

Seasonal Haiku

Julie Riddlebarger

Levels	All
Aims	<i>Describe people's appearances, activities, and preferences</i> <i>Explain relationships among people</i> <i>Narrate personal stories</i> <i>Collaborate with peers</i> <i>Use verb tenses for past and present events</i>
Class Time	1–2 hours
Preparation Time	20 minutes
Resources	<i>Background information on haiku as a form</i> <i>Sample seasonal haiku (Appendix)</i> <i>Images of natural environments</i> <i>Flora and fauna in natural settings (projected images, posters, or handouts)</i> <i>Season word bank (optional)</i>



Haiku is a popular and accessible form of poetry that allows students to delve into word play regardless of their language level. In addition, the seasonal aspect of this activity gives learners an opportunity to creatively use vocabulary that is often taught and used in predictable or formulaic patterns.

PROCEDURE

1. Begin with an explanation or review of haiku. The poets.org website provides a good, basic introduction (www.poets.org/poetsorg/text/haiku-poetic-form), or see the Terms to Know online. Modify the explanations as necessary for your students. You may also want to review the concept of syllables. Have students count syllables in the samples; they may discover that not all haiku follow the form. This could lead to a good discussion about when to follow and when to abandon the form.
2. A good way to explain the form is by choosing some haiku (www.haiku-poetry.org/famous-haiku.html) and finding images to illustrate them by using presentation software. This gives students concrete images to go with the abstract haiku and scaffolds the writing work they will be doing later in the activity.
3. Once students are clear on the form, have them write their own haiku. Instructions to the students are simple:
 - a. Choose a nature image,
 - b. Choose a seasonal word,
 - c. Use the present tense, and
 - d. Use the 5-7-5 syllable structure.

4. Distribute or project nature images and seasonal words on a screen.
5. Students, then, work individually to write their poems. They can share their poems with a partner for feedback.
6. Next, students create posters or presentations with their images and haiku and read their work to the class.
7. For a follow-up, have students search for their own natural images and write a haiku based on what they find. This could be an Internet or book search; alternatively, if possible, have students go out into nature and find something real rather than a picture. They may document the image with photographs or sketches.

CAVEATS AND OPTIONS

1. To keep students on track with the seasonal focus of these haiku, limit the explanation for this activity to only the traditional elements: an image from nature, a seasonal word, the present tense, and the 5-7-5 syllable count.
2. Tie this activity to one particular season. This could work well around the holidays for young learners.
3. In addition to or in place of the names of the seasons, more advanced or symbolic words may be used. For example, frogs or certain flowers may represent spring; harvest or the moon may represent autumn/fall. These may be projected on posters or handouts or simply written on the board. Students can generate these words or you can provide them. For seasonal word lists, see <https://youngleaves.org/season-word-list>.
4. Rather than providing all the sample haiku, show one example and then have students search for haiku that include the traditional features. They can share what they find with partners, small groups, or the class and point out each feature and whether the haiku they chose follows or breaks the rules.
5. If students are not familiar or struggle with syllable counting, modify from the 5-7-5 syllable pattern to 5-7-5 words.
6. Publishing options could include group presentations (e.g., have students who chose the same season or the same image present together), posting images with their haiku on a class or school bulletin board, or publishing a haiku section in the school literary magazine or a haiku chapbook.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

- Hanauer, D. (2012). Meaningful literacy: Writing poetry in the language classroom. *Language Teaching*, 45(1), 105–115.
- Heath, S. (1996). Re-creating literature in the ESL classroom. *TESOL Quarterly*, 30, 776–779.
- Jones, B. (2010). Motivating and supporting English language learners with the poems of William Carlos Williams. *Middle School Journal*, 42(1), 16–20.
- Preston, W. (1982). Poetry ideas in teaching literature and writing to foreign students. *TESOL Quarterly*, 16, 489–502.

SAMPLE WORK

Desert Sky

The bright blazing sun
Makes shadows into liars,
We hide our faces.

—Julie Riddlebarger

APPENDIX: *Sample Seasonal Haiku*

From www.haiku-poetry.org/famous-haiku.html:

Toward those short trees
we saw a hawk descending
on a day in spring.

—Masaoka Shiki

Winter seclusion—
listening, that evening,
to the rain in the mountain.

—Kobayashi Issa

No one travels
Along this way but I,
This autumn evening.

—Masaoka Shiki

Over the wintry
forest, winds howl in rage
with no leaves to blow.

—Natsume Soseki

Reflective Nature Poems With Photos

Anjie Kokan

Levels	All
Aims	<i>Learn about writing poetry</i> <i>Learn about imagery</i> <i>Connect with nature through mindfulness and writing</i> <i>Acquire new vocabulary</i> <i>Practice presentation skills</i>
Class Time	<i>1–2 hours (over 2–3 class periods)</i>
Preparation Time	<i>10 minutes</i>
Resources	<i>Samples of finished nature poems with their corresponding photos</i> <i>Cameras or camera phones</i> <i>Colored cardstock, scissors, glue, markers, and paper</i> <i>Access to a printer</i>

Poetry gives students a vehicle to express themselves. Given that grammatical rules are not the major focus of poetry, it is accessible to English learners of all levels (Aguilar, 2013). Completing this activity can increase students’ confidence and offer them the chance to engage in spoken language through discussions of their drafts and presentations. The reflective nature poem can also help students connect to a landscape that could be very new to them. The literal connection between the students’ pictures and words serves as a concrete model to illustrate imagery. This makes a great “first poetry” activity to complete before moving on to more complex writing assignments.

