



Poetic Imagination in Japanese Art
Capturing the Haiku Moment in Nature, Art, and Poetry
By Joan Kvitka

1. Overview: *Living Closely with Nature Across the Four Seasons in Japanese Culture*

each time the wind blows
the butterfly finds a new home
on the willow
~ Basho (1644-94) Haiku Master

Poetic Imagination in Japanese Art: Capturing the Haiku Moment in Nature, Art, and Poetry curriculum is a series of lessons designed for 2nd - 12th grade students to 'awaken their senses' within the natural world. The lessons are rooted in Japanese cultural value of *Living in Harmony with Nature* and find expression in the Japanese poetic form of haiku and in Japanese art.

This curriculum has been effectively infused into existing classroom curriculum in a variety of ways: Cultural unit on Japan; Integrated Science (geology & weather patterns) & Social Studies (geography and adaptation); Language Arts (vocabulary development & poetry writing); Art (shifting perspective using photography/drawing & painting). These lessons have been field tested in 2nd – 5th grade classrooms in a diverse urban school district using four seasons environments surrounding the schools and the beauty and harmony within the Portland Japanese Garden. The Portland Art Museum has developed this curriculum in conjunction with the exhibition *Poetic Imagination in Japanese Art*. Lessons can also be used by accessing images online from the permanent collection of Japanese art and by requesting the classroom poster of Yosa Buson's *Thatched Retreat on Cold Mountain*.

Objectives:

1. Gain an appreciation of the cultural value *Capturing the Haiku Moment in Nature, Art, and Poetry: Living Closely with Nature across the Four Seasons in Japanese Culture*.
2. Practice awakening 5 senses to the natural world with sequenced activities.
3. Learn about and practice Japanese 3-line poetry as a structure for capturing ever-changing nature—the *Haiku Moment*.
4. Extend exploration of Japanese haiku to correlate with images from the exhibition *Poetic Imagination of Japanese Art* held at the Portland Art Museum (Oct 2018 – Jan. 2019).

Essential Questions: *Capturing the Haiku Moment in Nature, Art, and Poetry: Living Closely with Nature across the Four Seasons in Japanese Culture.*

1. Where do you go to be in Nature? In what ways can Nature be a teacher? What can be learned from observing and enjoying Nature? How does Japanese culture, art, and poetry express the value of Living in Harmony with Nature?
2. How does Japan's geography (location, climate, natural features) bring the Japanese people close to Nature?
3. What does *Cycle of Life* mean to you? What are some of the ways you and your family honor aspects of the *Cycle of Life*?
4. What are some of the ways Nature affects your daily life—positively and otherwise?
5. What are some of the ways the Four Seasons affect your daily life?
6. What are haiku? What is a *Haiku Moment*? Offer your own insights into how three brief lines, in 5-7-5 sound pattern might be effective in capturing the beauty and wonder of nature in a *Haiku Moment*.
7. How can your Five Senses, create Four Seasons Vocabulary of Spring Summer Fall and Winter? Consider: weather patterns, angle of the sun, colors, flowers/plants, animals, moods, sounds, activities, foods, clothing and more to dig deep (year-long ongoing activity.) Record *Five Senses Four Seasons Vocabulary*.
8. How can you develop a practice of recording Haiku Moments? 3-line Haiku?

Sequenced Lessons for *Capturing the Haiku Moment in Nature, Art, and Poetry: Living Closely with Nature across the Four Seasons in Japanese Culture*

1. Overview.
2. *Living Closely with Nature across the Four Seasons—the Heart of Japanese Culture, Art, and Poetry.* Reading is appropriate as teacher background and for 6-12th grades as independent/class reading, discussion and analysis.
3. *Capturing the Haiku Moment: Background Reading on Haiku; Learn Haiku Basics; Explore Beyond Haiku Basics.* Introduction to Haiku Master Basho (1644-94) and haiku written by his followers. *Play with Haiku* inspirations for following in Basho's footsteps.
4. *Awakening the Senses: Immersion in Nature Across the Four Seasons—Five Senses Discoveries Activities.*
5. *Awakening the Senses Graphic Organizer.*
6. *Steps to Haiku.* Handouts include examples of haiku by students as well as Japanese poets and student activities. With Four Seasons/Five Senses vocabulary, students write individual poems *Capturing the Haiku Moment in Nature.*
7. Bibliography on Haiku.



