatwave
lizard glued to the wall
binks

five dolphins
leaping high
on beach towel

pink fluffy clouds
stream home this evening -
fairground music

slow to darken
garden sprinkler hisses
deep blue night

even the crows
cannot rob the cornfields
of yellowness

magpie struts
beneath the bushes
sun dappled lawn

warm bright sunshine
releases smiles and greetings
loosens clothing

back from holiday
I look for strawberries
before opening mail

I wave farewell
the grassy hills
wave back

revealed at low tide
sandcastle
made in concrete

smell of cooking
does not stop the bees
visiting clover

two young duckings
chase flies all morning
at brake neck speed

calm summer day
children
not yet awake

fresh green leaves
big enough to hide the bird
but not the song

yesterday's
dandelion clock
gone west

white balloon
floats downstream
signets follow

staring at me
in a city far from home
my cat's twin

summer rain
ducks pinch the air
fly catching

Stories are like poems; they are not to be understood. Something which is understood is never repeated. Understanding exhausts the word. It leaves the word empty with nothing left to be said. Once the word is understood it is reduced to silence. But a story is like a

One fruit left
noone about-
I take it

AUTUMN

leaves turning
into themselves
in technicolour

wet concrete
ripe golden pears
the air stirs

old cat lies
warming the grass
summer almost over

autumn dusk
scarecrow points
to the rising moon

summer almost over
drowsy wasps drink deeply
ripe plum juice

loosened paving stone
makes black shadow regardless
of its colour

laughing at himself
my son easily passes through
unstrung tennis racket

bee with broken wing
rushes headlong
to casualty

ancient hazel eyes
drink in another sunset
not yet closing time

cameras ready
tourists eagerly await
sun's horizon kiss

waking everyone
except the one that matters
last night's barking dog

ancient orchard
which will fall first
pear, plum or axe

old pear tree
starlings announce
harvest time

dark storm clouds
and hungry gulls
follow the plough

evening sun
red winter cherries
cool breezes

red deer
a mountain away
reach snow

fly buzzes
the distant train
disappears

torch reveals
fish asleep
under the ice

autumn evening
old man gives the hedge
one last trim

after the storm
old cypress tree
surrenders

autumn rowan
prepares food parcels
for migrants

freed butterfly
rises up and up and up
flying joyously

last autumn digging
two white ducks
ask if they can help

election papers
crossed only
by sunlight

WRITING YOUR FIRST HAIKU.

at sunset
wind drops rose petals
on the pond

engagement ring
sparkles nearly as much
as her brown eyes

first autumn trees
begin to blush
before disrobing

watery sunshine
swallows and bathers
linger on

fresh morning breeze
lively kite fights for
freedom
wins - and falls

... He opened the middle window, filing the room with cold air.

'Come here, Griet.'...

'What colour are these clouds?'

'Why, white sir.'

He raised his eyebrows slightly, 'Are they?'

I glanced at them again, 'And grey, Perhaps it will snow.'

'Come Griet, you can do better than that.

Think of your vegetables.'

'My vegetables, sir?'

He moved his head slightly. I was annoying him again. My jaw tightened..

'Think of how you separated the whites. Your turnips and your onions – are they the same white?'

Suddenly I understood. 'No. The turnip has green in it the onion yellow.'

'Exactly!'

'Now what colours do you see in the clouds?'

'There is some blue in them,' I said after studying them for some minutes. 'And some yellow. And some green.'

I became so excited I actually pointed. I have been looking at clouds all my life, but I felt as if I saw them for the first time that moment.

He smiled, 'You will find there is little pure white in clouds, yet people say they are white. Now do you understand why I do not need the blue yet?'

'Yes, sir,' I did not really understand, but did not want to admit it. I felt I almost knew.'