PROCEDURE

1. Write the word “nature” on the board. Have students work in pairs or groups to brainstorm words they already know related to nature in the current environment, for example *rain, sun, chilly, hot, squirrel, tree, leaves, and flowers*.
2. Next, have students share their lists orally and/or ask them to write some of their favorite words from their lists on the board.
3. Tell students they will be going for a nature walk to take pictures of items in nature that they find interesting. Then, they will choose one picture and write a short, reflective poem that speaks of the image and/or connects the individual with the image in some way.
4. Show students examples of reflective nature poems with the accompanying photos and have students read the short poems out loud. Discuss as needed. Next, cover the picture and ask if the poem can stand alone without it. Explain that using images in their writing, or imagery, puts a picture in the reader’s mind. Point out how using imagery can make our writing stronger.

5. After this, take students for a walk to take photos. If there is no time to do this as a class, it can be assigned as homework.
6. Students, then, select a photo and print it.
7. Next, students write a first draft of the poem that corresponds to the photo.
8. Have students bring their drafts and photos to class to share with others. Students can give feedback to each other in small groups.
9. Students, then, revise their work based on peer and/or instructor feedback.
10. The final stage of the process is for students to make a visual presentation with the photo and poem on colored cardstock. This can be done in class or for homework.
11. Students present their final projects to the class. Each student explains why they chose the nature scene and then reads their poem.

CAVEATS AND OPTIONS

1. Be sure to stress that there is no right or wrong way to write the poems. Students can write their poems in sentences or phrases. Titles and punctuation are optional. Students should be free to arrange the lines on the page whichever way they choose.
2. Make a slideshow of students' final projects and present them to a special audience. Have students read their poems as their slides are presented. This can be performed live or prerecorded in a video.
3. You may find some of your students' poems and photos to be quite stunning. Encourage students to submit to your school's literary journal, newspaper, or to any school contest that is appropriate.

Note: The Reflective Nature Poem With Photo assignment was inspired by small stone writing invented by Kaspalita Thompson and Satya Robyn. "A *small stone* is a short piece of writing that precisely captures a fully engaged moment" (Thompson & Robyn, n.d.).

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

- Aguilar, E. (2013, April 8). Five reasons why we need poetry in schools [Web log post]. Retrieved from <http://www.edutopia.org/blog/five-reasons-poetry-needed-schools-elena-aguilar>
- Thompson, K., & Robyn, S. (n.d.). Mindful writing tool: Small stones. Retrieved from <http://www.writingourwayhome.com>

SAMPLE WORK

Earth raises the tree,
The tree raises the squirrel—
Nature raises us.

—Zhang Hengrui

Celebrating Bilingualism Through Poetry

Keith M. Graham

Levels	Beginner
Aims	<i>Connect with and celebrate language and culture through poetry</i> <i>Learn about free verse poetry through reading and writing</i>
Class Time	2–3 hours
Preparation Time	10–15 minutes
Resources	<i>Video interview “Missing Heritage”</i> <i>Poem “Song to Mothers” from Love to Mamá: A Tribute to Mothers (Mora, 2001)</i>

Schools often do not recognize the individual languages and cultures of English learners, as was the case with Pat Mora’s education. This activity offers an opportunity to not only celebrate your language learners’ native language and culture, but also to celebrate bilingualism. The activity also introduces the joys of reading and writing free verse.

PROCEDURE

1. Ask students the following questions and discuss:
 - a. Does your school welcome your culture?
 - b. Is it okay to use two languages for one writing assignment?
2. Show the video interview with Pat Mora, “Missing Heritage” (www.readingrockets.org/books/interviews/mora), and discuss with students how Pat Mora would answer the two questions and how her answers would be similar or perhaps different from their answers.
3. Read the poem, “Song to Mothers,” by Pat Mora. After the first reading, elicit from students what is distinctive about this poem (i.e., it uses two languages, and it does not rhyme).
4. Present free verse as “poetry that does not rhyme and has no regular rhythm. In free verse, the poet creates the rules . . . of how the poem should look, sound, and express meaning” (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001, p. 412).
5. Practice manipulating sentences in free verse with line breaks and word elimination. Have students manipulate one sentence in multiple ways and demonstrate how it changes the reading. If possible, also manipulate sentences that use two languages.

6. Have students write their own free verse poems using Pat Mora's work as an example of how to include their own native language within the English poem. This can be done individually or in pairs (with common native language students paired together).
7. Finally, have students perform their poems for the class (preferably memorized). To support the performance, have them first practice with partners. In classes where there is not a common native language, have the students share the meaning of the non-English lines.