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2. Living Closely with Nature Across the Four Seasons in Japanese Culture

Living Closely with Nature is at the Heart of Japanese Culture

Japan is an Asian country made up of islands in the Pacific Ocean. The Sea of Japan separates Japan from mainland Asia. Formed by volcanoes, mountains run down the middle of the *archipelago* (ar kuh pel a go), a word that means a large chain of islands. Water is central to the lives of Japanese people. Stretching for nearly 3000 miles in the Pacific Ocean, (46° to 26° north latitude), the islands are marked with rocky coastlines and rivers rushing from mountains such as Mt. Fuji. Living along coastlines, across flat plains and in deep valleys, on steep mountains, and in green forests, the Japanese adapt to nature's diversity and demands.

Even the name of Japan is rooted in the culture's closeness with nature. The *archipelago* is comprised of more than 2000 islands. Most people live on four of the largest islands; running from north to south they are *Hokkaido* (Hohk kai doh), *Honshu* (Hohn shoo), *Shikoku* (she koh koo), and *Kyushu* (key oo shoo). The written characters that make up the name for Japan—日本 *Nihon* or *Nippon*, officially the **State of Japan**—mean 'sun origin.' The dawn of each new day is reflected in the name that is often used for Japan—*Land of the Rising Sun*.

The fragile and powerful qualities of nature are at the heart of Japanese culture. About 1,500 earthquakes strike the island nation every year; minor tremors occur on a nearly daily basis. Deadly quakes are a tragic part of the country's long history. While not all earthquakes on land or under the sea are followed by tsunamis ((t)soo-nam-e), giant sea waves have repeatedly caused death and destruction to the people of Japan across centuries and into the 21st century.

From ancient times to the present, living in harmony with nature is the Japanese way of life. Harmony with nature is practiced by honoring the four seasons as an endless cycle of change. The Japanese celebrate spring's new life by holding parties under *sakura* (cherry blossoms), the delicate petals that bravely bloom at the edge of cold and snow, before becoming air-born in the wind. Summer is marked with rain, heat, and humidity, as well as joy in colorful growth and fullness. Autumn brings awe of the red maple leaves, harvest celebrations, as well as challenges in coping with typhoons and whipping winds. Winter is the lean cold season, the time when nature hibernates, and people renew their spirits in readiness for the new year. Nature's gentleness and generosity, as well as nature's powerful demands, deeply affect the character of the Japanese.

All aspects of Japanese culture express respect for the changing seasons—from art, poetry, architecture, garden design and *ikebana* (flower arrangement), to food preparation and presentation, daily activities, and festivals. Textile designs feature different flowers and animals that are active during each of the four seasons. Art expresses colors, textures, emotions, and activities of growth and decline. Japanese poetry follows a long tradition of celebrating the cycle of life.

Rhythms of Nature and Poetry in Japanese Culture

Long ago in Japan, people started writing very short poems—*haiku*—to honor the seasonal beauty and power of nature in just a few words. Evolving from other forms of poetry such as waka and renga, haiku (hi-koo) became popular in Japan around 400 years ago. Japanese poets found that poems of three lines were enough to bring nature's seasons of change into sharp focus.

Highlighting nature's wonders and diversity, traditional Japanese haiku aim to follow a pattern in three lines, capturing the movements of each season in only 17 syllables or sounds. The first line in haiku are usually 5 syllables (sounds); the middle line has 7 syllables/sounds; 5 syllable/sounds repeat in the third line. 5-7-5 for a total of 17 syllables. Like an artist's brushstroke of ink on silk or paper, haiku capture ever-changing nature with simple freshness. Each of the three lines allow nature to grow bigger, brighter, and sweeter and to bring a deeper peace to the haiku poet and to the reader. Now, all around the world, people enjoy Japanese haiku and love to write Japanese-style haiku honoring nature's wonders across each season.

Basho—Master Poet of the *Haiku Moment*

The Japanese poet Matsuo Basho is given credit for being Japan's earliest Master Haiku Poet. Basho lived from 1644 to 1694. Born into a lower-rank samurai family Basho eventually gave up the comforts in his life to live simply. In 1689, Basho walked across rugged northern Japan; the poet started in late spring and walked for over five months (156 days!). As he walked, Basho wrote haiku about nature's gifts that are fleeting—here one moment, only to move or fade away. Basho taught many during his life and has inspired countless people worldwide to observe what has become known as the *Haiku Moment*—sights, sounds, tastes, smells, and feelings found alive equally in nature and in human nature. Haiku capture what is short-lived yet ever-lasting. Here are four of Basho's haiku filled with the rhythms of the seasons.