(The Girl with the Pearl Earring by Tracy Harper)

One of the most stimulating and exiting experiences for me in my exploration of Haiku has been when

family gathers
for fresh stories, presents
and photographs

Christmas candles
silently
empty the night

Christmas breakfast
in California
white corn flakes

far away smiles
old piano
rings out carols

falling cup
hits the floor
after its contents

orion's arm
reaches over the horiZon
tossing stars

snow flurries
the geese arrive
in thousands

myriad white flakes
hit by street lights
replace each other

snow flakes
make snowmen
walk home

mild december
tightly wrapper worker
hoovers leaves

again this year
the christmas lights
shine---out

Christmas day
wrapping paper
unwrapped

freshly cut oranges
revive memories
too deep for sharing

WINTER

after fresh snow
yesterday's snowmen
put on fresh coats

beneath the stars
open air prayer meeting
snowdrops

every night until
tonight obscured by thin cloud
great comet

remembrance service
two crows watch
on a bare branch

on remembrance day
four boys shoot each other
with toy guns

family gathers
for fresh stories, presents
and photographs

Christmas candles
silently
empty the night

Christmas breakfast
in California
white corn flakes

far away smiles
old piano
rings out carols

Because a thing is natural does not
mean it is not marvellous . . .

Amassed information is natural but
without reverent observation it is
sterile. A leaf can speak of order and
variety, complexity and symmetry.

A leaf can speak of order and variety,
complexity and symmetry.

R Foster Celebration of Discipline

HAIKU PUBLISHED IN MINICHI DAILY NEWS

morning break
tree not indigenous
but its shade is

August in Milan
head turning this way and that
ancient fan

profound darkness
punctured only by
dog's howls

after the children's visit
white apple bite
turns brown

summer holidays
lots of blue sky again
in the next jigsaw

queuing up
to get to the beach
white capped waves

evening wonder
still there in the morning
pale spring moon

long train journey
strangers overheard
with smiles and sighs

internet chess
one slip of the mouse
my queen falls

sunset calm
doubles
the number of bridges

sunrise
turns rocks
into seals

winter noon
white shadows
straddle the lawn

subway posters
smile down
on lifeless faces

autumn at last
leaf
touches its shadow

pruned tree
one leaf left
for autumn

Let us plant dates even
though those who plant them
will never eat them. We must
live by the love of what we
will never see. . . .
Ruben Alves

“the first property of nature . . . is
that working power from whence
comes all thickness, darkness,
coldness and hardness, and this is
the creator of snow and hail and ice
out of something that before was
only the fluidity of light, air, and
moisture.
William Law (1686-1761) The Spirit

helping those
who are not familiar
with Haiku poetry how to begin
poems.

writing their own

One of the first even haiku workshops I led was at the European Christian Artist Conference in Holland. At the end of the first session I sent the group off to look around at little things or circumstances that they had not noticed before.

We returned and listened to each other's poems.
The last person offered the following

garden pond
frog gets ready
to jump in

Now this person had never heard of haiku poetry before the workshop yet she had come up with a haiku so close to the most famous haiku poem by the great 17th century Japanese haiku poet Matsuo Basho.

the old pond
a frog jumps
the sound of water

So across the centuries two people from thousands of miles and 3 centuries apart had been noticing the same event. One a revered poet, the other a real beginner.

The second experience was at an International haiku conference in London in 2000. We were finished writing haiku in Regent's park when a Japanese photographer who had been assigned by her paper to cover the event came over to us and asked to take a photograph of our group writing haiku.

She asked if we would pretend to be writing so she could take a picture. We agreed but when it was over I suggested that she might like to write a haiku while we pretended to take her photograph.

She protested that she didn't know how to write haiku.

I suggested she just write what she saw.

"A pond" she offered.

"Look closer at hand."

"People pretending taking pictures."

"Of what?"

"Me writing."

"Writing what?"

"My first haiku."

"That's it!"

people pretend
to take pictures of
my first haiku

I entered her haiku anonymously in the next day's competition and she received an honorable mention. This was one of the most positive experiences of the conference for me.

**darting small fish
come to rest
in heron's shadow**

**blind woman
in a posture of listening
ginkgo nuts rain down**