

# Haiku

An introduction to the ancient form of  
Japanese verse known as haiku poetry



# WHAT IS HAIKU POETRY?

Hai-ku: An ancient form of Japanese poetry, typically containing a total of 17 syllables shared between three lines, arranged in a pattern of 5-7-5. The first line consists of 5 syllables, the second line 7, and the last line has another 5.

*This is a haiku  
You could write a better one.  
Go ahead and try.*

## SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF HAIKU POETRY:

- 2 simple subjects are often placed in juxtaposition
- These 2 images are usually separated by punctuation
- Haiku often contains a seasonal reference
- Poems are traditionally about nature or the natural world



# WHAT IS HAIKU POETRY?

Traditional haiku often focuses on very simple subjects while providing an interesting or unexpected perspective. Two distinct images are usually placed in juxtaposition, allowing the reader to see an enlightening connection between the two. Like a good joke, the first part can serve as the set-up while the second part delivers the punchline. Consider this ancient haiku by the haiku master Issa (translated):

The wren is chirping,  
But it grows dusk  
just the same.

## SEASONS

A seasonal reference is often present in haiku. Poems that refer to cherry blossoms, for instance, indicate spring as the seasonal backdrop.

Notice the two images:

- 1 A wren chirping
- 2 The growing dusk

The poem involves nature, includes two simple subjects in juxtaposition, is separated by punctuation, and makes a connection between the two subjects that tells us a little something about ourselves: Try though we may, we cannot add hours to the day.

# A BRIEF HISTORY OF HAIKU

While many have made valuable contributions to the furthering of haiku, there are four recognized masters: Matsuo Bashō, Yosa Buson, Kobayashi Issa, and Masaoka Shiki.

## Matsuo Bashō (1664 - 1694)



Matsuo Bashō was the most famous poet of the Edo period in Japan. He is considered a master of brief and clear haiku. His poetry is still recognized all over the world. Some believe that Basho invented haiku. The following is his most famous poem:

*An old silent pond...  
A frog jumps in from the shore.  
Plop! Silence again.*

## Yosa Buson (1716 - 1783)



Yosa Buson was a poet and painter who, like Bashō, was considered one of the greatest poets of the Edo period. Buson was also a master of haiga (haiku illustration), a manga-like genre he helped advance.

*The willow-tree  
has forgotten its root  
in the young grasses.*



# A BRIEF HISTORY OF HAIKU

## Kobayashi Issa (1762 - 1826)



Best known simply as Issa (a pen-name meaning "cup of tea"), Kobayashi is considered one of the four great haiku masters of Japan. Books on Issa outnumber those on Buson and rival those of original master Bashō.

*The wren is chirping  
But it grows dusk  
just the same.*

## Masaoka Shiki (1867 - 1902)



Shiki was an author, poet and literary critic and is credited as a major figure in the development and furthering of haiku poetry. Shiki argued that haiku was a legitimate literary genre and should be judged as other forms of literature. While some modern-day poets began to break from the 5-7-5 structure and inclusion of the kigo (seasonal word), Shiki advocated the keeping of tradition.

*The winter river -  
There is not enough water  
for four or five ducks.*

## A QUICK REVIEW OF HAIKU POETRY

Over-ripe sushi,  
The Master  
Is full of regret.

First autumn morning:  
The mirror I stare into  
shows my father's face.

Haiku is made up of how many syllables?

\_\_\_\_\_ And how many lines? \_\_\_\_\_

How many ideas or images are usually in a haiku?

\_\_\_\_\_ How are these ideas usually separated?

Traditional haiku often includes a special reference or hint. What is it? \_\_\_\_\_

How many Masters of Haiku are there? \_\_\_\_\_

Can you name at least one? \_\_\_\_\_



## WRITE YOUR VERY OWN HAIKU

You are ready to write your own haiku!

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# THANK YOU! LET'S STAY IN TOUCH

## Contact

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