each time the wind blows
the butterfly finds a new home
on the willow

a bee
staggers out
of the peony

on a bare branch
a crow has settled—
autumn nightfall

will you start the fire?
I'll show you something nice
a bright ball of snow

Living Closely with Nature—the Heart of Japanese Culture: Questions to Ponder

1. How does Japan's geography (location, climate, natural features) bring the Japanese people close to Nature?
2. In your own words, what does Cycle of Life mean? What are some of the ways you and your family honor aspects of the Cycle of Life?
3. What are some of the ways the Four Seasons affect your daily life?
4. What are haiku? Offer your own insights into how three lines might be effective in capturing the beauty and wonder of nature in a *Haiku Moment*.
5. Read the haiku by Basho. Copy each haiku. Identify the season it describes. What images and words bring the season into focus?
6. Using your Five Senses, create your own Four Seasons vocabulary of Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter. Think of weather patterns, angle of the sun, colors, flowers/plants, animals, moods, sounds, activities, foods, clothing and more! Use your five senses to dig deep!
7. Where do you go to be in Nature? Can Nature be a teacher? What can be learned from observing and enjoying Nature?



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*3. Capturing the Haiku Moment: Background Reading on Haiku; Learn Haiku Basics;
Explore Beyond Haiku Basics*

*There is nothing you can see that is not a flower;
there is nothing you can think that is not the moon.*

Matsuo Basho (1644-94)

old pond
frog jumps in
sound of water
Matsuo Basho

water falls rushing
shadows creep sun lights trees bright
peace surrounds me

5th grade Haiku Alive Poet Parkrose Schools

Nature is alive everywhere. Nature surrounds all living beings outside and inside. The elements of nature sustain us, support our growth, and plant seeds for our future. Taking time to notice nature is a powerful way to respect nature's gifts of life.

In Japanese culture, nature is honored throughout daily activities, in homes and gardens, in clothing, in celebrations and festivals, and in all art forms and poetry. For centuries, the Japanese have created art and poems based in nature's wonders and mysteries across the four seasons. Haiku, three-line poems, evolved to honor nature's gifts that are fleeting—here one moment, only to move or fade away.

Matsuo Basho (see quote and haiku above) was born in Japan in 1644 and spent much of his life walking in nature, writing, and capturing the *Haiku Moment*—nature's gifts that are short-lived yet, at the same time, part of an ever-lasting cycle of life. Even today, Basho's words continue to inspire people around the world to observe the *Haiku Moment*—sights, sounds, tastes, smells, and feelings found alive equally in nature and in human nature. Following in Basho's footsteps, haiku poets everywhere capture the rhythms of nature across the seasons. Like the patterns and movements of nature, haiku are brief. Haiku are written in 3 lines with about 17 syllables/sounds total. Haiku are written in present tense as nature is always happening NOW!

Follow in Basho's footsteps. Find the *Haiku Moment* everywhere you are! YOU are a haiku poet!

Step outside. With your five senses awake, haiku come alive in nature. Listen! See! Smell! Taste! Feel and Touch! Walk in the rain...close your eyes and cup your ears...does the volume of drumming water rain get louder as it hits the garbage can? Can you describe the feel of slippery leaves under your feet? Zoom in on a drop of dew while hearing buzzing bees drink

pollen from fresh pink blossoms. Zoom out to distant glowing stars pulsing to the loud tunes of invisible chirping crickets on a summer's evening. How does the taste of peace fill you on a snowy day? Now you are ready to capture the *Haiku Moment*!

Learn Haiku Basics

- ☐ Traditional Japanese poems written and read for more than 400 years
- ☐ Honor and respect nature's harmony and change across four seasons
- ☐ 3-line poems—journey in nature with five senses awake
- ☐ About 17 syllables total in 3 lines with sound pattern:

Haiku 3 lines: Short—Longer—Short

- Short: 5 syllables in 1st line
- Longer: 7 syllables in 2nd line
- Short: 5 syllables in 3rd line

- ☐ Haiku may change focus in each line:
Wide view...right around you...Zoom in

Find a quiet place to explore and record your senses and feelings discovered in being alive in nature. You are beginning to find haiku inside and all around you. The *Haiku Moment* is YOU!

Practice Awakening Five Senses

Haiku are Everywhere You Are!

