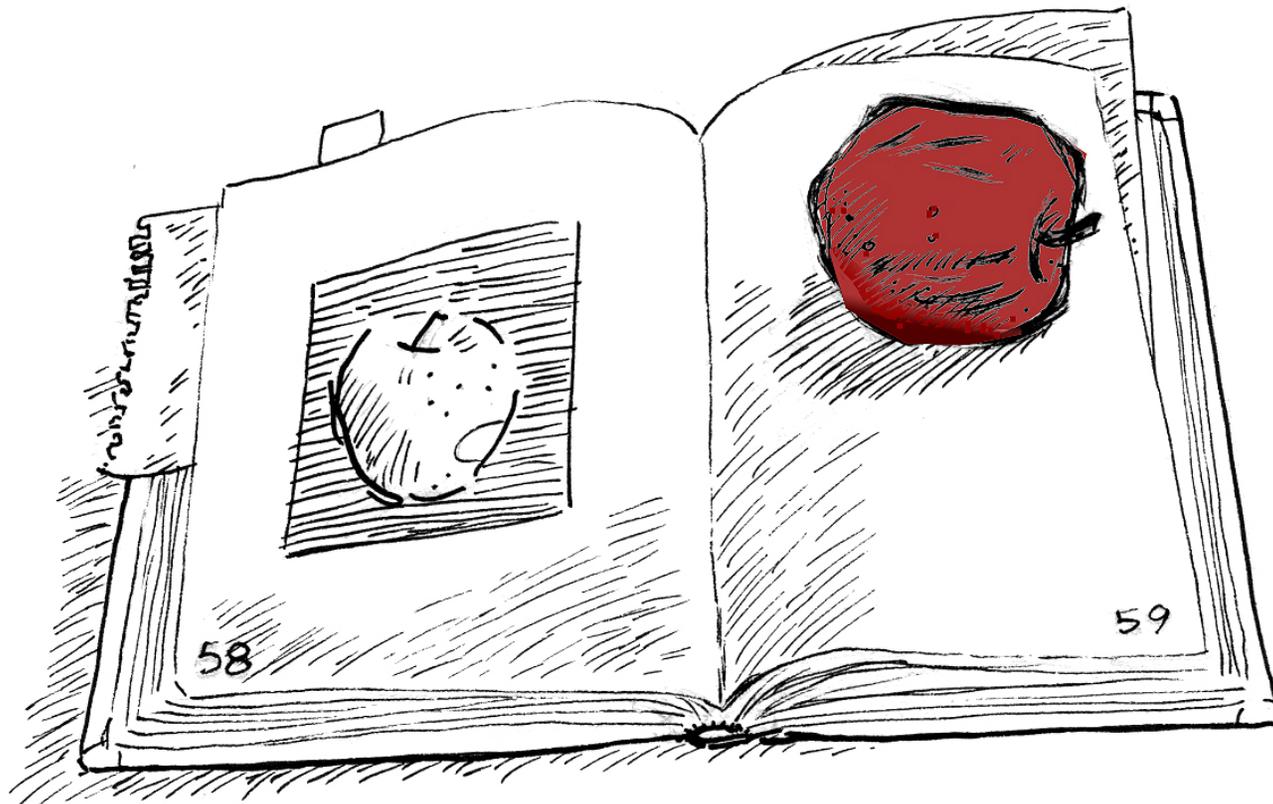


Haiku Poetry



Haiku

Referred to as Hokku or Haikai in Japan

- Medieval poetry form dating from early Japanese culture; originally began in twelfth century court traditions, restricted to noble class, however, by sixteenth century the verse had spilled over into all of Japan as a popular form of writing. Even the common working class were composing them: farmers, fishermen, hunters and monks, men and women.
- Transformed over the years, generating new forms along the way.
- In English, it consists of three lines of verse, totaling no more than 17 syllables; traditionally shown:

5 syllables,

7 syllables,

5 syllables

Enough of dawn light

To show pearly pear blossom

Burning from within.

Wright, Richard. "219." *Haiku: This Other World*. New York: Random House, 1998. Print.

Haiku

- Masaoka Shiki in the late 1800's gave haiku its modern definition which we use generally today— a reformation of the traditional form Bashō used.
- In Japanese, usually no more than 10 words are necessary; traditionally they display the writing in columns, ranging from one to three columns.
- Contemporary English writers favor using a less rigid formula when constructing their poems; they simply use 17 syllables in any combination of lines, without restriction of how they appear or are placed.

For example:

Allen Ginsberg, a poet of the Beat Generation, was heavily influenced by Eastern philosophies, created a concept called the American Sentence.

His interpretation of the haiku formula display the poem as one long sentence, consisting of 17 syllables, yet following the other traditional elements of haiku.

Haiku

Traditionally, even though haiku are terse poems, the verse should:

- establish a vignette scene
- show intense insight, or a tight epiphany moment
- depict a natural landscape
- utilize a target or seasonal word
- contrasting dualism are required for the themes; the poems require taking two polar opposites and showing a sameness between them:

near/far

life/death

sound/silence

spirit/matter

- themes often center on images and senses
- the poems often reflect on humanity's placement within nature or humanity's connection/disconnection with nature
- most importantly, they center on the beauty of nature, *not* the angry, destructive side of nature: such as earthquakes, flood, or plagues

Haiku

In Japanese versions, *onomatopoeias* are often used.

These are words which imitate a sound, such as:

Boom! Ah! Oh!

- They act as a *caesura* which is a pause for breath or reflection.

When translating the works into English, the translator will use sometimes use a dash, or an exclamation point or an ellipses to show the pause:

! ... —

Haiku

Editor Fabian Bowers indicates that a general formula consists using three elements in the themes:

- **what:** the poet reacts to a sensory impression: sight/sound/smell or taste
- **where:** usually the scene takes place outdoors at a specific natural setting
- **when:** season must be indicated in some fashion using symbolic elements
(autumn is the season most often used in these poems)

Haiku

Some random seasonal key symbols:

haze — spring

frog — late spring

wisteria blossom — late spring

clouds — summer

morning glories — summer

mist/fog — autumn

snow / ice — winter

plum blossom — New Year

Haiku

Matsuo Bashō

Bashō is considered one of the Haiku Masters. He lived from the second half of the 17th century from 1644-1694. His work is among the most translated and most quoted. He raised the art form to a new level broadening the perspective of casual experience out of ordinary events and creating a heightened sense of spiritual and mental awareness.

Haiku

Three translations of a poem by Matsuo Bashō

On dead branches crows remain perched at autumn's end.

—Hiroaki Sato

•

on a barren branch
a raven perched—
autumn dusk

—William J. Higginson

•

On a leafless bough
A crow is sitting: —autumn,
Darkening now—

—Harold Gould Henderson

Haiku

In his works as a whole:

- Bashō shows humanity and nature working together in order to establish a strong sense of meditation or peace of mind
- he shows a fusion of spiritual insight and awareness of humanity's placement in the wilderness
- he attempts to understand the *spirit* of nature because nature symbolizes the enlightened self
- he addresses a conflict between humans and nature, not between good and evil