CAVEATS AND OPTIONS

1. Bilingual poetry is not necessarily as simple as just changing languages at any moment. If you do not have proficiency in your students' native languages, you may find it difficult to guide them during the writing process. On the other hand, this also may allow students to freely and creatively produce work without instructor interference.
2. Pat Mora's poem, "Song to Mothers," is a great example of similes and metaphors. For more advanced students, the similes and metaphors in the poem could be identified and students could practice and use these figurative language devices in their own poems.
3. To add a digital element, students could create digital posters with their poem supported by graphics. The examples in the Appendix were created with Canva (<http://canva.com>).

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

- A video interview with Pat Mora. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.readingrockets.org/books/interviews/mora>
- Fountas, I. C., & Pinnell, G. S. (2001). *Guiding readers and writers: Teaching comprehension, genre, and content literacy*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Mora, P. (2001). *Love to mamá: A tribute to mothers*. New York, NY: Lee & Low Books.

SAMPLE WORK

You have been gone too long

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Home is here waiting

回來 回來

APPENDIX: *Student Example*



You have been gone too long

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Home is here waiting

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Visual Verse: A Purely Painless English Poetry Project

Jayme Wilken

Levels	<i>Beginner to intermediate</i>
Aims	<i>Skills to write poetry in English</i> <i>Practice adjectives</i> <i>Share poetry orally with groups</i> <i>Create a class slideshow using visuals and text</i>
Class Time	<i>2 (50-minute) class periods</i>
Preparation Time	<i>> 1 hour</i>
Resources	<i>Chalkboard or projector</i> <i>Photos of the seasons</i> <i>Access to computers</i>

This activity incorporates all aspects of multimodal communication: written (the poems), oral (reading aloud, group discussion), and visual and electronic displays (displaying poems on slides); this type of communication is also referred to as WOVE. This gives students practice in all forms of communication, as it is a very integrated approach.

PROCEDURE

Part 1

1. Begin by discussing students' feelings about poetry and their prior experience with writing poetry in their first language and in English.
2. Review adjectives by pointing to nouns in the room and asking students to describe them. If they use common adjectives, push them to use more interesting ones. For example, if you point to the chalkboard, a student may say it is big. Encourage deeper thought to draw out adjectives like *huge*, *sizable*, or even *expansive*.
3. Now, having warmed up, ask students to write five adjectives in the middle of their papers that describe one of the seasons.
4. Next, turn the list into a poem, following this procedure:
 - a. Write the name of the season above the adjectives on your paper.
 - b. Insert the phrase "_____ is" (fill in the blank with the chosen season) in front of each of your adjectives.
 - c. Write the chosen season's name again at the end of your poem.

Example

Fall
Fall is colorful
Fall is gusty
Fall is crunchy
Fall is exciting
Fall is spooky
Fall

5. Share poems in groups (three to five students per group).
6. Next, write another poem, using the same adjectives and the following four rules:
 - a. Combine the first two adjectives with a conjunction and add them after “_____ is.”
 - b. Write Adjectives 3 and 4 with a conjunction between them on line 2.
 - c. Write the fifth adjective on line 3. Add an adverb of frequency (sometimes, seldom, always) in front of it.
 - d. Write the season on line 4.

Example

Fall is colorful and gusty
Crunchy and exciting
Sometimes spooky
Fall

7. Share the poems in groups again. Have students discuss which of their poems they like best (Poem 1 or Poem 2). Which one was easiest to write, read, or listen to? What was different about the second poem? (Answers should focus on elements like conjunctions, adverbs, and less repetition).

Part 2

1. On the second day, briefly review the prior day’s activities. Have students work on adding visuals to their poetry to make a class slideshow (see Appendix).
2. Show them this example of a fall poem:



3. In the computer lab or with laptops in your classroom, have students add the text of their favorite poem to one of the available photos you provide, a photo they took themselves, or a free photo for educational use.
4. Students should choose appropriate fonts and colors. You may want to show a few examples of slideshow presentations with excessively small font or poor contrast as cautionary examples. Vocabulary teaching opportunities abound in this area.
5. Prepare a Google Slides presentation with a title slide. Share the link with students and have them upload their poetry slides to this new slideshow.
6. Have students present their slides and poems to the class. Be sure to praise students and cheer!

CAVEATS AND OPTIONS

1. Many students believe poetry is too difficult to write, especially in English. Emphasize at the beginning of the activity that these adjective poems are poetry that even beginning students can write and share for the enjoyment of themselves and others.
2. For intermediate to upper level classes, begin with a cinquain rather than the five-adjective poems. Some cinquain styles focus on syllables per line (for advanced learners), whereas others focus on the number of words per line. Didactic cinquains can be used for intermediate learners.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

WOVE information from Iowa State University:

<http://www.engl.iastate.edu/isucomm/about-isucomm/>

For further reading: Cinquain.org: <http://www.cinquain.org/theory.html>

SAMPLE WORK

Spring is cold and short,
Colorful and beautiful,
Sometimes rainy—
Spring!

—Yiqiu Qian

Winter is cold and long,
Dark and depressive,
Always white—
Winter!

—Joana Andrade

APPENDIX: *Intensive English Program Student Examples*