- **LOOK!**

Nature's Seasons constantly changing

- **LISTEN!**

Haiku world of sounds happening all around

- **SMELL!**

Breathe nature's growth, fullness, and decay

- **TASTE!**

Imagine samples of nature's delights

- **FEEL/TOUCH!**

Be Present Moment to MOMENT

Spring

the songbird's song
it stops what I am doing
at the sink

~ Chigetsu (born 1708)

Woman Haiku Poet in Basho school

Summer

longing for the grass
at the bottom of the pool
those fireflies

~Yosa Buson (1716-83) Haiku Master Painter

Autumn

on the mountain crests
a line of wild geese
and the moon's seal

~ Yosa Buson (1716-83) Poet and Painter

Winter

my runny nose
everywhere but on its dewdrop
the twilight fades

~ Hino Sojo (1901-56) 20th c Haiku Poet

Explore Beyond Haiku Basics

SIMPLE

- 3 Lines
- Count about 17 Sounds (5...7...5)
- No Punctuation Needed
- No rhyming lines
- Nature's Wonders
- Present Tense
- 5 Senses Awake
- Word Pictures
- Write from experience

COMPLEX

- Only 3 Lines
- Words Count more than Counting Syllables
- Show Don't Tell
- Each line connects
- Wonder about Nature!
- Be in the Moment
- Stay Awake to Nature's Mysteries
- Picture your Words
- Brings experience alive for haiku reader

Haiku by Students Like YOU!

Explore the Portland Japanese Garden in Portland OR in Haiku

From Haiku Alive ~ Partnership between Portland Japanese Garden and Parkrose Schools

zig zag everywhere
fish in diamond waters dart
white and orange sun

~ 2nd grade Haiku Alive Poet

rocks ripple silence
peaceful river of Zen speaks
dapples of light

~ 5th grade Haiku Alive Poet

brand new leaves open
green turns lacy fingers red
fiery maple smells

~ 4th grade Haiku Alive Poet

fresh sound waves in stone
shimmer lantern flowers move
curves of earth ripple

~ 2nd grade Haiku Alive Poet

peaceful forest waves
trees talking, leaves blowing
heart moving in rain

~ 4th grade Haiku Alive Poet

giant koi flowing
bug sits over orange flash
tasty bug, fish gleams

~ 4th grade Haiku Alive Poet

flowers grow softly
rosy white petals glisten
pollen hangs waiting

~ 3rd grade Haiku Alive Poet

words of Japan
polka dots splatter smooth stones
green leaves push

~ 4th grade Haiku Alive Poet

wind whistling calm peace
heavenly falls mountain stream
birds silence friendship

~ 3rd grade Haiku Alive Poet

- ◆ Read each Haiku aloud with a friend.
- ◆ Circle Five Senses vocabulary.
- ◆ Identify what you See, Hear, Taste, Smell, Touch/Feel.
- ◆ With the words you circled, write your own haiku as if YOU were in the Portland Japanese Garden!

**Let Basho Inspire You, too! Haiku written by *Followers of Basho*
From *The Art of Haiku* by Stephen Addiss, Chapter 4
Awaken to the Season! Five Senses Discoveries! Play with Haiku!**

**Play with Haiku ~ Make it YOURS!
Illustrate your Haiku**

a wild sea—
and flowing out toward Sado Island
the Milky Way

Basho Haiku Master (1644-94)

Haiku by Followers of Basho

lightening—
and in the dark
the screech of a night heron

a monk sips morning tea
it's quiet,
the chrysanthemum's flowering

from all these trees
in the salads, the soup, everywhere
cherry blossoms fall

stillness—
the cicada's cry
drills into the rocks

wolves
howling in harmony—
snowy evening

baby sparrows—
exchanging their chirps
with a nest of mice

with water as a mirror
you can paint your eyebrows—
willow by the river

not waiting for summer
the plum blossoms have
put on a white dress

although I call "yes yes"
someone still knocks
at the snowy gate

hundreds of gourds
all coming from the heart
of a single vine

one sneeze
and he's lost from view—
the skylark

(EXAMPLE: Inspired by the first haiku, by Haiku Master Basho...feeling Autumn's letting go...Sado Island in Sea of Japan leads to Sauvie's Island in Columbia River. Leftover soggy pumpkins in fields after Halloween signal moving from outdoors to inside. Orange pumpkins & inner lights.)

stormy river waves
flowing toward Sauvie's Island
orange lights dark fields



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4. Awakening the Senses: Immersion in Nature Across the Four Seasons

Five Senses Discoveries Activities

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1. *Nature Walk*

Students walk around the school with clipboards and paper/pencil; may have 1 camera to share for every 6-8 students. With 5 senses awake, students capture five senses word pictures. 15-20 photos may be printed to share in pairs for practice in Awakening the Senses to capture Five Senses Discoveries and for use in writing Haiku. This immersive activity can be repeated as the seasons change.

2. *Curate Four Seasons in Japanese Art*

Go to portlandartmuseum.org. Under the *Collections* tab, click *Search the Collection*. In upper right corner, click *Advanced Search* to narrow search to Asian art, Japanese art, or only works on view. Teacher/students may curate their own *Four Seasons in Japanese Art* images to generate Five Senses Discoveries vocabulary.

3. *Gather images of nature.*

Find images in magazines, calendars, garden books, and online. Images may be local seasons or those in Japan or around the globe. Search YouTube for “four seasons in Japan.”

5. AWAKENING THE SENSES: CAPTURING the HAIKU MOMENT
ACROSS the FOUR SEASONS
FIVE SENSES DISCOVERY WORDS

SEE

HEAR

TOUCH/FEEL
Outside/Inside

SMELL

TASTE



6. Steps to Haiku by YOU!

HAIKU A, B, C, D, E's...
Awaken the 5 senses!
Be curious and wonder-full!
Capture Nature's surprises in a single moment!
Dig Deep!
Everywhere is a *Haiku Moment*!

Each step into nature is a new moment of discovery. In haiku, each of three lines of the poem allows for a fresh view of a simple moment.

STEP 1: STEP OUTSIDE or into ART

STEP 2: Stay in the PRESENT! SENSE changes moment to *HAIKU MOMENT*!

STEP 3: BRAINSTORM Word Descriptions in a Five Senses Chart

SEE SMELL HEAR TASTE FEEL/TOUCH

Use Descriptive Words...take out words that do not give details

(the, a, very, pretty, nice, like, I, colorful (describe colors), some, there...)

Use Action Words that show movement, sound, feeling, taste, touch

Leaves swirl, water gurgles, wind ripples, ghost clouds, leaves reach/uncurl, stones listen, heart moves, peace calls, pollen waits, sweet pink blooms, slippery steps, guard quiet, fiery maples, memories blossom, oxygen blooming, sweet wind, whistling quiet, still harmony

STEP 4: RANDOMLY READ images aloud to hear sounds and patterns emerge

STEP 5: CIRCLE IMAGES that express the *Haiku Moment* from far away to up close

STEP 6: CLAP out SOUNDS/SYLLABLES in 5-7-5 patterns

IMPORTANT: DESCRIPTIVE WORDS COUNT more than counting syllables

STEP 7: BEGIN to WRITE original Haiku

STEP 8: EDIT for Aliveness and Clarity...Haiku READERS are part of *Haiku Moment*

STEP 9: SHARE your Haiku!

STEP 10: ACCEPT the CHALLENGE—Shifting Focus Haiku

1st line: Far Away

rocks stand in ocean

2nd line: Right around you

sand circling shadows purple

3rd line: Zoom in close up

waves rushing home 2nd grade Haiku Alive Poet

rain clouds-

steps to Japan

the frog

stone by stone I walk up

puffs his belly out!

rain drops on journey

~ Chiyo-ni (1703-75) Woman Master Poet

~ 4th grade Haiku Alive Poet

AWAKENING THE SENSES: CAPTURING the HAIKU MOMENT ACROSS the SEASONS
FIVE SENSES DISCOVERY WORDS

SEE

HEAR

TOUCH/FEEL
Outside/Inside

SMELL

TASTE

CAPTURING THE HAIKU MOMENT: HAIKU by YOU!

Line 1 Short (5 sounds/syllables)

Line 2 Longer (7 sounds/syllables)

Line 3 (5 sounds/syllables)

(5 sounds) _____

(7 sounds) _____

(5 sounds) _____

(5 sounds) _____

(7 sounds) _____

(5 sounds) _____



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Picture books suitable for reading aloud to younger children and for independent reading by children and older readers, too.

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- Portland Japanese Garden <https://japanesegarden.org/category/photos-videos/>
- Videos on Forest Bathing (*Shinrin Yoku*)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_0zC4dlj5jl
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=stuZaKB9j7I>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kb8CW3axqRE> (Forests of Oregon)
- Search YouTube on Four Seasons in Japan